



# 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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## Jump Start # 2846

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*2 Timothy 3:1 “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.”*

As Paul instructs the young Timothy, he doesn't paint a make-believe, everyone lives happily ever after picture. That wouldn't be helpful for Timothy. Had Paul said that, Timothy might become disillusioned wondering when the “happily ever after” part starts. Instead, Paul tells Timothy the truth. It won't be easy. Our verse uses the expression, “Difficult times.” Other versions use: terrible times or even dangerous times.

And, what follows is a careful, descriptive image of what makes those final days troublesome. It's not aliens invading the planet. It's not volcanos and earthquakes causing massive destruction. It's people. It's godliness that becomes widespread. Paul lists a series of twenty sinful attitudes and behaviors. Among them are the “un” words: ungrateful, unholy and unloving. That follows with the “lovers” list: lovers of self, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure.

Characteristic of these characteristics is a selfish spirit that believes the universe revolves around me. It's interesting to see this attitude reflected in the progressive nature of popular magazines. Years ago there was LIFE Magazine. It was about LIFE. Then, along came PEOPLE Magazine. Shortly after that, was US magazine. US is about us and not them. That led to SELF magazine. It's not you, it's about self. And, of course the obvious magazine to follow is called ME. All about me. From LIFE to ME—lovers of self is what Paul said.

Another common characteristic of this selfish spirit is that it centers upon things. How big is your house? How wide is your TV screen? How many cars do you have? What brand labels are on your jeans? Status. Image. Trying to impress others.

And, with that comes an obsession about NOW. No looking down the road. No thought about the eternal. Let's do what we feel like now. We will worry about the consequences later.

**(OVER)**

The picture isn't pretty. These are the times we live in. Empty lives trying to find happiness in fad after fad. However, in the flow of these verses we find that Timothy was different. He was not like this selfish spirit. Paul says, "But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings." A selfish community has no tolerance for those things. A little inconvenience and a selfish society starts screaming. "But you," Paul says. You are different.

Now, some thoughts:

First, now maybe more than ever, our world needs Jesus. The selfishness of our times is ruining all things good. It even creeps into our fellowship and our worship. If I can't have it my way, then I'm out of here. Unless there is something in it for me, why should I help someone else? What's missing is Biblical love and Biblical serving. What's missing are hearts devoted to Jesus. Instead of things getting better, Paul tells us that things are going to get worse. The great ending of fairy tales, is not found here. The Lord will come and many will not be ready.

Second, it will be challenging to connect with selfish hearts. That's the task before us today. Finding ways to grab the attention and teach others the way of Christ. Selfish people want a church that serves them and makes them feel happy. Starting conversations will be hard. Getting people to the Bible will be hard. Finding starting places will be hard. But an empty and vain world offers nothing to fill the hole that is in the hearts of most people. They need to know that God loves them. God can help them. And, that they need God. We are seeing a shift in the way funerals are conducted. It's been gradual, but it's there. Less Bible and more laughter. Less preaching and more celebrating. Less eternity and more partying. Many, many funeral homes now have liquor licenses. The crashing reality of death is one area that a selfish society cannot deal with. So, they must find a way to change the scene. However, death still hovers over them. Their coming death, although ignored and never talked about, is still there. And, moments like this, is a great opportunity to talk about Jesus.

Third, Timothy was different. He was not caught up in that godless, selfish moment. The "but you," shows that Timothy had a heart that remained true to the Lord. For us, that's encouragement and hope. Not everyone is going down the drain. Not everyone has lost their senses. There are righteous people in Sodom. There are righteous people in the final days. There are righteous people who are making godly choices and are leaving footprints of compassion, fairness, and hope for others to see. That's where you and I come in. We are lights of the world. We illustrate Jesus for others to see. We show others that there is a better way. Loving God is a great choice. It is the best choice.

Difficult times will require great faith and patience. You and I can do this because we have the Lord to help us.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

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