

A Scriptural Analysis of Paraenesis

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The chief premise of this analysis is that Paul's epistles are distinctly addressed to members of the Body of Christ, as its message (Gospel) is specific in the sense of the conveyance of God's methodology in the application of Grace. This entails the Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God in election to salvation as well as God being the exclusive cause of all that can be properly extracted from the lives of His elect. It is in this light that the language and style of Paul's epistles are couched. More specifically, the structures of the conveyances exude:

- 1). **The Indicative**. The composition of factual information that delineates God's will, plan and purpose in establishing the son positioning of selected ones according to His good pleasure in the eternal Heavenly sphere.
- 2). **The Imperative**. God's mode for addressing the manifestation of His elect in identification with their Heavenly position in the temporary Earthly sphere.

Thus the composition of Paul's epistles engender the conveyance of eternal facts with the view of urging, encouraging and advising through exhortation as God's means and methodology of causing (according to His purpose) certain ones to conform identification-wise to the new creation in Christ Jesus. In this sense, an analyzation of the texts of Paul's epistles tracks the institution of eternal facts, whose design and aim are to modify the recipients' behavior, as the persuasive features are not conditions in the legalistic sense of the Mosaic Law but are clothed in the knowledge of the institution of goals that only the Holy spirit can manifest in the hearts of God's people. On the one hand, the style and rhetorical techniques of each letter reveals and advances the perfection of Christ as the superior being whom the child of God should accept and emulate. On the other hand, a rhetorical analysis yield derivative answers as to how and why God has designed provisions for the progression of the indicative to the imperative, as He works His will severally in the live of His elect.

Thus the exhortation spectrum is not implying that the child of God within oneself has the ability to respond but only that this is God's devised methodology of employing the exhibition of His character in ones life, as he alone is able to do this. An array of methodologies are debated and applied on the rhetorical interpretation of the characteristic of revealing more clearly how the scriptures attempt to persuade their audiences. In the end they provide information about the contents of the texts and more importantly they account for the rhetorical strategies used therein. This is very useful in the rhetorical analysis of the exhortations.

This brings into view a very probing question, i.e., what is the prevailing message that should be adhered to by those who are members of the Body of Christ? The issue is properly addressed by introducing the Theological term “Paraenesis.” In Acts 27:22, the root Greek word *παραινώ* (**pah•reh•no**) rendered “advise” or “urge,” form the basis of *παραεισεις* (**pah•rah•neh•sis**), which is transliterated paraenesis (pa-RAIN-e-sis) in the English language. Thus paraenesis is defined as the dissemination of advice, exhortation and/or recommendation. The paraenetic style of communicating is that which exudes Paraenesis, i.e., advising one to pursue or avoid something. Paraenesis is divided into two parts, i.e., persuasion and dissuasion. The directives of the writings of the Apostle Paul’s epistles to the Body of Christ identify three basic structures that are commonly found in Greek scripting. These basic structures are prescript, body and conclusion. In addition, the modification of this basic form engenders two concomitant segments, i.e., thanksgiving and exhortations, thus forming the complete gamut of Paraenesis.

There is a lack of consensus in most Theological circles concerning the line of demarcation between formal parts as some proponents espouse a wider view of paraenesis than others. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to have a working definition of paraenesis according to the dictates of proper bible exegesis. This is necessary because of the wide spectrum of usages assigned to commenting on paraenesis, as some view it as either building on or correcting disconnected sentences that cannot be interpreted as a connected discourse, which in effect treats the context of most scriptures in a fragmented manner. The thinking is, since there is a lack of coherence, there is also a lack of definite context. This is partially due to variances in the apportionment of the scriptures into chapters and verses but the dominant contribution is the notion that the majority writings of the Bible are for the most part, open to “free flow” commentary. The position of those that hold this view is that it is too difficult to distill from them any gleanings that are void of topical insertions, which is quite certainly their view concerning Paul’s intended conveyances.

