



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)

July 7, 2019

Jump Start #2361

1 Thessalonians 2:19 *"For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?"*

The other day we were singing the wonderful hymn, "This world is not my home." I've sung that song for years and years. But for the first time something stood out about the second verse. It begins, "They're all expecting me, and that's one thing I know..." They're all expecting me. Who is expecting me? And, where are they expecting me to be?

Our verse today carries that idea. Paul was praising these wonderful Thessalonian saints. He loved them dearly. They were a young church and Paul's heart was incredibly moved by the sacrifices and commitment that they had already made. This verse shows that Paul anticipated them making it to Heaven. Paul anticipated them being with the Lord. At the Lord's coming, their faith and presence is what Paul would glory in. He expected them to make it.

There is a sense in which this is true in many settings. At every wedding, we expect the couple to stay married. We don't go, bearing gifts, thinking this marriage will be over in two months. We expect it to last. We expect our children to grow up, get jobs and be responsible citizens. No parent brings that newborn home from the hospital thinking, "Just imagine in eighteen years, he'll be in jail." We don't do that. And, the same is spiritually. When we baptize someone into Christ, we don't say, "within a year, he'll no longer believe." We expect him to grow and mature in Christ.

Let's think about this expression, "They're all expecting me." I had this cartoon of two old people sitting on the front porch. One says to the other, "I'm getting so old, all my friends in Heaven are going to think that I didn't make it." They are expecting me.

Who is expecting you in Heaven? Obviously, the Lord is. He died for you. He is the one who loves you and believes in you. He is the one who changes you and gives you a real purpose in life. The Lord has blessed you, forgiven you and been with you every step of your journey. He was there when you had mountain top experiences. He was there when you traveled through those dark valleys. Through His word, the Lord has seen you develop, grow and become a powerful soldier of Christ. He'll be looking for you. If you don't make it, it won't be because of Jesus. You'll miss Heaven because of wrong choices you make in your life. You'll miss Heaven because you have followed the pied piper of modern theology and traded your soul in for glamor, prestige, and popularity. And, if you don't make it, the Lord will be disappointed. He's expecting you. He's prepared a place for you.

Who is expecting you? The righteous that you have loved, worshipped with, and grown close to

through the years. You have been more than part of a church, you were part of a spiritual family. You have seen happy times, such as weddings, babies born, young men giving their first lessons. And, there has been sad times. There has been surgeries, tragedies, and funerals. We've sat together. We've prayed together. We've worked through some tough moments together. We've seen faces come and go through the years, but one thing that has glued us together is that we are brethren, the people of God. And, when this world is over, they are expecting to see you in Heaven. Will we know each other in Heaven? Sure, we will. Absolutely. Our verse is just one that shows that. Otherwise, we are with a throng of strangers. Does that sound comforting to you? I know folks who avoid tourist spots simply because they don't like crowds. Now, if the crowd was people I knew and loved, that's a different story.

Can you imagine the conversation in Heaven if you didn't make it? What happened to him? I thought for sure he'd be here. He seemed to love the Lord so much. He seemed so dedicated. "Wow, I'm shocked that he's not here."

Who is expecting you? Those that poured so much into helping you grow spiritually. We all have those people in our lives. Parents. Grandparents. Preachers. Elders. Friends. They talked to us when we were at a crossroads in life. They were there when we were down. They taught us. They answered all of our questions. They were patient with us. They forgave us. They never gave up on us. They expected us to carry on. They expected us to be the legacy. They felt good about the future because of us. They felt the church was in good hands because of us. They are expecting us. And, if we don't make it, not only will they be disappointed, but who behind us will not make it either? If we miss Heaven, then our influence and example may lead others to miss Heaven as well. Rather than passing the torch on, we've dropped it. And because of that, the church suffers. The world suffers. Others, especially our children and grandchildren, were counting on us to be there.

Who is expecting you? You are. At least, you ought to be. You ought to expect to be in Heaven. Not by anything you have done, but because of the grace of God and your love for the Lord. Is this not why we worship? We love the Lord. We want to be with Him now and forever. Is this not why we put our nose into God's book and read and read? We want to know. We want to become. Is this not the reason that we hold our tongue when we could say things? Is this not the reason that forgive instead of holding a grudge? Is this not the reason that we look after others and try to make a difference in the lives of others? We love the Lord. We love who the Lord is and what the Lord has done. We don't go through all of these things only to miss Heaven. It's easy to be lost. It's easy to fail. It's easy to lose your soul. It takes commitment, dedication, effort, and heart to walk with the Lord. The world doesn't like us, because of Jesus. Friends don't understand us. Family members often grumble about us. But, we know. We love the Lord. And, if we don't make Heaven, we will be so disappointed in ourselves. We'll look back at the turning point where we lost all that we had. Maybe the lust of money caused us to become dishonest and we gave up on the Lord. Maybe the lust for immoral sex caused us to walk away from a marriage and then the Lord. Maybe rising to the top in our careers caused us to be more interested in who is around us than the Lord. We'll look back and see that moment. We will realize what a terrible, terrible mistake that was. We threw it all away for a moment. Lot's wife turned and looked. David took another man's wife. Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Turning points that weren't for the better. And, if we miss Heaven, we will have ours as well.

We have some folks coming over tonight. I love company. It takes some polishing of the house to get things ready, but I love it when the doorbell rings and we greet one another with smiles and hugs. I'm expecting friends over tonight. We'll talk, laugh, look in the Bible, play some music and make some great memories. It will be wonderful. If no one showed, I'd be disappointed. I'm expecting them to come.

They're all expecting me, and that's one thing I know...Do you know that? Don't make the wrong turn and miss Heaven. Don't give up. Roger Shouse (Used by permission)