

Diotrophes approach. He wanted to have the preeminence (3 John 3). It is clear that the spirit of Diotrophes did not die with him. God spare us from rivalries. Let each leader exercise himself in the place of his appointment.

Conclusion The section concludes with a tremendous appeal. It is a present active imperative: "be at peace among yourselves." The obvious connection with what has been written in the context is readily discernible. As at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11, 12); so apparently was the case at Thessalonica. There was the old nature intent to be puffed up for one leader against another (1 Cor. 4:6). This only leads to jealousy and strife (1 Cor. 3:3, 4). Leaders there will always be. Followers there must also be. But rivalries and party-making which result in cliques, divisions, and schisms--such ought not to be named among the believers of a local assembly (1 Cor. 1:11-17; 12:25). Given the ingredients taught by Paul here, such will never be. May God bring about the truth of His Word as mentioned in another connection relating to matters which divide: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).

THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"Care for Church Leadership"

1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13

Introduction

1. The subject of the rapture (4:13-18) and the day of the Lord (5:1-11) has been completed. The distinctions between these two events is patent. The Lord will come for the church (rapture) and for Israel (at the end of the tribulation period).
2. The concluding words concerning the eschatological study (4:18; 5:11) urge comfort and edification. It is claimed by Paul that the believers are doing just that. This represents a mutuality among the saints in the local assembly.
3. But to avoid the error of so many--that leaders are not necessary in a local assembly--Paul introduces that subject. It is a needful one in these present days, just as pertinent as it was in the days of Paul. It is not a new subject that the leadership in a local assembly should be challenged. It's 2000 years old in the church, but was evident in the days of Moses too (cf. Num. 12, 16, 17). Apparently, it has always been that everyone wants to be Chief and no one wants to be an Indian.
4. So this study of church leadership and their care is important. Among other reasons because it persists as an evil unto the present hour. But, if this is not resolved, it is difficult to see how the local ministry can prosper in all the other areas assigned (5:14ff.). These are the ways Paul handles the issue here:

1. By EXHORTATION

The verb "beseech" is a present active subjunctive. It is therefore hortatory in action. The same Greek verb in classical Greek means to ask. Hence, the thought here is that of urgent request to the believers. They are called "brethren." While we cannot enforce proper attitudes on the nonbelievers, we do have a point of appeal to those who claim to be in the body of believers. This is the only area where we can attempt an understanding.

2. By APPRECIATION

a. To know

This verb means to recognize, acknowledge, appreciate, or value. Obviously, this is purely a spiritual exercise possible to spiritual people only. Non-spiritual persons will not acknowledge the Word (1 Cor. 2:14). The principle was laid down by the Lord (Matt. 10:40, 41). Paul later exhorts the same way and uses the same verb (1 Cor. 16:15). The facts are well known here. He uses another term also (1 Cor. 16:18) where the personal character of some is in view. Why mention these men? Because they would not lead the Corinthians astray, as others were obviously doing.

b. To esteem

This verb means to consider or think (cf. Eph. 3:15; Phil. 2:3, 6). It is to be done "exceedingly." This double compound adverb is forceful (cf. 3:10; Eph. 3:20). It means: "abundantly more than out of bounds." This is to be done "in love." The better rendering of the phrase is: "esteem them in love exceeding highly." Hence, love is to govern the attitude of the saints towards their leaders. Note carefully: however much it may be needed, admonition will provoke resentment and rebellion where the hearts of His own are not submissive to the Word He has given. The rationale for treating leaders this way is their work. Elsewhere it is due to their future activity (Heb. 13:17).

3. By INSTRUCTION

a. They labor

Here is a present active participle. As God views them, the leaders are laborers. The word here means to toil or make weary. It is used of physical toil (Matt. 6:28; 1 Cor. 4:12), weariness from toil (John 4:6), and of labor among the saints (Col. 1:24; 1 Tim. 5:17).

b. They supervise

Literally the verb means to "stand before." Therefore, it means to attend to, care for, lead. It is the verb rendered "rule" in the family (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12),

the church (Rom. 12:8; 1 Tim. 5:17), and is translated "maintain" (Tit. 3:8, 14). It is used in a technical sense of elders who rule (1 Tim. 5:17). These same men are called "bishops" or "overseers" (Tit. 1:7; Acts. 11:30; 14:23). They are called "guides" (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24). The term "shepherd" is also applicable to them (Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:2). That these are a special class of persons who have particular roles in the local church is evident. These several functions have traditionally been attributed to the local pastor of a congregation. These men are specially equipped by the Holy Spirit for ministry. It has been found that these same individuals have normally been trained to meet standards of excellence which fit them for the ministry to which they are called. The rule is "in the Lord." Hence, this responsibility is 1) in the church; 2) in spiritual things; and 3) ultimately rests with a divine appointment.

c. They admonish

The verb employed here means to "put into the mind." Therefore, it is used of 1) instruction and 2) warning. It is to be distinguished from correction by discipline (Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:6) and remonstrance which is little more than expostulation (1 Sam. 2:24). This is a very strong term and usually relates to things which are wrong. It is here that the bite comes. Men usually turn from this, but it is a God-given responsibility of church leaders.

NOTE: 1. These responsibilities are all headed by a single definite article, thus they are three functions which are included in one person. 2. There is a great cry for plurality of these leaders. While this may have been true in any given single local church, it nonetheless did not rob that assembly of a further single headship under Christ (1 Tim. 5:17). This single person was similar to the head elder in a local synagogue. Those who advance plurality of leadership locally normally call for consensus in decision-making processes. Nowhere is this sort of thing represented in the Bible, whether Old Testament (where there were orders of priests and Levites, each with his own appointment) nor in the New Testament (where there were disciples and apostles, again each with his own labor). Probably at the root of this plurality drive is the attempt to oppose God-given and God-appointed leadership in the local assembly. It is the sort of