



# 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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***1 Thessalonians 4:17*** *“Then we who are alive and remains shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

Our verse today comes from that comforting and descriptive section about what happens when a believer dies. This is not intended to answer every question on life after death. Nor, is this intended to be a complete picture, showing what happens to everyone who has died. That’s not the purpose. The picture is limited, small and specific. It is about the death of Christians. Their journey here has ended. They have crossed through the door of death. They are on the other side now.

Paul reveals three thoughts for us here:

First, there is a hope. Certainly there will be tears and sorrow. That’s natural. That’s because of love. When some boast that there shouldn’t be any tears at the funeral of a Christian, they have forgotten the Lord at the grave of Lazarus. Jesus cried. Does anyone want to question the Lord’s faith? The Lord even knew what He was about to do. Seeing others cry has a way of making you cry.

In this Thessalonian passage, there are two types of grief. One with hope and one without hope. The hopeless grief is pitiful. There are few words that can comfort. There are more questions than answers. Without Christ, without salvation, what hope is there? But it is not that way for the believer. His faith, his walk, his obedience to Jesus, has made all the difference. There is a heavenly hope. Their suffering has ended. Their life has not be wasted nor in vain. They are experiencing the best in their life.

Second, we will be with the Lord always. Always. Not most of the time. Not some of the time. Not almost always. But always. With Jesus. With Jesus where He is. With Jesus in His home. With Jesus in Heaven. No more tears. No more pain. No more suffering. No more fears. No more troubles. Safe in the arms of Jesus, is a wonderful hymn. Safely home. Protected by Jesus. Fellowship with Jesus.

And, not just with Jesus, but with all the beloved followers of God. Paul describes two groups in our verse today. One group is alive on earth. The other group have gone one. We and them. We who are alive, he says, shall be caught up with them. We and them together. We who not died, with those who have died. And, for the Thessalonian brethren, who were grieving the loss of fellow Christians, here was

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the grand reunion. Will we know each other in Heaven? What does this verse tell you? "Together with them," (17) are "those who are asleep" (13). You'll see each other again. That's the point. You are separated now. You remain carrying on now. They are on the other side. You can't see them. You wonder about them. You think about them. You miss them. But a time is coming when we are going to be together with them. And, just how would we know that unless we recognized them?

Now, again, don't miss the intent of this passage. Paul is not saying that you'll be with your mamma and see her again, just because she has died. Not at all. Was mamma a Christian? Was she with the Lord on this side of things? Is she with the Lord on that side of things? The world believes that we will have a grand family reunion on the other side no matter what. Doesn't matter what you did, believed or chased after. Everyone makes it and everyone will be together. That's nothing more than the old doctrine of universalism resurrected from long ago. Who is together in our passage? The believers. The believers on this side and the believers on that side.

Third, these thoughts are intended to comfort. That's how the chapter ends. Comfort one another with these words. These words are not intended to scare us, anger us, disappoint us or discourage us. Comfort. Keep walking with the Lord and in time, you'll walk through that door and you'll see all the others who have walked with Jesus.

There are consequences for believing as well as consequences for not believing. For believing, there is a life with Jesus. It is a life of direction, purpose and hope. It is filled with grace, forgiveness and the promise to be with the Lord forever. It comes with the promise of seeing fellow Christians who have walked with the Lord.

For not believing, there are also consequences. The consequences are being on your own. The consequences are living in the rat race without any reason, purpose and help. The consequences is a life filled with guilt and sin. The consequences is that at death one is cast into eternity without knowing God. The consequences is that of an eternity without God.

Comfort comes from those who believe. Comfort is found in those who know the Lord.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

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