

[6] *But having gifts that differ according to the grace having been given to us, let each one use them...* [8] *... the one who ENCOURAGES, in their ENCOURAGING...*

[Romans 12:6,8]

ENCOURAGING or *ENCOURAGEMENT*, or as some versions render it, *exhortation*, is παράκλησις (*paraklasis*).¹ It is the act of *encouraging* or *giving encouragement* or to give *comfort*. If you would stop to consider it, ALL of Scripture is designed to be a *paraklasis*. That is an *encouragement* for us to walk righteously with God. The purpose of *encouragement* is to *strengthen* and *establish* believers in the faith [Romans 15:4; Philippians 2:1-2; Hebrews 12:5; 13:22]. Paul speaks of his preaching of the gospel as a *paraklasis* [1 Thessalonians 2:3 Acts 13:15].

There is one man in the New Testament whose name was Joseph (Joses in some versions) who's *GIFT of GRACE* was *ENCOURAGEMENT*. Because he used his *GIFT of GRACE* to encourage, he is at least partly responsible for us having thirteen of the New Testament letters. Do you know who he is? We will come back to him later.

Παράκλητος (*paraklaytos*), is a noun form of the word meaning "*encourager*"² and is used of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16 where it is variously rendered as '*Helper*', '*Counselor*', or '*Comforter*'. In 1 John 2:1 this Greek noun is used in reference to Jesus and is usually rendered as "*Advocate*". William Barclay in his book, *New Testament Words*,³ makes the following observations of *paraklaytos*² as being:

1. Someone called in to help and render some service.
2. To render the kind of comfort and consolation in distress which keeps a man on his feet.
3. A prisoner's friend. An advocate and counsel for the defense....
4. One who encourages people for noble deeds and high thoughts and instills courage before battle.

The one who has these characteristics is the one who has the *GIFT of GRACE* to act as an *ENCOURAGER* of others.

Now let us think about Joseph the encourager mentioned above. Have you figured out who he is? He is best known in Scripture by the name given to him by the apostles because of his ability to encourage others. It is Barnabas, which means "*son of encouragement*" [Acts 4:36]. He was given this name in part because he owned "*a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet*" [Acts 4:37].

In Acts 9:1-18 we read of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Paul). Before his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road, Paul was seeking to destroy Christ's church. Because at this time Paul was "*breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord*" [Acts 9:1]; the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem did not trust him and would not associate with him [Acts 9:26]. "*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*" [Acts 9:26]. Barnabas used his gracious gift of *encouragement* when Paul needed it the most. That is what one who has *ENCOURAGEMENT* as their *GIFT of GRACE* naturally does. They *ENCOURAGE* those who need to be *ENCOURAGED* by stepping in to help the need, whatever that need is.

¹ "Encouraging" or "Encouragement" is Strong's Greek dictionary noun number 3874; and comes from παρακαλέω (*parakaleō*) Strong's Greek dictionary verb number 3870 with the meanings of 'aid', 'help', 'comfort', or 'encourage'.

² "Encourager" is Strong's Greek dictionary noun number 3875.

³ Barclay, William *New Testament Words*. Louisville, © SCM Press, 1964. Page 221-222.

In Acts 11:20 a congregation of the Lord's church was established in Antioch. When news of this reached the church at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch [Acts 11:22]. And "when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to ENCOURAGE them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord" [Acts 11:23]. Then Barnabas went to "Tarsus to look for Paul"; [Acts 11:25]; "when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" [Acts 11:26]. This occurred because of the way Barnabas encouraged others. If you have the GIFT of GRACE of ENCOURAGEMENT, what will using your GIFT accomplish to the glory of God and Christ?

While still in Antioch "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" [Acts 13:2]. This was the call to the first missionary trip. The reason I mention this is because of something that occurred during this trip. In Acts 13:14 they came to Pisidian Antioch where they went into the synagogue. When they were offered the opportunity to speak a word of encouragement it was Paul who stood up to speak [Acts 13:16]. Now notice that when they were going out it was said that "as Paul and Barnabas were going out" [Acts 13:42].

Up to this time it was Barnabas who had held the lead position. Before this, when these two were spoken of it was "Barnabas and Paul" [Acts 13:2,7]. Now it is "Paul and Barnabas" [Acts 13:42,43,46,50]. One of the character traits of the one who is an encourager is HUMILITY. They do not need to be in the limelight, they are also comfortable to use their GIFT of GRACE in the SHADOW of others.

How about you? Do you seek the limelight, or can you be in the shadow of others and yet still work for the glory of the Lord and the salvation of souls? If you can, then your GIFT of GRACE may be giving others ENCOURAGEMENT!

Lord willing, I will meet you here again tomorrow to learn the traits of an ENCOURAGER.

Now as we close Today's Thought will you please pray with me in closing?

Father God, once again I praise You that You have given gifts of grace to each and every one of us who are disciples of Jesus. Again, Father I pray and ask that you reveal to those praying with me today the gift of grace you want to give to them through which they may serve Christ's church. If being an encourager is the gift of grace you are giving to any who are praying with me today, I ask that You clearly reveal this to them. As always, I ask You to do this through the power and authority that is in the name of Jesus! Amen!

Please meditate and pray on these things!

Louise and I pray this will help to both enlighten and encourage you to **know in a greater way** the **One** promising in His Word to never leave you or forsake you [Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6, 8]!

BECAUSE THE WORK OF BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST NEEDS ENCOURAGERS! – tom!