



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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2 Timothy 4:1 *“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith.”*

Recently in a class I was teaching we discussed giving up. Quitting is as much a part of life as starting. Every semester, some quit college. Businesses start and then they close. Kids sign up for an activity and then change their minds and want to quit. Some give up on their marriages. But the greatest tragedy is giving up on God.

There are a variety of reasons why some quit God.

- Their expectations and reality didn't match. Some thought God would come running every time they called. Naaman thought the prophet would show up and wave his arms and say great things. When that didn't happen, he went away angry. **(2 Kings 5:1-14)**
- For others, the weariness of the journey is all it takes to give up on God. Multiple times the N.T. tells us not to grow weary, but often we do. Tired of problems. Tired of people doing wrong. Tired of fighting the devil.
- Yet for others the pull of the world is so strong that they simply can't break free. Their friends are of the world. Their co-workers are of the world. They have tried to be a Christian but they have kept one foot in the world and they have kept looking back to the world. They never faced the direction that they were going.
- And, for some, they are upset with the church. Someone hurt their feelings. Someone let them down. The church didn't do what they thought it should. So, rather than finding another congregation, they quit and they give up on God.

Defeated, discouraged, deflated and disappointed, that's the feeling one has when they quit. Some are angry and accusatory. Some have nothing good to say about the experience. The number of Christians who have quit through the years would alarm us.

(OVER)

There are three reality checks that one must realize about quitting God.

First, quitting God doesn't make God go away. The Lord is there. He is there whether we believe Him, follow Him, love Him or not. Out of sight and out of mind may be something we must deal with, but God is still there and God is still reigning.

Second, quitting God doesn't change what the Bible says. Upset about what the Bible says about same-sex relationships, or divorce, or fellowship may lead some to just throwing in the towel. They may even declare that I no longer believe the Bible, but the word of God remains the same. It doesn't change under social pressure. It doesn't change because we want it to. Rather than trying to change the Bible, we must change ourselves.

Third, quitting God doesn't make life easier. Oh, so many believe that it will. Sleep in on Sundays, no shame or guilt about drinking alcohol, come and do as one pleases, say anything they want without regret, but going back to the mud, as Peter describes it, only makes one filthy. **(2 Pet. 2:20-22)** Problems do not get better when one leaves God. Answers are not more clear when one leaves God. Hope, brighter future, great examples, grace, forgiveness, love, those are with God, not the world. The mass shootings are not caused by those who are living according to the word of God. Drug abuse is not caused by those who are closely following Christ.

One may think, leaving God and my life will get simpler, it won't and it doesn't. And, when trouble comes, and it always does, who are you going to reach out to? Someone in the same boat that you are in? And, when you get to the end of your life, are you going to conclude that this is it? This is as good as it gets?

Crowds walked away from Jesus. The Lord asked Peter if he was going to leave also. Peter's reply, so classic, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" **(John 6:66-69)** If we leave God, we are on our own. If we leave God, we leave the best thing that ever happened to us.

Giving up...that's what Satan wants you to do. He wants you to believe that you tried and it just didn't work out for you. But God knows better. Do not grow weary. Finish the race. Complete the task that God has set for you to do. There is no consolation prize in Heaven. There is no t-shirt for trying. It's all or nothing. And, the nothing is to fail.

Don't give up just because the journey is long. Look around you. There are others who are moving the same direction you are. There is an army of God that loves the Lord and will follow Him to the ends of the earth. Faithful. Committed. Finishing what we started. That's the people of God.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
