



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 # 2307

John 10:17-18 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

In our verses today, Jesus is telling the disciples that His coming death is a sacrifice. In a sacrifice, there is more than a death, but an offering. Someone offers a lamb to God. That lamb is slain. The death of a lamb in sacrifice to God is different than the death of a lamb out in the pastures because a wolf got it. In a sacrifice, a choice, an offering was made. The death was intended. It was on purpose. It was a gift, a gift to God.

This is the point Jesus is making. It would not be the Jews who killed Jesus. It would not be the Romans who killed Jesus. Now, some may disagree with that. They may contend that Roman soldiers drove the nails into a Roman cross and executed Jesus. They may say that Roman soldiers stood around the cross. Had it not been for Rome, Jesus would not have died. Absolutely false. Jesus chose to die. Jesus offered Himself. He didn't go to the cross kicking and screaming. He wasn't fighting it. He laid down His life. Had He wanted to get away, He would have. There is no power that could contain Jesus, even death, as the rest of the verse states.

Earlier in John, Jesus declared, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This statement not only tells of the coming resurrection of Jesus, but it stated just how long He would be in the grave, Three Days. Just as Jesus had the power to lay down His own life, He had the power to bring it back up. In three days, I will raise it up, is what John 2 says. Our verse today says, "I have authority to take it up again."

Now, here's the interesting thought. Even in death, while His body was in the grave and His soul was in Hades, Jesus was not only in charge of the situation, He was aware of the time table. We often say after a funeral, that life goes on. It does for the living. Back to work. Back to school. We flip calendars. We get about life. But for the dead, it has stopped, at least on this side of things. My mom, for instance, would be in her 90's if she were still on this side of life. But she's not. She died in her 60's. Time stopped. We understand that.

(OVER)

Yet in these passages from John, Jesus, in death was aware of the time. He said that in three days He would be raised. The book of Matthew tells us that it was on Sunday, the first day of the week, the third day after His death, that the women gathered to the tomb, and it was empty. An angel declared, "He is not here." How did Jesus know it was the third day? He said that he would lay down His life and that He would take it up. What if He came back too soon? What if He was raised and it was still Friday? Or what if it was on Saturday? Or, worse, what if it were on a Tuesday? Not only would Jesus' words be in question, He said three days, it would make us wonder about His other words.

So, this leads to the thought that even in death, Jesus was aware, in charge and had all authority. There is no indication that the Father sent Jesus an angel to remind Him, "It's Sunday, you better rise from the grave." He did this on His own.

But this shouldn't shock us nor surprise us. We find several occasions when Jesus talked to the dead, and they not only heard Him, but they obeyed Him. Jairus' twelve year old daughter was told by Jesus to get up. The dead girl got up immediately. Lazarus was told to come forth out of the grave. He came out, still bound in grave wrappings. You and I can stand at the grave of a loved one and tell them about our day and talk and talk, but there is no indication that they can hear us. We could say "come forth," but they won't come. We don't have that power and we certainly do not have that authority. But Jesus does.

You and I are bound by this world. The laws of nature govern us. The laws of time impact us. The physical components of this life are like boundaries that we live between. For Jesus, none of those things held Him. He could walk on water. He could command the dead. He could cast out demons. And, even when He was dead, He knew when it was the third day and when it was time to be resurrected.

You and I are battered by the weather, disease, and time. There isn't much that we can do about those things. But Jesus is not like that. We trust in a God who is not governed by the things we are. We follow a God who is greater than this world. We come to understand that all things, the weather, the demons, disease, and even you and I are subject to Him. He is the Almighty. He is God.

I might get discouraged because of the weather, death, and disease. Time may wear me out and age me. But these things do not touch the God I follow. God doesn't age. He's not getting older and past His peak. Time means nothing to God. The weather, He changed it. The disease, He cured. The demons, He cast out.

But greater than time, weather and disease, is our sin. God can forgive me. God can cleanse me. God can make me whole again. Through faith, obedience in baptism as He commanded, and following Him, I can fear no evil. I can sit at the table of my enemy. I can travel through the valleys of death. On my own, I'm scared to death. But following the One who is greater than all of these things, I step right behind Him. I listen to Him in His word. I follow Him. I obey Him. I love Him. And, I know what He says will be. I know what He promises is true.

How can I be so sure? He said that in three days after He lay down His life that He would take it up again. He was exactly right. He knew. Even in death, He knew. Without faith in Jesus, how terrible life is. But with Jesus, comes hope, joy and knowledge that the best is yet to come.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)