

## The Shepherd's Exhortation, Part 1

### Selected Scriptures

Last week we surveyed the shepherd's instruction. This week it's the shepherd's exhortation, exhortation. And we're going to begin with our Lord's Great Commission. So if you have your copy of God's Word, you can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 28, Matthew 28. And while you're turning there, I'm going to give you just a kind of a brief, a simple definition of, exhortation, in case you're not familiar with that word or you, you know it, but you're not, it's kind of fuzzy for you what exhortation is or means.

Simply put, we could say exhortation refers to how we compel someone to do something, to encourage maybe a certain action or a certain kind of action using persuasive speech. You can compel someone at the point of a sword. You can compel somebody with a gun, but this is not that. This is compelling somebody with speech, using persuasive speech.

The common verb for exhort or encourage is *parakaleo*, *parakaleo*, literally, to come alongside. That's the *para* part of

that word and then *kaleo* is, to call or to command, even. So it's to come alongside and call, to come alongside someone and command them. So it's compelling someone to action using speech, and it can vary, that speech can vary in strength.

I'll just use a few synonyms all within the semantic range of *parakaleo* and you'll see what I mean. *Parakaleo* can refer to, we could use the word comfort someone, appeal to someone, entreat or, yeah, or appeal to someone. All those are soft. You can hear the softness in that kind of a language, gentle terms of comforting someone, but it's all with an encouragement aspect. And quite frankly, this is what pastors, elders, church leaders, this is how we want to interact using this range of, this is the wider semantic range of *parakaleo*, we'd like to stay right here with all people at all times, in all situations, about all things.

We want to stay in the, the comfort and the gentle encouragement, and the little bit of persuasion, and the comfort that can be applied in shepherding. And there are many opportunities for shepherds to do just that. We at, at the heart, we are not just gentle men, but growing in gentleness and meekness of Christ. And we love interacting with the sheep, with the people, in a spirit of gentleness.

Some people, however, in some situations, in some circumstances, and at some times require a little bit sterner stuff. So think about in parenting, you want to just tell your child, Hey, could you go clean your room? Yeah, Mom, I want to do that! I'm so, I'm so thankful to go clean my room. And after I'm done cleaning my room, I'm going to go to that field of daisies and pick you a bundle and bring them to you because I love you so much. And after that, I'm going to help you with the cooking. And then I'm going to help with the...

That's what you want to see in your kids, right? What do you get? Aww, mom. And so mom turns it up a notch, doesn't she? I said, Go clean your room. Mom, you're always making me do stuff. It's not fair! You know what? Get up there. I'm going to spank your little bottom. Mom, I'm not doing it. Okay, now the real gun comes out: Wait 'til your father gets home, right?

We understand this in parenting. And it's the same kind of thing sometimes in pastoring. And if we turn up the dial on this language, this word group, turn up the dial on the, the compelling pressure, you might say, that we have to add in our speech, *parakaleo* can mean, to urge, encourage or strongly encourage, to call upon. So when you hear and you know it's your

duty as a Christian, you know I'm trying to persuade you to do what's right. That's the idea.

And it's not even sounding at this point too strong, but we can turn it up even further on the dial with the pressure. And we've got words within the semantic range of *parakaleo* that convey an even higher and a stronger, a more urgent degree of compelling pressure. And there's a severity or an urgency in the language or in the tone.

You can see some of this coming out in the book of Hebrews. All the warning passages in Hebrews are of this nature, kind of at the top end of that nature, sometimes strong rebukes coming to people in the church, even in Paul's letters as well. He says, "Shall I come to you in a, with a rod or with a spirit of gentleness?" I mean, you, you pick. I want to come in a spirit of gentleness. But I'm, I fear that I'm going to have to come, when I come to your church, I'm going to have to come with a rod of correction and reproof.

So we speak of encouraging strongly or beseeching or pleading, even. There's an emotional element. Or even the word admonishing. Admonishing is a, is a strong form. It's kind of a, to exhort with a bite. So sometimes that encouragement comes, it

feels like it's a sting. It, it comes with some sharpness due to situational urgency or the immediacy of the moment.

Again, back to a parenting analogy. If I see, if I look up and see my toddler has wandered into the middle of the street and there's a semi-truck be, bearing down, speeding in his direction, a soft appeal in a, in a low, quiet tone would not only be inappropriate, but it would be out-and-out unloving and unthinkable for a parent to do that. The only appropriate, loving kind of speech in that situation, obviously, is a strong, loud command of admonition. Get out of that street now! Right? The child may come over, tears streaming down the face and wondering, What? I was just playing with my ball. And when you turn them around and see that semi-truck whoosh past, crush the ball, you know, all of a sudden; he understands.