The major malfunction that lends to such flawed conceptions of conveyances is mostly attributed to improperly contrived exegesis. Investigation of this would yield: (1) literary analysis based solely on formal, stylistic, and linguistic features and (2) the misapplication of parallels as well as antecedents in Jewish and Hellenistic sources. While certain sections of the Gospel of Grace may address everyday affairs, the majority writings are not for the most part intended to relate particularly to present life induced situations, in that they basically address eternal affairs. Thus as the results of gleanings drawn from improper Bible exegesis, most exhortations do indeed seem to exist in virtual isolation and the question must be raised whether one may select such an exhortation and interpret and preach it without any concern for its literary context. But the truth is, paraenesis must not exist as unrelated moral maxims. In this sense, in order to bring clarity to the definition of paraenesis; isolated exhortations can not possible express any relationship to the context as such context of a paraenetic section is without question interconnected to the larger literary situation to which it is associated. Unfortunately, this is the process by which most unscriptural slogans have evolved.

Properly contextualized doctrinal scriptures entail distinctions that do contain nuances of meaning and at times are fully interchangeable in their usage in concomitant writings. Paraenesis can also exude a series of precepts, which will serve as a guide for compiling exhortations, in effect depicting a particular way of peripatetic (child of God's daily walk) as one's own and instructions on how to live, which are devised to shape the future directions or actions of the child of God. In this light the question may be asked, what is the right format for exhortation? The answer is; just as there are specific applications for refutation and instruction, there is the unique style of display, which evinces a mode for exhortation that dominantly addresses the issues from the eternal, heavenly viewpoint. Properly invoked exegesis eliminates all focusing on individuals, while the warring inconsistency by which improperly contrived exegesis flounders about, as it concentrates mainly on anything that the flesh may truly desire.

The desires of depraved humanity do not covet the things that conduce to true happiness in that the flesh is always looking for them in the wrong places. There is nothing more effective in the correct style of exhortation than when the speaker makes clear to his audience that earthly things have no eternal value. It places the exhorter in the position of highlighting the contradictions, which cause believers to err in their prioritized misapplications. This defines God's designed process for clearly bringing such to the point of addressing the fact that one should not be prioritizing one's own agenda and at the same time injects effective input both in encouragement (*προτρεψάμενο*) and refutation (*ἔλεγκτικός*). The idea operation is exemplified as one internalizes the correct presentation of the message that reveals the err of one's actions thus inducing corrective measures (through the workings of the Holy Spirit) that are testimonies of God in causing such to abandon what one is doing contrary to the directive for faithful service in the ministry.

The basic analysis of the literary and nonliterary features of paraenesis found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, defines its usages as a style of exhortation utilized to influence conduct through the teaching of things not previously internalized. Paraenesis that seeks to modify the conduct of the messages' recipients identifies the following features:

- (1) Paraenesis heavily relies upon its recipient's comprehension of doctrinal precepts consisting primarily of material that is scripturally (unoriginal) confined to the writings of the general context of the epistle.
- (2) Paraenesis involves the general applicability of these doctrinal precepts presented in the formulation of the desired response.
- (3) Paraenesis is in this sense addressed to those possessed of the Spirit of God abiding within.
- (4) Paraenesis often employs examples of God's people who are the recipients of the virtues, which are being advocated.

(5) Paraenesis assumes a close personal relationship between the author (God) and the recipients of the epistles, which would set the tone and justify the advice given therein.

Thus, paraenesis tends to brevity (conciseness) and to a simple succession of imperatival units. Moreover, it is concerned with intimate, personal counsel on moral and spiritual issues engendering even down-to-earth practical advice as part of the education of the recipient. It is the exclusive mode of teaching appropriately given only by the more spiritually informed teacher on matters of which such one has some experimental knowledge. Its dominant characteristic is its adherence to the godly wisdom, passed on from generation to generation and foundationally embodied in the spiritual doctrines of which Paul speaks. There are basically three types of paraenesis: (1) a prolonged exhortation or extended discourse on a particular theme (e.g., the Body of Christ, the Church), (2) lists of vices and virtues of which Paul is so adept at outlining in the mode of goals and (3) interpretational moral maxims (fundamental principles) compiled together in a harmonically arranged array. The effectiveness of these arrays of exhortations are held together by their similarity in form and the corroborating sources carried over from one context of scripture to another (e.g., correlatives statements found in several writings).

