
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 4:1-2

By: Brian A. Yeager

The previous chapter concluded with Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wanting to come help the saints in Thessalonica perfect what was lacking in their faith (I Thessalonians 3:9-13). Until that happens, this letter will have to suffice. Thus, they wrote this: *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus”* (I Thessalonians 4:1-2).

The word translated “furthermore” [λοιπόν] carries the idea of “for the future” or “henceforth” (Thayer; Strong’s # 3063). By using the word translated “beseech” [ἐρωτάω] these brethren were essentially expressing their desire (Strong’s # 2065) for the brethren there. The word translated “exhort” [παρακαλέω] is rather broad in meaning (Strong’s # 3870). It can mean anything from “comforted” as it is translated in Matthew 5:4 to “desired” as it is translated in II Corinthians 8:6. That Greek word is also translated as “beseech” in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:1, Philippians 4:2, etc.). By the combination of both words we can see that these brethren had a strong desire for the saints in Thessalonica to do something.

What they wanted them to do was to focus on what they had already received in teaching from these brethren. For a moment, take a thought back in time with me. The Apostles, which Paul was, were tasked with preaching the Gospel to the lost all over the world (Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-20, and Luke 24:45-49). Think about the vast work of making the Gospel known to all nations (Romans 16:25-26). Now, in addition to that, Paul had to worry about all the churches too (II Corinthians 11:28). Think about what that included, in addition to preaching to the lost. Notice: *“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. 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... Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem”* (Acts 15:35-36 and Acts 16:1-4).

With all of the work that Paul and the evangelists working with him had to do, sometimes brethren would just have to focus on what they already had been taught. The saints in Thessalonica already had been taught how to walk and please God. Walking and pleasing God comes down to faithful, obedient action (Colossians 1:10 and I John 2:3-6). So, they needed to be doers of what they already knew (James 1:21-27).

Of course, there was more to learn and this is obvious by the writing of this epistle and a second one that will come later. However, the Thessalonians at this time needed to focus on things they had already been taught. There are times wherein Christians need to grow in things they don't know (Hebrews 5:12-6:3). Then there are times wherein Christians have to grow in the truths that they have already been taught (II Peter 1:3-13; 3:1-2; 3:14-18). This brings us to the phrase "abound more and more."

By abounding they would be in excess or in abundance (Strong's # 4052). By "more and more" you could also say "in a greater degree" (Strong's # 3123). Think of how the path of the just shines more and more (Proverbs 4:18). In the previous chapter they were told to "*abound in love...*" (I Thessalonians 3:12). Paul told the saints in Philippi that he prayed that their love may abound yet more and more (Philippians 1:9). Jesus taught that His followers would bring forth fruit, be pruned, and bring forth more fruit (John 15:1-7). As disciples of Christ, Christians need to bear much fruit (John 15:8). So, a Christian does not always need to be taught something new to be able to grow.

Knowing that what Paul and those working with him taught were from Jesus Christ is significant. We have seen already in this letter that they did not receive the teachings of Paul as though they were words of men (I Thessalonians 2:13). They made the right conclusion. What Paul was teaching them, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, were the words of Christ (John 16:1-13, I Corinthians 2:1-16, and I Corinthians 14:37). This establishes the authority of what the saints in Thessalonica are being told. Additionally, it is a good reminder for them and us that when we read the words from Paul, Peter, etc.; we ought to obey them as the words of Christ. All Christians should know that Jesus sees our love for Him when we obey His commandments (John 14:15 and I John 5:2-3).

This is a great study for all of us in Christ to consider. Faithful Christians love to learn. Sometimes studying the Scriptures and meditating upon them can cause us to lose time and sleep (Psalms 119:148). We find peace in God's word (Psalms 119:165). It is fun to learn and discover treasures in the word of God. Here is a question for us all: what have you done with the truths that you already know (Romans 2:13)? Unlike the Thessalonians, we have all the revelation of God. We have a lot to learn. However, it is not a sprint to some knowledge finish line. We see that Jesus taught as people were "*able to hear*" (Mark 4:33). So, perfect what you know before you seek greater knowledge. The end goal is to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians 4:12).