Pastors, elders, shepherds, overseers, all those synonyms for the same office in the church. They're chosen by God, called by Christ, gifted and qualified by the Holy Spirit to the work of not only instruction, as we talked about last week, but also exhortation, to speak with this kind of command and this kind of tone, whether it's a very gentle tone or a much stronger tone as well. It's all within the range.

As I did last week, let me give you just a thesis about the shepherd's duty to exhort. We could say shepherds exhort the flock of God from a foundation of biblical, doctrinal, theological truth, that's last week, so that Christians love, serve, and obey God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind. That's the aim of our instruction. That's the goal, is love from a pure heart, a pure conscience, and a sincere faith. Shepherds exhort the flock of God from a foundation of biblical truth, doctrinal theological truth, so that Christians will love and serve and obey God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind.

And as I said, our exhortations, different voices, different tones, different levels of intensity or severity, all depending on the situation, all depending on the condition of the one to whom we speak, sometimes depending on the response of the person to whom we speak. But we're always to exhort in love, always to exhort in a spirit of meekness, even to the hardest of hearts, still a spirit of meekness, but also in a voice of authority, and always with an expectation that a Christian will obey the word of God, always with that expectation of obedience.

This is why the writer to the Hebrews says in Hebrews 13:17, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep

watch over your souls as those who will give an account, and let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would not be profitable for you." Paul says something similar in 1 Thessalonians 5:12. He says, "We ask of you, brothers, that you know those who labor among you." The word, know, there, is in the sense of regard them, respect them, and respect their duty, respect their purpose, acknowledge that, listen to it. That's the idea of, know, there.

It's a, it's a broader than just kind of having an intellectual comprehension of something. It's actually knowing and appropriating that and then responding, prop, appropriately. So, "We ask of you brothers that you know those who labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord," some translations say, "who rule over you in the Lord," "and admonish you, that you regard them very highly in love because of their work."

In place of the word exhort, *parakaleo*, Paul speaks of the elders admonishing, which is the word *noutheteo*. *Noutheteo* is a strong exhortation. So it's that, that stronger degree of exhortation. Now you get in the territory of admonition. This is regular and normal in a healthy church. This is something practiced in a healthy church. This is something that healthy church members not only expect and count as normal, but they

actually really appreciate exhortation and words like this of encouragement and, and pleading and urging and compelling because they know they need it. I need this.

The Proverbs is filled with wisdom for young people to seek this out, to seek out the wisdom of elders and the comfort and the encouragement and the correction and the exhortation of those who are older and wiser than them so that they'll grow, so that they, too, will pass from simple-mindedness to a heart of wisdom, from a, a lack of the fear of the Lord to walking in the fear of the Lord. That's the idea, here.

It's sad to say, but, and I think you understand this, the voice of exhortation has gone missing in most evangelical churches today. The voice of authority by exhortation has gone missing from Gospel proclamation itself. It's missing from preaching, including so much of what's falsely called, expository preaching. It's missing from discipleship. It's missing from counseling. There's a saying that "soft preaching makes hard hearts, and hard preaching makes soft hearts." That saying is true. But I want you to understand, when I use the word, hard, to refer to preaching, I don't mean promoting unkind preaching, harsh, severe, scolding preaching. That's horrible stuff. That's browbeating stuff.



Just talking, when I say, hard, I'm using the word to, as a synonym for strong preaching with this exhortative element in it. It's in reference to this very aspect of exhortation, which really, if it's true preaching, if it's biblical preaching, as you read from the prophets and the Apostles, it ought to be in every single sermon. We ought to be calling people to a verdict, pressing the conscience, not leaving them as they are, but demanding change, pushing them toward further and further degrees of repentance and holiness.

If it's not in every sermon, the sermon is merely a lecture. It's just something even less serious, like a speech or a pep talk or a Ted talk or group therapy. It's just, instead of a pastor, you've got a coach, life coach, therapist, someone speaking soothing words and making you feel good.

That is not what preaching is, but that's what passes for so much preaching today. "Sermons," I'll put that in air quotes, sermons like that, and especially when the preacher, you know, in our more conservative circles, moves kind of superficially through huge, massive chunks of texts, like preaching. It's valid sometimes to preach a whole chapter in one sermon. Most of the time that's the standard fare that people get, is chapter after chapter every single week, or maybe a whole book, or maybe

massive sections, never, always hitting the wave tops and never going down into the troughs to really dig in and see what exactly is there. And they call that expository preaching just because they move consecutively through a book.

