

Message #74

I Corinthians 16:15-18

Carnal churches and carnal people do not like to follow or submit to anyone. If you look carefully at the text before us, you will notice three key verbs:

- 1) The verb “know” (16:15), which means to know in a unique sense of respect and appreciate.
- 2) The verb “submit” (16:16), which means to recognize rank and place yourself in subjection under it.
- 3) The verb “acknowledge” (16:18), which means to know in the sense of discerning by discovery.

In other words, the church is to discern and discover leaders who are faithful and they are to respect them and submit to them and to recognize them.

A N.T. CHURCH OF GOD IS TO DISCOVER, RECOGNIZE, RESPECT, APPRECIATE AND SUBMIT TO THOSE WHO HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES FAITHFUL BY THEIR DILIGENT WORK FOR GOD IN HIS LOCAL CHURCH.

Carnal churches do not like to highly esteem anyone and they certainly do not want to submit to any authority.

WAY #1 – A man the church should honor will be identified by key servants of God.
16:15, 17

By virtue of the fact that Paul specifically names Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus and specifically says they should be honored, is enough to have the church honor them. If Paul esteemed them, so should the church.

In Pauline letters he names two types of people; those who should be honored and those who shouldn't.

WAY #2 – A man the church should honor will be discovered by the time of salvation.
16:15a

The house of Stephanas was the first fruits of Achaia.

Paul is very careful to point out that Stephanas was the “first fruits” of Achaia, not Corinth, because Aquila and Priscilla were the first fruits of Corinth (Acts 18:1-2). Apparently Stephanas was part of the Athens group who first responded to the Gospel (Acts 17:34). Paul himself had baptized the believers of Stephanas' house (I Cor. 1:16). The fact that Paul calls them “first fruits” indicates that these were the first from Achaia to be converted and dedicated to Jesus Christ. This was the first family that was planted in the faith and had grown to harvest age.

In the mind of Paul, one way to determine who is to be esteemed in the church is to watch them over a period of time. Time is one key Biblical method to determine faithfulness. Consistent attitudes and actions over a period of time determine who is worthy of honor in the church and who isn't.

Churches somehow forget that it is not the novice that is to be honored; it is the veteran. One who has proven himself faithful over a period of time is the one who is to be esteemed and honored.

WAY #3 – A man the church should honor will be one who ministers to the saints. **16:15b**

The word “devote” is intriguing because it is a word that literally means to assign, to appoint or to order by one's own authority. The word “ministry” is a word that refers to a working servant, who cares for and who attends to the needs of others.

What Paul is saying is that the one who is to be respected and honored is one who, by his own initiative, took it upon himself to take care of the needs of believers in the church.

The word “saint” refers to God's people.

It was not their social status or financial status that was to be honored; it was their humble service.

WAY #4 – A man the church should honor will be one who labors with other leaders. **16:16**

As we said, the word “submit” speaks of recognition of rank and a willing placement of one's self under that rank.

The N.T. church is to be a place where there is recognition of rank and a proper submission to rank. For example: 1) We are to submit to each other (Eph. 5:21); 2) Husbands are to submit to Jesus Christ (I Cor. 11:3); 3) Wives are to submit to husbands (Eph. 5:22; I Cor. 11:3); 4) Children are to submit to parents (Eph. 6:1-3); 5) Believers are to submit to government (Rom. 13:1); and 6) Younger are to submit to the older (I Pet. 5:5); 7) All are to submit to church leadership (Heb. 13:17). Submission is a good Biblical way to gauge spirituality.

The primary concern in submission is not who we are over, but who we are under.

The word “help” is a word that specifically means to “work together with” and the word “labor” is a word that refers to working with effort, to the point of growing weary.

The church is to take note of those who have worked hard with those who have been called and gifted by God in the work of God and they are to submit to them. They have earned their rank by their submission to and work with other high-ranking men of God.

WAY #5 – A man the church should honor will be one who has positively impacted other leaders. **16:17-18**

It is clear that the three named here, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, took it upon themselves to go to Ephesus to see Paul in order to “supply what was lacking” from the Corinthian church.

This probably refers to a spiritual, emotional and financial lack.

The ministry is often draining, not refreshing. It is wonderful and rare when servants take it on themselves to be a refreshing influence on the life of one who is in God’s work.

Are we one who refreshes the work of God or one who drains the work of God? Are we one who is refreshing because we are so highly committed to God’s Word, God’s church and God’s people, or are we one who is a constant drain?