***The Gift of Exhortation  
RO155-01***

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Please open your Bibles today to Romans 12:3-8. Out subject is "Service of the Body," and this is segment number five.

**Spiritual Gifts**

The spiritual gifts, which each of us receive at the point of salvation, give us the ability to serve God in an acceptable way. All Christian service is done through our spiritual abilities – special capacities given to us by God the Holy Spirit. This divine good service is produced by God the Holy Spirit, using our spiritual gifts, and for that service we receive rewards in heaven. The apostle Paul, therefore, directs each believer to fulfill God's plan of good works designed for that believer, specifically, to be executed through his personal spiritual gifts. All gifts for Christian service are equally important, and they are needed in the local church body.

So, we have been looking at some of these, and we have already pointed out that some of the gifts were once operational in New Testament church, for the specific purpose of establishing the written Scriptures, and establishing the change from Judaism to Christianity as God's program currently in this age. Once those things were done, certain gifts were phased out. So, we no longer have apostles, and we no longer have prophets. We do continue to have the gift of evangelists, the pioneer missionaries. We also have the pastor-teacher gifts as the communicator of the Word of God. We then looked at the gift of ministry, which we suggested every believer has to some degree, probably, and under which his genetic abilities (these special capacities with which he was born) are sanctified and used by the Spirit of God. We then looked at the teaching gift – the special ability to be able to convey spiritual phenomena, and we observed the warning that one should not be too eager to want to perform in this capacity, though if you have the gift, that's the capacity in which you do perform. Nevertheless, it does carry with it a special burden of responsibility, and a very serious result if it is a violated responsibility. Teaching people the wrong things will affect their eternal future. Teaching people the right things will enhance their eternity, and they will forever bless you in God's presence.

**The Gift of Exhortation**

So, we have come down to Romans 12:8, where we have the next gift presented: "Or he that exhorts on exhortation." The word "exhort" is a verb. It looks like this is the Greek Bible: "parakaleo." This word literally means "to call somebody to your side;" "to rally somebody to a cause;" or, "to encourage somebody to do right." This is a very valuable gift in the local church, where people need to be encouraged to do something that they should be doing, and to encourage them not to do things that they should not be doing, and to encourage them to do the things for which we recognize they have particular spiritual capacity to do. It is challenging believers to a Holy Spirit-directed goal, or to some biblical goal. It is present tense, which means that this is the constant activity of the person who has this spiritual gift. God the Holy Spirit just leads you around the congregation to commend; to encourage; or, to strengthen a believer in the things that they are doing, and to perhaps express a word of caution to the things that they should not be doing. It is active voice. You do this by your gift yourself. It is in the participle mood, which is a spiritual principle being laid down. This spiritual gift generally looks to something in the future for some divine objective to be reached.

So, what we're talking about is the ability that some Christians have in a super way to make pertinent application of the Word of God so that Christians are moved in the right direction in God's service. The person who has the gift of exhortation, Paul says, should be about the job of exhortation – the job of encouraging.

People who know doctrine, but are indifferent to its application at pertinent points in their lives, need exhortations to get with the Word of God. And that is a very big need among believers. Believers who are taught the Word of God are always in danger of knowing more than they do. They're always in danger of violating James' principle of being hearers of the word, and not doers. And the slack is taken up (the connection between hearing and doing is made) very often by the person with the gift of exhortation. This is the person who comes to you and opens doors of service because they see you as an individual who has the capacity to perform in a certain place.

Now, of course, Satan does not want Christians to be motivated to apply doctrine to their lives. Satan is always out to bring pressure on the people who are getting with the Word of God. An officer in the penitentiary wrote us from his gun tower, speaking about his enlightenment and entree into the Word of God through the Berean ministries, and the consequences of what he sees of the work of Satan on his life that wasn't there before. Here is a man who is an officer in a penal institution, and he gets with the Word of God. So, suddenly, he has perspective on why those men are in that place, and what their problem is. And his testimony, now, begins to make an inroad into the kingdom of Satan. Now Satan recognizes him as an agent that he needs to gun down in that tower in one way or another. We thank God for, again, the ministry of Berean tapes, and for the consequences in the life of this man, and we do pray for him. But indeed, our local church needs this gift in order to strip Christians of the fronts that their old sin nature puts up of the excuses for indolence that the sin nature puts up. It is the person with the gift of exhortation that at least alerts us to what we should be doing. Then we, at least, are not as comfortable to excuse ourselves.

