

SCRIPTURAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

In order to have a strong faithful congregation it is necessary to have strong faithful leadership. It has been said that a congregation is no stronger than its leaders. This means that if those who take the lead in the church are weak spiritually, the whole congregation is effected. Peter seems to indicate this when he writes to the elders in the church, "...being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our supreme leader and He sets the example for all who would be leaders in the church today.

There are many good men in the church who want to see the church grow and prosper, but all have not learned the importance of leadership. It is the purpose of this article to point out some Bible requirements for men to qualify for the kind of leadership the Lord wants in the church. In Heb. 13:7 we are told, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." The Revised Standard Version says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith."

One of the first things we need to understand is that there is no official office in the church called "leader". Leadership is an ability. Some have the ability to lead, and others do not. Some may have the ability, but are not qualified for other reasons. Some would like to be leaders in the church, but do not have the ability or the qualifications.

In our worship services we have men who lead singing. We have others who lead prayer. In both of these capacities these individuals are leaders — song leaders and prayer leaders — but they occupy no official position. So it is with other leaders in the church.

In order for a man to be a qualified elder in the church he must be a leader of men. But men can take the lead in the Lord's work who are not elders.

In the Bible we have examples of men who were leaders in carrying out the will of God. Jesus is the most notable example of all. The apostle Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Christ was the supreme leader because He was the Son of God and was always an example in doing the will of His Father. He said, "And he that sent me is with me: The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (Jno. 8:29). Again, He said, "...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

In the Old Testament Moses was a leader of the children of Israel, because God selected him to deliver His people from slavery in the land of Egypt and to lead them to the place of "milk and honey". At first he offered excuses. He did not think the people would believe that God had chosen him for this job. When that excuse didn't work, he complained that he was "not eloquent" and was "slow of speech" (Ex. 4:1, 10-16). But God would not take "no" for an answer and promised He would be with him and qualify him to serve as a leader of his people. Moses became the great deliverer with the help of God and the assistance his brother, Aaron, and served God in that capacity for forty long years.

In the sixth chapter of Judges we read the account of another successful leader chosen by God. His name was Gideon. He was told to fight against the Medianites who were the enemies of God. Gideon did not hesitate to rally an army of 32,000 ready to go to war. But God told him he had too many. All were given permission to return home who really did not want to fight. That day Gideon lost 22,000 of his men. However, he was still ready to go against the enemy under God's direction. But He was told he still had too many men. A simple test was given. Only three hundred passed it, and with this small force Gideon successfully fought against the enemy of God.

In the New Testament the apostle Paul who at one time "made havoc of the church"(Acts 8:3) became one of the greatest proponents of truth the world has ever known. He was a natural born leader of men. Before his conversion he was known as "Saul of Tarsus" and was the archenemy of Christ. And when he was converted and became an apostle of our Lord, when it came to leadership he stood head and shoulders above all other apostles and wrote more books in the New Testament than any other man. He urged other Christians to follow him as he followed Christ.

One of the requirements for a person to be a leader in the church is great faith. A man of weak faith is not, yea cannot be, a leader among Christians. The apostle Paul expressed a powerful faith when he wrote "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Solomon said, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

Knowledge of the scriptures is an absolute requirement to be a spiritual leader. Jesus said, "...If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 13:14). A person is going to have to know what the will of God is if he is going to help lead others to heaven.

Wisdom is needed for a leader to do a good job, whether he is an elder or not. Wisdom is the proper or best use of knowledge. The writer of Proverbs said, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding" (Prov. 4:7). The apostle James wrote, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

A leader must be an example. Paul wrote to Titus and said, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" (Tit.2:7). Jesus taught His apostles, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). A person is not a leader who is not strong spiritually and sets a good example for others to follow. Paul wrote, "Be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). Again, he says, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11).

One must not show partiality if he is going to be a leader in the church. The apostle Paul wrote Timothy and said, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:21). Solomon wrote, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 17:15). "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons (Col. 3:25). One cannot be partial if he is to be respected as a faithful leader of the Lord's people.

One more requirement for a man to be a respected and efficient leader is that must show stability. He must not vassilate. He cannot be fickle. James says, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). Paul writes, "My beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

In conclusion let me say this. There is a dire need for good, sound scriptural leadership in the church today, men who know what is right and will stand for the truth. We need leadership that puts the Lord and the church first in their lives. We need men who are good examples, who command respect because they are genuine Christians and who are concerned for the salvation of souls and the strength and growth of the church. With this kind of leadership the Lord will bless His people and their efforts.