

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Maturity (Lesson 12),
Scripture: Gal.1:6-10; 1st Thess.1:2-10; Rom.12:8a
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M., D.Min.
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What Are the Gifts? (Part 8) Exhortation and Encouragement

Galatians 1:6-10 (NASB)

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

1st Thessalonians 1:2-10 (NASB)

We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴ knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; ⁵ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. ⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Romans 12:6-8 (NASB)

...and since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ **or he who exhorts, in his exhortation**; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Introduction The apostle James was so very right when he talked about how powerful speech is. He likened the tongue to a bit in a horse's mouth, to a rudder (*pédalion*, steering oar¹) on a ship, to a little flame that sets a whole forest on fire,

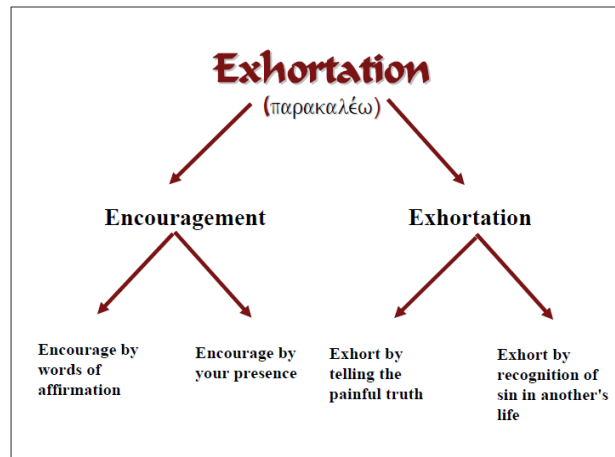
¹ The modern "rudder" as we know it, was only just being invented in China in the 1st century, A.D. What James knew was more than likely the steering oar of Phoenician, Greek, Roman and Egyptian ships of the Mediterranean and usually were engineered in pairs.

to a restless, snake-like evil and as a schizophrenic organ that at the same time blesses and curses people. How we talk to one another, is one of the most important and powerful effects we have on each other—parents to children, spouse-to-spouse, in business, in education, in government, in medicine and almost endlessly.

A neighbor said to me about another neighbor, “I didn’t like the way she spoke to me.” I asked, “Why not?” My neighbor replied, “Because she said my roses are wilted.” “But your roses *are* wilted,” I said. “Yes,” she shot back, “but it was the *way* she said it...’*your roses are wilting!*’ “

How we *speak*, and what we say are significant. And so James tells us to be careful, as Christians. And as we come to the next spiritual gift—we have covered 14 so far--we come to a **speaking** gift: **THE GIFT OF EXHORTATION**, as Paul calls it (Romans 12:8a.) **The two passages read things morning (Galatians 1 and 1st Thessalonians 1) are examples of Paul’s own gift of exhortation.** This gift joins the gift of evangelism, the gift of teaching and the gift of shepherding as gifts which depend upon talking—the transmission of ideas—speaking, and how we do it. Other gifts depend on other kinds of skills but **EXHORTATION** depends on the ability to “encourage other believers by noticing strengths and weaknesses and exhorting the believer accordingly.”²

You can see from this chart that this word (*parakaleo*) can either take the direction of **encouragement** or a more confrontational approach in **exhorting** a person who is in sin or by telling that person a plain truth that they need to see.



People can be encouraging in many different ways. Some people exhort people by giving them words of affirmation. Others do so through wise and well-timed words of correction. It is usually built into their personality. Some people who encourage people by words of affirmation will stumble all over themselves

² *The Theology Program*, 2005, by Michael Patton and Rhome Dyke. Dallas.

when giving words of correction. Both are needed. A pastor will find it necessary to do both in his teaching from the pulpit or in one-on-one encounters. Pastors then, it would seem, necessarily would need to be exhorters because of their role within the Church.³

It is much easier to focus on people who have a gift of encouraging. Barnabas is one such person in the New Testament, and even his name means “son of encouragement.” We read in Acts 9:26,27 at a critical moment for Saul of Tarsus, ***When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.*** Now this is not the modern idea of encouragement that we think of, someone who makes you feel good—but it WAS a huge encouragement for Paul to have Barnabas stand up for him and vouch for him.

We need people who are encouraging. And we need lots of them, so many in fact that really *every* Christian should try to be encouraging. No Christian should be negative, or critical or always looking for the darker interpretation or always bent on keeping us from getting too positive. Every Christian should be focused on our future in Christ, on what is coming and on the good things God wants to do with us NOW.

A person with a gift of encouragement will capitalize on the positive. If a football player only rushed for 47 yards in a game, the person with this gift will say, “Hey, that’s 47 more yards than you had a week ago!” Or if someone is saddened by a setback in their family, the person with gift might remind them that there’s always a new day tomorrow and that if God forgives us for failures in family life, then we can always be hopeful. Or if someone is struggling with temptation a person with this gift will strengthen them by reminding them that saying “No” to sin always brings a harvest of joy, deep in the heart.

I think this gift is rarer than we might want to believe. Teaching and serving are foundational gifts that any church or fellowship needs lots of. But brothers or sisters who are gifted to lift us up and make us feel positive about walking by faith with Jesus Christ—these are very special.

But the other side of this gift is more confrontational. It tells the plain truth or exhorts a person by seeing sin in his or her life. This gift is certainly not popular but it is just as NEEDED as the person with a more encouraging way about them.

³ *The Theology Program, ibid.*

Realize that I am not saying the *exhorter* is negative. I do not mean that at all. In fact, I think the person with this gift has a unique ability to challenge us without threatening us. That is actually a very positive feeling. Some of the times I have really been exhorted in my Christian life were some of the most fruitful moments. I came away challenged about something I was doing, or not doing, but I didn't feel the person who challenged me was out to get me, or was in competition with me.

Once again, there is a universal *function* of exhortation that every Christian should engage in. We should ALL take Paul's words to Timothy, ***preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*** 2nd Timothy 4:2 (NASB95) or to Titus, ***These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*** Titus 2:15 (NASB95) But there are some who God sends into the body to challenge us and keep us on track and get us BACK on track when we err.

The person with the gift of exhortation is neither the "good feelings cheerleader" nor the "meter maid" of the body of Christ. But this person speaks into the lives of individual Christians and also to large bodies of believers, too.

- Some speakers are especially gifted in this gift and they have capitalized on their gift by making it their full-time ministry. And this bears fruit as there are speakers who travel the country, exercising their gift and blessing large numbers of Christians. Some are more encouraging and others are more confrontational.
- There are also teachers, and missions-minded speakers.

But encouragers are some of our favorites, and we should thank God often for these bigger name people. We choose them to listen to, we get their books and CDs and DVDs. We go out of our way to listen to them and see what they're thinking about THIS year. I thank the Lord for people like this who can really SEE what we need and focus on those subjects!

I love the spiritual gifts that exist in our own body though. Some here are gifted in the gift of exhortation. We don't always hear them but they are here. And we need to hear what they are seeing, because this is a great asset to us. May the Lord Jesus give us ears to hear and eyes to see.