This gift, of course, should not be used to harass people. It is not your business to keep putting a blowtorch to the tail of other people because you have the gift of exhortation. It is your business to alert them, and then to leave them with the Lord. This gift is simply exercised through encouragement; through accommodation; through appeal; through rebuke sometimes; and, certainly through the clarification of doctrine.

**Barnabas**

One of the people that is recorded in the Bible who had the gift of exhortation was Paul's associate Barnabas. In Acts 4:36, we read this about Barnabas having this gift of exhortation: "And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation)." This is the translation in the King James Bible. It's the same word for exhortation in the Greek Bible that Paul is speaking about: "He is the son of exhortation, a Levite of the country of Cyprus." So, here is a man that everybody recognized as really an encouragement – a man who moves us in the right direction by what he says to us. He does have indeed the gift of exhortation. And they equated him with the title (they called him, in effect) Mr. Exhortations. Barnabas was able to encourage the new convert Paul. When Paul came out of Judaism, with all of his hatred, and all the murder of Christians on his hand, coming into a group of Christians who were wary of him – they did not trust this Saul. He had been such a thorn in their flesh. And now he's saying, "I'm a Christian." And the Christians are saying, "Is this a con job, or is it for real?"

Well, along comes Barnabas to help Paul make the transition, because Barnabas is Mr. Consolation (Mr. Exhortation). Acts 9:26-27: "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and believe not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him (that is, Paul), and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to Him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." Barnabas came in, and he exhorted the apostles and the other disciples: "This man is really what he says he is. He has truly been converted. You can trust him, and I exhort you to accept him, as I exhort him to accept all of you.

When Barnabas was ministering in the territory of Antioch, he was there exhorting the Christians, using his gift. In Acts 11:23-24, we have that indicated: "And when he came, and had seen the grace of God, and was glad, and exhorted them all, and with purpose of heart, they should cling unto the Lord." Barnabas comes up from Jerusalem. He sees what is going on in Antioch. He says, "This is terrific. This is real. The Word of God is alive and powerful, and doing its work. And then he exhorts the Christians on what they should do as a result of the Word they knew.

Verse 24: "For he was a righteous man (that is, Barnabas), full of the Holy Spirit (a Spirit-filled man), and of faith, and many people were added unto the Lord." Because Barnabas exhorted the people, they got on the job and did what they should do with their spiritual gifts. And many people, as a result, were reached for the Lord.

**John Mark**

Barnabas, as you know, became an associate with the apostle Paul. The two men were identified by the Holy Spirit to the believers in Antioch, that they should be set aside for foreign missionary service. So, they did team up. They needed an assistant. So, they took a relative of Barnabas, a man named John Mark. In Acts 15:36-39, we have this recorded for us. Paul and Barnabas went out on their first tour, and they took John Mark with them. They got to a certain point in the tour, and John Mark decided that missionary work was not for him. And instead of completing the tour and then resigning, he cut out at that point, which left these men out in the field without an assistant that they needed. And in those days, it wasn't just calling on the phone, and getting somebody else, or picking somebody along the way. The burden of this abandonment was enormous. When they decided to go again on a second tour to visit the churches they had established, Barnabas wanted to take Mark along again. The apostle Paul said, "Nothing doing. I do not trust somebody that has cut out on us the first time. He deserted us in the field. He didn't cut out after we got back. He deserted us in the field, and therefore I consider him untrustworthy.

Well, the conflict was so great between them that they finally said, "Well, we can't go together. We're going to have to split up, and team up with other people, and go our own separate ways, which Barnabas did, so that he could take Mark with him. Now, in fact, Barnabas was working from the frame of reference of this gift of exhortation that he had: this gift of consolation; and, this gift of encouragement.

Now, notice Acts 15:36-39: "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought it not good to take him with them who deserted them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder, one from the other. So, Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." As a result, they simply separated. They divided, and they went their separate ways. Barnabas was determined, and felt led of the Lord to encourage Mark to seek to restore him. And that's exactly what he did.

