

And so they were hurting and hungry, while some of the other believers were doing better, and they sold some of their land and gave the money to the church to help those believers out who were in need. We see this in Acts 4:32-37.

Here we see that this man named Joses, who was also called Barnabas, also helped out with ministering to those in need. And I'm sure he got the name Barnabas out of the way he lived. Why do I say that? Because his name, "Barnabas" means "son of encouragement!" Barnabas did not just talk about helping others, he lived it. His deeds matched up with his words.

B. TAKING A CHANCE ON OTHERS - ACTS 9

Barnabas, Mr. Encouragement was willing to take a chance on others. He was willing to let them take a step in faith and see what the Lord would do in their lives. Could they fail? They could but Barnabas was a man who was always encouraging them to go forward!

In Acts chapter 9 we see Saul's or Paul's conversion experience. And again, he went from persecuting Christians to defending the faith. We read of this in Acts 9:20-26. Here is the problem. His old friends, the religious leaders saw him as the enemy to their faith, they wanted him dead. The believers in Christ were still afraid of him. They weren't sure if Saul was legitimate or not in the faith. And really, could you blame them? Absolutely not, they saw what he was doing to Christians, even consenting to the death of Stephen! So what could he do? Not a whole lot!

But in Acts 9:27-28 we read what Barnabas did for Paul. Notice what this man does here. We see Barnabas take a chance and he brought Saul to the apostles and stood up for him. True ministry is not activity, but it is people. And here we see Barnabas stand up for Saul, which must have encouraged him, and the other believers. You see, Mr. Encouragement!

C. A HUMBLE SPIRIT - ACTS 11

Barnabas also had a humble spirit and truly, if you are going to encourage others you can't be haughty or looking down upon people, you must be humble. In Acts chapter 11 we see the church moving out of Jerusalem, being scattered because of the persecution that was mounting in Jerusalem. And in Antioch a large number of Greeks got saved. We see this played out in Acts 11:22-24.

Here we see that Barnabas goes to Antioch and God is working in him and through him, things are happening. And we read of this in Acts 11:25-26. Why did he let Paul take over? Because he saw his limitations and also saw that Saul or Paul, raised in the Greek culture, schooled in the Law of God, was better equipped for the job, so he goes to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him back.

You see, Barnabas was concerned with others and wasn't interested in a position or recognition like so many people are today. He had a very humble spirit and was more interested in the work of God than human recognition or accolades! He was willing to step down and let Saul come in because he was the best man for the job here in Antioch. In fact, we read in Acts 15:35, "**Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.**" Notice, Paul is mentioned first, even though Barnabas was the older Christian and the one who was sent to Antioch.

D. THE PRICE YOU PAY - ACTS 15

Now please understand that there is a price you will pay for being an exhorter, an encourager and we will see that with Barnabas. You see, Barnabas was a man who did not like to give up on anyone. He saw the diamond in the ruff you might say. And when you go out on a limb for someone you do take a chance, you can pay a heavy price. We see this spoken of in Acts 15:36-41.

Here we see that Paul was ready to do the circuit, to go back to areas where they had preached before, to encourage them and see how they were doing. And Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, but Paul didn't. Why was Paul so harsh on John Mark? Because Paul saw how he did not finish the work last time, that he left before the work was done. And thus, he was not going to take him again. Barnabas, on the other hand, saw the potential of this young man and was not ready to give up on him. And because of that, because of all the contention, Paul and Barnabas split up and went their own way. Paul ends up taking Silas with him and Barnabas ends up taking John Mark.

What happened to John Mark? What happened to this man who did not finish the work? He ended up being one Paul's most valuable co-workers in the faith. How can that be? It was because of one man who saw his potential and was willing to take that chance and work with him. And it Colossians 4:10 and II Timothy 4:11 we see how important John Mark was to Paul now!

This man who struggled to complete the work early on in his life now has a Gospel that bears his name: The Gospel According to Mark! And some believe that it was Peter who gave Mark all the information he used in writing this Gospel. Again, all because one man stood up for him and exhorted him to go on, and he did!

You see, exhortation and the gift of exhortation is truly needed in the church today. We all need to be encouraged and exhorted to move forward. My pastor did that with me, as well as others in the church I came from. From teaching a Bible study to overseeing ministries, they were the result of someone exhorting me on. Exhortation stimulates and motivates people into action!

Most of us probably remember that old phone commercial that said, "Reach out and touch someone!" Okay, maybe I am just dating myself, but there was a commercial like that back in 1979! The point is this. God is calling all of us to do just that, to reach out and touch someone, to exhort people. Remember what Paul said in Hebrews 10:24-25.

