

Hebrews
(Lesson 25)

Introduction:

1. Hebrews 13 contains a number of instructions that are designed to help the Lord's people remain faithful to Him, including:
 - a. showing love and hospitality to others (vs.1-3)
 - b. maintaining faithfulness and purity in marriage relations (vs.4)
 - c. avoiding covetousness and being content (vs.5-6)
 - d. remembering faithful instructors from the past (vs.7)
 - e. following Christ's example of steadfastness (vs.8-9)
 - f. offering sacrifices (vs.10-16).
2. (vs.17) The Lord's people are to obey and submit to their leaders.

Discussion:

- I. LET US IDENTIFY THE "RULERS" [LEADERS] UNDER CONSIDERATION
 - A. The Lord's plan is for each congregation to be led by a special group of men.
 1. Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23).
 2. Titus was instructed to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5).
 3. The church in Philippi had bishops as well as deacons (Philippians 1:1).
 - B. Only qualified men may serve in this capacity (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).
 - C. In the Bible, congregational leaders are referred to as "elders" (Acts 14:23), "overseers" (Acts 20:28), "pastors" (Ephesians 4:11), and "bishops" (1 Timothy 3:1).
- II. ELDERS HAVE WEIGHTY RESPONSIBILITIES
 - A. (Hebrews 13:17) One responsibility is to "watch" for the souls of the congregation they lead.
 1. Watch: "to exercise constant vigilance" (as a shepherd watches over his sheep)
 2. Elders will give account for the manner in which they watch over the flock.
 - B. Additional responsibilities are revealed in:
 1. Acts 20:28-31 -- taking heed to self, taking heed to all the flock, feeding the flock, protecting the flock
 2. 1 Peter 5:1-3 -- feeding the flock (as a shepherd leads his sheep to green pastures), overseeing the flock (to inspect, to look after, to care for), not being lords, setting the proper example
 3. Titus 1:9-11 -- holding fast the faithful Word, exhorting, convincing, and shutting the mouths of gainsayers
 4. James 5:14 -- visiting and caring for the sick.
- III. THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE TO OBEY AND SUBMIT TO THEIR LEADERS
 - A. As elders fulfill their responsibilities, members of the flock are to submit to their leadership.
 - B. Doing so will allow the elders to do their work with joy and not with grief.
- IV. LET US DETERMINE WHETHER A CONGREGATION MAY EXIST WITHOUT ELDERS
 - A. In making this determination, let us consider 2 principles.
 1. First, newly established congregations in the New Testament existed for a time before elders were appointed.
 2. Second, a congregation may not have men who are qualified to be elders.
 - B. Let us also consider the example set by the church in Jerusalem.
 1. We learn from Acts 15:2 that this church eventually had elders.
 2. However, in Acts 6:1-7, a matter was taken care of before elders are mentioned.
 - a. A problem developed in this congregation (vs.1).
 - b. The apostles dealt with this matter before the church, and they involved the members (vs.2-4).
 - c. All the people involved cooperated, and the church continued to grow (vs.5-7).

Conclusion:

When the leaders of a congregation follow Christ and the members follow their leaders, faithfulness will result.