The gift of encouragement got Mark back on track, and brought him back into fellowship with the Lord and into Christian service, so that even the apostle Paul, when he wrote his very last book on the eve of his own execution, tells us in 2 Timothy 4:11 that Mark was a very valuable assistant to him. Paul says, "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with you for he is profitable to me for the ministry." So, they have the pattern where Paul said, "I don't want this guy on the team. Barnabas says, "I'm going to use my gift of exhortation to get this young man back on track, and to move him in the right direction, and to encourage him to do what he should have done in the first place, indeed, but we'll pick it up now." And Mark responded, and Barnabas got him on track. The apostle Paul recognized the results of this gift of exhortation in Barnabas. And Mark became a very valuable associate with the apostle Paul.

This is no small gift. This gift is highly resented by all those who are negative believers. It is deeply appreciated by positive believers. For all those of you who can't be told anything, you don't like the gift of exhortation butting up against you. For those of you who are teachable, and you are not like a mule, you appreciate the gift of exhortation, and you can be taught something. You can be told something. You will listen.

So, the results of negative feeling are that people do not want to be exposed in their sin; in their indolence; in their disorientation; and, in their indifference. They want you to let them alone to live their lives; perform their religious rituals; do their little show-up at church; and, then, "Don't bug me from there." On the other hand, the positive feel that they have been focused upon pursuing the really good things in their lives that God has for them.

Now, the gift of exhortation is particularly important at the point of aiding a believer back into temporal fellowship after an act of sin. I think all of you are well acquainted with our little diagram of concentric circles, to illustrate this outer circle of eternal fellowship that we enter at the point of salvation from which we never leave. But there is this inner circle of temporal fellowship – fellowship in time where we can, through sin, break our walk with God; break our ministry; and, stop the use of our spiritual gifts. Sin takes us out of the inner circle, which is the circle of spirituality, and brings us out here into the outer circle of carnality. Here is where the gift of exaltation is so very valuable. Believers who are out of temporal fellowship need to get back into the inner circle of Christian service, Christian fellowship, and maximum effectiveness in walking with God. That is no small thing. What the devil likes to do is grab Christians who are out there in carnality, and to use them to discredit the cause of Jesus Christ.

**Good Sins and Bad Sins**

All of you should understand that there are no such things as good sins and bad sins. There are no good and bad sin categories with God. All sins violate His absolute righteousness. Now, I know that it is characteristic of Christians to look at themselves and say, "Well, of course I'm a sinner. Yes, I sin." We also tend to look at somebody else and say, "But now there is real sin." And just the way you say it implies that your sins are the nice kind, and that guy's sins over there are the bad kind. So, there are sins, and then there are terrible sins. And the very inflection of your voice will indicate the difference.

There are religious groups like Roman Catholicism that indeed make that distinction. But you don't find that in the Bible. And that is not the result of what God has taught you. That is human reasoning, because with God, everything that violates His absolute standard is equally vile.

Now, having said that, it is true that there are some sins which have more drastic fallout than others, for various reasons. Some sins are more drastic because of the remaining results that are evident. Some young woman, who is unmarried, engages in sexual relations; becomes pregnant; and, has a baby. The results of that act of sin are very evident. And it's not as easy to dismiss it. The fallout is more drastic. But the sin is no worse than somebody who's been stealing paper clips at work.

There is also the fact of the status of the sinner in society. If you are the President of the United States, and you're engaged in some immorality, it has a greater drastic fallout impact because of the status of the individual. But the sin is no worse than anyone else's.

There is also the extent of injury. Some things don't go any further than the individual, but some sins have a circle of fallout. Therefore, it makes them more serious, not because they are more sinful, but because the impact that they have.

Then there is the degree of publicity. Some things become considerably worse simply by the fact that they get public exposure and public portrayal. And indeed, there are some religious groups that have the opinion that that is the way that God says you must handle sin – by a public display in a public portrayal. Well, obviously, that compounds the effect of any particular sin. But it doesn't make it any worse in God's eyes. It just makes the effects worse.

Then, of course, there is the nature of the evil done. People recoil from certain evils more than they do others. And that's why they seem inclined to think that some sins are worse. Somebody that is a child molester, and who abuses a child in some terrible way – that's viewed as a heinous crime, and people recoil with revulsion from something like that, and with indignation against the individual that they wouldn't from somebody who's stealing gas from your car. But don't forget that, with God, the child molester is in no different capacity and no different category of guilt and the guy who is stealing gas out of your tank.