It is very important to garner the recognition that isolated moral maxims as found in the pastoral sectors of Paul's epistles bring the dimension of literary unity to these exhortations. This is the first step to correct the use of qualifiers such as "isolated" or "unrelated." These sectors in some instances depict brief and pithy admonitions on a variety of certain directives, as unity is found in the common subject matter. This unity is often strengthened by the use of a recurring word which binds the other elements together but as a collective unit conveys sound advice to the peripatetic aspect of the child of God. Such is deemed a strengthening of the thesis by identifying a recognizable form. This type format contains the following elements: (1) an injunction urging that a certain course of behavior be followed or avoided, (2) a reason for the injunction, and (3) a discussion of the logical or practical consequences of the behavior. This is followed by: (4) an analogous situation to the one being discussed and (5) a refutation of a contrary way of thinking or acting.

Constructive Hermeneutic (strict scriptural interpretation) is the forum, which provides enabling possibilities for preaching paraenesis. The forum of traditional or "rational" Homiletics (topical sermon outlining) entails structuring that fail in the communicative stream of the spiritual unseen sphere. In the conveyance of the Gospel of the Grace of God, popular so-called "point-making," "situational" and "conversational" sermons miss the power of the original intended thought flow. To reduce the paraenesis to a single point or a secession of points renders such as propositional truth, frustrating its intentional force. Although first impressions may lead one to surmise that this mode of delivery is well suited for preaching paraenesis, it altogether fails to follow the dictates of contextual, grammatical and historical contexts. True language events in the scriptures, are mostly historical in nature (the eternal realm) that cannot be stripped from the context. The historical form is not accidental and neither is the setting coincidental.

"What is meant" and "how it functions" must be the first steps considered before focusing on "what it means."

Spiritually applied analytical exegesis (contextual, grammatical and historical) is preferred over traditionally contrived hermeneutics (topical interpreting) and certainly before homiletics (topical structuring). Without this, the language event becomes only a creation of the exegete. Also, without this thorough analysis, the interpreter will only yield theological utterances or moral demands that may or may not be equal to the original meaning or intent of the context. In addition, modern settings will often interfere and prejudice interpretation by clouding the original meaning of the text. It is very important to understand that any incorrect application of contextually basically opens the doors for a host of interpretations. The contextual, grammatical and historical setting places boundaries, gives directions and provides the means to closing the carnal (physical and natural) bridge. This critical methodology documents and maintains spiritually analytical exegesis as the best alternative to carnally interpreting the scriptures.

Historical criticism respects the historical gap (dispensation) and uses a method to determine as precisely as possible the significance of the words for the applicable covenant assignment. This places the scriptural interpretation into the domain of the Grace Gospel (covenant or contract) such that the impact of the message is made relevant to its intended recipients, i.e., members of the Body of Christ, the Church. The fundamental rule of correct Scriptural exegesis is that the interpreter must be obedient to the context itself, that is, he or she must allow the texts to determine their interpretation ----- in other words, **"allow the text to do the talking."** The true servant of God must be diligent in recognizing that history, currents situations and exegesis are by no means the same: history tries to reconstruct the past, currents situation attempts to identify the occurrences of the present, while spiritually analytical exegesis unabashedly attempts to unfold the meaning of the text.

It is apparent that the communicative language of the 21st century has its own characteristics. In this light, the greatest challenge to those who minister the Gospel of Grace is the developmental learning of its constituency to walk progressively in the knowledge of the covenant of the Grace Contract. The process of God instilling such in the lives of selected ones, functions according to the Holy Spirit's purpose concerning His elect. The Apostle Paul speaks to this as he states (Greek Text), "Except to each as the Lord has distributed, as God has called each, so let him walk; and so I command in all the churches" (I Corinthians 7:17). Also Paul's expression of this goal is exemplified in his exhortation to the church in Colossae wherein he states, "As therefore you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6). It is in this sense that paraenesis is employed in internalizing the Word of God according to the spectrum of spiritual discernment in the vein of the invisible sphere of eternity that is invested in the son-positioned abode of the Glorious Body of Christ, the Church.

