



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 2150

Ezekiel 33:33 "So when it comes to pass-as surely it will- then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst."

Our passage today is one of the many sad things that Ezekiel went through as a prophet and a preacher. His road was long and it was rugged. Most wouldn't have been able to do what he did. In this section, we find the conflicting response to his preaching. The crowds love to listen. They tell others and bring others to hear the prophet preach. However, twice in these verses it is stated that the people will not do what the prophet says. They love to hear, but they are not changing. Love to hear, but they are stuck in their ways. This reveals the ups and downs that preachers face. Most preachers would be thrilled to have members telling co-workers, family and neighbors about their sermons. Most would love to have members inviting others to come and hear the words. But how depressing to learn that folks are coming, but no one is interested in changing. No one will actually listen to what you are saying. The place may be packed with people but there are few that truly serious about the message. How sad.

Our verse begins today with that most interesting expression, "So when it comes to pass, as surely it will." It will come to pass. It will come about. It's going to be. It will be, because God said so. But there's something to that "it comes to pass" business. Consider a few thoughts:

First, our problems come to pass. Our problems do not come to stay, but to pass. They may seem to take a long, long time, even a lifetime, however, the day comes when they will be no more. I think about that bent over woman in the Gospel of Luke. For 18 years she was bent double and could not straighten up at all. Eighteen years is a long, long time. She may have thought that she would never be rid of this problem. She may have thought that she'd die with that problem. Some do. Some never get any distance between them and their problems. However, when you are walking with the Lord, your problems will come to pass. They will end. We do not carry these burdens beyond the grave. Health problems, they will end. Financial woes, they will end. Fighting temptation, it will end. Stress, it will end. Fears, they will end. They will all pass.

Living forever only has an appeal if that life is better than what we have here. Who would like to work FOREVER. Can you imagine asking a co-worker how long have he has been there and his response, "only about 50,000 years." Can you imagine changing diapers FOREVER. Can you imagine paying bills FOREVER. Life eternal is more than just living on and on, it's living differently. Through Christ that is possible. Your burdens will pass some day.

(OVER)

Second, we ourselves will come to pass. We have a divine appointment with death. This is why the Holy Spirit tells us that life is like a vapor or a weaver's shutter. We're not going to stick around here long. You turn around three times and your kids are raised, out of the house and raising their own families. Knowing that we too will pass, behooves us to make the most of our time. Stop putting off what needs to be done. Get to the essential things. Seek ye first, the kingdom of God. First clean the inside of the cup and then wash the outside, He said. There seems to be an order or a priority with these things. First things first. We can get our order out of order and spend so much time with things that do not matter much.

We will come to pass. I go today to a funeral of one of my aunts. There are not many left. All my grandparents have passed. All my uncles have passed. My mom has passed. The numbers are getting fewer and fewer. I remember an old guy telling me once that he knew more people on the other side than on this side of life. The measurement of life shouldn't be by age, but by what you have done with your time. Given ten lifetimes, some still wouldn't do much with it other than watch TV, sit around and complain and make life miserable for everyone else. A lifetime is made up of many days. Days like today. Today, how will I encourage someone? Today, how will I show Jesus? Today, what difference will I make? One day quickly turns into a week, which becomes a month, then a year, then a lifetime. So, each day make it the best that you can. Lift hearts. Shed some sunshine. Stand up for Jesus. Smile more. Be thankful. Be helpful. Do it today and it will be easier to do it tomorrow.

Third, my sins do not come to pass without the blood of Jesus. This is a lesson that many do not seem to get. There is no limitations to our sins. Decade old sins are still there. Sins we committed three houses ago, still there. Sins we have forgotten about, still there. Sins back in college, still there. Sins we committed while living in other states, still there. Sins committed in our first jobs, still there. They don't go away. They don't evaporate after time. They don't expire. God's judgment isn't limited. Sins of our youth. Sins while we were dating. Sins of anger. Sins of lust. Sins of hatred. Still there. Always there. They do not pass. Only in Christ, can they be forgiven, washed away and removed. Nothing else will do it. Year after year, those sins are stacking up. As it says in Revelation, they have reached Heaven. And, through it all, we see ourselves as pretty good people. We help out at little league. We watch the neighbor's dog when they are on vacation. We hold doors open for people with packages in their hands. We help out at school. We donate money to charities. All in all, we are fairly decent people. Yet, what about all of those sins? They are there. There is no amount of good that can compensate for those sins. The magnitude of our sins is expressed in Matthew 18, where a man owed his master 10,000 talents. That number is huge. It reaches beyond 10,000 years of work necessary to pay that debt. That's sin. There isn't enough life in any of us to overcome what we owe. We are in trouble without Jesus. Sins do not pass away.

Finally, God does not pass away. He's there. He's always been there. He sees you, knows you and loves you. He wants to forgive you, help you and invites you to spend forever with Him in eternity. God doesn't get old, outdated nor out of touch. He was there for Abraham to make sacrifices to. He was there for Noah to pray to. He was there for Paul. And, He is there for you. When alone, God is there. When unsure, God is there. When the world seems to be changing and falling apart, God remains the same. He wants you to trust Him, believe Him and follow Him. He always has. Don't try to find short cuts. Don't look for new ways and new approaches. Don't try to find hidden messages or secrets that no one else knows. It was by faith that the walls of Jericho fell. It was by faith that Noah built and survived in the ark. It was by faith that Peter boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus. And, it is by faith that you and I walk forgiven in the name of Jesus. Does a person need to be baptized? Yes. Yes, because God said so. Had God said to learn a foreign language, then we'd have to learn a foreign language. Had God said everyone must travel to Jerusalem, then we'd have to book a flight to Jerusalem. Had God said be baptized, then we need to be baptized.

Recently, I stood in some old, old places in Rome. Greek period, Roman period, and yet, God remains the same. He still wants you and I to walk by faith. He wants us to live according to His word. He wants us to be like Him.

It comes to pass...what a great expression for us to think about.

Roger Shouse