So, there are no good sins, and there are bad sins. There are only sins.

**Sinless Perfection**

The second thing to point out is that there is no Christians on earth who is free from personal sins. While you are on this earth, you will not be free from personal sins. Probably you will not be free even on a daily basis. Satan has hoodwinked some sincere, zealous Christians to pursue and to claim sinless perfection. That is one of Satan's greatest delusions, and one of his greatest victories – people claiming sinless perfection. And I mean, even people who claim that they don't believe in sinless perfection – people who would not claim sinless perfection, but whose actions deny their claim. In effect, they are conveying the impression that they do believe in sinless perfection. If you have never had somebody look you in the eye, eyeball-to-eyeball, and say, "I don't sin anymore, and God has removed the effects of the sin nature in me," you don't know what an experience you've missed. And I have had that several times. Usually when you speak to the husband or the wife of that person, you will get a different opinion on the matter. But some people are not about claiming sinless perfection.

The Bible is clear that that is not true. Turn to 1 John 1:8, for example, to establish that. And if you are sitting next to someone here today who has not brought a Bible, please use your gift of exhortation, or imitate that you have it, by suggesting to them next time that they should bring one. 1 John 1:8: "If we (we Christians) say that we have no sin (singular – nature: we have no sin nature), we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is a self-deception to say that we do not have a sin nature.

Jeremiah 17:9 puts it in a different way: "If the heart is evil (desperately wicked), who can control it?" This is talking about the same thing – that we are born with a nature (a propensity) to sin. You do not have to teach a baby to sin. A baby grows up knowing how to sin because he is a sinner by his birth. The genes inherited from his father gave him a sin nature.

So, every Christian has a sin nature. Therefore, you can never become sinlessly perfect because the sin nature is always operational, as long as you're breathing on this earth. Every Christian, therefore, is guilty of sinning in some degree on a regular basis.

Drop down to 1 John 1:10. These are the personal sins that are referred to here. If we say that we have not sinned (done personal acts of sin), we make him (God) a liar, and His Word is not in us." God says, "You sin. You perform personal acts of guilt all the time.

So, we have two things. We have, on the one hand, a sin nature that is always egging us on. Here it is, this vile thing that we have – the old sin nature. And it has a terrific power, and it's always trying to pull us down toward Satan, and to all of the characteristics of Satan – all that can be dredged up from the evil of our sin nature. And you should know that Jeremiah's statement, in Jeremiah 17:9, indicates that the human nature is totally depraved. It is vile. And you should know that when you become a Christian, your sin nature has not been affected in one way. It's as filthy, and as dirty, and as vile as it ever was. And it is also constantly pulling you down toward all the characteristics of Satan. And for that reason, you are guilty of individual acts of personal sins.

Anybody who denies this (personal acts of sin) is, in effect, trying to discredit God. In James 3:2, we also have this: "For in many things, we all stumble. If any man offend not in a word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." James here is referring particularly to verbal sins. And James says, "There is none of us who is perfect. Anybody who can be guiltless of verbal sins is an absolutely perfect person." And the indication is, of course, that there's no one like that.

Now, there's another thing that James points out in the first chapter here that is very important. There is a classification of sin which is more serious. It's not more or less sinful, but it is more serious because of the fact that it is a trigger point. And that is the sins of the mind. Notice James 1:13: "Let no man say, when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither does He tempt any man." I've often heard people say, "The devil made me do this." I have not heard him say that: "God made me do this." But James is making it clear that God does not tempt you to do sinful things.

Where does the temptation come from? Verse 14: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed." You are tempted by your own sin nature. That's where the temptation comes from. It's what the nature throws up into your mind. He's talking about mental attitude sins. Then, when these lust patterns of the sin nature cycle up to your mind ("have conceived"): "It brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." In the unbeliever, it brings forth eternal death in the lake of fire. In the Christian, it brings forth temporal death in separation from fellowship with God.

