

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Responsible Living within The Church 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 Part 2

If churches are going to not only be happy but more importantly healthy there must be a good relationship between the people and their leaders. At Valley Bible Church this would mean that there needs to be a good relationship between the elders and this congregation.

Last week we considered the responsibilities that the leaders or elders have toward this congregation. The first responsibility that we considered was their responsibility to labor. Let us look at **V. 12 “But we request of you brethren that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you.”** If a man steps forward to take on a position of elder in the church he must understand that he is committing himself to a life of labor. He is committing himself to working to the point of weariness. There is no place in the ministry for laziness. But not only is there a responsibility to labor but there is also a responsibility to lead. Let us again look at **V. 12 “But we request of you brethren that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord.....”** The elders of this church must not be satisfied with the status quo. The work of eldering is not done until this church is perfected or in other words until Jesus comes to catch up His church.

The leaders of this fellowship have a responsibility to labor and to lead. But there is still another responsibility. Let us again look at the verse, **“But we request of you brethren that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.”** The word that is translated **“instruction”** is a word with a root meaning of admonish. The elders of a congregation are not to share with the people what they want to hear but what they need to hear. They are responsible for teaching the whole counsel of the Word of God.

This fellowship cannot be truly healthy unless we as leaders are willing to step up to the plate and to be responsible for faithfully carrying out these duties. But what responsibilities do you have toward us if we are going to in fact have a healthy church? What are the responsibilities of a congregation to their leaders?

Responsibilities of congregation to their leaders

The first responsibility that we see in the passage is TO APPRECIATE YOUR LEADERS.

Let us read **1 Thess. 5:12, “But we request of you brethren that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.”**

It seems obvious that some feelings of tension and misunderstanding had arisen between the members of the Thessalonian Church and their leaders. This might be surprising to us since we have already noted that Paul considered the Thessalonian church to be an extraordinary church, an exceptional church, a model church. This should help us see that even in the best of churches there will at times be the possibility of difficulties arising between the leaders and the people in the church.

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Though this may be true we should not just roll over and say, “Oh well.” We need for the Lord’s sake to work on this relationship. Therefore Paul is writing the Thessalonian church and is encouraging them **“to appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.”** The Greek word EIDENAI translated “appreciate” in the NAS and translated in the NIV “respect” literally means “to know.”

This does not mean that they would learn their names or the names of their wives and children. But rather it appears that it had something to do with knowing about their nature and function . Again let us look at the verse and see if this is not so. **“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate, respect, know those, (who what?) Diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.”** The members of the Thessalonian church seemingly had not appreciated or rightly understood the work of their leaders and the difficulty of it. If they had had this knowledge they would have “appreciated them.” If they had had this knowledge they would have “respected them.”

A lack of knowledge often leads people not to appreciate those who are in a position of oversight over them. Consider the relationship between parents and children. Do children typically appreciate the efforts of their parents in trying to provide for them and give them wise counsel? I would have to say not very often. Certainly this is true of very small children. If you have chosen to become a parent in order to receive expressions of appreciation from your children while they are at home you may be sorely disappointed. It is an exceptional child who while at home takes time to express appreciation to their parents. Often times it is not until a child becomes a parent themselves that all of a sudden the lights go on and they begin to understand the price that their parents paid in training them up.

I believe that the same thing is true in respect to appreciating the nature and function of the leaders in the church. If you truly want to respond to the encouragement of the apostle Paul **“to appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction”** all you have to do is become involved in ministering to people on this level. Be willing to take responsibility for ministering to the spiritual lives of your brothers and sisters in Christ here in this fellowship. Be willing to expend yourself in that work, even to the point of weariness. Be willing to prepare yourself to minister the word of God in their lives whether that involves simple instruction, exhortation or if necessary rebuke. And once you have gotten a taste for the difficulty of this work then consider the work of the elders of this fellowship who have the responsibility for the whole of this church. This growing appreciation of the challenges that face church leaders hopefully would make it possible to enjoy a maturing and deepening relationship between one another. Hopefully if you are here and are a part of this fellowship, you in fact, feel this sense of appreciation for those who are leading this fellowship. BUT THIS IS NOT ALL, THE PASSAGE CONTINUES ON AND INTRODUCES US TO A SECOND RESPONSIBILITY.

The second responsibility we see in this passage is to TO ESTEEM YOUR LEADERS.

Let us read V. 13 **“and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.”** The word **“esteem”** is defined by Webster as to regard as valuable. This is very much like the first word that was translated “appreciate” but it goes deeper. And we see this in the qualifying phrases that Paul uses.

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The first phase is “very highly.” We are to esteem our church leaders “very highly.” The word translated “very highly” is a strong double superlative adverb meaning “**abundantly out of all bounds, beyond all measure.**” This is an amazing statement. It is one thing to appreciate church leaders, acknowledging the importance of their work. But it seems quite another thing “to esteem” them and yet even further to “esteem them very highly.”

Let me ask you a question, if a congregation were in fact esteeming their leaders, very highly, do you believe that it would impact the way that congregation would think or act toward their leaders? I believe that we would all have to say, Yes!

