



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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Luke 12:4 "And I say to you my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."

Our verse today is encouraging. It shows that there are limits to what can happen to us. The death of the outside does not mean the end of the inside. Although it is not written this way, one can nearly read a spirit of taunting in this passage. The heavy hand of oppression and oppression can seem to cripple the righteous. In ways, it seems that the enemy wins. Righteous ones die. The righteous are removed from the earth. The wicked rejoice. They dance in celebration. They mock, ridicule and believe that they are triumphant. But they are not. All they have been able to do is kill the body. They can do no more than that. You can almost hear the righteous declaring, "Is that all you got?" "Is that your best shot?" "I'm still around." "You've killed the body, but you haven't killed me."

Consider what the enemy cannot do:

First, they cannot stop faith. Even though the righteous are killed, their example, their influence and their voice remains in the land. Hebrews tells us that Abel, though he is dead, still speaks. That is true of the example of the righteous. The fires of persecution did not destroy the kingdom. In many ways, those very fires encouraged others to stand and remain true to the Lord.

Second, faith, hope and love cannot be touched by death. Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" He listed tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword. None of those things can touch, stop or destroy faith, hope and love. The inside is stronger than the outside. The inside will endure through eternity. Where ought we to pour our efforts and our attention? Obviously, into our faith, our heart and our soul.

Third, in the greatest of ironies, the wicked, by killing the righteous, are putting them right where they want to be. We go to the Lord when we die. We long for that. We groan for that. That is the best thing that can happen to us. So, rather than crushing and defeating the Christian, the wicked has helped fulfill a hope that the Christian has long awaited. He wants to be with the Lord. The killing of his body puts him there. Rather than renouncing the Lord, he has propelled the Christian into the presence of the Lord. The wicked has helped the righteous gain his victory in the Lord.

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Fourth, those that want to kill the body are doing nothing more than what we already know is going to happen anyway. God said it is appointed unto man once to die. The death of a Christian is nothing new. It's not shocking to him. He knew it all along. Death will come. The body will die.

Fifth, the Christian doesn't fear death. It's simply a door that he passes through to get to the other side. Death isn't the end. Death isn't the worse than that can happen to a person. The Christian, loaded with knowledge from God's word, understands. He is prepared. Just as birth is a door that takes us from one room to the next, so is death. The door swings one way. But there is no need to get fixated about that door. There is no need to spend so much time concentrating upon that door. It's the other side that matters. To get there, the Christian must go through the door of death. The wicked, as does Satan, thinks that death is the worst thing that can happen. They believe that a person will deny all, renounce all, and curse God to his face, just to save his skin. They may believe that, but the Christian doesn't. What's there to fear?

There is a story that comes out of the late second century of a noble girl and her servant who were arrested for being Christians. They were taken to the arena to be executed with others. The servant girl was thrust with a sword and died. But when it came to the noble girl, the soldier had second thoughts. His hand was trembling. He was begging the noble girl to renounce Jesus so he wouldn't have to go through with the orders to kill her. The brave noble girl held the soldier's hand up to her neck, so she could be executed. There was no fear. She knew by faith where she was going. She knew by Scriptures that a resurrection awaited her.

Now, put a twist to this for you and I. It's not the enemy that may kill our body, but disease. You have cancer. It's bad. Do not fear the disease that can kill your body and do no more. Do not fear the lingering illness which can kill your body. In many ways, all it will do is release the doors to allow your soul to go to the Lord. Rather than being a prisoner to this world and the pain and sorrow of this world, your death frees it to go and be with the Lord. Away from troubles. Away from those who take life. Away from those who hate the Lord. Away from Satan.

Kill the body! Is that all you can do? You can't touch our soul. You can't invade our spiritual heart. You cannot separate us from Christ. You are pitiful in what you can do. We shall live on and on because of Jesus.

Therefore, do not be afraid. Do not be afraid of the one who can kill the body and do no more. Do not be afraid of persecution. Do not be afraid of cancer. Do not be afraid of death. It's not the end. It's never the end.

The best is yet to come!

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
