



# THE EXHORTER

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*“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](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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**2 Corinthians 4:16 "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."**

Inside and outside. What was happening on the outside was not affecting the inside. The inside and the outside were going in opposite directions. The outer man represents the body. It was falling apart. Paul's words are, it's decaying. The next verse adds more to this. There it says, light affliction. Those are polite words to define persecution. The inner man, our spirit, hope, outlook, soul was remaining fresh, invigorating and actually getting better.

These words, carrying through the first part of the next chapter, reveal an amazing and complex difference between our outside and our inside. Here are some added thoughts:

First, we can't control the outside very much. We can't do much about the weather. We can't stop things from happening to us. Sickness, disease, accidents are all part of being connected to the outside man. We don't live in a bubble. We cut our fingers opening the mail. We stub out toes walking in the dark. We catch colds from being cold and wet. We get tired. The outer man goes through a lot and on top of that we age, wear out and fall apart. We can try to eat well, but things still happen.

Second, what happens on the outside is not an indication of what happens on the inside. We can be cold, wet and miserable on the outside, but that does not mean our spirit, attitude and outlook must be the same. We can be diseased, sickly and dying, but our hearts can be encouraged, strong and hopeful.

Third, even though we can't do much about the outside, we control the inside. We do this with our homes. The weather can be nasty on the outside, but inside our homes can be warm and comfortable. Paul is not talking about weather nor our homes, but our spirits. A person who is grumpy, has chosen to be that way. He has allowed the outside to determine the inside. Our attitudes, spirit, joyfulness, outlook are all set and determined by us. As my friend Barbara Johnson so often wrote, 'Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional.'

Fourth, I am responsible for the way my inner man is shaped. This is a point that very few understand. They allow the outside to determine the inside. This is why happiness is the religion of choice. I want to be happy. I want a happy marriage. I want a church that makes me happy. I want to work at a place that makes me happy. I saw recently where a man was suing McDonald's because after eating a Happy Meal he was still miserable. He missed it. The world misses it. They are counting upon someone else to set the tone of their inside. You control that thermostat. You can be cheerful or you can be a dark cloud everywhere you go. So, you work around toxic people. You don't have to let them determine the color of your inside. Things are stressful at the moment. Are you going to allow that to shape how you feel on the inside? You don't feel the best today, is that

going to be the choice of your outlook, attitude and words? We too often point our finger to the circumstances that we are going through. Things are tough, so I'm negative. Things are hard, so I'm depressed. We allow the outside to shape the inside. And, from our first point, since we do not control the outside, we are going along for the ride. I can't help it, we convince ourselves, that I'm negative. Look at my day. I can't help it that I'm complaining, look at what I am going through. And, by saying these things, we excuse our sour disposition and pass it off on our circumstances and by doing this we deny what this passage is saying. Paul said the outer man is decaying. That's not a good word. You would never eat decaying food. We toss those things out of the frig. That's every reason to look in the mirror and sigh. It's enough to pull the blanket over our heads and say, "What's the use." But that's not what Paul said. The outer man was decaying but the inner man was renewed day by day.

It's about time for us to stop tolerating negative, sour, bitter and complaining hearts-both in our homes and in the church. Get over it, is what Paul says. So things are going well, what's your excuse for being a real pain to those around you? Quit using your circumstances to hide a sour spirit that you have chosen to live with.

Today, as we head out, we will pick out what we will wear. Our choice is reflected by the weather. Where I live, short sleeves are just about finished for the year. The weather will dictate sweaters, jackets and our choice. But as we head out today, we also pick out what attitude, spirit and optimism we will wear. Those are not based upon what is happening outside. Someone who is grumpy, short, complaining and negative, has chosen that. Don't blame what is happening to you. You are in the driver's seat of your inner man. This is a lesson that begins at home. We allow our children to have a sour spirit because of what is happening to them. They never learn the difference. They grow up and it's the same. And, where I live, it's amazing how the weather impacts one's mood. Gray, dark days as fall moves into winter, is exactly the way people are on the inside. The professionals have even developed words to define this winter syndrome. Don't help people by buying into this. You are what you have chosen to be. A jailed apostle would tell the Philippian brethren to rejoice. Your spirit isn't shaped by where you are, but by who you are. It's your choice.

Finally, Paul said that the inner man was renewed day by day. Renewed. Every so often you have to "renew" your driver's license. When you do that, it's like you have a brand new license. It's now good for a few more years. Here, he's talking about our inner man. It's renewed, or new again. This is happening daily. This is happening by their actions. It doesn't happen automatically. It doesn't happen to everyone. But for the child of God, even in the era of persecution and trouble, his heart was getting stronger and better daily. How? By connecting with the Lord. By praying. By worshipping. By surrounding himself with godly people. By deciding that he was going to live joyfully and thankfully. By filling his heart with God's word and hope. Now, every day, the outside isn't always nice. Bad weather. Mean people. Unfortunate circumstances. Accidents. Trouble. Those things happen almost daily on the outside. But the inside was getting better and better, every day. Choices. Faith. Hope. Seeing the Lord. Those are the components of an inner man that was being renewed day by day.

It's going to be a dark rainy day where I live. But I will decide if it is going to be a dark day on my inside. It's time we took control of the inner man. It's time we stopped allowing the outside to come inside. It's time we stopped tolerating miserable attitudes, especially among God's people.

Is there any reason you are not being renewed day by day? Well, things are tough right now. So. Well, I haven't been feeling the greatest. So. Well, the bills are stacking up. So. Well, there's Trump. So. Well, my dog has to go to the vet. So. Well, it's raining today. So. Well, it's November already and the holidays are coming. So. You have not explained why you are miserable on the inside and why you spread your dark mood to everyone around you. It's your choice. Why have you chosen that?

Day by day, includes today. Will you renew your inner man? I hope so. It will change your day and it might even spread some sunshine to those around you.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)

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