



# 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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## Jump Start # 2309

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**2 Corinthians 5:11** *"Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences."*

Our verse today reveals motives. It is cased in a series of verses that begin with the word "therefore." In this chapter alone, six verses begin with the word "therefore." That word, therefore, connects as well as determines. Because of this, that happened. So, in our verse, knowing the fear of the Lord (because of that), we persuade men (this happened).

Here we find the means of conversion, persuading men. The word "persuade" can have a bad taste in our mouths. We tend to think of being talked into something that we don't want to do. We drop by a car dealership just to look. We aren't buying, just looking. But the next thing you know, we've test driven a car and now we are sitting in a cubicle with a stack of papers in front of us to sign. We've been talked into or persuaded. That can often lead to buyer's remorse. We go home and start thinking about everything and realize it was the smooth talking salesman and his pressure that got to us. Your granddaughter wants you to buy some girl scout cookies. Those cute little eyes are enough and you buy a whole case. Your wife asks, "what are you going to do with all those cookies?" And, your response, "I couldn't resist." Persuaded.

Paul didn't strong arm anyone, smooth talk anyone or promise the sky to get someone to follow Jesus. The persuasion came from God's word. Nothing else is needed and nothing else is appropriate. One doesn't become a Christian to meet nice people at church. One doesn't become a Christian so he can find a good girl to date and marry. One doesn't become a Christian because it looks good on his resume or if he runs for office. None of that! When the Ethiopian in Acts 8 became a Christian, there was no talk about the people or a church. It was all about Jesus. The persuasion comes from God's word.

When God's word is preached properly, it ought to bring a godly response. The power is in the word and not the preacher. The changing is within the heart and not because of the benefits that it may do to someone.

Now, why would someone be persuaded? They are not offered cash. They are not given tickets to a ballgame. They don't get a free meal. And becoming a Christian comes with responsibilities and obligations. So, why? Why be a Christian?

(OVER)

First, from the Scriptures God wants you to be with Him. That's how the Bible story begins. It wasn't just naked Adam and Eve. It was Adam, Eve and God. They were together. There was no separations between them. Transparency in it's truest form. God walked in the garden with them. They had a close relationship. That's what God wants with you. It's not merely changing your outlook and your thinking. It's not making you upbeat and optimistic. It's not shaping you to be a killer salesperson. None of that. God wants you. God wants to be with you.

Second, we have sinned and that separated us from God. That is the next page in the Bible story. Adam and Eve chose to listen to the serpent rather than believe God. They disobeyed God. They sinned. God removed them from the garden. The relationship was broken. Things were not the same. They lost that connection with God. Our sin does the same. We choose self over God. We choose friends over God. We choose Satan's trinkets over God. And, we sin. We shatter the trust and the love that once was there. Sin separates us from God. We are lost. We are without hope. We are Hell bound.

Third, the blood of Jesus can cleanse us of our sins and restore that relationship back with God. Jesus came and was the perfect sacrifice for us. He did what we could never do. His blood cleanses us. But we must believe. We must do whatever He says. We are not in the position to make demands, call the shots or barter with God. There is no deal to be made. There is no negotiating. Jesus died for us. Our faith and our turning our hearts over to Him and our following Him builds that bridge back to God. Salvation is possible. Forgiveness, hope and freedom are renewed. We commit to a new and better life. Now, it's God's way and not our way. Now, Jesus is the Lord of our lives. That faith leads to baptism, the doorway that connects us to the cleansing blood of Jesus. With sins forgiven, we again have a platform to be close to God.

Fourth, this message, this hope, this grace and this gospel is what and why Paul persuaded people. Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade people. Knowing God we do these things. The purpose is not to put notches in Paul's belt. It's not to build churches. It's to bring people to Christ.

A person reading the Bible can be changed. There is a power within the Bible that works on our hearts. Goodness looks really good and bad looks really bad. We see why God says what He says. He's is trying to keep us near Him. He is trying to keep us righteous. God warns. We need that. We tend to get too close to the edge and likely will fall over. God explains. God teaches. God commands. He does these things because He wants us to be close to Him.

Can a person, with just the Bible, and nothing else, become a Christian? Absolutely. You don't need anything else. You don't need commentaries. You don't need these Jump Starts. You don't need the opinions of others. Paul traveled the first century world, not with a suit case full of tracts and class books, but only the N.T. message. That message is what persuaded his world. That same message is what will persuade our world. That same message will persuade us if we allow it.

There is a song that we sing, "I have decided to follow Jesus..." Why would one decide to do that? Because God is right. Because I am not. Because I want to be right. Because God loves me and Jesus is the way.

Persuaded. Not talked into something that I didn't want to do. Not blindly following some charismatic leader. But based upon facts, faith and my heart, I made that decision. It is my decision.

I have decided to follow Jesus...

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)