

Faith Pulpit

Followers of Faithful Men

Two verses of scripture from Hebrews have been used and perhaps sometimes misused in the context of spiritual followership. Hebrews 13:7 reads, “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.”

An understanding of this verse is vital to our appreciation of leadership and followership.

We are reminded that a leader has the responsibility of providing direction. He is told that he is to rule. We must harmonize this, however, with other passages of scripture in the New Testament which reinforce congregational decision-making: Acts 6: 1–7; 15:1, 2, 4, 12, 22–25 and 1 Corinthians 5:1–13. The kind of rule described in the New Testament involves teaching, preaching, and godly example. Thus, their rule would be moral, doctrinal, and spiritual persuasion.

The request of the writer of Hebrews is this, “Remember them which have the rule over you.” We are to be mindful of these leaders. We are to respect them. We are to remember how and what they taught, and thus follow them in their faith and in their faithfulness.

These former leaders had spoken unto them the Word of God, but now their earthly life had come to a close. Therefore, the saints were to continually call to mind those who had at one time had the rule over them. Those who had the rule over them were spiritual men who faithfully taught them the Word of God and lived according to the instructions they provided.

The importance of this remembrance and respect comes into focus when we observe the reason these saints were to remember their leaders of the past. The leaders were to leave behind such an example of faith and holiness so that the saints would follow their example.

These are clearly leaders in the spiritual realm. These were true men who had faithfully discharged their responsibilities as ministers of Jesus Christ. Remembering such leaders would have a sanctifying

effect and would serve as a possible restraint to those who were tempted to turn away from the truth.

The truth which a man preaches is always closely related to the life which he lives. The three elements which are contained here are the word which they spoke, the life which they lived, and the faith which they exercised.

It's relatively easy for a preacher to tell his listeners to remember the truth which he preached and forget him. However, most of us remember well numerous men who have spoken to us the truth and have also demonstrated for us the faith we are to hold dear. It is no light thing for us to be ministers of the Word of God because long after our voices are quieted, our lives continue to speak. Therefore, faithful leaders will often produce imitators of their faith and faithfulness. We are not told that we should mimic the mannerisms of men or to copy the techniques of men, but to be faithful followers of men who have been true.

- Does your pastor faithfully preach the Word of God?
- Does he have a faith that is worth emulating? Is he faithfully giving himself to the ministry?
- Is he honest, pure, and godly in his character? If so, then he should be respected.

A second verse of Scripture that must be considered and understood is Hebrews 13:17. This verse reads, "Obey them who have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

This is a reference to an authority which must not be abused. On the other hand, it must not be overlooked. The spiritual leaders referred to in this verse are still in their midst, and in these men was found the same consistency of life and doctrine as in those who had already finished their course described in Hebrews 13:7.

It appears that the leaders were true to Christ, but that some of the saints were turning away from Christ. Now if these teachers demanded things that were not in accord with their calling, then certainly no obedience was due to them.

Insubordination, however, made needless burdens for these leaders. There is a command for obedience and honor. People ought to have confidence in their pastors and to have proper respect for them. Unfortunately, there are some leaders who have nothing but the title and often use their title for the purpose of destroying.

These leaders are responsible for the souls of these saints, and therefore it is imperative that they be followed. Leaders, therefore, must be able to distinguish between friend and foe. Watching means keeping self—as well as others—safe wherever danger is known to exist.

These leaders were godly men who exercised sound, spiritual leadership and demonstrated true concern for people.

This kind of leadership and followership is still needed today. May God give us spiritual leaders and spiritual saints like those described in these passages of Scripture.

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Dr. Robert Domokos (D.Min.) is a seasoned pastor, educator, and leader with a heart for ministry and the local church. Referred to as "Dr. Bob" by students and peers, Domokos has served in various pastoral roles and is known for his teaching, mentoring, and discipleship efforts within the church.

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