



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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Ecclesiastes 9:11 “I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all.”

Our verse today from the wise Solomon is one of those significant statements that we see lived over and over in what we call life. Things just do not always work out the way you expected or thought that they would. One can prepare well. One can do his homework. One can dot all the “I”s and cross all the “T”s but the unexpected happens. Even when one anticipates every conceivable angle, time and chance still happen.

Solomon’s list is quite impressive: the swift, the warriors, the wise, the discerning, and men of ability—each one accomplished. MVP’s, we’d call them. Allstars. But time and chance overtakes them. The guy who ought to win, doesn’t. The most qualified doesn’t get the job. The team that ought to be in the finals isn’t. Things happen. Time and chance.

From this we are reminded:

First, not everyone is going to respond and act the way I think they should. This even includes brethren. Some ought to apologize, but they won’t. Some ought to step forward and serve as shepherds, but they don’t. Death calls the young before they got much of a chance to do anything. All of this can be disappointing to us, but we must understand that not everyone is going to act the way that I think they should. Not everyone thinks the way you think. Not everyone feels about things the way you feel about things. What you care about, some don’t. What is important to you, for others, it is unimportant.

This ought to tell us that we have to listen and let others tell us where they are on the page of life. Just because a guy sits in a church building on Sunday morning, does not mean that he is righteous, kind and Christlike. Not everyone is going to act the way that I think they should.

(OVER)

Second, time and chance changes things. The swift ought to win the race. The best horse ought to win the Derby. That doesn't happen. The best time ought to win the championship. That doesn't happen. Everyone has an off day. There are factors such as weather, crowds, injuries, moods that play into all of this. Time could refer to age. The longer we are on this planet, the less we are capable of doing. Time catches up with us.

Third, all of this has a way of making a person declare that life is not fair. And, that's right. It's not. In a fair world, the best win. The strongest dominate. But sometimes the strongest are defeated. Sometimes the best lose. Life is not fair. Darwin's survival of the fittest simply does not fit with this verse. The fittest sometimes does not survive. Time and chance, those things belong to God. It rains when there is an outdoor wedding. It snows in the spring and is hot and dry at Christmas. And, when we deal with other people, life really gets unfair. Some cheat. Some lie. Some take advantage of others. Some don't care. When you play by the rules, but others don't, it hurts. When you try to be nice, but others are rude, it hurts. Some are aggressive. Many are selfish. And, yes, it's not fair. The wicked prosper. A guy who can throw a football halfway down a football field will get paid millions and millions and a guy who preaches his heart out, trying to save souls eternally, has to sweat the bills, life is not fair.

We can sit down and pout about it, but that won't change things. We can get mad, but that won't change things. We recognize the point Solomon is making. Time and chance changes everything. It's life. It's part of a broken world that we live in. We must make the most of it and do the best that we can.

Fourth, there will be days when time and chance shines favorably upon us. We win the race when we shouldn't have. We were not the swiftest. We win the battle when we were not the strongest. Time and chance were on our side. But, there will be other days when time and chance does not favor us. Maybe we were the one who should have won the race, but we didn't. Time and chance shined on the other guy that time.

So, what are we to do with all of this? We are to walk by faith. We make it our ambition to please the Lord. There will be days that are blessings. There will be days that are hard. There will be days that favor us. There will be days when the winds blow against us. Prayerful and thankful are what we need to be. Our behavior and attitudes are more important than winning races or the victories we have in battles. Our children notice us. Our victories can make our heads swell if we are not careful. And, our defeats can cause us to give up if we are not careful.

Paul said that he learned the secret of living in abundance and of having little. Time and chance...those are elements that we do not control. Those are factors that can ruin us if we are not careful.

Be brave. Be strong. Be faithful.

Roger Shouse (used by Permission)