So, the worst sins, James says, are these mental attitude sins which trigger the overt (the outside acts). Most sins by those of you sitting here today are probably in the mental attitude type: hatred; envy; vindictiveness; jealousy; covetousness; guilt; lust; bitterness; pride; or, deceit. All these things that are in the mind then trigger terrible external actions. But all of these are in your mind. Remember that Jesus said, "If you hate somebody, you have committed the sin of murder. If you lust after someone, you've committed the sin of fornication and adultery. Mental attitude sins are the worst kind, because they all break temporal fellowship, though outwardly you may appear to be a paragon of virtue. And nobody would think for one moment that you are a sinner. And if someone were to come to you today, and greet you, "Good morning, sinner," you would recoil a little bit, because you do not view yourself as a sinner, but as a nice person. But the Word of God says, "These mental attitude evils are there, and you may outwardly look very impressive, but those who know doctrine also know you."

Now, the born-again person carries the sin nature into the Christian life. And the grace of salvation has done something very wonderful for us, relative to the sin nature – namely that it has broken the absolute domination of the sin nature over us. When we were unbelievers, we were the slaves of that sin nature. We couldn't say "No" to it. We couldn't avoid the thing. It was on us. But once we have entered the family of God, all of that changes. And as we learned in Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man (our man in Adam – the place of death) is crucified with Him (with Jesus), that the body of sin (our place of death in Adam) might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The control of the sin nature has been broken over the believer. You don't have to serve sin anymore. And as we move on in spiritual maturity, learning Bible doctrine, and the power of God enabling the believer to resist sinning, we move up toward spiritual maturity.

What happens is that there is now the power of the new nature. And here it is. And it is constantly pulling the believer upward to the image of Jesus Christ, so that now we have this tension pulling upward toward of Jesus Christ, pulling downward of the sin nature toward Satan. And the power that this is the Word of God, and the filling of the Holy Spirit. When those are in operation, the Christian is picking up speed. You cannot put a satellite out in space unless you can break the drag of gravity. You have to break free of gravity to get it out there. And what God the Holy Spirit is doing is giving us the upward thrust so that we're moving toward the image of Jesus Christ, where we become less and less like Satan. But if you do not stay on the high thrust line, you're going to be dragged down toward Satan by the sin nature. And this is happening in the believer all the time.

In Romans 6:17-18, we read, "But God be thanked that whereas you were the servants of the sin nature, you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from the sin nature you became the servants of righteousness." How could you say it any simpler than that?

Notice Romans 6:12-14: "Let not sin (the sin nature)." When the word "sin" is singular, it is referring to the sin nature: "Let not the sin nature, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it and its lusts; neither yield your members as instruments (the physical members of your body) of righteousness unto the sin nature, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members, as instruments of righteousness unto God. For the sin nature shall not have dominion over you. For you are not under the Law, but under grace. It is the grace of God that has broken you free from the downward gravitational pull of sin nature, and has given you the power and the thrust that is moving upward toward the image of Jesus Christ.

So, I review all this for you in order to remind you that there is always this internal battle of the sin nature pulling the believer down while the new nature is pulling him upward toward the image of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is an unmitigated lie to pretend that this tug of war does not exist, going back and forth, moving upward and downward.

Romans 7:15-17 reiterate this tug of war. Paul says, "For that which I do, I understand not. For what I would, that I do not; but what I hate – that I do." Paul says, "I don't understand it. The sins I hate – those are the things I'm doing. The things I love to do, I'm not doing. What is this pulling me back and forth toward evil when I want to go toward good? "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but the sin nature that dwells in me." Paul understood this tug of war. No Christian therefore can pretend to be sinless. And that's what all this is coming back to. That should be very simple. But there are Christians, as I will show you in a moment, who are acting in a certain way that they are, in fact, claiming sinless perfection, though they would not say that if you were to ask them this. Let's make it clear. We're all starting with the base of sin, and that's where we're moving from.

Philippians 3:12-14, add this to those who pretend to be sinless. Paul says, "Not as though I had already obtained; either were already perfect." And by that he means completely sinless: "But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Jesus Christ; that I can take hold of what Jesus Christ took hold of me for. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (taken hold). But this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The apostle Paul said, "I struggle with the tug of war. Sometimes I'm pulled down. Sometimes I'm pulled up. But I'm always going in that direction. The old Negro spiritual says, "Sometimes I am up, and sometimes I am down, but always I am heaven-bound." That is a basically true principle. Pulling it down; fighting it back up; but I'm always heaven-bound toward the object of the image of Jesus Christ."

