



# 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 Thessalonians 3:3 "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."**

Our verse today reminds us that we live in dangerous times. It's been that way since the garden of Eden. Jesus described Satan as a thief, whose intentions are to steal, kill and destroy. The evil one wants to overcome you and defeat you.

Now, from this one sentence, there are many lessons to be seen.

First, Satan, the evil one, cannot conquer us without a fight. Satan has many tools that he uses. He can tempt us. He can discourage us. He can use persecution to scare us. He can accuse us. He can use family. He can use brethren. He can use friends. He can confuse us with ideas that are not true. He can get us side tracked by chasing after trivial things that do not matter. Satan works on our attitudes. He messes with our schedule. He makes things difficult. Peter described Satan as a lion that is on the prowl. He's looking for someone, anyone to devour.

As strong and powerful as Satan is, he cannot get into my heart without me allowing that. He cannot force us to do things against our will. He cannot kidnap us and hold us as hostages. God won't allow Satan to do that. What he does is get us to side with him. He gets into our hearts and our lives when we open the door and invite him in. He may stand outside in the cold and pound all day on the door of our hearts. He will remain there until we finally open the door and let him in.

Goliath taunted Israel for forty days. Joseph was tempted by his boss's wife every day. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days. Satan knocks and knocks and pleads and begs and promises to be good and promises to bring you happiness if you will just open the door and let him in. He's persistent and he is patient. He wears us down. He finds moments when we are tired, alone and are not thinking spiritually. And, we get tired of Satan pounding on the door. So, we open it up. Just a little. And, immediately he slips in. And, then begins the trouble and the problems that follow sin. And, once he's in, it is hard to get him out. It's like a bird that comes into your house. It's hard to get it out.

(OVER)

Second, God is stronger than Satan. Our verse tells us that God can protect us. God can strengthen us. Satan was limited by God as to what he could do to Job. When Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat, he had to get permission from God. The Lord is always in control and always upon the throne. Through God we can not be harmed by Satan. With God's help, we can make it safely through.

There are two key expressions here:

First, God will strengthen you. He will equip you and prepare you to face this enemy. He doesn't remove the evil one. The evil remains. The evil is there. The evil is a present danger at all times. I saw some guys working on power lines the other day. A man was elevated high in the sky in a bucket and he was wearing thick gloves and was working on the wires. It looked dangerous. I'm sure it was dangerous. He had been trained what to do and what not to do. He was wearing special equipment. The danger was there, but he was able to not be harmed by it. Had it been me up there, I would have touched the wrong thing and been jolted to the moon. I wouldn't know what to do other than don't ever touch one of those wires. He could. His knowledge and training allowed him to deal with a dangerous situation.

Now this is what God has done for us. The evil is still there. He's dangerous. The wrong touch and we are toast. Rather than removing the trouble, God, like that lineman I saw the other day, instructs us and strengthens us so we can survive without having any troubles. How does God do this? It's through faith and knowledge in the word of God. God teaches us. God gives us examples, both good and bad. God warns us. God shows us the consequences. With this knowledge, this strength, we are able to handle the evil one without getting shocked and harmed by him. Our faith, grounded in God's word, makes it possible for us to recognize evil and to discern right from wrong.

Second, God will protect you. The strengthening and the protecting fit together. Without the strength there is no protection. God is greater than the evil one. No harm will come to the one who follows God's instructions. I was putting together something for one of the grandchildren last night. Simple instructions. I skipped one step, thinking I knew what was next. I didn't. I had to go back and undo a part for everything to fit together. It's that way with God. We start skipping steps, we start figuring things out on our own, and before long, things don't work well. We started with God, but then we took over and it is at that point that we got into trouble.

Like medicine, if we take it properly, it will do us good. When we don't, we shouldn't be shocked that we aren't seeing much improvement. God doesn't leave us alone. He doesn't say, "I'll meet you on the other side." He was with the Psalmist when it was time to journey through the valley of the shadow of death. God was right there with him. The rod and staff of God protected and comforted the child of God.

The Lord will not leave you. He will not turn His attention away from you. However, it's up to us to stay close to Him. He will strengthen and protect us, but we must listen and follow.

Finally, God is faithful about these things. You can count on God. He will be there. He won't let you down. He won't be running behind and leave you standing. He won't forget. He is faithful. We sing, "Great is Thy faithfulness." It is great because He is faithful. The enemy is there, but so is our God. The enemy is watching, but God is protecting and strengthening.

Will we make it through safely? Will the evil one trip us? Will he get us? It's up to us. Get strong and be protected with God and you'll be fine. If not, you'll probably not make it very long.

Great words of hope. Great encouragement. Great reminders of how much God loves us and wants us to make it successfully.

Great is our God!

Roger Shouse (used by permission)