Such sermons, without any exhortation at all, they just create generations of church-goers who are wise in their own eyes and reject correction. Instead of adults, they're more like spoiled children who are never exhorted, never admonished, never corrected, never told, "No." Why has exhortation gone missing? What has silenced the voice of command in the pulpit today? Many answers to that, but if we just say it simply, the church has followed the world. Leaders no longer lead; they follow. It's the same today as in Hosea's time. Like people, like priest; pastors just putting their finger into the wind and figuring out which direction the cultural winds are blowing, and they go that way.

That's why there's been, since 2020 especially revealed, so much compromise, so much caving in to the culture, so much just lining up and saying nothing that the word of God says that would be out of step with the mode of the day. Pastors are more inclined now to conform to their people and cater to them and pander to them and flatter them and never risk saying anything

that would offend. We are in a leadership crisis, and all of a sudden I'm catching myself right now preaching another sermon. I need to not preach that sermon, but come back to this matter of exhortation. That's what this moment calls for. Maybe I'll preach the other one another time.

But I just wanted to give you a, a sense of a definition of exhortation, give you some examples, give you just a sense, also, of kind of the crisis in our time of an anti-exhortative day that we live in, an anti-authority time, a revulsion of any corrective coming from the front, coming from a leader.

Sometimes I wonder if leaders don't speak with a voice of authority because they're just as compromised as the people to whom they're speaking. They're just as immersed in sin and the culture and the distraction and the entertainment and the worldliness as everybody else. So it's one of those, I've got a log in my eye; better not speak to the splinter in anybody else's. I'm just going to speak the nice stuff of the text. Anyway, I'm still preaching that other sermon. Sorry about that.

Let me come back to the point and give you a point to write down for today's, eye, outline. Just two points in today's outline, but the second one has a bunch of sub-points, so I'm cheating. So two points. Number one, by exhortation, sinners are

saved and sanctified. By exhortation, sinners are saved and sanctified.

I'm not pointing to the power in any human being, in any sinful man, in any sinful leader, in any sinful, imperfect preacher to have such a strong exhortation that his exhortation alone saves anybody or sanctifies anybody. I'm speaking about the preacher, the pastor, the elder, oh, and by the way, all Christians who have, must also exhort. I'm speaking about them being a conduit of God's saving and sanctifying power, his saving and sanctifying grace.

The more empty the conduit of himself or any other gunk, the more clear it is as a channel for life-giving water, life-giving air, whatever grace of God is coming through that channel. Get it? That's what we are, that's what we are. So we're not looking to the vessel; we're looking to the power of God but the vessel's usefulness in exhortation.

And I want you to look at the Great Commission, starting here in Matthew 28. Look at verse 16. I'll start reading there. "The eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated, and when they saw him, they worshiped him. "But some doubted, and Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and

on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to keep all that I commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

In obedience to Christ's command, the Twelve have gathered on the mountain, unnamed mountain, here, but Christ often delivers very important things on mountains, getting them alone. This is after the resurrection. And they receive from Jesus their commission. As Apostles, they receive their marching orders. And just understand that as Apostles, these men do not receive the commission for themselves alone. These are not just individual Christians with their individual devotional life coming up and receiving some word from Christ for them personally, individually. No, they speak, not, not even as a small group.

It's not just for them as a small group, and once they've died or whatever God has done with them, that commission is over. No, these men represent the church. Ephesians 2:20 says these men are the foundation stones of the church, which, with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. So the Apostles serve a representative function here on this mountain. They receive this, kri, commission from Christ as representatives of

the universal church, the universal church that started in Acts chapter 2 and continues on to this very day. So it crosses generations and time spans and, and geography and cultures, two millennia running now.

All individual churches, then, are instantiations of the universal church, and by instantiation, take the word, instant, that's the idea, or an instance. Every true, local church is a concrete instance of the abstract reality of the universal church. You can't walk into a universal church of all times, and all generations, and all cultures, and tribes, and tongues, and languages, and nations. You can't walk into that place. It's not in a particular place or in a particular time. That's why I say it's an abstraction, but it's a reality. No, we're talking about these local churches, ones you can walk into, like this particular local church. Not a building, but a body. But you see in that smaller local body the larger universal body of Christ put on display.

Christ's commission, then, gave to these eleven Apostles, representatives of his universal church, he gave to them a commission that is particularized and instantiated in every true local church, at every time, in every place until Christ returns. So the commission is not for individual Christians,

each acting alone. It's not for individual Christians acting autonomously under their own authority, on their own initiative.