I have been in the Valley a long time and I have had a lot of conversations with a lot of pastors. And I would have to say that I have been with a lot of pastors who felt alone in their work. I have to say that I have been with a lot of pastors who felt unappreciated by their congregations. This is not the way it should be in our churches. The world at times treat their leaders better than congregations treat their pastors. Some of you may have watched Bill Clinton’s State of the Union Address to Congress last week. What did the congress do when the president entered the room? They stood up and they applauded him as he came down the center aisle. They were what “esteeming him.” They were recognizing the importance and value of his work as president.

When congress stood up they were not saying by their applause that they agreed with his policies, they were not saying that they supported his programs, they were not even saying that they liked him as a person. What they were saying is, “You are the President of our great nation and we recognize the important work that you have been entrusted with and your efforts to carry it out.”

Let me ask you a question. Who has the more important work, the President of the United States or the shepherds of the congregations across America and the world who have the responsibility to care for and lead the church as Christ’s undershepherds? I believe that the answer clearly would be the shepherds of the churches. Does this mean that when the elders or the leaders of the church come into a room that everyone should stand and give them a standing ovation? Of course not! God forbid! BUT IT DOES MEAN THAT HOPEFULLY THE CHURCH WOULD SEEK TO ENCOURAGE THEM PERSONALLY AND SUPPORT THEM IN THEIR WORK KNOWING HOW TRULY IMPORTANT THEY ARE TO THE PROPER FUNCTIONING OF THE CHURCH.

And hopefully this would not be done just out of a sense of duty but out of genuine affection. Let us look again at the verse and look at the second qualifying phrase. “**But we request of you , brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, (13) and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.**” We hopefully would not be seeking to appreciate and highly esteem our leaders just because it is the right thing to do but because it something we want to do for the simple reason that we love them.

This call by Paul to highly esteem the leaders of a church in love should not surprise us. The love of the brethren is a continuing theme throughout the scriptures.

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Even in this epistle we have seen Paul emphasizing the importance of love. We first of all saw him commending the Thessalonian church for their “labor of love” in **1 Thess. 1:3** and then we saw Paul again commending the Thessalonian church in **1 Thess. 4:9** when he says “**Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.**” Following this, Paul then gave the exhortation in **1 Thess. 4:10** “**But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.**” certainly it should not surprise us that the church is being urged in this passage to appreciate, and to highly esteem their leaders in love. But what we may not so easily see is the fact that of all the groups in the church the leaders may be in fact the most difficult to love in the sense of feeling affection toward them.

Why do I say this? If in fact the leaders of the church are leading. If in fact they are ministering the word of God tirelessly encouraging, exhorting, imploring, and rebuking they may not be generating warm fuzzies. A church must mature to the point where they appreciate their leaders or in other words come to a place in their lives where they value their leaders, not so much based on how nice they are but rather the work they are doing in the body. A church must mature to the point where they even highly esteem their leaders in love. Not because they may have a great sense of humor but they are willing to step forward and perform a very difficult task of leading and instructing the church.

BUT WE ARE NOT DONE YET. NOT ONLY IS THE CHURCH TO APPRECIATE THEIR LEADERS, NOT ONLY IS THE CHURCH TO ESTEEM THEIR LEADERS HIGHLY IN LOVE. BUT THEY ARE TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH THEIR LEADERS.

The third responsibility that we see in this passage is **LIVE IN PEACE WITH YOUR LEADERS.**

Let us look again at **VV. 12-13** “**But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, (13) and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.** It would appear that this command is with what has preceded in **V. 12** and the first part of **V. 13**. I would therefore conclude that the congregation is still being addressed in respect to their responsibilities to their leaders.

How can the congregation effectively carry out this command? How can a congregation in truth by their choices bring about peace with their leaders? It is very easy. It is to follow them. It is to support them. It is to obey them.

Heb. 13:17 makes this very clear, “**Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.**” Certainly this does not mean that a congregation has any obligation to obey leaders when those leaders are asking them to perform sin, but a congregation does have an obligation before the Lord to submit to the leadership of the church when they are being asked to do something that the leaders feel is in the best interest of this fellowship.

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I can remember 20 years back in the history of this church and remember the elders making a decision concerning the staff of this church. We asked a youth pastor to step down from his position. This decision was made with the unanimous support of the elders and the youth leaders. We made the decision believing that this was in the best interest of the church and the individual involved. There was a group of individuals rather than submitting to this decision attacked the elder group and myself personally as well as my family. It was a time of tremendous grief. Hopefully we as a church have grown beyond this.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully we as a church have grown beyond this. Hopefully this church has grown and matured to the point where you appreciate the leaders that are serving this body and know about the importance of their function to lead and to instruct this fellowship. Hopefully this church has grown and matured to the point where you esteem the leaders of this fellowship highly in love and that we are truly seeking to personally support them and to encourage them in their work, understanding how difficult their task is. Hopefully we as a church have matured to the point where we are able to live in peace with our leaders by willingly submitting to them even those areas where we may question their judgment.

If we as leaders carry out our responsibilities to lead and instruct this fellowship to the point of weariness. and if you as a congregation carry out your responsibilities to appreciate, esteem and live in peace with your leaders this church can be not only now but until Jesus comes a very happy fellowship.