

Preach, Exhort, Rebuke

This article is an examination of several New Testament ideas related to various types of teaching. In particular, we are looking at several English words, and their Greek sources, for information about how Bible teaching is to be used in different contexts.

Speak: from *laleo* (**laleo**)

Preach: from *khrusso* (**keiruso**)

Teach: from *didasko* (**didasko**)

Exhort: from *parakaleo* (**parakaleo**)

Reprove and Rebuke: from *elegko* (**elegko**) and *epitimao* (**epitimao**)

These words refer to differences in teaching methods which are applied to various requirements for spiritual training and discipline.

Preaching and teaching refer to the exposition of Bible doctrine principles which a pastor-teacher presents to a congregation as a group.

Exhortation is the communicated by urging and encouraging of a local church body which is designed to lead them to conduct worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Exhortation plays an important part in church life, and many examples are found in the New Testament in the ministries of the apostles.

Rebuke is a type of teaching used when individual or congregational discipline are necessary, when it is necessary to speak with some force, or even confrontationally, in order to correct some serious problem affecting the local body. Most instances of one person's rebuking another person are shown to be unjustified; but brotherly correction is sometimes necessary.

Reproof is used to correct or criticize someone with the intent of correcting some fault, and it is linked with the ideas of discipline and instruction.

Exposition of Titus 2:15

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

"These things" refers to the sound doctrine which Titus was commanded to speak. And the rest of chapter 2 provides illustrations of the type of teaching that is to be done.

"**speak**" the present active imperative of (**laleo**).

This is a continuous action imperative of the Greek verb. Titus's orders are to keep on communicating Bible truth in order to straighten out the problems on Crete. The content of his teaching is to be "these things".

In fact, these three verbs are all imperatives, commands to speak, exhort, rebuke.

"**exhort**", (**parakaleo**) "to comfort; to admonish"

Here is one of the key words of the Christian experience. The Holy Spirit is called the Paraclete, because He comforts, and He admonishes and convicts of sin.

Christians are commanded to "exhort" one another. Sometimes that calls for a comforting ministry, and sometimes it calls for straight talk.

In this verse, it is the meaning "admonish" that is meant. The Greek scholars say that this is true whenever the word (**parakaleo**) is followed by (**elegko**) "rebuke", as it is here.

"**rebuke**", (**elegko**), "to rebuke"

These are three approaches to making one point of doctrine.

1. There are several types of Christian. Some learn easily through teaching and respond with faith as each principle is laid down.
2. Other require bracing, the pointed example, the warning, the admonishment.

3. A few require serious rebuke, amounting to a verbal slap to wake them up.

The sense of this verse is that, if speaking doesn't get the idea across to the listeners, then move up to admonishment. And remembering that some of the people Titus is dealing with are "gainsayers", he may have to increase the intensity to the point of offering "rebuke".

Now this third method is not necessarily desirable, and it is the slow, painful method of learning. But it is necessary in some cases, especially with some believers who are already indoctrinated in some system of legalism or emotionalism.

But we see in Titus 3:10,11 that the "heretic", who does not respond to any teaching, must be "rejected", so rebuke is not too strong a treatment if the alternative is to be made to leave the congregation.

Remember that it is Titus who is being commanded to "speak, exhort, rebuke".

It takes a very discerning and advanced believer to know how to admonish or rebuke properly. It takes experience and training, or other believers can be blown out of the water by misguided "admonishment". When a novice believer tries to "rebuke" someone, it is often no more than self-righteous criticism.

"with all authority"

Titus's authority comes from God, so he can teach with dogmatic authority.

"let no man despise thee."

The verb here is (**periphrono**), literally "to think around". Combined with the negative the meaning becomes "disregard", or "don't let anyone disregard or reject what you are teaching with all authority.

This refers to anyone in the congregation. It would seem that the teacher would find it impossible to obey this command, because there is no way he can control the volition of all the believers in his church. While the objective of the communication is to allow the Word to

motivate the volition of the Christians, the pastor does not have a key to turn a person's volition on or off.

Anyone who teaches the Word of God must be as well prepared as possible and be able to teach authoritatively. Authority, or regard, or respect, is not a mantle one can put on. It is not a title that can be assumed.

People will listen and respond to the Word of God accurately and authoritatively taught, because it *is* the Word of God, not the ideas of men.

