

## Spiritual Gifts: Exhortation A Series on Spiritual Gifts: Part 7

Paul introduces the spiritual gift of exhortation by using the Greek noun “paraklesis.”

or he who exhorts (**parakaleō**), in his exhortation (**paraklesis**); he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom 12:8)

Much of what is understood about “paraklesis” is influenced by the passage in Acts describing Barnabas as the “son of encouragement” or “son of consolation.”

Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement (**paraklesis**)), (Acts 4:36)

Contemporary definitions of “encouragement” see the term as “giving support, confidence or hope.” However the Greek noun “paraklesis” may be best understood by examining how Paul uses the Greek verb “parakaleō,” which means literally to “to call beside.” When Paul “exhorts,” he appears to have two meanings:

### 1. Exhort to “urge” or “appeal”

Therefore I urge (**parakaleō**) you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)

I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort (**parakaleō**) you, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Cor 4:14-17)

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making (**parakaleō**) an appeal (**parakaleō**) through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. And working together with Him, we also urge (**parakaleō**) you not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor 5:20-21 - 2 Cor 6:1)

In the majority of cases, Paul uses “parakaleō” as “urge” with the meaning of “earnestly persuade” or “strongly encourage” (Rom 15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 14:31; 16:15; 2 Cor 2:8; 8:6; 9:5; 10:1; 12:8, 18; Eph 4:1; Philip 4:2; 1 Thes 2:11; 3:2; 4:1; 5:11, 14; 2 Thes 3:12; 1 Tim 1:3; 2:1; 5:1; 6:2; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9; 2:6,15). Whereas some interpret “parakaleō” as “encourage,” Paul’s form of encouragement was never intended with the meaning of “giving confidence” as with a compliment or praise.

### 2. Exhort to “comfort” or “conciliate.”

and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate (**parakaleō**); we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. (1 Cor 4:12-13)

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Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts (**parakaleō**) us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort (**parakaleō**) those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted (**parakaleō**) by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted (**parakaleō**), it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort. (2 Cor 1:3-7)

Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort (**parakaleō**) him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. (2 Cor 2:6-7)

In several instances, Paul uses “parakaleō” as “comfort” to console a person’s feeling of grief or trouble from affliction (2 Cor 7:5-7, 13; 13:11; Eph 6:22; Col 2:2; 4:8; 1 Thes 3:7; 4:18; 2 Thes 2:17). Paul’s “parakaleō” is in the context of suffrage; his exhortation of sympathy and comfort is commiserate as their suffering is met by God’s consolation.

On the surface, it appears that Paul uses “parakaleō” with two unrelated meanings “to urge” or “to comfort.” However closer observation of Paul’s words reveals that “parakaleō” is grounded in sanctification and mediated through God.

Paul sees exhortation explicitly for the purpose of encouraging Christians to strive for holiness, towards Christ’s love for others and the works that come out of that.

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort (**parakaleō**) you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. (1 Thess 4:1-2)

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement (**paraklesis**) of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement (**paraklesis**) grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 15:4-6)

Therefore if there is any encouragement (**paraklesis**) in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. (Phil 2:1-2)

For Christians, who are not experiencing any current trials, Paul exhorts (**parakaleō**) them to live a holy life. For Christians, who are suffering and afflicted, Paul comforts (**parakaleō**) them to find their consolation and hope in God all the while to avoid sinning out of frustration and anger.

Paul’s exhortation is not simply a human being giving moral instruction or an imperative, it is an exhortation mediated through the triune God – by the mercies of God, by Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit.

Therefore I urge (**parakaleō**) you, brethren, **by the mercies of God**, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom 12:1)

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Now I urge (parakaleō) you, brethren, **by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit**, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, (Rom 15:30)

Practically speaking, reading the Bible is an example of exhortation as the Holy Spirit is involved with the inspiration of the Bible and serves as the means of sanctification of the Believer (see the article: What divine work does the Holy Spirit do? at [www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/3HolySpirit/DeityDivineWork.aspx](http://www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/3HolySpirit/DeityDivineWork.aspx)).

Through the spiritual gift of exhortation, the Holy Spirit uses the endowed Believer to exhort others, who may be in good or bad times, towards personal sanctification. Those with this spiritual gift have a genuine concern for the spiritual welfare and growth of others and understand the heart of exhorting to persuade or to comfort while all together pursuing personal holiness.

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