In view of this, there should be no non-scripturally inspired conceptions or suggestive allusions (earthly points of reference) relied upon to reach the hearer. The scriptures are

not to be construed as traditional passages that have been passed down through the generations but such should be gleaned from analytically and spiritually inspired exegesis. In this sense, the pulpit must be faithful to communicate the thought impartment of eternally based language events according to the Holy Spirit's intended conveyance. Thus in light of this, scripturally correct paraenesis functions within the operational mode of goals and challenges as components of God's causative process for scriptural growth and development. This alone is the task of scriptural expositions in the epistles of Paul.

Here questions can be raised historically speaking; as to how did the language events of the covenant writings of other dispensations affect the original hearers of those eras? What were the points of reference that touched their lives? Weren't even the conveyances of the preaching and teaching our Lord Jesus Christ mostly engrossed in things that His addressees could comprehend? The simple reply is that the gospels and covenant information of all other dispensations are focused in the natural realm of things that are physically related to in the earthly sphere. In this view, those who utilize these aspects of teaching and preaching seek to imitate events in the lives of present-day believers and minister on the premise that through these means, the Word of God comes alive and the change of improved existence is possible. It is thought that through the means of relating through physical familiarity, the listener moves from unbelief to faith, as they consider this to be the correct mode of paraenetic teaching and preaching that accomplishes godly socialization functioning.

To many this may seem to be the correct assessment in the operation of the world's system but it is in no way plausible in the unseen spiritual vein of the eternal heavenly sphere. Here some will inquire as to how can the modern day preacher and teacher be expected to create the same awareness of a direct and personal message if the exhortation focuses almost exclusively on abstract matters? Although imitating some human logic and form of the paraenetic text may be helpful in corroboration as Jesus did in His masterful use of parables. But the Grace Minister must be diligent in the utilization of paradigms, as such could result in great latitude to the homiletical craft that gives ample opportunity to those seeking the dynamic equivalent of the allurements of fleshly gratification.

Sometimes other sermonic forms or so-called logical approaches may in a seemingly relevant manner speak to a particular congregation more effectively but the correct assessment of such is gauged by whether it was communicated without reshaping the scriptural context of the message. Ministers of the Gospel of the Grace of God should be committed to rendering the function of paraenesis as it contributes to the ongoing argument of the text in mind so the effect is not lost in the translational mode of application. Those who espouse various aspects of social/political and philosophical ministering foist the idea that the dynamic equivalent of the language event engenders that, which is needed to bridge the economic-cultural barrier. The crux of this cogitation is that such is the dynamics that can be felt by the modern audience; therefore the topical aim, theme and relevance of the text should influence the aim, theme, and relevance of the sermon.

This constitutes a seriously flawed conception of teaching and preaching in that true and original dynamics engenders the text itself, which speaks with the greatest of authority because of the life, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In effect, the church (Body of Christ) confesses its faith that these are its scriptures for life and doctrine. Today the relevant minister of the gospel in the Grace Dispensation is a corroborating witness to that authority. Scripturally understood, contextualized paraenesis is even more demanding, admonishing, rebuking, encouraging and promising than when it is laden with the conditions of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Thus when considering the grace aspects of paraenesis; pathos (compassion), ethos (ethics of moral characteristics) and logos (identity) are all involved in the text of the language event.

As noted earlier, paraenesis is written by one (the Holy Spirit) who has an eternal relationship with the audience already and has decreed all situations of which He writes. The content of the paraenetic section is bound to the message that its audience is caused to internalize (spiritually receive and accept). The exhortation is designed for the dual purposes of reinforcing their identity and bringing about a transformation in conduct due to their preexisting transformation of existence in the eternal sphere. The audience is faced with resolving specific moral problems and conflicts that arise as the results of their deliverance from the depraved nature; manifested by coming out of the world and entering into identification of the nature of God (new creation), which exhibits new social structuring. The reality of this new life is addressed specifically in paraenesis that insists on the spiritual operation by which the gospel impinges on identification with the new existence even though one is yet "in the flesh."