That is why the emphasis in Titus is on "sound doctrine", "preaching", so that the teacher can "exhort and convince the gainsayers". It is the Word of God that is convincing, not the opinions, ideas, or sermonizing of someone who just wants to hold an audience.

Preaching (keirugma)

The word "preach" is found in many places in the New Testament (KJV); however, it has been translated from several different Greek words. For example, in 1 Cor. 1:17, the phrase "preach the Gospel" comes from *eujaggelizw* (**euangelidzo**); while in 1:18 we see the phrase "the preaching of the cross", which is *ὁ λόγος γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ*. You can see that the translators took some liberties with their use of the word "preach".

The Greek verb *khrussw* (**keiruso**) was commonly used in ancient times to refer to public proclamation or public teaching, and there are many NT verses where it is found. A complete listing can be found in a Greek concordance.

The noun *κηρῦξ* (**keirux**) refers to the "proclaimer; publisher; messenger" who is making the proclamation. Thus,

1 Tim. 2:7, "Whereunto I (Paul) am ordained a preacher (**keirux**), and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." (Likewise in 2 Tim. 1:11)

In 2 Pet. 2:5, Abraham is called a “preacher (**keirux**) of righteousness”.

The word **keirux** was used in several ways in ancient times. The **keirux** was a “publisher”, or “herald”, in the sense that he would broadcast important news to townspeople. The person making official proclamations or announcements to the public was called **keirux**, a sort of town crier.

A man assigned to carry messages between enemies on a battlefield was also called **keirux**.

The message of the **keirux** is the **κηρυγμα** (**keirugma**). The **keirugma** is what was given to the **keirux** to proclaim. The originator of the message may have been a battlefield officer or a public official.

In the Bible, the **keirux** is the preacher, the **keirugma** is his message, and **keiruso** is the act of preaching.

The English word “preaching” would be correct if it were used in its primary etymological sense of “proclaiming before the public”, the meaning which is derived from the Latin, *praedicere*. However, the modern use of “delivering a moral discourse or religious message of any kind and in any manner” does not give the meaning of **keirugma**. There is no finger-pointing or arm waving in **keirugma**.

1. The emphasis of **keirugma** is on the message. Someone in authority, who has something to communicate, gives the message to a messenger, the **keirux**, preacher, who passes the information on to someone else, usually in a public setting. It is expected that there will be attentive hearers who will be receptive to the message and who expect to derive some benefit from the message.
2. The messenger does not proclaim his own viewpoint, his own political opinions, his own grievances. The message is another person's communication. The public proclamation is not the platform for him to expound his own theories, to support his

side in a debate, talk about his own projects, or get things off his chest. The **keirux** does not call the people together for an important proclamation, then, instead, lecture them on some private matter not associated with the real message.

3. The Bible teacher gets his **keirugma** from God Himself, as revealed in the Word of God. Correct preaching is done by making the message clear to the people who are listening to the proclamation. Public teaching protects the privacy of the believer. Confining himself to the message, the preacher does not unduly influence the listeners with personality dynamics or bullying techniques. The listener can accept or reject the message in private.

Exhortation (**parakleisis**)

from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

The NT word for “exhort” is **parakaléō**, a word with various translations for its 103 uses in the NT (fifty-four in the writings of Paul). It can mean either “call” in the sense of “summon,” “invite,” “address,” or “speak to” someone, the meaning then being dependent upon the nature of the call. This second sense is predominant in the NT with **parakaléō** meaning not only “exhort,” but also “request” and “comfort.”

When the term is used for “exhorting,” it refers to that urging and encouraging addressed to those of the community of faith which is “designed to lead them to conduct worthy of the Gospel” (1 Thess. 4:1,10). It is more than just an appeal to morality, inasmuch as it has for its basis and presupposition the action of God in Jesus Christ for salvation.

The acceptance of this offer of grace involves obligations for life and conduct. Mutual exhortation in the community is desired also by the author of Hebrews (3:13). While some passages indicate no sharp, polemical, or critical sides to the exhortations (1 Thess. 3:2), other passages have surrounding terms and contexts that make it clear just how serious and

urgent the exhorting is to be (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:12; 1 Pet. 5:1).

