

Hebrews 13:17-25

Brown Community Group September 23, 2018

Obey Your Leaders

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

This is a follow-up to verse 7, which apparently refers to leaders who are no longer alive:

Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

This is clearly referring to church leaders as and not to government leaders. Scripture supporting obedience to government is found in Romans 13, Titus 3, 1 Peter 2 and Matthew 22.

So, who are the leaders? The term refers to “leaders” or “guides” and is the same word for “bishops” or, as we call them, “elders.” It does not refer to preachers or pastors since they did not exist at the time, but could it? I believe (only my opinion) that spiritual leaders refer to anyone that acts as a guide to someone else in their journey. That would include preachers, elders, teachers and mentors.

This simple verse can be divided into three parts which say:

1. Obey the leaders of the church – these are people who “lead” us or help us down our spiritual walk. The Greek word for submit is *hupеiko*, which means “resist no longer.” It is the only biblical use of this word.
2. The duty of the leaders is to watch over our souls and they will be responsible for their task and must answer to God.
3. The last sentence can have two meanings:
 - a. If the guide’s flock has been faithful under his leadership, his account will be a joy when he must face God. If they have not or if he has failed, his account will be full of groaning and excuses. This will not help his flock.
 - b. You should be a joy to your leaders and not a burden. If you support your leaders with obedience and a good attitude, their watch will be one of joy. If they are met with criticism, resistance and groaning, their watch will be a heavy burden and no advantage to you.

Pray for Us

Hebrews 13:18:19 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Some feel that the author is imprisoned and is asking for prayers because a few verses later, in verse 23, he says “You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.” Since the author is free to travel when Timothy arrives, they appear to both be free. The author is probably constrained by commitments.

However, there is one big question of the verse: why does he feel the need to justify his conscience and actions in order to ask for prayer?

Benediction

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

A benediction like this was common in letters of the time and may be more colloquial than original.

Final Greetings

Hebrews 13:22-25 I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵Grace be with all of you.

Observations on the paragraph:

- Although a long letter, he does not feel he covered everything. He is implying that there is more to learn on his exhortations.
- Update on Timothy. Not something to find in the “pseudo-gospels” but lends credibility to the book.
- The Italy remark shows a couple of things:
 - Neither the author or the recipients were in Italy
 - It shows how the gospel has spread at the time, all the way from Jerusalem to Italy
 - To me, I find it ironic that Jesus was killed by Rome thousands of miles from the seat of government yet Jesus has now invaded Italy and Rome.

Questions

1. Who are our leaders? Are they limited to people we see at church? Are you ever a leader?
 2. How do we bring joy and how do we bring groaning to our leaders? What can we do to bring joy other than not causing groaning?
 3. How does making our leaders’ lives joyful provide an advantage to us?
 4. Why did the author prove a clear conscience and honorable acts before asking for prayer?
-