



# 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***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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***2 Timothy 4:10 "For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia."***

I witnessed a death the other day. I have seen many people take their final breath. It's not like the movies. There is no music playing. It's not dramatic. The person simply stops breathing. And, with that a soul crosses through the doorway into eternity.

But the death I saw the other day could have been prevented. Everything was there to turn the person around but it didn't happen. This death was one of the most tragic I have ever seen. No funeral home was called. No memorial service was planned. No family member was contacted. No preacher was sought out. This was not the death of a life, but it was the death of a faith. It's one of the saddest things to witness. A soul slipping away in the midst of a thriving congregation. A soul died in an environment of sermons, classes and special studies. A soul died when all around was the very tools to not only keep the person alive, but to help them grow and become powerful. A soul died because a person didn't care about his soul. Others were praying, but he wasn't. Others were concerned, but he wasn't. Others tried everything to turn this death around, but it was all rejected. A soul died because the person no longer wanted it to be alive.

It's hard to understand why a Demas would return to the world. Was the pressure too intense and the persecution too strong? Was his expectations not realistic? Did he expect great fanfare and gifts and slaps on the back, but instead saw the bars of prison, the angry words of accusations and the hostile threats to take his life? Did he miss the far country? Did he always keep one foot in the world? Was he never fully committed and convicted?

Demas left. He abandoned not only Paul, but his faith. When he turned, he left what faith he had behind. Back to the world. Back to a false safety. And, back to a life that would not take him to Heaven. As joyous as baptisms are, the death of faith, must be one of the saddest experiences for the people of God.

**(OVER)**

Hebrews tells us that there no longer remains a sacrifice. Once one has turned his back on Jesus, there is nothing else. There is salvation in no other name. There is no other way to be saved if one walks away from Jesus.

Unlike a physical death, where we have a funeral, there is some closure. There are precious memories. There are footprints to be followed. But not with a spiritual death. Those things are missing.

Here are a few thoughts:

First, the death of faith hurts the righteous more than it hurts the one who walked away from Jesus. The righteous know and understand the outcome. The person making those choices are off to a new love, a new lifestyle, a way without the Bible, brethren or worship. The things we hold dear are no longer special to the person who let their faith die.

Second, we can often beat ourselves up for not seeing this coming or not doing enough. Sometimes that is the case and when it is, we must do better. But much too often, there is nothing that could have been done. The preaching was strong. The classes relevant and useful. The fellowship strong. But a person chose to distance himself from those things. His personal spiritual habits died. He no longer prayed. He tossed his Bible on a shelf, or worse, in the trash.

We must remember that some walked away from Jesus. I expect He was not only upset with them, but also had a tear in His eyes. He knew what a mistake they were making. He knew that they were walking away from their salvation.

Third, when a faith dies, many have questions. Why? And, often no reasonable answer can be found other than they returned to the world. Their minds had been on earthly things for a long time. It hurts.

Fourth, there are times when nothing can be done other than pray. Communication cut off. A heart that has grown cold and unresponsive. Even a bitterness arises from the one who is walking away. Final shots are fired across the bow. He blames the church. He blames the family. He blames others. But the truth is, he wanted to walk away. He didn't want to stay. To save face, he points his guilty finger towards others. His family didn't leave. Others are hanging in. It's not the church. It's not the Bible. It's not brethren. It's a heart that wants the world. The desire for the far country can be so strong that it blinds our eyes to reality. Vows broken. Promises destroyed. Hope trashed. That's the litter that is thrown upon the wayside as one walks away from Jesus.

A soul died. I wonder what Paul thought about Demas? I wonder if Paul had trouble sleeping as he thought about Demas? What a waste. What a poor choice. Back to the world, and the world becomes just a little bit darker.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