That this exhorting played an important part in the life of the early Church is seen by the use of the word *para*, meaning “exhortation.” In Pisidian Antioch the rulers of the synagogue asked Paul and Barnabas if they had any “word of exhortation” for the congregation (Acts 13:15). The remarks that follow provide an example of the “word of exhortation,” which was probably “a synagogue expression for the sermon which followed the Scripture lessons” (Bruce, Acts, p. 261; cf. 1 Tim. 4:13). This is the same expression used by the author of Hebrews to describe the book’s literary character (13:22), thus making it a kind of “homily in written form” (Bruce, Hebrews, p. 413). The encouraging and comforting aspects of an “exhortation” are seen in the rejoicing of the congregation of Antioch when they received the letter from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:31) and in the words of wisdom of Prov. 3:11f quoted in He. 12:5f.

Bible references to exhortation (King James Version)

Acts 2:40. And with many other words did he testify and **exhort** saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Acts 27:22. And now I **exhort** you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship.

2 Cor. 9:5. There I thought it necessary to **exhort** the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before hand your bounty, whereof you had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

1 Thess. 4:1, Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and **exhort** you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us how you ought to talk and to please God, so you would abound more and more.

1 Thess. 5:14. Now we **exhort** you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the

feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

2 Thess. 3:12. Now them that are such we command and **exhort** by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

1 Tim. 2:1. I **exhort** therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.

1 Tim. 6:2. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and **exhort**.

2 Tim. 4:2. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort** with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Titus 1:9. Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to **exhort** and convince the gainsayers.

Titus 2:6. Young men likewise **exhort** to be sober minded.

Titus 2:9. **Exhort** servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again.

Rebuke (*elegko*)

Rebuke is the task of convincing people to repent (to re-think a viewpoint) and to decide in favor of God’s will in a matter.

The Greek meanings of the word are:

- (1) to disgrace; to put to shame; to dishonor
- (2) to convince, to refute, to disprove, to supply truth, to give evidence.
- (3) to examine, to question, to prove or attest.

Examples of Rebuking

Here is a case of one believer rebuking another believer. Note the steps that must occur before a matter is made public.

Matthew 18:15-17. Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hear you, you hast gained your brother.

But if he will not hear *you*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto you as a heathen man and a publican.

Then, John the Baptist rebuke Herod.

Luke 3:19. But Herod the tetrarch, being **reproved** by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

Accusing Jews were convicted by their own consciences.

John 8:9. And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

Sometimes rebuke is the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7-11. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

The value of rebuke in witnessing and teaching.

1 Cor. 14:20-25. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye

children, but in understanding be men.

In the law it is written, With *men of other* tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or *one* unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

Rebuke to correct a problem.

1 Tim 5:20. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

The Content of the Rebuke is Bible doctrine.

John 3:20,21. For every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprove.

But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

READ Ephesians 5:8-15

2 Tim. 4:2. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Principles of Rebuke

The objective is to convince a reasonable person.

There must be rapport; an open teaching or witnessing situation.

There must be no "corrupt communication".

Eph. 4:29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.

There must be no name calling, bullying, yelling and pounding.

Titus 1:9, That he may be able by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers.

Bible doctrine will not be received by someone who is defensive, angry, embarrassed. **Elegko** is not a chewing out; it is a presentation of doctrine.

Severe Rebuke (**epitimaō**)

The New Testament maintains very heavy restrictions on rebuke, forbidding rebuke except as brotherly correction, and teaching effective threatening and reproof as the prerogative of God and Christ alone.

It is only with restriction that **epitimaō** is used of human threats and reproofs. Thus when Jacob rebukes Joseph because of his presumptuous dreams, we see later that the rebuke is not justified.

Genesis 37:10. And he told *it* to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

The servants of Boaz are tempted to reprove the foreign gleaner, but their master forbids it.

Ruth 2:16. And let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not.

If men have any right of **epitimaō** among themselves, it can only be in terms of judicial, paternal or fraternal correction. However, we should take to heart the reproofs of the wise.

Prov. 17:10. A reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool.

The word **epitimaō** is used for rebuke when the disciples try to drive the mother away with severe words; but they are over the top with their criticism, as Jesus admonishes them.

Mark 10:13,14. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*.

But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Peter attempted (**epitimaō**) to turn the Lord from his path, but Jesus resisted this with His own (**epitimaō**).

Mark 8:32,33. And he spoke that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get behind me, Satan: for you savor not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

There is one case where strong rebuke is allowed to go unchallenged. This is the case of the thief on the cross; and the rebuke is not from a superior position, but from a spirit of humility.

Luke 23:39,40. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If you be Christ, save yourself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?