



# 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***

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***1 Peter 1:7 "that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."***

Peter's use of the expression, "proof of your faith," indicates the genuineness of their faith. They were encountering various trials and their faith was being tested by the fires of persecution, yet they continued on with their walk with the Lord. Unlike Peter himself, when in the Gospels, the Lord rebuked him for having little faith. The following verse explains this even more, "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him..." Their faith was the real deal. As Paul had written to the Corinthians, they were indeed, "walking by faith and not by sight." Shallow faith. Empty faith. Sunday only faith. A faith that is only there to impress others will not stand during the storms of life. What Peter was witnessing among these people was a faith that would not quit. The tide of popularity had turned against the Christians. Now, they were being hunted down, prisoned and soon put to death. That's all it would take for some to toss in the towel and walk away from Jesus. But not these people. They were truly believers.

This expression, 'the proof of your faith,' is often misunderstood. It is often viewed as some external item that would give credibility to what they believed. If somehow Noah's ark could be found resting on the mountain, then that would prove the Bible. No. The Bible has already been proven and our faith does not rest in physical and external items. The proof is the resurrection of Jesus. The proof is the fulfillment of prophecies. The proof is in the words of God.

But this is nothing new. For centuries, religious relics have been sought after and used to milk money for gullible followers who did not have a rock solid faith. For instance, in the mid 1500's in Germany, as the reformation was coming to life, and the common people were forcing rapid changes to the structure of the Roman Catholic church, ambassadors were sent from Rome to collect more money from the people. To accomplish this, new and outlandish relics were displayed at a cost. Like a circus side show, these relics were carried from village to village to give "proof" of the Roman way. Included among these relics were: two jugs of wine that Jesus had made from water at Cana; two vials of Mary's breast milk; actual manna from the wilderness; the finger bone of John the baptist that had pointed to Jesus; a branch of the burning bush; forty-three bones from Peter; a thorn from the crown that Jesus wore; an actual piece of Jesus' body; and most amazingly, a pinch of the actual dirt from which Adam was created.

**(OVER)**

You and I look at this list and we think how ridiculous and how gullible the people must have been. But remember, the common German had no Scriptures to read. The only Bibles were in Latin and they were kept locked in the cathedrals. Superstition runs wild when there is no way to counter check and balance it against anything absolute. So, the relics were paraded into town and the crowds gathered and these poor peasants paid great sums of money to look upon what they were told was the real thing. These relics were "the proof" of faith for many. But once the Scriptures were translated into German and made affordable, the people could see for themselves the word of God. Blessed, Jesus said, are those who have not seen, yet believed.

And today, a shallow, gullible people fall prey to superstition, speculation and wild ideas. Aliens. Life on other planets. Ghosts. Zombies. UFO's. Concepts of Heaven that are nothing more than pleasure island. Wondering if Jesus was married. Wondering if there are missing books of the Bible. Dismissing the miracles by critics, skeptics and doubters. Assuming emotions are the same thing as faith. Bringing entertainment into worship. Looking for tangible objects to prove and make faith seem acceptable to others.

But that's not the nature of the N.T. The apostles were sent into all the world with only the preached word. They were the proof. They were eyewitnesses to the life and work of Jesus Christ. They carried no branches of the burning bush. They didn't have vials of milk or handfuls of dirt from where Adam was created. It was their words, supported by the miracles that they could do. And, it's those words that have been passed on to us.

Paul would say, "I know whom I have believed." Our faith doesn't rest in some old bone housed in a century old building. Our faith lies in the living word of God. The world doubts the Bible. The world picks apart the Bible. It does so at the beginning by denying the creative powers of God. It does so at the end by questioning the eternal nature of Heaven. Even in the days of our Lord, the masses were demanding proof. Give us a sign, is what the demanded of Jesus. His reply was, "no sign will be given, except the sign of Jonah." The Lord pointed to His death, burial and resurrection. That's the proof. That's the sign. If they won't believe Scriptures, as the rich man was told, neither will they believe if someone rises from the dead.

Genuine faith. It may not convince a doubting world, but it certainly is all the proof that we need to know that Jesus is the Son of God and His word is real.

I know whom I have believed.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)

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