Spiritually applied analytical exegesis of the text will enable the teacher and preacher to place the message in its proper literary context, thus establishing the distinctiveness of this logos (identity). Effective ministering also engenders the Holy Spirit's perfect knowledge of the congregation's needs and the occasion of the present message to establish pathos (compassion). Some of the possible occasions noted above dealt with the entrance or anticipation of entrance into an identification relationship with the eternal position of sonship in the Body of Christ. When the connection is made between the congregation and the grace message, ethos (ethics of moral characteristics) is manifested and maintained as the Holy Spirit is pleased to execute such according to the purposes of God, individually to His elect with confidence and authority.

Paul's apostolic authority is based on his understanding of God's dispensing of such. In this light, one should not overemphasize the commanding nature of paraenesis, for it is not solely relegated to "recommendations and good advice," as the power and purpose of God are the controlling factors in the effectuation of mirroring the elect's conformity to the attributes of godliness. Since the gospel contains instructions for grace and growth, it exudes binding directives for moral living of the individual in the present age as illustrations of identification with the new man in the eternal realm. In is exclusively in this sense that Paul states the authority of the gospel in the directives of his epistles. Thus the same authority that enabled him to preach the Gospel of Grace was also that which enabled him to correct, admonish, encourage and command.

The greatest of the Apostle Paul's concerns was that God's people be grounded in the indicative of the gospel, as he did not primarily issue directives but rather appealed with deep passion according to the perfect knowledge of the truth. In this aspect of paraenesis, he sought to convey the fundamental implications of the recipients' divine nature as the influencing operation of God's inducement of their participation in conformity to His will. Foremost, the scripturally controlled paraenetic sermon will be rooted in the indicative facet of the text. In compliance with this premise, the conveyance should always abide within the text with the confident that all applicable life situations and immediate occasions are woven into the body of the text. Although teachers or preachers may desire to address a particular issue, the context of the text must be considered on a prioritized basis. Thus paraenetic passages are always bound to the larger framework as such are encapsulated in the "indicative" of the gospel.

It must be fully understood that the indicative of Scripture always implies an imperative. The indicative is the essential nature of the gospel but the Doctrines of Salvation are not taught for their sake alone, e.g., merely that they may be known; they are also taught in order that the indicative may be manifested in the practical or identification aspect of the imperative. In this sense, the imperative invokes dialectical relationships to the indicative in Paul's epistles as it manifestly functions expressly in testimony to what the indicative makes possible through identification. The interrelationship of the indicative and the imperative must be automatically understood in terms of the text. The Law is consigned to past and future dispensations as the present Grace age currently continues. The Grace Dispensation and Covenant define the present economy as it operates according to the infusion of its goals that are directly tied to the indicative process of God in manifesting the imperative in the sphere of time, which is the identification of that which was actualized in the sphere of eternity

In this present age, the elect are free from the condemnation of the Law with its catastrophic powers yet such are currently abiding in the present evil world. Therefore, the position of son placement in the Body of Christ evinces both the possession of spiritual gifts and the demands of grace, which are concomitantly conferred according to the contents of the gospel that practically processes the manifestation of identifying with that, which was actualized in the eternal sphere. Thus, the crux of contextualized paraenesis connects the power of experiencing the new creation in ones mind by expounding upon the integral relationship of the indicative and imperative as such is outlaid in the Scriptures. The power of the gospel depicting the eternal Christ event must form a continuum in one's life. Through this process, the child of God is caused to maintain continual response to the Word of God as it proclaims the message of ones eternal relationship in Christ.

