



# 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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***Genesis 4:7*** *"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."*

Our verse comes from the story of Cain and Abel. They were the first children born on earth. They offered a sacrifice to God. Abel offered a lamb, a blood sacrifice. Cain offered vegetables. God accepted Abel's offering. God rejected what Cain brought. Cain got upset. He wasn't mad at himself. He was angry with his brother. Our verse appears right before Cain made another terrible choice. He killed his brother. There was no bringing him back. Abel was the first to die physically. Centuries and centuries later, Abel's name appears in Hebrews 11. His voice still speaks, is what that passage tells us.

In our verse today, God is warning Cain. You don't have to continue on the course that you are on. You can change the direction of things. However, Cain would not listen to God. What a powerful expression, "sin is crouching at the door." It sounds like Peter's description of Satan as a roaring lion. He's there waiting for you. He has his eyes on you. He's crouching. He's ready to pounce on you.

Some thoughts from our verse:

First, God was aware of what Cain was thinking about. God saw that Cain's expression or countenance had fallen. He knew that Cain was thinking about doing something wrong. God was aware that sin was about to happen. What a thought for us! God knows what you are thinking. God knows when you are upset, sad, bothered or angry. God knows what plans you have planned. There is nothing that we do that surprises God.

Second, God knew the next step in Cain's thinking was going to be the wrong step. He knew it involved sin. He knew that he was about to make a terrible mistake. I wish we could put such thoughts to our plans. We often do not think things through. We'll say something without considering how hurtful our words could be. We do things without thinking about the spiritual consequences.

Third, God knew that Cain was in the driver's seat. You can do well or you may not do well, God saw that and God knew that the choices of Cain would determine the outcome. Even though Cain's thoughts were going the wrong way and sin was right at his door, God knew that Cain could master it. Cain wasn't predestined. He didn't have to go through with what he was thinking. He could master it.

**(OVER)**

He could master jealousy, hatred and anger.

And, that's a great reminder for us. We don't have to say what's on our mind. We don't have to vent. We don't have to explode. We don't have to sin. The choices are with us. We can master the temptation that is placed in our minds and hearts. Jesus did. The hungry Jesus did not turn the rocks into bread. He mastered the temptation. Jesus did not bow down to Satan. He mastered that.

The way to master sin is to be in control. Much too often we are a passenger to our feelings and emotions. They get the best of us and we say things we shouldn't. We fly off the handle. We do things that we later regret. Self control is one of the virtues that Peter said we need to add to our faith. Self control was part of Paul's sermon to Felix. Control our emotions. Controlling our tongue. Controlling our attitudes. You can master it, is what God said. You get behind the wheel of your life and get things under control. Stop spinning around, allowing others to determine your moods, attitudes and words.

Fourth, Cain didn't listen to God. We know the story. Cain kills Abel. God knew what would happen. He warned Cain. He told Cain that things could be different. He told Cain that he could master his feelings. Even though God had rejected Cain's offering, God had not given up on Cain. He was still talking to Cain. He still cared about Cain. He wanted Cain to do what was right. He believed that Cain could master those feelings. However, God was not going to break the free will of Cain. If Cain chose to do wrong, God was going to allow that. The innocent died by the hands of the guilty. This in many ways is a picture of Jesus, the innocent, who died for our sins.

If you are set on doing wrong, God will allow that. You'll find God warning you through His word. You may find God's people trying to talk you out of it. But if you are bent on doing what's in your mind, only you can stop it.

Sin is crouching...but you can master it. Simply words from long ago that ought to help us.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

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