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The Believer's Attitude Towards Leadership

1Thess. 5:12-13

The relationship between the pulpit and pew is one of a marriage, committed to resolve problems.

* The desire to bail out without resolving issues is not the answer!

It is also one of a parent and child relationship.

* Not everyone is going to like you all the time!

Paul moves towards the close of his letter by turning to a series of exhortations that were related to and needful for the Thessalonian church.

1. The responsibility of the congregation towards leadership. vs. 12-13
2. The responsibility of the leadership towards the congregation. vs. 14-15
3. The responsibility of the believer towards God. vs. 16-22
4. The responsibility of God towards the believer. vs. 23-24
5. The responsibility of the church towards the missionary. vs. 25-27
6. The benediction of grace, because none of this can take place apart from the grace of God. vs. 28

* J. Vernon McGee called These 22 particulars, commandments for Christians.

Remember that Paul had only been at Thessalonica for three Sabbaths reasoning with them from the Scriptures. Acts 17:2

-They had been chased off to Berea. Then Paul went on to Athens, finally ending up in Corinth.

Acts 17:10-18:1

-Paul attempted twice to return. 1Thess. 4:17-18

-Silas and Timothy met Paul at Corinth and had been sent back by Paul from Athens, to see how they were doing and to encourage them. Acts

18:15-16, 1 Thess. 3:1-3

-As a young church, Paul is giving specific instructions needed as reported by Silas and Timothy.

From the context of our text it would appear that there were some who were not submitting to the authority and care of the leadership, resulting in some tensions in the church. 1Thess. 4:9-12, 2Thess. 3:6-7, 11-15

So Paul addresses the congregation about their responsibility towards leadership from three perspectives. 5:12-13

- I. They were to have a proper perception towards leadership. vs. 12
- II. They were to have a positive affirmation towards leadership. vs. 13a
- III. They were to have a personal motivation towards leadership. vs. 13b

I. The Thessalonians were to have a proper perception towards leadership.

* “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you”. vs. 12

* This speaks of the believer’s attitude!

A. They were to respect those in leadership. vs. 12a-b

* And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those.

1. The request includes Paul’s companions. vs. 12a

a. His companions were Silvanus and Timothy, represented by the pronoun “we”. 1:1a

1) Silvanus had been sent along with Paul to Berea when the Jews attacked the house of Jason. Acts 17:5, 10

2) Timothy had been sent back to Thessalonica when he was at Athens to encourage and comfort them in their faith, in view of persecution. 1Thess. 3:1-3

3) Both had been at Thessalonica and were known by the church.

b. His plead is one of humility, instead of some authoritative command, by the phrase, “urge you”.

1) The word urge “erotao” means to request and entreat with the idea of begging for immediate obedience.

2) Paul used it regarding the Thessalonians walk to please God. 4:1

3) The disciples used the same word when they requested the Lord to heal Peter’s mother-in-law. Lk. 4:38

4) John used the word as he pleads with the lady he wrote to. 2Jn. 5

c. His platform is his spiritual relationship to them, he calls them “brethren”.

1) They were born into and belonged to the same family Paul did, the heavenly family.

2) The phrase appears nineteen times in First Thessalonians.

3) The apostle comes along side presenting himself as their equal and under the same responsibility as they.

2. The request of Paul is that they recognize those who labor among them. vs. 12c

a. The word recognize “eido” means to know, consider, pursue, understand.

1) They were to know who they were.

2) They were to know what they did.

3) They were to make this a priority.

- 4) They were to know all those involved.
* The idea in context being their regards for them and acknowledgment because of what they do.
- b. The apostle Paul qualifies their labor.
 - 1) The word labor “kopiao” means to work to the point of exhaustion and weariness.
 - 2) The same word is used by Peter when Jesus told him to let down his nets and he said, “We have toiled all night and caught nothing.” Lk. 5:5
 - 3) The same root but different form is appears. 1:3, 2:9, 3:5
 - 4) The type of service they rendered revealed that they were servants not hirelings.
- c. The apostle declares that these men exerted themselves among them.
 - 1) They did it in their midst.
 - 2) They did it on their behalf for them. Acts 20:18-21, 33-35, 1Cor. 4:9-13, 2Cor. 11:22-30
- b. Paul is appealing that they submit to the leadership ordained by God. Acts 14:23, 20:17, Tit. 1:5

- c. Paul is appealing that they obey the leadership because of their example. 1Cor 16:25, Heb. 13:7
- B. They were to reflect on the authority of those in leadership. vs. 12d
 - 1. Paul says realize they will preside over you. vs. 12d
 - a. The word over “proisteemi” means to stand before, superintend or rule.
 - 1) The word is used of one who leads, to be done with diligence. Rom. 12:8
 - 2) The word is also used of the qualifications for a bishop, ruling his own house well having his children in submission in order to know how to rule the church of God. 1Tim. 3:4-5
 - 3) The idea is not a dictatorial or absolute rule but one of authority exercised for the care and benefit of the one being superintended faithfully and lead.
 - b. The limitations are clearly stated “in the Lord.”
 - 1) It is after the manner and example of Christ by it’s nature.
 - 2) It is in accord and limited to the revelation of Scripture, not