Progressively, the indicative gives expression to induced understanding of the believer. The comprehension of eternal existence includes ones understanding of what the will of God for such is in ones Earthly life. The imperative reminds the believer that there is freedom from sin but it also conveys information that there is also renewal by identification with the new man, in obedience to the command of the grace of God. In the testimony of Paul's writings, this freedom from sin is rooted in baptism or

identification through the Holy Spirit. Paul's witness is that his humanly depraved nature was crucified with Christ through baptism (spiritual identification). In essence his sinful self was rendered powerless. In this view, enslavement to sin is no longer possible. In this sense, how can the imperative, "you shall not sin" be reconciled with the indicative, "you are freed from sin?" Scripturally contextualized paraenesis educes the answer in the inner connection between the indicative and the imperative.

Those who espouse the virtues of "Topos" (topical preaching and teaching) foist it as the direct methodology of conveying two optional elements: (1) analogous situations of the text in this life and (2) refutations of contrary ways of thinking or acting. Topos presentations are infused with rhetoric denoting subjects that are ingrained in the clutches of dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms, which deal with such questions as justice or politics and may be indicative of identifiable physical concerns. In this view of paraenesis, it denotes a particular topic of moral or social concern. In this mode they attempt to convey the features of imperatives, causal extensions and conditional clauses but the limitations of the "topoi" (preaching and teaching utilizing topics) are the generalities they impose upon the context. To this observation the proponents of topoi aver that the advantages exceed the disadvantages, in their reasoning that topoi appeal directly to the audience with simple and practical advice in a clear and concise manner without equivocation.

Incredibly, it is in this vein that they assume authority, unity of thought and stimulus for action. Their claim is that they can stimulate minds into active thought; therefore topos is a flexible unit of paraenesis capable of addressing various subjects on matters in the arena of practical living, which relates to the present circumstances of life on Earth. Consequently those who practice this style of delivery convey isolated maxims that purportedly exhibit a relationship with the immediate context in a coherent and unified way. In this they allege that each isolated maxim functions to contribute to the whole purpose of the subject matter.

There are two obvious flaws in this viewpoint: (1) its reluctance for relying on the Holy Spirit for thought conveyance and (2) its complete disregard of the contents for the more expansive spiritual context for the exhortation. These deficiencies become vividly apparent when the proponents of such assert that "Paraenetic sayings ordinarily address themselves to a specific (though perhaps fictional) audience, or they foist that they at least appear as instructions and commands." While still maintaining that paraenesis applies to a single audience and a single set of circumstances, such express doubt in the possibility of reconstructing one single frame into which all the paraenetic sayings can fit. Their qualification of finding the current or historical context brings into operation the art of editing as it exudes a process of inducing requirements for reconstructing social backgrounds from out-of-contexts information. In this sense, their mode of conveyance is dependant upon sociological studies that are devised to bring promising results as contributions to some convincing reconstructions of current and historical settings. It is of note that all these proceeding are void of spiritual influence as they are exclusively purposed in the earthly/physical sphere

In stark contrast, the contents of Paul's epistles are conveyances of the indicative that are inherently inclusive of all the requirements of situational paraenesis. The conveyance of spiritual information is designed to guide members of the Body of Christ in working out individually and corporately what the "law (principle) of Christ" is for God's people in the midst of the present struggles in identifying with the implications of their faith. Even though Paul absolutely desires God's people to depict moral characteristics, he prioritizes and points them towards information that is most relevant in the eternal spiritual realm. In this mode the ultimate reliance is upon the believer's identification with the eternal relationship and authority that is foundational in the essence of Jesus Christ. Thus the most comprehensive description and classification of paraenesis deal primarily with the process of its function. Paraenesis in effect "orders" obedience through the motivation for actions based upon the knowledge of the elect eternally existing "in Christ" as such conflicts with the depraved human nature in seeking to change its social order by exhibiting manifestly, testimony in identifying with the glorified state of being.

Within the variety of forms found in paraenesis, the overriding purpose is the provision of guidance for moral expression of the believer through the principle of identifiably confirming the nature of the new man by converting/subverting one's old social order in favor of the new one. In this sense, the believer is exhorted on the basis of conforming to the spiritual expectations of the new creation.