



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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Jump Start # 3138

***Revelation 14:13** "And I heard a voice from Heaven, saying, 'Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'"*

Recently, I was in the British Isles. Wonderful places like Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Liverpool. I stood in the ruins of castles, flew over glaciers and even ate reindeer and moose. At the ruins of an old Catholic church, that later was taken over by the Protestants, during the Reformation, I stood at the grave of Kenneth MacKenzie. He died in 1491, that's before Columbus sailed the ocean blue. MacKenzie died more than 530 years ago! The history in Europe takes our breath away. We think of something in the 1800's as being old.

There I stood at his grave, taking a picture of it, something MacKenzie would have never understood. As I was looking, thinking and reflecting, our verse came to my mind. There hasn't been anyone on this planet for a long, long time that knew Kenneth MacKenzie. Yet, Heaven knows him.

Some thoughts for us:

First, what we do here is not forgotten by Heaven. A cup of cold water is recognized by Heaven, Jesus tells us. Everyday you and I send forth rays of sunshine to others. A little note. A kind text. A thank you. A had you on my mind call. A gift. An act of goodness. We don't keep track of those things. To do that would take away the good that we do. To do that would be bragging or expecting someone to pay us back for what we've done. We just keep doing good everywhere we can. Zealous for good deeds is what Titus was told to instruct his people. That's us. Eager to help. Quick to lend hand. And, who notices? And, what good does it accomplish? Maybe very little. But it's the right thing to do.

Second, our passage reminds us that deeds follow those who die in the Lord. Although those beloved have passed through that doorway of death, they have left footprints that we all notice.

(OVER)

Humble service. Faithful to God's word. Focused. Dedicated. Committed. Loyal. That's the steps and characteristics of those persecuted saints in Revelation. We sing, "Faith of our fathers," and how true those words are. You and I are leaving footprints for our children and grandchildren to follow.

A cherished example is one of the greatest things that we can give our family. Always in worship. Always willing to jump in and help out where needed. Always there with a listening ear. Our deeds follow us. We will be remembered by those deeds.

Third, the rest always follows the labor. That's the way the Sabbath was designed. We don't start off with a rest and then work. The work comes first. Work six days and then rest the seventh. The labors here in our passage is not a lifetime in the factory or at an office job. The labors surround the work in the Lord. The labors were enduring the suffering that they went through. They worked for the Lord and now they rest. They were challenged, beaten and wounded for the Lord. Now they rest. This wasn't a lifetime of working and earning a living. This was a lifetime of service in the kingdom. There can be no rest without labor. The still waters is what the Shepherd leads us to. Jesus' invitation was for the weary to find rest in Him. These all have a spiritual tone and application to them. Many a person wears themselves out after a lifetime of work, but they have done little for the kingdom. Our verse is kingdom based. The labor was the faithfulness to God and the kingdom work that means so much to the Lord.

This must remind us of what our true job is. It's not insurance, nursing, real estate, mechanics, or construction. Our true job is kingdom work. Saving souls, encouraging others, helping out where we can. Teaching. Building faith. Stronger homes. Better marriages. That's our work.

Fourth, there would be others that must take up the torch and carry on this work. Our Revelation passage tells of those who die in the Lord. Once they crossed through that doorway of death, their labors and work here ended. Now, who would do it? Revelation was not written to the dead, but the living saints in those seven churches. They would have to labor where the others once were. This is the idea of a legacy. Who will carry on after us? Are we training those who follow? Are we putting in place the next shepherds and preachers? Are we leaving this place better than we found it? Is the church in a better way because of us? Is it stronger and doing more?

I don't know much about Kenneth MacKenzie. He sure died a long, long time ago. Someone thought he was special to be buried in the church building. There are no longer any church services in that building. In fact, there wasn't a roof, only walls. No glass in the windows. But there remained MacKenzie. The world has moved on since his time, as it will do for us when we are no longer here.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. What a special place they hold in the Lord's heart. The Lord has not forgotten, even though we might.

Roger Shouse