Now, the apostle Paul says, "I can forget what's behind me." What? You can forget that murder that you were guilty of, Paul? Yes, it's nothing. Don't even think about it. What? You can think of all those terrible covetous sins you had in your mind? You told us that you could say, "I'm perfect of all the commandments, but when number ten came, it knocked the props out from under me. Suddenly, I saw how shot-through I was with sin in my mind:" "Yep, it's nothing. I never think about it. It's gone." How can Paul say that? Because he understood that the death of Christ has covered all sins. The price has already been paid. The forgiveness is already there. The problem is only: what shall I do when I have let the downward thrust take hold of me, and pull me out of the inner circle? What must I do to get the thrust going back up, and getting me back into the inner circle?

**Confession**

That's where we come to the verse, sandwiched between the two verses we read. 1 John 1:8 says, "You have a sin nature." We read 1 John 1:10, which says, "You are guilty of personal sins." And in between, in 1 John 1:9, is the solution for both: "If we confess our sins (acknowledge what we did), He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." God the Father will forgive us our sins. He does it on the basis of justice, the covering of the blood of Christ, the payment for our sins. Furthermore, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness," because we can't remember and we're not always aware of all the sinful things we do. But he says, "I'll cover the evil that you're not even aware of. I'll cover the sin you have forgotten, if you'll deal with those that you know of." And I need not stress the point that all of us know when we're out of line. All of us know, and the more we know about the Word of God, the clearer we are of this. And the more we are willing to be taught by the Spirit of God, the more sensitive He makes us to the times when we're violating the moral code, and breaking the principles of Scripture.

**Confess to God the Father**

1 John 1:9 says that a sinning saint has a method of returning to temporal fellowship, and the power of the upward thrust for the image of Jesus Christ, and full blessings in his life here on earth, and full rewards of eternity, by acknowledging that he has sinned, and that acknowledgment is made to God the Father. God the Father is always the ultimate object of your sin.

**David**

Today, I read Psalm 51 to you. This was the psalm that King David wrote after a year of resisting – a year of refusing to admit that the adultery with Bathsheba was bad business. It was stepping out of line with God. His fellowship was broken. As you go through that psalm, you'll read the agonies that he went through, night and day, and how he sweated on his bed, and how he just didn't feel good, and how he kept bucking the tiger, and not going to the Father and saying, "That was wrong." Let me read Psalm 51:1-4: "Have mercy upon me, O, God, according to Your lovingkindness, according to the multitudes of Your tender mercies. Blot out my transgressions." David had been, under the system of Judaism, guilty of a capital crime. The only punishment for this was death. He threw himself upon the mercy of God. Where else could he go? So, he says, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I should have done this a year ago, but I'll do it now. I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." Finally, he gets around to 1 John 1:9: "Against You and You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." Oh, yes, there were other people involved. And yes, there was a circle of injury. But the ultimate injury was to God Himself. Therefore, that is where the confession is made. And that's where, in this age of your priesthood, you must deal with this issue: "Against You and You only have I sinned (done this evil) in Your sight, that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge."

I should also point out to you that, in verse 11, David pleads, "Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me." Some ignorant Christians pray that prayer today. You cannot have the Holy Spirit taken from you in the age of the church. In the age that David lived, you could lose the Holy Spirit, who was given to him for special power and for special leadership, and it was an appropriate prayer. But verse 12 is an appropriate prayer for the believer today: "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

**Public Confession**

So, acknowledgment of the sin is the first step. Public confession of one's personal sins is purely a satanic device, not a biblical device. It was invented by the devil in order to humiliate the Lord Jesus Christ, and to ridicule the truth of biblical Christianity. Doctrinally ignorant Christians fall into the trap of public confession of their sins. They are so insensitive to the needs of other people that they don't mind standing up before groups and spewing their personal sewage and garbage of their personal sins that nobody else knows about. It's between them and God, and they want to get up and let everybody else know it. And even if everybody else knew that there was something out of line, for them to stand up and dignify it, and to expose the rest of us to their personal evil, so that we have to bear the burden, is totally insensitive to the needs of other Christians, and totally outside of the Word of God. It is a purely satanic human viewpoint action. No knowledgeable spirit-led Christian stands up in front of other people and confesses his sins to them. That is a gross and terrible evil, and it exposes the Word of God to ridicule. It exposes the person of Jesus Christ to ridicule.

