



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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Hebrews 9:27 *“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment.”*

I was listening to my '60s radio station the other day and the announcer said the that day marked a significant period for the late Beatle John Lennon. On that particular day, he said, John Lennon had now been dead longer than he was alive. But that fact isn't true only of John Lennon. Trace your family history, and you'll find that just two or three generations before you, the same is true of them. They were dead longer than they were alive. Many, many cemeteries tell the same story. History tells the same story. Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln—all dead longer than they were alive. Open the pages of the Bible, and it's even more true. Moses, Abraham, Joshua, Daniel, Paul, Peter—each dead longer than they were alive. And, the same will be said of us some day.

With this sobering reality, there ought to be some lessons that we learn from this:

First, there is the emphasis factor. If it is true that we'll spend more time on the other side than this side, then we ought to put more emphasis upon the other side than this side. Only occasionally have a spiritual thought while we sit in a church building on Sunday really doesn't do the job. All the sports stats, all the political problems, the weather, finances, can sure fill our days, minds and hearts. Do those things really matter years later? If we are going to spend more time on the eternal side of life, then we ought to make the right choices, build the character and follow the Lord as we ought to.

Second, there is the preparation factor. My kids were at Disney last week. They were planning and planning and packing and packing for this special trip. One doesn't just show up at the gates of Disney and get in. You best have some money on you. In fact, you best have a lot of money. You need a place to spend the night. Preparation—that's the key. We understand that for a Sunday morning worship. The song leader needs to have his songs ready. In many places, the songs are placed on the powerpoint screen. One doesn't do that on the fly. The preacher doesn't just stand behind the pulpit and wing his lessons. If he does, he won't last long. Preparation. So, if we are going to spend more time on the other side than this side, we ought to be prepared. We need to be saved by the grace of God. We need to know what the other side is like. We need to understand what the Lord expects and what pleases the Lord.

(OVER)

Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you." (**John 14:2,3**) It's been said that Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. One doesn't just show up at the gates of Heaven and walk in. Ignoring God for a lifetime will bring sorrow for an eternity. Doing what you want, rather than what God wants, is a sure way to miss Heaven and to spend an eternity in torment.

Third, there is the anticipation factor. Paul talked about this in **2 Cor. 5:1,2**. We groan and we long, were the words used to describe the feelings of wanting to be with the Lord. Throughout the epistles we find statements showing the great desire to be on the other side. For the righteous, death wasn't dreaded and feared. Death was merely the door that opened up to being with God. To depart and be with the Lord was far better, is what Paul told the Philippians. No one goes to Heaven kicking and screaming. Heaven is for those who have longed for it all of their lives. They have thought about it often. They have prayed about it. They have studied about it. They have put their hope and trust in the Lord of Heaven and earth. Rather be there than here is the thoughts of the righteous. Looking forward to it is a wonderful, wonderful way to make the right choices in life.

Fourth, there is the reality factor. That's where we started. The truth be, all of us will spend more time on the other side than we ever spent on this side. Eternity has no end. Our lives here do. This earth will be destroyed one day. Whether one likes that reality or not, and whether one thinks about it or not, doesn't change the truth that we will live on and on. There is no final page to our story. The book never closes with a "The End." This life ends, but it's short compared to what's on the other side. There we will live, either in the comfort of God or in the punishment from the Lord.

And, all of this brings us to some of our wonderful hymns. Won't it be wonderful there, echoes the hope and the joys that await the righteous on the other side. This world is not my home, is a wonderful reminder that we are just passing through this place and this time in life. Our home, our citizenship belongs in Heaven.

Dead longer than alive—not so shocking when one reads the pages of the Bible. This makes us realize how valuable each day we have here is. Don't waste your days. Don't spend your time doing nothing. Make a difference. Leave footprints that follow the Savior. Get up and get going. Time is short and we won't be here very long.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
