



# 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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***Psalms 79:8 "Do not remember the iniquities of our forefathers against us; let Thy compassion come quickly to meet us; for we are brought very low."***

Our verse today are the words of Asaph. He wasn't happily writing about sunny days, calm seas and blessed memories. The chapter begins with "the nations have invaded." He details the destruction of Jerusalem. Blood has been poured out. The birds are eating dead bodies. We can understand why Jeremiah's second book is known as "Lamentations" or mourning. The call for God to help, to stop what was going on, and to avenge the righteous runs strongly through this Psalm.

I want to look at the opening expression in our verse today. The iniquities of our forefathers is brought to the surface. The plea is to not remember those sins. It was the sins of Judah that brought about the wrath of God. They ignored prophets that God sent. They rebelled against the commands of God. They insisted on worshipping idols. It was because of their forefathers that the current troubles had arisen. If possibly, God would not remember those iniquities, then the disasters that they were currently facing would ease up and go away.

Sometimes you and I have a hard time with the sins of our forefathers. The past often colors the present and ruins the future. Move on is hard for some. This is true in our families. The sins of our forefathers have hurt many of us. This is also true congregationally. The mistakes and iniquities of the past have led to divisions, sour and bitter feelings towards others and ruined the faith of many young people. Older Christians who walked through the troublesome church splits of the 1950s and 1960s are very cautious about anything that seems out of the ordinary. New and different are met with suspicion and followed by a warning. It's hard to blame them because of the iniquities of our forefathers.

We all have a past. How do we deal with the iniquities of our forefathers?

First, we are not responsible for our forefathers. They made the choices that they did with what was available to them. Some made wise choices. Some made foolish choices. Some made selfish choices. Decades and generations later, we often are living with the consequences that came from that, but they are not our sins.

**(OVER)**

A mother who abused her self while pregnant with alcohol or drugs, may have brought you into the world but you started off with a huge disadvantage. Health problems may have plagued you all of your life. You may have grown up where sin was as normal as the air. No Bible readings. No prayers at the table. No Sunday worship. It took you a long, long time to learn what our little ones in church already know.

Because of the sins of our forefathers, we can be bitter and resent them. We can be jealous of others who never experienced the pain, tears and horror that you have. Some grew up being loved. You may have been adopted away. Some had a stable family. You may have never known your dad. Now, you can wear this as a cross the rest of your life and many do. They walk through life with a chip on their shoulder. They are bitter, miserable and unhappy. That will be your choice. You can't blame your forefathers for the attitudes, bitterness and misery that you have chosen to carry the rest of your life.

There are others who have had a similar background as you have, but they have chosen Christ. They have chosen to not let others color the picture of their life. They have refused to be bitter. They have refused to be miserable. They have seen wrong and they have made it the focus of their life to illustrate right. The sins of their forefathers have pushed them to have a warm, close and loving relationship with those in their life. They have chosen not to continue on the path of their forefathers. They refuse to allow the forefathers to hold them back, nor to be a nail upon which they will hang their hat.

We are not responsible for our forefathers, but we are responsible for ourselves. You can let the sins of others shape and define you, or you can stand in the shadow of the Cross and be defined by the Lord.

Second, it's easy to point out the mistakes of those in the past. Being a student of church history, as I am, this is something that one can look for and see in the lives of nearly every person they study. But truth be, neither you nor I are without iniquities. As a father, as a preacher, as a citizen of the kingdom, I have made many mistakes and blunders. Only Adam had the right to say that he married a perfect person. Everyone since Adam, has come with a past, issues, baggage and sins. All of us. You may declare that your spouse is perfect, but they are not. There is no such thing as a perfect church. There is no such thing as a perfect preacher. It is so easy to look in the rear view mirror and see the mistakes of others, while we ignore what we are doing right now. Our attitudes. Our choices. Our willingness to forgive. Our involvement. Sure makes one think.

One day, some of our family or church members may look back to us and talk about our failures. We want people to see our goodness. We want to leave footprints that point to Jesus. But as in the hymn, "The World's Bible," sometimes the type is crooked, and sometimes the print is blurred. If all people ever see was our mistakes, that would not be the true nor complete picture. Shouldn't we think the same about our forefathers? Yes, they made mistakes. But, they also did some noble things.

Do not remember the iniquities of our forefathers against us. It would likely do us well not to remember the iniquities of our forefathers and to concentrate upon what the Lord would have us to do. Don't hide behind the past of others. Don't use the past as an excuse. Rise above those things and become the man and woman of God that the Lord expects. Use your past to help you and better you. Use yourself to help others be better.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)

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