



bits from bob....

## WOW: Word Of the Week

### Encouragement

June 22 and 24, 2020

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One Greek word can have several meanings depending on the context. This study focuses on a Greek word, *parakaleo*. The etymological meaning is “to call to one’s side.” In the KJV, the most common translations of the verb are “to beseech” (43 times), “to comfort” (23 times), and “to exhort” (19 times). The noun form is translated “comfort,” “consolation,” “entreaty,” and “exhortation.” The noun referring to a person is translated “advocate” and “comforter.” In more recent translations, the word forms are sometimes translated “to encourage, encouragement, encourager.” Various forms of the word root are used ten times in 2 Cor. 1:3-11, most often translated comfort. A form of the word is used 25 times in the first nine chapters of 2 Corinthians.

Paul wrote to Corinth in the midst of great affliction (the Greek word *thlipsis* can also be translated tribulation or trouble). The basic meaning of the word is “under pressure.” Both Paul and the Corinthians were experiencing afflictions. In affliction and pressures, we need comfort, we need encouragement. Often in life, our afflictions and troubles are not going away. There is no relief. We have to endure. We need someone to walk beside us. We need comfort or encouragement.

Another Greek word, *peirasmos*, meaning trials or temptations, is used in James 1:2, 12. The root word refers to testing. In times of testing, we need an escape (1 Cor. 10:13). God provides relief. Two different kinds of problems highlight two different needs, and two different outcomes.

In 2 Corinthians, God is the one who comforts, the comforter. In 1 John 2:1, the same word is used when Jesus is the one encouraging us, walking beside us as he advocates for us. The Holy Spirit is also described as an encourager or comforter. This quick study reminds us how often we fail to appreciate that Deity (the triune Divinity) often works as one. The New Testament says that all three persons (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) have a role in comforting and encouraging, all three live in the Christian. Sometimes the Bible attributes an action to a specific person in the Godhead, but more often the Deity works as one. We fail to speak where the Bible speaks when we assume that the Holy Spirit is the only source of comfort or the only divine person active in our world and in our lives today. This principle extends to many of God’s actions today.

Notice the breadth of the word we are studying – comfort, encourage, exhort, console, stand or walk beside. God acts according to our needs. Few people today have thought about, and even fewer desire, a “tough” God or a “tough” Holy Spirit. “Encouragers” may comfort, instruct, rebuke, or correct us; or they may argue our case.

These thoughts introduce a “Word Of the Week” – encouragement. This week, “bits” and “WOW” go together. They are published together here – be sure to check out both videos!

### Word of the Week – Encouragement

The church needs encouragers. The world today needs people with the gift of encouragement. Barnabas’s name means “son of encouragement.” May God give us more people like Barnabas.

When Paul and his missionary companions arrived at the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, the leaders said, “If you have a word of encouragement, speak it” (Acts 13:15). As much as to say, “If you don’t have encouraging words, please keep still.” Paul wrote to the Romans, saying that he wanted to visit them because they would mutually encourage faith, Paul for them and they for Paul (Rom 1:12).

The New Testament is filled with words of encouragement. A quick survey of passages that mention encouragement shows that encouraging words are related to joy, strength, relationship, grace,

harmony, unity, love, confidence, affection, sympathy, kingdom living, hope, building each other up, lifting the weak, and patience. That list is most certainly incomplete.

The Old Testament brings encouragement and hope to Christians (Rom. 15:4). As noted earlier, the word used to describe the Holy Spirit, “Comforter,” could also be translated “Encourager.”

Lessons for today!

Seeing life through the lens of encouragement is not automatic. Encouragement is a learned skill. Those truths lead to the first three lessons.

- 1- Seeing good in the midst of difficulties requires a worldview adjustment, how we see life.
- 2- It is easy to see what is bad, what is wrong. It is often difficult to see how God works for good.
- 3- It is easy to be critical of others, of past decisions, of history.

Giving encouragement does not come naturally for most people. We must learn three more things.

- 4- Encouraging other requires that we take the focus off ourselves.
- 5- Giving encouragement requires knowing and understanding others.
- 6- Encouragement and praise are two different things.

All of us need encouragement. The next three points are reminders.

- 7- Encouragement keeps us going in difficult times.
- 8- Encouragement is not always positive; encouragement is also needed when we stray.
- 9- The importance of encouragement can be seen in the results – check out the word list above.

10. Encouragement makes us like God. God encourages us in times of trouble. Jesus is an encourager as he stands in our place, representing our case. The Holy Spirit represents our words before the throne. We are blessed when we have both divine and human encouragers.

When we bring together these ideas, at least an introduction to what the Bible says about encouragement, we have a better understanding of encouragement. Encouragement helps us in difficult times, gives us direction and purpose, and keeps us from wrong. Let us be encouraged; let us be encouragers.