Paul is admonishing us to gather together as a local body of believers to worship God, to stir each other up for good works and-so-on. So if you are not doing that, then you are negating what the Scriptures are saying here! You can't stir people up, exhort them, encourage them if you don't reach out and touch them! You have to make that effort and as God gives to you this supernatural gift of exhortation, don't hold it back, use it for the glory of God. You see, you don't know how you can impact a person's life and you may find that diamond that may be hiding in the ruff! The gift of exhortation, may we use it often in our lives!

What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 12

11. THE GIFT OF EXHORTATION

Paul tells us of some of the other gifts of the Spirit here in Romans 12:3-8 and we will specifically look at the gift of exhortation from these verses. Now many people today can exhort others, and we should all be doing that, but please understand that this gift of exhortation is a supernatural gift given by the Holy Spirit that stimulates people into action.

William MacDonald put it this way as he said that this "is the gift of stirring up the saints to desist from every form of evil and to press on to new achievements for Christ in holiness and service." And when a person who has this gift comes alongside of you, they get you moving!

The word that Paul used here in Romans 12:8 for **exhorts** is the Greek word PARAKALEO, (par-ak-al-eh'o), which is translated "**exhorts.**" This Greek word is made up of two different Greek words, PARA which means, "by the side," and KALEO which means, "to call."

Thus, this word "**exhorts**" means, "to call by the side." It can be translated, helper, to counsel, comforter or encourager. In fact, when Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit He called the Holy Spirit the PARAKLETOS, which has the same basic idea, to comfort.

In fact, that is how this word is translated when Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit, "**comforter**" or "**helper!**" And this gift of exhortation, many times works in conjunction with some of the other spiritual gifts, like pastor-teacher, teacher, mercy, ministry and-so-on.

Now to understand exhortation or comfort, we need to look to God, the creator of heaven and earth as our example. In the New Testament we can go to II Corinthians chapter 1 where Paul tells us, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**" II Corinthians 1:3-4.

In this section of Scripture Paul uses the same Greek word that is used in Romans 12:8, PARAKALEO and PARAKLESIS when he was speaking, and we have translated them into our English words, "**comfort**" and "**comforted.**" And what Paul is saying is God has come and will come alongside us and help us, comfort us, and carry us through those difficult times we encounter in life. He will encourage us! God loves to wrap His arms around us and many times He does that through the body of Christ who are coming alongside to help.



OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF EXHORTATION

1. JUDAH PLAYS THE HARLOT - JEREMIAH 3:1-5

In Jeremiah 3:1-5 we see Jeremiah exhorting Judah to turn back to God and not to go after the false god's. They were involved in spiritual adultery and because of their actions judgment had and was coming upon them. He goes on to say in Jeremiah 4:1-2, "**If you will return, O Israel,' says the LORD, 'Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved. And you shall swear, 'The LORD lives,' in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory.'"**

The call is to stir them up into action and to desist from every form of evil. To press on to new achievements in holiness and service unto the true and living God instead of going after these other god's! Now the problem is that they then must act upon what they heard and they did not and they were brought into captivity because of it. Here's the thing, just because someone is exhorting us doesn't mean we have to listen, and many times that is the problem. We continue down that dangerous path until we find ourselves in captivity!

2. TRUST IN THE LORD - II CHRONICLES 20

In II Chronicles chapter 20 we find a great story of seeing what God can do in the most difficult, the most dangerous of situations! Here in II Chronicles chapter 20 we see three nations rise up against the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites, who were all blood relatives of Israel, and yet they were mounting an attack against Judah, and obviously Judah was outnumbered and outgunned!

On the throne in the Southern Kingdom of Judah was a godly king by the name of Jehoshaphat. And I love what Jehoshaphat does in this dangerous and really hopeless situation. He calls for a fast to seek the Lord in this matter. What a great thing to do and it was the right thing to do!

And as the people gathered around their king, he exhorted them by refocusing them on God, he refocused them on God's power, and he concludes by saying in verse 12 of II Chronicles chapter 20, "**O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.'"**

Again, a proper perspective of the situation - we have no strength, we can't do it on our own, and so our eyes are upon you Lord! It speaks of a total dependence upon God.

It is as Psalm 46:1-2 says, "**God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear. Even though the earth be removed. And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.'"** It is when we

lose the consciousness of God in our life that things get out of focus and we become anxious and terrified.

Remember what David said in Psalm 31:24, "**Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the LORD.'"**

And truly think about this for a minute. If you place your eyes upon people, guess what, you will be disappointed! If you place your eyes upon the situation you are facing, the circumstances you find yourself in, you, like Peter will begin to sink! Folk's, we need to place our eyes upon God and when we do we will be stable, He will see us through all that life has thrown our way!

It is as Jehoshaphat said, "**... For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.'"** There is no other place to look but the Lord, and now they waited upon God to answer their hearts cry.