- beyond, to abuse their power and authority.
- 3) It is a delegated authority not one's own, it has been vested to them by Christ.
2. Paul says realize they will admonish you. vs. 12d
 - a. The idea behind the word "admonish" is not discipline but personal responsibility and accountability to one's professing faith of being a Christian.
 - 1) The word admonish "noutheteo" in our text is in the form of a verb and means to put in mind, to warn, caution or reprove.
 - 2) The word appears also in the noun form "nouthesia". 1Cor. 10:11, Eph. 6:4, Tit. 3:10
 - 3) The person who is admonished is reminded of what he or she is in danger of forgetting, rebuke for wrongdoing as well as warning to be on guard against wrong doing, appealing directly to their conscience and will to set them right with Scripture.
 - b. This is the only type of counseling that should go on in the church, which should be characterized by three things.

- 1) First recognition of the problem.
 - 2) Second, the goal of the problem is obedience to the Biblical standard.
 - 3) Third, is the motive, to benefit the one being counseled.
 - * No Pchychological should be going on in the Church of Jesus Christ!
- c. All three participles are described by one article identifying one class of person namely an elder who exercised oversight and had to be able to teach.
 - 1) They were appointed by Paul in every church. Acts 14:23
 - 2) They do it out of loving care.
 - 2) They do it for the people's own good and protection. Acts 20:31, 1Cor. 4:14, Col. 1:28

Illustration

Today much of society's attitude toward motherhood is much the same as some people's attitudes and perceptions of spiritual leadership; that they are unnecessary, do nothing, don't know what they're talking about, therefore they should be pointing people to professional help for their marriages and to raise their children.

Application

1. We are to respect and appreciate the leaders God has appointed but never worship them. Heb.13:17

- * Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.
- 2. We are to acknowledge and submit to their spiritual authority in light of Scripture not blindly or beyond it. 1Pet. 5:2-4
- * Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."
- 3. We are to mark their labor and warnings as loving protective care, not a desire to control the people. Acts 20:31-32
- * "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

The proper perception towards leadership is most affected by our attitude!

II. The Thessalonians were to have a positive affirmation towards leadership. vs. 13a

- * "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."
- * This speaks of the believer's actions!
- A. They were to value leadership very highly. vs. 13a
 - * If in fact the congregation of believers have a proper perception towards leadership based on respect and recognition of their authority, then they will demonstrate it.
 - 1. The command is to value the leadership that God has provided in an active way not mere lip service.
 - a. The word esteem "hegeomai" means to consider, regard, deem, account or estimate.
 - b. They were to see their leadership as a valuable resource to benefit the church body in view of their labor, oversight and warnings for their spiritual growth.
 - 2. The measure of the value to be ascribed to leadership is "very highly".
 - a. The phrase very highly "perissos" comes from the word beyond,

meaning excessive, exceedingly, abundantly or much more.

- b. The same word was used by Paul regarding his prayer to see them. 3:10
 - c. Paul uses the word to tell the Ephesians all that God can do for the believer. Eph. 3:20
 - d. The idea Paul is communicating is that God has gifted and called these men to lead the church and are of great value to Him and they also should be to us. Eph. 4:11-16
- B.** They were told how to esteem leadership very highly, in love.
- 1. The word love “agape” describes God’s divine love.
 - a. The source is not human love which though it is not perfect, often is looking for perfection. (Negative)
 - b. This is self-centered and conditional looking to one’s own personal benefit only.
 - 2. The source is divine love which looks to potential and responds in appreciation. (Positive)
 - a. Recognizing that the leaders are called and anointed.
 - b. Recognizing the leaders commitment to labor.
 - c. Recognizing their courage to warn.

- d. Recognizing that men are not perfect and all have feet of clay.
 - e. Recognizing there will be personality clashes which has nothing to do with the work of leadership.
 - * Paul tells the Corinthians that as a spiritual parent he would very gladly spend and be spent for them but the more he loved them, the less he was loved. 2Cor 12:14-15
- C.** They were told the reason for esteeming the leaders very highly in love, due to their work’s sake.
- * This is distinct from the labor to the point of exhaustion, which revealed they were servant, their “work’s sake” reveals the sphere of the work, namely the “Lord’s” not their own and their ongoing commitment to do all God has called them to do!
 - 1. For all that they do regarding the word of God.
 - a. By their diligence to study and teach the whole council of God.
 - b. By preaching the gospel faithfully without watering it down, so as not to offend man.
 - 2. For their care as shepherds.
 - a. By constantly protecting the people from wolves.

- b. By praying for the people's needs.
 - c. By encouraging, reproofing and rebuking the people when needed, instead of attempting to be liked by everyone.
 - d. By training those called to the ministry and giving them opportunity to serve.
3. For the wisdom and experience of their years.
- a. To direct the people in their daily lives.
 - b. To advise the people in their difficult situations in life.
 - c. To cry and rejoice with the people.
 - * We are to esteem others better than ourselves. Phil 2:3

Illustration

Four-year-old Martha, hugging a doll in each of her pudgy little arms, looked wistfully up at her mother and said, "Mamma, I love them and love them and love them, but they never love me back."