However, the world loves to jump upon that. That is because public confession implies one very serious error. Public confession is telling us that you are sinlessly perfect. Public confession tells us that you have arrived at sinless perfection, because if that were not the truth, we should have been hearing from you quite frequently – just about every Sunday we should have heard you asking for opportunity to tell us about all those mental attitude sins. Yes, I know what you've been thinking about me. The Lord tells me what some of you have said about me. But you haven't gotten up and told the rest of them what you think about me. You've been keeping that all to yourself, and you thought: "Lord, Dr. Danish was really not the fink that I said he was. And I'm sorry. He is what he is – a super person." And you finally got yourself straightened out. But you didn't stand up and tell us.

However, when you haven't been doing that, and, suddenly, you say, "Now I have a sin that I want to confess," I have to ask: "Why this one? Is this the first one?" I used to always raise a groan out of my kids in class when I taught in the academy. When I'd make a mistake, I'd say, "That's the first mistake I ever made my life. I've ruined my record." And they would howl in protest because they didn't believe me. But what you're telling us is that you have never sinned until now. And because when you sinned, you make public confession – you've stood up now, you've spewed it all out on us. So, we're wiping off your sewage and your garbage. The Bible says, "Be innocent relative to evil. Be experienced in good. Do not learn evil by experience. But learn good." And the Bible says, "It is a shame even to speak about those things which they do in private." You don't think that's true? That's what the word of God says. What does it say that? It's because the less said about that, the better. It doesn't help you. It's not required of God. And it certainly doesn't help the rest of the people who must hear you.

Violation, of course, of a position of trust through selfish indulgence in sin may require a public apology within the circle of those who know, and who have been affected. When you are in a position of public trust, and when you are in a position of public leadership and influence, and there is that sin that has greater impact because of the things I've listened to previously, an apology may be in order, but not on TV. It should be in intense privacy of those who have been affected, so that the circle of confession is restricted to the circle of injury. That's God's way. And the circle of apology is restricted to the circle of injury.

Once confession to God the Father has been made, the issue is closed with God, and private accommodations are made on the human level, as you feel are necessary, and the Spirit of God will lead you to do that, to those who have been affected.

The Christian with the spiritual gift of exhortation can be an enormous help in alerting a believer, not only to a sinful condition, but in helping that believer to be restored to spirituality, and to be restored to God service. And God help the poor slob who falls into the hand of some arrogant preacher who does not understand the Word of God, but who sees an opportunity to make some public mileage out of somebody's tragic sin, and to make some notoriety; to raise some waves; to get some interest; to feed the sin nature of other believers; and, cause him to do things that only create greater injury for himself and other people, rather than do with the Word of God says: "Get it straightened out; forget it; and, go on.

The person with the gift of exhortation who understands God's procedures in dealing with sin is a very valuable person in your life.

I point you to James 5:19-20, which say, "Brethren, of any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him (one change his mind), let him know that he who changes the mind of the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul (shall save a life, is what it means) from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Yes, keep on sinning. The person with the gift of expectation says, "I should alert you: Keep on with this sinning, and keep on with this attitude on your part, and God may even take your life. But change. And if you will change, God says, 'You'll cover a multitude of sins that he's been guilty of, and you will save a life.'"

So, this is what the gift of exhortation does – the believer, exhorting and assisting. However, he has to recognize that he is a fellow sinner who, at that point, is in temporal fellowship – at that point, when you go to help somebody. And this is not only for those of you with the gift of expectation. You can do a super job. But all believers are in a position to help each other. But when you help somebody who is sinning, who has fallen into a sin, and it has had bad repercussions, and you're helping him get back on his feet, which is what you should do, be careful to remember that you're doing it as another sinner.