And so as they waited the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, who said beginning in verse 15, "**And he said, 'Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.'"** II Chronicles 20:15-17.

Did you see what Jahaziel did here? He exhorted them to look to God and see the salvation that He will bring in this battle. In fact the battle plan was to put the worship people in front as they went to battle and as they did, singing praises unto the Lord, the enemy was confused, and they began killing each other. Praise, especially during difficult times confuses the enemy.

The people of Judah didn't even lift a sword in this battle, the entire enemy had killed each other and it took 3 whole days for Judah to gather the spoils of this victory that God had given them. We can see that both Jehoshaphat and Jahaziel both exhorted the people to look to God, to trust in the Lord.

Now let's look at some New Testament examples of this gift in operation and see how it is played out!

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF EXHORTATION

1. YOU CAN'T STOP A GOOD MAN - ACTS 14

We are going to see here that you can't stop a good man who is serving the Lord, whose faith is in the Lord, whose strength is in the Lord! Here in Acts chapter 14 we see that Paul was in Lystra with Barnabas, and Paul heals a man who never walked in his life, crippled his entire life, up to this point anyway.

Now when the people saw this they thought, "**The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!**" In fact they thought Paul, being the smaller guy, was the god Mercury, and Barnabas, being bigger, was the god Jupiter. And as these pagan priests hear of this they come with sacrifices to offer to Paul and Barnabas. When they saw this we see that Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and pointed them to the true and living God, explaining that they too are only men and not gods!

Now when the Jews from Antioch and Iconium got word of what was going on, they came and stoned Paul to death, at least they thought he was dead, and they dragged his body out of the city, and left him for dead. And in Acts 14:20-22 we see what happened after they stoned Paul.

You see, you just can't stop a servant of God. Paul was almost killed; he then gets up, goes and preaches in Derbe, and then goes back to the place where they tried to kill him! What in the world was he doing there? Not filing a compliant with the local law enforcement on how he was mistreated, beaten up. He was not protesting against those that tried to kill him.

But he exhorted the believers to continue on in the faith. They saw the example of Paul and it encouraged them to continue walking in the faith. Can you imagine witnessing all that happened to Paul and now he is the one exhorting them to go on? That had to fire them up, encourage them and that is exactly what this gift does!

2. BUILDING UP THE GENTILES IN THE FAITH - ACTS 15

In Acts chapter 15 we will see the gentiles built up in the faith out of a dispute that arose over the gentiles that were coming to Christ. Some of the Jews believed that these gentiles should become a Jew, get circumcised, and keep the Law of Moses. And so before things got out of hand they had the Jerusalem council church meeting to help settle this situation.

And after hearing all the arguments, James comes to a conclusion that the gentiles did not need to do these things, even the Jew's couldn't keep the Law of Moses! And so he sends a letter to the church back in Antioch, to the gentile believers. And we read beginning in verse 31 of Acts chapter 15, "**When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.'"** Acts 15:31-32.

Not only did this letter encourage the gentile church to continue on, but Judas and Silas did the same. Do you see that even a letter, a card, even just a little note can be a source of encouragement to people. May we not forget that!

3. EXHORTING THE EPHESIAN ELDERS - ACTS 20

In Acts chapter 20 we see Paul exhort, encourage the Ephesian elders. In this story Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, and the ship docks in Miletus, which is about 30 miles or so from Ephesus. So Paul calls for the Ephesian elders to come so he may exhort them one last time, his farewell address to those he spent 3 years teaching. And in Acts 20:27-36 we see what transpired.

And we see in these verses Paul exhort these leaders to shepherd the flock that God has entrusted to them by feeding them, warning them, and protecting them. He exhorted them to live a life that is pleasing to God, to be an example to the people, to maintain a good reputation. Paul, seeing these men for the last time, poured out all that was on his heart, building them up in the faith, and exhorting them to continue on, and they responded in a way that shows how much they loved Paul. We read beginning in verse 37 of Acts chapter 20, "**Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.'"** Acts 20:37-38.

Do you see how much they loved Paul and respected this man of God! And I am sure those words encouraged them greatly in the work that God had called them to do. To stay focused, to not let anything move them off the course that God has set for their life. What a powerful gift this is, this gift of exhortation!

Barnabas stepped back and he let Paul shine! He was a man with a humble spirit this Mr. Encouragement!

4. BARNABAS - MR. ENCOURAGEMENT!

A. HE LIVED WHAT HE BELIEVED - ACTS 4

Barnabas lived what he believed and that is important if we are going to encourage people, they need to see our faith lived out in our lives. In Acts chapter 4 we see the church continue to grow in Jerusalem. And that was like a death sentence for most of the Jewish believers.