

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Need For Exhortation

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Paul charged Timothy to “*preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (2 Timothy 4:2). The word of God must not only be “preached”, but it also must be “applied”. The faithful man of God is not faithful just because he preaches the revealed principles of God, but he is faithful to God’s demands by applying those principles to the hearer’s life. It comes in the form of *reproof* (convicting the mind with his error—Eph. 5:11), *rebuke* (addressing the error or sin—Mk. 8:33) or *exhortation*.

The Greek word translated “exhortation” literally means “to call beside”: PARA- (beside), KALEO- (to call). One is coming to one’s side and bringing comfort, looking to what has transpired in the past; or providing encouragement in the way one should go in the future. Barnabas, whose name literally means “Son of encouragement”, lives up to his name when he addressed Antioch by “*exhorting them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord*” (Acts 11:23, cf. Acts 4:36). Sitting at

the feet of faithful preachers, one will not only have his toes stepped on, but will have his heart lifted to see what must be accomplished in Christ.

God’s servants exhort the people of God distinctively in the New Testament. For example, Euodia and Syntyche, two Christians in Philippi, are exhorted “*to be of the same mind in the Lord*”. This is possible because the Spirit has not only revealed the one faith to be united in (Eph. 4:3-5), but has directed Christians to be humble, loving and forbearing in sustaining that unity in the Lord (Eph. 4:2, Philippians 2:3-4).

The Christian is not to remain static in the area of seeking the wellbeing of others. Love toward others must grow! “*For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. . . But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more*” (1 Thess. 4:9-10). Love grows not only by opening our hearts to the needs of more people, but it may grow as we change our ways. For example, some in Thessalonica could abound in love towards others by not being busy bodies in others’ lives, and working with one’s own hands so he or

she would not be a burden to others (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:8).

Exhortation often comes when times are intense. Prayer should not only be a constant part of our lives, but connecting with our God becomes exceedingly important in stressful times. God’s faithful servant writes, “*Pray for us. . . And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner*” (Hebrews 13:19). We may not see how we are going to overcome our difficulties, but humbly presenting our petitions to our Almighty and caring God, we will find solutions and solace with His help.

Exhortation is needed because we may see the truth before us, but need encouragement to walk in the way. Being united with one another in the Lord, abounding in love toward others and being fervent in prayer to God is certainly the way we know we should walk. But as in the days of the first century Christian, we often need a little encouraging boost to move. Exhortation is needed.