Galatians 6:1 says this: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual (who are here in the inner circle at that point in time, with all known sins confessed, and guided by the Spirit of God), you who are spiritual restore such one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." So, if, at a certain point, you're out of fellowship, then keep your mouth shut, and stay out of the person's business. You're not equipped to help them. Unfortunately, those who are out of fellowship, if they're religious leaders, don't have enough sense to keep their mouths shut, to be qualified, not to deal with that subject. The Word of God says, "When you are a spiritual Christian, then you help this person get on his feet. And when you do, do it scared stiff, knowing that you might be the next person for the very sin that has brought the bad repercussions in this person's life. You can do it too. And that's what I meant when I said to you earlier, "The sin nature is totally depraved. It's not any different in you than anyone else. It's the bottom of the barrel, and everything that shocks you in somebody else, under the right circumstances, you would be able to do. You have the encouragement to do that.

**Worms**

Galatians 6:1 is a serious admonition. What it is telling us is that the exhorter should understand that he is acting as one worm who is up, trying to help another worm who is down. Write that down. The exhorter is one worm who is up at that particular point, trying to help another one who is down at that particular point. It is one woman who is in fellowship, helping another worm who is out of fellowship. But they're both worms. And if you see them in the sunlight, you'll see the dirt going through them. That's how worms are. The next time you find a worm, cut him open, and that's what you'll find.

The confessed sinner then is restored. He is to be received in full fellowship. He has been restored by God the Father. He has been restored by the Holy Spirit. He's not to be treated as an outcast, as if he had no return to full privileges. Now whether he can continue doing what he's been doing before is up to God, and it is up to the people he's dealing with, and it is up to the surrounding circumstances. All of those things will affect that. But it is his business, and it is God's business.

The gift of expectation does not go around, pussyfooting around here, trying to see which of you are out of line, and which of you are fooling around. But when it comes into contact with a problem of sin, some of you have a special capacity to be a gentle exhorter to move a person out of the bad patterns, and into the good patterns. But when you do it, God help you if you do it as one who has not needed to admit to yourself that you too are guilty. And if you tell somebody to get up there in public, and confess their sins, when you have not been doing that on a regular basis yourself, you are a travesty and a blasphemy in the face of God. And you've seen it portrayed on public television, and the people of God, who understand the God of grace, recoil in horror, and want to reach up there, and grab those guys by the throat, and shake them like rag dolls, and beat some sense into their heads. But they are too stupid, and too empty-headed, and too arrogant to be able to be taught anything.

The Word of God says that there's always a way back, and when God forgives, He forgets. And what your future is relative to human beings is in His hands. And you don't mention it again. You don't think of it again. You don't light a new sin from a guilt complex over remembering an old one. God forgets it, and you forget it, and you treat the person in full standing in Christian fellowship.

The apostle Paul founded the church at Corinth, which was a church that had a lot of local sin, and a lot of loose living. He found a thing that he said shocked him because it's the thing that even the pagans didn't do. They had a member in the church who was carrying on an affair with his stepmother – a case of incest with his stepmother. The members knew about it, and they didn't do anything about it. They didn't care about it, and they didn't speak up. There was nobody exhorting against this evil. And this person must be removed from the circle of fellowship until this thing is corrected. The apostle Paul says, "I can't believe that you people permitted that sort of thing to go. And I am now commanding you, as an apostle, that you take action against that. To their credit, they did. And to the credit of the individual, there was total repentance, and straightening out of the problem, and the discontinuance of the practice.

Paul referred to this in 2 Corinthians 2:6-8. Concerning this man, he says, "All right, sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted by the many. You withdrew fellowship from him. He was permitted to come to the service. He was not permitted to participate in the Lord's Supper. He was not permitted to be in a place of ministry. And that was sufficient punishment. So, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such one should be swallowed up with much sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you that you would confirm your love toward him."

Then add to that verse 11, where Paul says, "The reason for this (receiving this person in full fellowship), less Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." And what you have seen in public display is Satan getting an advantage of Christians who are ignorant of his devices, and who did not know how to handle the fact that all of us have a sin nature, and all of us are guilty of sin, and all of us act as our own priest, and deal with this matter before God, and straighten it out. And thank God for those of you who have the gift of exhortation to help us along the way, as individual believers, to get back on track. And thank God for those of you who, as believers, understand that once you are back on track, all as well with God and you. God is in His heaven, and He's operating, and you, on this earth, should be operating equally well. Thank God for the gift of exhortation in its ministry among us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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