



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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1 Timothy 4:1 *“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”*

Our verse for today gives us much to think about. It’s stuffed like a suitcase going on a vacation. It does us good to “unpack” several of these expressions and to expand upon them. For instance:

· Ensuring salvation: that’s the end result of all that is said in this verse. That’s the motive and the purpose. Why pay close attention? Why bother? The reason is to ensure salvation. Guarantee it. We understand “insurance.” You are supposed to have insurance on your car if you drive. You best have insurance on your house and even your life. That is being financially responsible. That is doing the right thing. The same goes for our salvation. Ensure it, but making sure you are staying close to the Lord. Stay so close that He is always in sight. Stay so close that you don’t miss a step.

Some folks believe that once you are saved you can never lose it. Always saved. Nothing can touch it. Never can lose it. Doesn’t matter what you do, you have it and will always have it. In theory that sounds wonderful. But practically, it doesn’t make sense. Biblically, it’s nonsense. The majority of the N.T. is written to Christians to teach them how to continue on the walk with the Lord. If it doesn’t matter, then why those passages in our Bibles? Example after example is found in the Bible of people like Demas who chased after the world instead of Christ. The Corinthians were warned about falling (1 Cor 10). The Galatians were told that they had fallen (5:4). Multiple churches in Revelation were told to repent or be punished.

Your salvation can be lost. It can be lost when you are not paying attention to what you are doing. That leads to the first action words in this verse.

· Pay close attention: we have a word and a concept of the opposite of this. It’s called being distracted. A distracted driver is likely to drift into another lane and have an accident. This is such a problem that in my state, if the police catch you on your phone while driving, you will automatically receive several points against your license. Get enough of those and you won’t be driving for a long time.

(OVER)

Pay attention. More than that, pay CLOSE attention. Pay close attention to yourself. Look what you doing. Listen to what you are saying. Where is it you are going? God's people are gathering to worship, where are you? Not paying attention leads to accidents, little ones getting hurt, and being caught off guard by the devil. A little anger let loose can sure do a lot of damage. A little flirting with someone you are not married to can put you in a real mess. Pay close attention. What is that you are reading? What is that you are watching? What is that you are letting into your heart? Are you paying attention? Are you paying close attention?

I've mentioned before that I hate snakes. I hate them with a passion. I wish God had never created them. If animals went to Heaven and Hell, I know where snakes would end up. It's not the good place! I know I have snakes in the woods near my house. So when I'm back there, I'm watching, looking, and being very careful. Now, when you are in the world of Satan's snakes, temptation, deception, error, unprincipled morals, keep your eyes open. Be watching. Be careful, very, very careful.

He then adds, to the preacher Timothy, pay close attention to your teaching. Make sure it's what God says. Don't preach assumptions, opinions or doubts. Don't be guessing. Do your homework. Pay attention, pay close attention. Don't say things just to get people to like you. Don't say things just to be controversial. Don't say things to get a following. Pay close attention to what you are saying. It best be by the book or else you best sit for a while and figure out what you are really doing.

When you have paid close attention, it will bring positive results. It will bring about salvation for yourself and for others. And, that's what we are after. We want the salvation of all. But that comes about when one has paid close attention.

Paul is showing Timothy that if you wreck, it will affect others. If you do not pay attention to what you are doing, not only are you hurting yourself, but others will be hurt. But when you pay close attention to yourself, others will follow. There is a direct connection between the salvation of Timothy and those that heard Timothy.

Sometimes we put things off because we don't want to be bothered. We do that with our health. Someone in the family pleads for us to see the doctor, but we tell them, "there's nothing to it. I'm ok." We are not paying close attention. The same happens spiritually. We can get very close to the line of right and wrong and some can walk that line, telling others, that its not a sin, but the slightest push and they are over on the other side of things. Why get that close? In recent times, there has been way too many Youtube celebs that have died because they were taking a picture of themselves on dangerous cliffs. They fell. They died. Yet, more have died spiritually, because they have stood on the edge of wrong, wanting to get as close as they could and they fell.

Paul's simple words are: Play close attention to yourself.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
