

A Brief Exposition of 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 12-13, under the Title: “Recognize Leadership”

1 Thess. 5:12-13 *And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, (13) and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.*

These verses command us as Christians to Recognise Leadership. We are told, to recognize those who are our church leaders, to esteem them very highly in love, and to be at peace with them. As motivation to obey, we are called to consider the work they do among us.

1. Recognising Our Church Leaders.

The word translated “recognize” or in the KJV “know” literally means “to see, to know, to understand, to gaze or stare”. The gazing is with purpose; to understand, to know. **Heb 13:7 comments; “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Here we are told to remember and to consider.** This is a careful consideration both their lives and their work. How well do we know our church leader? How much do we pray for them?

2. Esteeming Our Church Leaders

The word to *esteem* means “to think, to account, to judge, to govern”. It is an exhortation to be discerning and think rightly about them.

Paul also gives us the manner in which we are to think about them: “*very highly*”. This is very strong and active term. 1Ti 5:17 tells us that *elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor.*

The Holy Spirit goes further by saying, we must esteem them very highly, “*in love*”. This love is the Greek – *agape*, God’s love.

To recognize and to esteem are things in our minds, and speak of our attitude towards our Church Leaders. To love is a thing of the heart and will, and speaks of our actions towards them.

3 The Command to be At Peace

At the end of vs 13 we are commanded; “*Be at peace among yourselves*”. This can be translated “*cultivate peace with them*”; meaning our pastors/elders. If we regard them “*very highly in love*”, we will endeavour to be at peace with them. Of cultivating peace with our pastors/elders, this John Gill says; “*do not disagree with them over every small matter, or make them wrongdoers for a word; keep up a positive attitude towards them, and cultivate love and friendship with them.*”

But how can we do this? Paul also gives us the right motivation and points to the work they do.

4. The Motivation for Obedience

Paul says it is “*for their work’s sake*”. Their work is described in terms of three things: Their Labour, Leadership and Teaching.

a) Their Labour

Paul speaks of their “*labour among you*” – this “labour” is hard work to the point of fatigue. Being as pastor is no 9 to 5 job!

b) Their Leadership

Paul says they are “*over you in the Lord*” – literally to; “stand before, to preside, to maintain, be over, to rule” Leadership is a place of example. It can be a very lonely place. We watch our leaders more than we know.

c) Their Teaching

Paul says they “*admonish you*”. This means; “put in mind, to caution or reprove gently, to warn”. We often think negatively about admonition, but it is part of teaching. The Scripture are given for reproof and correction as much as they are for teaching and training? Pro 27:6 says; *Faithful are the wounds of a friend*. Those that love us will tell us where we go wrong, to help us.

The work of pastors or elders is spiritual work; it is work for eternity. John Calvin says - “*this work is the edification of the Church, the everlasting salvation of souls, the restoration of the world*”.

In our society we give the highest regard to those with the most important work. How highly do we regard the work of the ministry? How important to ME is the salvation and edification of men and women?

Conclusion

We are commanded, by the Holy Spirit, to hold our pastors/elders in the highest regard, to know, appreciate, love and to be at peace with them. Why does the Lord consider this so important? Because the work they do is of the greatest significance; it has eternal consequences, will last forever. Will we obey this command for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and for His Kingdom?