



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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James 4:13 "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.'"

All of us are faced with three realms: yesterday, today and tomorrow. Those three interest often and what happens in one can color the others, especially the future. Some have trouble dealing with these three realms. Some live in the past. They can't let go and move on. Grief will do that. One can spend the day just looking at old photos and longing for days that will never come back. Kids grown, moved out and living on their own, that's hard for some parents.

But others live only for today. They are in the moment. They give no thought to yesterday. No lessons learned. No perspective and no observations. Likewise, they give little thought to tomorrow. This is especially true financially. Paycheck to paycheck is how some live. Saving, investing and living with a budget seems boring. And, worse, many do this spiritually. They live for the moment. No thought given to the consequences of their choices. No thought about Jesus. No consideration about eternity, Heaven or Hell. It's all now. It's all fun and good times. Life on the beach looks great until the storms come. And, those who have built upon that foundation of sand experience the pain of their world collapsing around them.

Yet, there are still others who live for tomorrow. They don't like the season that they are in and they can't wait until a better period of their lives. They can't wait to finish school. They can't wait to get married. They can't wait to have children. They can't wait to have their own home. Then, they can't wait until the kids are in school. Then, it's the kids old enough to take care of themselves. Then, it's the weddings. Then, the grandkids. Then they can't wait until retirement. Always looking ahead and much too often, never enjoying the moment that they are in.

In our verse today there are three bold pronouncements made:

First, we will go to a city. They were not in the city, but that was in their plans. This is what we will do. We will do this tomorrow.

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Second, we will spend a year in that city. That's a long time. If they did not live in that city, what about their place back home? Where would they stay in the city? Who would take care of them?

Third, we will not only engage in a business, but we will be successful. Every small businessman begins with that dream. No one starts off with a business model of filing bankruptcy. We will do well is what they are thinking.

The following verse puts all of this into the proper perspective. There the passage says, "Yet, you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow." Not only do you not know what your life will be like, you do not know what the weather will be like, you do not know what the economic climate will be like, you do not know how travel will be, you do not even know if it will be safe to be in that city tomorrow. The truth is, we don't really know anything about tomorrow. We make assumptions based upon today.

Today we feel well. Today we can pack our bags and prepare to go to the city. Today we have ideas about business and how to make a profit. But, tomorrow may not be like today. Tomorrow may be very different. That city could be under attack.

Instead, the text continues, we ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." Life is not promised. Peaceful times are not promised. Prosperity is not promised. God is the Lord of Heaven and earth and our lives are in His hands. The cemeteries are full of people who had plans for tomorrow. There were things that they had wanted to do, but they did not realize what their lives would be like tomorrow.

Some thoughts:

First, we must make the most of each day, because one day, will be our last day. Living in the past and living in tomorrow will make us miss today. We can put off things believing that we can get to them later. For some, there is no later. Do you need to get things right with the Lord? When are you planning on doing that? Are there things you want to do for the kingdom? When?

Second, we need to make plans, but realize that our plans are not written in ink, but pencil. So many variables and factors can change what happens tomorrow. But without plans, we drift. Without plans we do not help our families, nor our congregations. What's the legacy plan? Who will be the next shepherds? What will happen if you are not there? Business plans. Spiritual plans. Family plans. Congregational plans. Make them, but realize God has the final say.

Third, keep God in your plans. Keep God in your conversations. Keep God in this day. It will make such a difference to live as if the Lord is right beside you. You will pray more. You will shape your decisions around the Lord more. God with you today. God with you tomorrow. God with you forever. That's the idea.

Fourth, understand that we are not here very long. My sweet dad lived to be 95. We call that old. Yet, going to Israel and seeing things that date back to the B.C. period reminds me that 95 really isn't that old. We are not here very long. Time is important. Paul told the Ephesians to make the most of it. Use time wisely. Make a difference. Leave footprints for others. We will be on the other side much, much longer than we will be on this side of life. Don't let little things bother you. In time, they do not matter. Don't lose sight of the eternal.

Yesterday...today...tomorrow. Three realms. God is in all of them.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