The commission is carried out in the context of local churches and under local church authority. Ordinances like baptism and communion are the purview of local churches, led by elders who are overseeing the Great Commission work. That's why it's inappropriate for someone to just grab somebody and baptize them in their pool in the backyard, on their own initiative or on their own authority. That has to happen through the local church.

This is why the Lord's Supper is not practiced among a bunch of buddies up in the mountains over hunting or whatever, or fishing, passing around some wine and saying, we're doing the Lord's Supper. That's not the Lord's Supper. It's not practiced under the authority of the local church with qualified, called elders, and church body around. That's not baptism, the Lord's Supper.

Christ is speaking, as he says, "with all authority," universal authority that's been granted to him by the father, and he commands the church, when he commands the church, he commands the church to do one thing, universal church, about one thing, each particularized instantiated local church also about

one thing. One verb, one main verb, here, one main command: Make disciples. Make disciples, that's the verb. And the disciple-making mandate encompasses two great works, two great works: baptizing and teaching, baptizing and teaching. Implicit in these two great works, essential to them, as we talked about last week, is instruction.

To fulfill the first work of the disciple-making mandate, the obedience of Trinitarian baptism, we must instruct non-Christians in Christian theism. We must instruct, instruct non-Christians in theology proper, so that they know the God with whom they have to do. They understand this God is a Trinity, one God in three Persons.

We instruct non-Christians about the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, his deity, his humanity, his two natures in one Person, Christ. We instruct them about his offices of prophet, priest, and king. We instruct non-Christians about his teachings and his miracles, his claims, his commands. We instruct non-Christians about his substitutionary atonement, how he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, how he satisfied God's wrath for our sins, and he had satisfied God's demand for perfect righteousness.



We tell non-Christians about demands of discipleship, Luke 9:23. If anyone wants to follow Christ, he must deny himself. That's the first prerequisite. It's the end of you. You take up your cross, that is your, it's the end of you, to death. And you follow him as the Lord every day. That's the deal, that's the command. We instruct non-Christians about the consequences of not following Christ, which is eternal judgment, punishment in Hell.

We also instruct non-Christians about the consequences of following Christ, all the blessings in Christ and the promises that are "yes and amen in Christ," the adoption as sons, citizenship in heaven, eternal life of inheritance and blessedness and holiness, to be like Jesus Christ, to know God, to know Christ and the fellowship of his suffering and the attainment of his glory, to share in his glory.

So having been instructed, these non-Christians, some of them whom God has chosen, whom Christ effectually calls, whom the Spirit regenerates to new life, who then exercise saving faith in this message that they have been taught and understood, the result of a well-instructed, obedient faith, results in Christian baptism. Not that baptism saves. Baptism is the external symbol and representation and sign of what's happened

internally. So salvation happens. It's faith unto justification. God justifies them by faith. He declares them righteous. He immediately sanctifies them in the sense of setting them apart to himself.

He plucks them out of error and into truth, puts them into truth. He takes them out of darkness and puts them in the light. He takes them out of unrighteousness and sin and wickedness and enslavement to Satan and the flesh and the world, and he makes them slaves of Christ, where they are beloved, cared for, treated as not just a slave but a friend, to signify the change that takes place in them by the Holy Spirit, invisibly, mysteriously, but truly. They are then baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All that to say, quite a bit of instruction that goes into this, right, implicit in this first great work of making disciples. This isn't just about handing them a tract and saying Sayonara. The instruction leads to a call to conversion, calling the sinner to repent of sins and believe in the Gospel that they've understood and that bears the fruit of obedience, which is to put faith in Christ and repent of sins. And it results in the obedience in Christian, Trinitarian baptism, which is the entrance ordinance into the local church.

Let me make this more explicit to our point today. Always accompanying the instruction of the Gospel is exhortation from that instruction. You see that. It's the call to repent and to believe. It's to press the sinner's conscience that, you've got to make a choice. It's calling them to the verdict. It's calling them to obey the gospel. We not only instruct sinners, we exhort them. We command them to repent and believe and be baptized.

So that's the first great work of making disciples that leads to the fruit of baptism. What about the second work of disciple-making? Is there instruction in that work, too? Is there, is it accompanied by exhortation? Does it lead to obedience? Absolutely. You bet! Christians are to, according to what Jesus says there, they're to "teach them to keep all that I commanded you."

Teach them. What's the pronoun referring back to? The new disciples, baptized Christians. And it's teaching them to do what? To keep: the verb *tereo*, to keep, to observe, to practice, to obey, to maintain, to pursue, to be obedient to. So disciples, these disciples are to be, after being baptized, they're to be taught to keep not just baptism as a commandment, but all of Christ's commandments.

