



# 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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*Acts 10:15 "Again a voice came to him a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.'"*

Our verse today comes from the vision Peter had while praying. The vision was to emphasize and prepare Peter to go preach to Cornelius, a Roman soldier who was a Gentile. It seems in all of this that Peter needed help. This was a huge step. Jew/Gentile relations were not good and this was something difficult for Peter.

What is interesting in all of this is that it was Peter, in his **Acts 2** sermon, that quotes the prophet Joel, stating that God would pour forth His spirit upon all mankind. And, “it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (**Acts 2:21**). All mankind. Everyone. Peter said it, but did Peter get it? Peter said it, but did Peter mean it? Peter said it, but did Peter understand that all mankind and everyone actually means everyone, including the Gentiles.

All of this brings us to a much larger lesson that we ought to consider:

First, it is always easier to say something and preach something than it is to practice it. We can talk all day long about forgiveness and preach that story of the prodigal up and down but when someone has been unkind and cruel to us, how easily it is to forget everything we have said. Writing sermons takes time. Living a sermon takes much more time.

For Peter, he had to dismiss generations of prejudice, hatred and ill feelings that Jews had toward the Gentiles. The Lord had opened that door. The healing of the centurion’s servant, was work among the Gentiles. The man with legions of demons, was living in Gentile country. The Canaanite woman was a Gentile. Peter had seen what the Lord had already done. The Gospel was for all. Now, he had to demonstrate that in his own heart.

We all come with a background and carry baggage from the past. We were taught certain things. They may not be true to the Bible. We grew up seeing and hearing things. Now, we must walk with the Savior. It’s hard changing. It’s hard doing things differently.

Second, God was patient with Peter. It took three times for Peter to begin to get this and even then, the text tells us, Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision he had seen might be” (**Acts 10:17**). It wasn’t until the men sent from Cornelius showed up that Peter put the dots together. We’d think that he would

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remember what he preached in **Acts 2**. We'd think he'd remember the Lord's kindness to the Gentiles. We'd think...but, isn't the same with us. We can hear a sermon, sit through a class, and still not fully get what we are supposed to make of all of that.

Learning is a process. Our backgrounds, open minds, and honest hearts has a lot to do with that. Some will see lessons quickly. Some, take time. It is important for us preachers to help with application. We can be so vague and general that the audience plays spiritual dodgeball with us. Theory and concepts need to have some feet on them so people understand what to do with those principles. Open the door for application. I've heard many great sermons but they end and I'm left wondering what are we supposed to do with this? Preaching is more than telling facts. It's moving people closer to the Lord.

Third, much later in life, Peter again has problems with this very issue. In **Galatians**, Paul confronts Peter to his face because he was not associating with Gentiles. His fear of the Jews made him inconsistent in his practice. His walk and his talk didn't match.

And, for us, there may be times when we still need help forgiving. We have heard the lessons, but it may be hard for us to put that in practice when we have been hurt by someone.

Practicing what you preach...living what you believe...walking like you talk—it's a lot harder than it seems. Help one another. Be kind. Be patient. Growing is a process. And, like Peter, many times, we need help from others.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

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