

The Example Of The Thessalonians

“For from you has sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything” (1 Thess. 1:8).

Paul has, in verse seven, commended the fact that the Thessalonians had been examples to all brethren in Macedonia and Achaia. We do not know how much time was spend in these two provinces: the second journey of Paul was approximately three years in length, half of which was spent in Corinth. Certainly the Thessalonians had been examples of many things to other brethren, yet the specific example they gave (which is the thrust of Paul’s comments) was their example of sounding forth the word. In this energetic effort of theirs they became examples of all who obeyed the gospel. Even beyond those two areas, the fervent spirit of the brethren in Thessalonica was known. There was no need for any comments from Paul; they put their words into action.

The efforts of the Thessalonians could not have been greatly different from those who had preceded them in obedience to the gospel. It was said of the apostles, “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they ceased not to preach Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). And when persecution arose against Jerusalem Christians and they were dispersed abroad, “they that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Paul told the Ephesians he had taught them “publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). We are persuaded that no efforts will ever be as productive as personal contact and are equally persuaded that nothing else will replace it.

Some time ago an announcement was made by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) that their long-standing practice of sending out their “missionaries” two by two to teach their message was being replaced. They now will make their appeals through technical means: Internet, social media, and such like. I am personally convinced that Mormons are surrendering the most effective tool they have in spreading their doctrine. We are certain their gospel is not gospel at all, but that is beside the point. We have long been convinced that if Christians were to commit themselves to convert others as Mormons have done, we would see results the likes of which have not been seen before. We can put ads in newspapers, take to the radio, TV, or Facebook, but all this produces minimal results.

Perhaps it is time to example our own faith. Paul urged the Corinthians in his second letter: “Try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed ye be reprobate” (2 Cor. 13:5). It is eternally important that we examine whether we are walking as the faith directs. It is just as important that we examine our own convictions. Peter saw Jesus walking on water and asked the Lord to bid him come also. At Jesus’ invitation, Peter began to walk, took a few steps, but then began to sink. He cried to the Lord to save him and Jesus did, but asked “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matt. 14:31). On another occasion when the disciples, with Jesus, were on the sea, a storm

arose. The waves began to fill their boat with water and they said, "Master, Master, we perish." Jesus rebuked the wind and raging water and the storm abated; there was a great calm. Jesus then asked, "Where is your faith?" (Lk. 8:24-25).

And, where is our faith? Jesus examines us as He examined those He personally walked with. To the Syrophonecian woman Jesus exclaimed, "Woman, great is your faith" (Mt. 15:28). Would He say the same of ours? There are so many souls that are perishing and we have the gospel whereby they can be saved. Do we really believe in an eternal soul? Do we really believe in a future resurrection? Do we really believe in a future judgment? Do we really believe there is both a heaven and hell? If we believe all these things and still make no effort to reach the lost, an appropriate question must be, "How can we say we love the lost but do absolutely nothing to turn them to Christ?"

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