So here's the pattern: instruction, which is a lot and exhortation, which is driven by love and concern for the sinner, concern for the Christian, concern for the disciple. And that instruction with exhortation in evangelism leads to action, which is the obedience of baptism, which signifies salvation. Instruction and exhortation in discipleship also leads to action. It's the obedience of keeping all that Christ has commanded, which is, we just call sanctification.

God has ordained that the instruction in the faith, the instruction in sound doctrine, the instruction in the truth, is to be effective unto salvation and sanctification. And to do so, he says, he shows, it must be accompanied by exhortation. Christian instruction always presses the conscience, always calls for a verdict, always calls for submission.

You say, well yeah, but what about if there's no human instrument there? What if it's just the sinner alone with his Bible? I would submit to you that by the Holy Spirit, that sinner alone with his Bible is also being called to a verdict. There's an exhortation coming in a spiritual form, maybe not mediated through a human being, but there's still exhortation accompanying the instruction. The instruction is not just a dead

letter; it is alive. It is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword."

God has ordained that we as a church, as Christians, participate in the disciple-making process by instructing and exhorting. Both things we do. Both things are in the Great Commission. You can see this in the ministry of Moses and the prophets of old. You can see it in Christ and his Apostles and prophets in the New Testament. You can see it in the pastors. You can see in the Christians in the New Testament.

It's rife in the New Testament, hardly needs to be proven, but again because we are, exhortation has fallen on hard times in our day and people don't like to be told what to do, and they've got a private life and a public life, and they've got a, a home life and a church life and don't ever mix the two. I say the Bible tears all those walls down and says, no, exhortation is appropriate. You need the voice of authority in your life. I need to be told what to do. I'm not asking for applications right now, but we all need to be told what to do, don't we?

John the Baptist, Jesus the Christ, both came preaching, and they led out with exhortation: Repent, and then instruction, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You see that? Likewise, Peter used the voice of command at Pentecost, exhorting his

fellow Jews in Acts 2:38, after giving them instruction, after elevating the instruction to their conscience being pained.

He also said, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins." What had happened just previous to that? They were cut to the quick. They were troubled in their hearts, and they cried out for that exhortation, Brothers, what must we do? We on whom the guilt of the Savior's death, the Messiah's death, has landed on us. We're covered with his blood. We're guilty, guilty, guilty. Peter, what do we do? I've got relief for you, a word of exhortation, "repent, be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins."

Ask this question: Why is exhortation necessary in the first place? I mean, why didn't John and Jesus and Peter simply provide instruction and leave it at that? Why not just leave it to every individual to make up his and her own mind without any pressure, without any coercion, without any fear-mongering? Why not just do that?

Well, for those who are not fallen, for those who are without a sin nature, instruction is enough. But that's a very small, exclusive group, isn't it? A group of only one. For Jesus, we see this. Ever since childhood, instruction was enough. All he needed to do was just read the law and say, yes,

I want to follow that God! He's my father. I love him with all my heart, soul, strength and mind. I can't wait to get up and do his will every single day. Behold, it is written of me, Behold, I have come to do your will. Instruction was enough for the pure heart of our Lord Jesus Christ to seek God always. It stirred him with greater and greater love for God always. It stirred him to worship and serve the Lord with gladness and joy. "It was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross and despised the shame," right?

But outside of that exclusive group of one, there's the rest of us, those of us who are fallen, those of us who are born into sin, those who experience the continual influence and draw of the sin nature, those who are tempted by the world, the flesh and the devil, those who feel this all the time. We require exhortation. Instruction must be with exhortation; otherwise, it just doesn't register through our hard hearts and our stopped-up ears.

God has chosen this exhortation, the voice of command, the call to obedience, to penetrate and provoke our hard hearts to stir and to awaken our dull and sometimes sleeping consciences. Instruction targets the intellect, and that is a large part; the chief work of a pastor's regular ministry is the instruction in

the Word of God every single Sunday, throughout the week as well. But exhortation targets the will, and it exposes the affections. So by instruction and exhortation, God penetrates the sinner's hard heart to inject the truth deep inside of him in order to save and to sanctify.

By instruction we're taught and we're informed. But by exhortation, our wills are confronted and challenged and provoked and moved. And when we resist in our will, well, then, it exposes our affections, what we really want and don't want, what we love and what we really kind of hate. By exhortation we're called to consider our duty to hear, listen, consider, so that we will submit to what we've been taught, so that we will respond in obedient faith and repentance unto life. That's exhortation in the Great Commission. By exhortation, sinners are saved and sanctified. We praise God for the exhortation of the Gospel, don't we? None of us would be sitting here without the ministry of exhortation.