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**Tradgedically such is the case for some believers regarding leadership!*

Application

1. The affirmation of love goes beyond words, it is active in growing spiritually. Eph. 4:11-16
- a. To attend the teaching of God's word.

- b. To be involved in serving.
 - c. To pray for leadership.
2. The affirmation of God's love to be practical, will manifest certain elements, namely the nature of Christ. Phil. 2:5
- a. Grace.
 - b. Mercy.
 - c. Patience.
3. The affirmation of God's love will always be grateful for all that is done in the Lord in thanks. 1Thess. 5:18
- a. That they answered their call.
 - b. That they have continued in their call.
 - c. That they are faithful steward in their call.
 - d. That they have expanded their work and call.

Their positive affirmation towards leadership was Scriptural!

III. The Thessalonians were to have a personal motivation towards leadership. vs. 13b

* "Be at peace among yourselves".

* This speaks of the believers willingness!

- A. They were to be at peace with the leadership.
 - * If we have a proper perspective of leadership and a positive affirmation,

then our motivation for the leadership and church will be peace.

1. The Greek tense is the present imperative, meaning that they are not urged to make peace but rather to maintain it.
 - a. We don't create any peace, but only disrupt the peace and unity of the Spirit.
 - b. For that reason Paul tells the Ephesians to walk worthy of the Lord, with all humility and long-suffering, bearing with one another, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". Eph. 4:1-3
2. The very mention of this instruction and the urgency to obey it implies the problem was present at Thessalonica.
 - a. Nothing will hinder the work of ministry more than disunity.
 - b. Nothing should be done for self glory but with the mind of Christ.
 - c. Nothing should be allowed by the leadership to hinder the unity of ministry but should be dealt with immediately.
3. The practice of some, to come against the leadership is unfortunate but certain in every church, at one time or another.

- a. We are to exercise Matthew eighteen for all our conflict, not only for leadership.
 - b. We are to hold people accountable for what they say and do within the minimum number of people, for the sake of the person and the people in the church.
 - c. We are to at times ask people to leave, if they will not come to be accountable or if they will not repent.
 4. The bringing of an accusation against an elder is not to be done lightly or thoughtlessly.
 - a. There is to be two or three witnesses, not mere say so by people. 1Tim. 5:19
 - b. There must be verifiable evidence.
 - c. The accusers are to come forwards.
 - * People who refuse to come forwards and make themselves accountable to the leadership of the church in their accusation, are not Biblical nor very honest or honorable!
- B.** They were to be at peace with the congregation.
1. There are many types of personalities in the church and at times there may be personality clashes but we are to walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh.

2. There can be cliques that form and gossip can result due to jealousy, envy and pride, we are to flee these things.
3. There are people who will date within the church and for whatever reason they stop and now they have to deal with the fact that the person still comes to the same church, they have to refrain from slander, accusations, etc.

C. They were to be at peace with themselves.

1. The believer can only have peace, if he or she is obeying the word of God and confessing when they fail. 1Jn. 2:1
2. The believer can only have peace, if he or she is asking forgiveness of anyone they offend. Matt. 18
3. The believer can only have peace, if lifting all things to God in prayer, hardening their hearts and minds. Phil. 4:6-7
4. The believer can only have peace, if he or she is bringing every thought into the captivity of Christ. 2Cor. 10:4-5

Illustration

God came to establish peace between man and Himself, emptied Himself of His glory, took on the form of a servant and humbled Himself even to the death on the cross. Phil 2:5-8

Application

1. We are commended by Jesus to, “Have salt in ourselves, and have peace with one another.” Mk 9:50
 - a. Don’t be rebellious and defiant towards the leadership’s Scriptural authority and leading. (Korah-Num. 16)
 - b. Don’t steal the hearts of the people from leadership by flattery as Absalom. 2Sam. 15:1-6
2. We are told to attempt every possible effort as much as depends on us, to live peaceably with all men. Rom 12:18
 - a. Don’t create your little party split as the Corinthians. 1Cor. 1:12-13
 - b. Don’t try to impose your personal convictions and criticisms on others to stumble and poison them as Korah did. Num 16:41-50
* We are to pursue peace with all men. Heb. 12:14a
3. We are told to be of one mind, live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with us. 2 Cor 13:11
 - a. Don’t try to lead the church and leaders when God has not called you. Rom. 12:3
 - b. Don’t refuse to submit to church authority, it is a mark of immaturity. Col. 3:13-14

Their personal motivation towards leadership was vital!

Conclusion

Every congregation has this same responsibility towards leadership, from these three perspectives.

- I.** They are to have a proper perception towards leadership!
By their attitudes, respecting, recognizing and reflecting on their authority!
- II.** They are to have a positive affirmation towards leadership!
* By their actions, valuing their worth in God's loving appreciation!
- III.** They are to have a personal motivation towards leadership!
* By their willingness, pursuing peace in the entire body!