

“Leaders” in Hebrews 13

In Hebrews 13 there are two mentions of “leaders” (JND tr.). They are, “which have the rule over you”, (vs.7) and “that have the rule over you” (vs.17.) It is important to know, that Hebrews does not give us church truth, that is, union with Christ our Head in heaven. It does give us, as individual believers, a pattern of how to live a Christian life on earth. Neither does it give us Christ as, “having ascended up on high, He has led captivity captive, and has given gifts unto men....for the perfecting of the saints.” (Down here.) (Eph. 4:8-11). Noticing these important truths, we can understand in a clearer way what it means to “be submissive” to those who bear the character of leaders as given in this chapter and elsewhere in the Word.

First, I would call attention to something we may not notice as important. It is not profound. Verse 7, referring to those whose lives are already over, comes before verse 17, which refers to those who are presently alive. Those leaders in verse seven, take an important precedence, over those in verse seventeen. Not simply because of time, but because only of them is it said, “who have spoken unto you the Word of God.” Notice the Word of God was “spoken unto you.” It is not here, as in 2 Timothy 2:2, the committing, of things heard “to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

Here, all of these dear believers had the wonderful foundation of hearing “the Word of God”. If those who were in the present place of being leaders did not follow that Word themselves, the saints were to “remember those” who had spoken it, and follow their “faith”.

The doctrine had been taught by those leaders now gone. Verse seven is followed by these words, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever, Be not carried about by strange doctrine..” (verses eight & nine) . This would take precedence over any at the present time who led contrary to “to the Word of God” spoken by those now gone.

What a blessed safeguard this is against those who would take the place of “leaders”, who lead in disobedience to God’s Word. When one who takes the place of being a leader violates the conscience of one, who has had his conscience formed by the “Word of God”, that leader is to be rejected. He has not that place from God.

The leadership spoken of in verse 17 is gained by spiritual men, who have attained to a higher level of spirituality than that of those they lead. The led, follow their pattern of life that their own spiritual state might be more fully developed like that which is seen in their leaders lives.

This is a normal pattern for Christian growth. It is not here a question of teaching doctrine but of living it. Thus the apostle himself states in the following verse “Pray for us; for we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” Such is the character of the leaders here. (vs.17) To such leaders we should joyfully be submissive, for truly, “they watch for you souls.”

We see leadership here, as elsewhere, relates to Christian living . It does not, relate to assembly discipline. Only the assembly administrates that. Else, it is not assembly discipline. Leaders are never the assembly, nor can they act in place of the assembly.

Discipline is for the purpose of purging the leavened lump of the leaven. leaders are are part of that lump. Should the assembly refuse to “purge out ... the old leaven”* the leaders can only, as anyone else “purge himself” by withdrawing from the leavened lump. This is the responsibility of every Christian. But this is not assembly discipline. (1 Cor. 5 & 2 Tim. 2:21)

**Any thinking of “purging” “himself “ should note the leaven is called “old” . It is sin known to the entire assembly . In such a case remonstrance with the assembly itself would first be done before withdrawing oneself. (1 Cor.5:1-7)*