



## Appreciation and Esteem

The flesh tends to chafe when directed by the bit of God's directive, and often tries to remove the saddle of responsibility. Hence come some instructions and exhortations from the word of God for the encouragement and strengthening of the brethren. In addition to these from the scriptures, saints can encourage others. "Encourage one another," says the apostle Paul, "and build up one another." This edifying of one another is one of the important functions of the local assembly; the noting of positive accomplishments, and truly complimentary remarks about the brethren really assist in the development and growth of saints, especially the new ones. The apostle is even complimentary to the brethren in Thessalonica, adding, "just as you also are doing."

As the disciples of Christ assemble, the exhortation from the author of Hebrews is, "consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24). Thus the apostle has some stimulating exhortations for the brethren.

- **Have charge over you** — Any group of people, in order to accomplish anything of significance have to be organized (not the same as *micromanaged*). So it is that the church of the Lord has leadership by the design of the Lord. Paul, in his inspired instructions to both Timothy and Titus talked about overseers and deacons (special *servants*), and in the letters defined a lot of the work of evangelists or preachers. Writing then, to the brethren in Thessalonica, he says, "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" (1 Thessalonians 5:12). If someone is in charge, then others are in submission. This, obviously, is not blind submission, where saints are manipulated into doing things counter to the scriptures, which is why Paul uses the expression, "charge over you *in the Lord*." There has to be an understanding among the faithful followers of Christ that there are those who are in leadership, and whose directives are to be implemented by the brethren.
- **Appreciation** — When Paul spoke of the eldership to Timothy, he noted "If any man aspires to the office of overseer (*bishop*), it is a fine work he desires to do (1 Timothy 3:1). It has to be the *work* that the man aspires to, not the *position*. As Paul talks about the leadership in Thessalonica, he requests that they appreciate "those who diligently *labor* among you." Those who thus labor, who are in charge, and who give instruction can often be unfairly criticized or castigated. If they are having to give the instructions in the "hard sayings of Jesus" or get the saints to engage in some work for the Lord that is difficult or challenging, they can encounter resistance from those being taught or directed. This can devolve into criticism and kicking against the leadership. Paul requests that the brethren be appreciative instead.
- **Esteem** — In addition to appreciation, Paul adds, "and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1 Thessalonians 5:13). This means that the brethren are to regard highly those who engage in such labor, recognizing that their leadership and instruction result in the salvation of many new souls, as well as the conservation of those who are already Christians. What more valuable work could be done than that?

One of the lessons is cheerfully to heed God-ordained leadership

God brought Israel out of the "iron furnace" of Egypt, but they had to wander in the desert for forty years because of their initial unbelief. This was traveling under difficult circumstances, but necessary to accomplish God's objective. "Now the people," recorded Moses, "became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord" (Numbers 11:1), and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. One of the lessons clearly to be drawn from their example is not to complain about adversity and cheerfully to heed God-ordained leadership. If this were true under the terms of the old covenant, how much more true it is under the terms of the new. Appreciation and esteem should rightly be given to those who have a proven track record of getting the work done! "Live in peace with one another."