
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 1:7-8

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After it being stated that these brethren followed the Lord and faithful teachers, we then read the following that was said about them: *“So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing”* (I Thessalonians 1:7-8).

The saints were “ensamples” to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. Pointing out those faithful brethren who are good ensamples is a good thing. To the saints in Philippi, Paul and Timotheus wrote this by the inspiration of God: *“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample”* (Philippians 3:16-17). The word translated “ensamples” is defined as: “a die (as struck), that is, (by implication) a stamp or scar; by analogy a shape, that is, a statue, (figuratively) style or resemblance; specifically a sampler (‘type’), that is, a model (for imitation) or instance (for warning): - en- (ex-) ample, fashion, figure, form, manner, pattern, print” (Strong’s # 5179). Those brethren were a pattern of good works for others to follow as all faithful Christians should be (Titus 2:2-8).

Their example was seen in their local region of Macedonia and Achaia. However, not just there. Some brethren are highly esteemed and have a notable reputation (i.e. Philippians 2:25-30). What is written here about the saints in Thessalonica tells us that people were talking about them favorably. We see that individuals had a “good report” in other texts (Acts 10:22, Acts 22:12, and III John 1:12). Yet, when one can say that an entire congregation serves as a good example, that is certainly a great compliment to their faithfulness. We cannot conclude too much from this though. We know there were other congregations, whether known by reputation or not, that were entirely faithful (Revelation 2:8-11 and Revelation 3:7-13). Furthermore, we have to take note of what they were good ensamples in specifically.

The congregation in Thessalonica was a good example to follow in that the word of God sounded out from them. What we will see in this letter and the second letter will show us that there were problems in this congregation. They had to be instructed regarding secular work in the first letter (I Thessalonians 4:11-12). In the second letter they were told to withdraw from those members who were not laboring as they should have (II Thessalonians 3:6-15). There

are other things that needed worked on in this congregation as we shall see in our studies going forward. Having said that, them being good ensamples in sounding out the word of the Lord has some significance we should consider. They were such a good example in this manner that Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus did not have to speak of them. People abroad already knew about them.

How can an entire congregation be known for sounding out the word of the Lord? We know that every member of a congregation in the first century was not a teacher, evangelist, prophet, etc.; for various reasons (I Corinthians 12:3-31, Ephesians 4:7-16, and James 3:1). We know that a congregation does not collectively go out teaching. There are two ways that an entire congregation can be accredited with the word of God being taught. Before we get to that, I want to focus on the word “from” that appears in verse eight.

The Greek word translated “from” [ἀπό] is defined as: “A primary particle; ‘off’, that is, away (from something near), in various senses (of place, time, or relation; literally or figuratively): - (X here-) after, ago, at, because of, before, by (the space of), for (-th), from, in, (out) of, off, (up-) on (-ce), since, with. In composition (as a prefix) it usually denotes separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal, etc.” (Strong’s # 575). Therefore, the idea is not about a personal involvement of every member of the congregation. It is the idea that from among them something came forth separate from the whole. There are two ways that can happen.

A congregation can have men among them that go forth to teach the word of God. Notice: *“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away”* (Acts 13:1-3). We know the Holy Spirit is not directly sending men from congregations today. However, the pattern of such is set forth in the text you just read. Furthermore, we can see how the word can be sent “from” a congregation to other places. Aristarchus is an example of a man from Thessalonica going forth and accompanying Paul (Acts 27:2). A congregation can also be accredited with spreading the Gospel by financially supporting men to preach the Gospel in different places (II Corinthians 11:8-9 and Philippians 4:10-18).

What we can see about Thessalonica is that they wanted the word of God to be spread and not just locally. In this regard, they were a congregation at work. If a Christian or congregation does nothing, they have dead faith (James 2:14-26 and Revelation 3:1-6). Good works show the faith of an individual and/or a congregation (Matthew 5:14-16). What does our work, as a congregation, say to the world? Are we hidden in some dark corner or do we have a reputation? Think on that!