
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 5:12-14

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After the instructions to continue comforting and edifying one another (I Thessalonians 5:11), the saints in Thessalonica were told: *“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men”* (I Thessalonians 5:12-14).

The Greek word that is translated “know” [εἶδω] is very broad in definition (Strong’s # 1492). What we can draw from this word is that the contextual meaning is about closely knowing those teaching. We can see this drawn out because of other verses wherein this word is used in this same letter (I Thessalonians 2:1-2, I Thessalonians 2:5, I Thessalonians 2:11, etc.). The same is shown in the second letter to these saints (II Thessalonians 3:7). Think of this instruction as one seeing something close up, personally. That Greek word is used in I Thessalonians 2:17 and is translated “to see” relating to face to face communication.

As we begin considering the instructions noted above, we have to consider who those that labored among them were. That would include those teaching among them, such as evangelists (I Corinthians 3:5). Specifically, those that were located among the saints such as Philip was in Caesarea (Acts 21:8). So that one is not confused, evangelists did/do have some authority (Titus 1:5; 2:15). Consider also: *“I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth”* (I Corinthians 16:15-16). It would also include elders, if they had such, that were locally among them as elders must be (Hebrews 13:7; 13:17 and I Peter 5:1-4). Also, one should consider that some elders did double duty in that they oversaw the flock and taught also (I Timothy 5:17-18).

The specific is drawn out that those who are to be known among the saints are those that admonished them. This is certainly a role that those that preach the Gospel must fill (Acts 20:28-31, I Corinthians 4:14, and Colossians 1:28). In verse twelve it is clearly about those who have the work of teaching among the saints. This instruction however is not to exclude the fact that all Christians are expected to admonish one another. We will address this further when we talk more about verse fourteen.

Those laboring among the saints in Thessalonica were to be esteemed very highly for the sake of their work. This instruction is about how a faithful teacher of the word of God should be received (cf. Matthew 10:40). Receive them in love for what they do. Those that teach the truth know how it feels to be under appreciated (II Corinthians 12:15). The faithful messenger is all too often hated for teaching the truth (I Kings 18:17-18, I Kings 21:20, I Kings 22:1-38, II Chronicles 24:20-21, II Chronicles 36:14-16, Proverbs 15:12, Isaiah 29:21, Jeremiah 20:7-8, Amos 5:10, Amos 7:10-16, John 3:19-21, John 8:31-59, Acts 5:25-42, Acts 7:51-58, and Galatians 4:16). This instruction has to be carefully observed. The teacher is not to be exalted above the message (I Corinthians 4:1-6). Nor is the preacher of God's word or overseer of the flock to be worshipped in any way (Acts 14:8-18). If the preacher or elder is exalted, there will certainly be division following. To avoid such division and to have peace, the weakest among the flock should receive the most honor (I Corinthians 12:14-27).

Rather than division (I Corinthians 1:10), peace is to be found among the saints. Consider the following instructions that are very simple and effective: *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another... I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful”* (Romans 14:19, Ephesians 4:1-3, and Colossians 3:12-15).

Then, the exhortation was that the saints in Thessalonica were to warn, comfort, support, and be patient. Each member of the body of Christ are to be involved in warning [admonishing] each other (Romans 15:14 and Colossians 3:16). In the second letter, the unruly were addressed and what to do with them is stated (II Thessalonians 3:6-15). The feebleminded were faint hearted (Strong's # 3642). The reward does not come to someone who gets weary and faints (Galatians 6:9). So, those individuals need comforted the way someone might be if they lost a loved one (John 11:19; 11:31). This can also be done through teaching (I Thessalonians 2:11). When you think of those weak, who need supported, think about someone who is physically ill. The Greek word that is translated “weak” [ἄσθενής] (Strong's # 772) is also used in that way (Acts 5:15-16). Having said that, the application here is more likely to the conscience and/or spiritual state of such weak ones (I Corinthians 8:1-13 and I Corinthians 11:28-30). Also, a faithful Christian will be patient towards everyone. That means to have forbearance; be longsuffering (Strong's # 3114). This word is translated “bear long” (Luke 18:7) and “longsuffering” (II Peter 3:9). We will consider that further in our next article as it ties to what we will be studying therein.