

**Hebrews 13:7,17**

It is generally recognized that Hebrews 13:7 is referring to past leaders who have already died and Hebrews 13:17 (and vs. 24) refers to current leaders. Steven J. Cole captures the intent of these (and the following verses) verses well in the context of the book: "The author was concerned that his readers would be 'carried away by varied and strange teachings' (13:9), including returning to Judaism. So he calls them to remember the godly teachers who had spoken the word of God to them (13:7). Even though these men had now died, Jesus Christ, whom they preached, is the same yesterday, today, and forever (13:8). His grace (13:9) and His sacrificial death on the cross (13:10-12) are at the center of sound doctrine. Jesus and His death on the cross have become our altar, which supercedes and replaces the Jewish altar in the temple. Therefore, we must turn our backs on Judaism and every other religion and hold firmly to Christ and the cross (13:13). If such faith leads to hardship, rejection, persecution, or even death, keep in mind that we are not living for rewards in this life, but for the reward He has promised us in heaven (13:14),"

THE ANTIDOTE TO FALSE TEACHING Hebrews 13:7-14, February 27, 2005.

**7 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.**

First, though, what are the biblical features of leadership.

- 1) Humble, servant character - Mark 10:42-45
  - 42 *But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.*
  - 43 *But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:*
  - 44 *And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.*
  - 45 *For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*
  
- 2) Shared oversight - 1 Timothy 5:17 *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*
  
- 3) Non-clerical structure - there is no division between clergy and laity  
 Church at Pergamos  
 Revelation 2:15 *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*  
 Nicolaitans  
 "The meaning of the Greek is "rulers of the people." This meaning may imply that this was an attempt to divide and make an unnatural distinction between the clergy and laity, creating a division in which the clergy exercised rulership over the laity. Certainly, elders have the biblical authority to determine the policy of the local church. But the authority described here probably went much further than the issues in the local church and may have extended to the personal lives of the members."  
 Biblestudytools.com
  
- 4) Scriptural qualifications - moral and spiritual 1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9.  
*A bishop then must be blameless....*  
 willingness 1 Peter 5:2  
*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind*
  
- 5) Male leadership - 1 Timothy 2:8-3:13  
*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...*

### Three things about these leaders

#### 1) They were (or are) rulers over you

- 1 Peter 5:     1     *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*  
                  2     *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*  
                  3     *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

#### 2) They have faithfully spoken the word of God

- 1 Timothy 5:   17     *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*  
                  18     *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*

"These men 'spoke the word of God' to the Hebrews. God's Word is the only source for sound teaching. Yet we live in a day when very few pastors devote themselves to teaching God's Word in a systematic way. Many evangelical churches, in an attempt to reach the unchurched ('seekers'), have abandoned teaching through the Bible verse by verse, for fear that some of the difficult doctrines may offend people. They aim the church service at giving the 'customers' what they want: topical messages on how to have a happy life. They avoid talking about sin or judgment or anything controversial. In many cases, their messages could have come out of Reader's Digest rather than the Bible! You should evaluate any teaching by the criteria, 'Does it explain the text of Scripture in its context and apply it to my life?'"

THE ANTIDOTE TO FALSE TEACHING Hebrews 13:7-14 By Steven J. Cole February 27, 2005

#### 3) They have been faithful in their life.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:     6     *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*  
                              7     *For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;*  
                              8     *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:*  
                              9     *Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.*

1 Corinthians 11:1     *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

- Philippians 3:     16     *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*  
                              17     *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*  
                              18     *(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*  
                              19     *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

Hebrews 6:12     *That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Believers are reminded that they have three basic responsibilities in regard to the rulers.

- 1) **Remember** - is in the present imperative and is to be mindful of, to call to mind  
We are to remember godly leaders of the past.
- 2) **Follow** - to imitate  
We are to follow the example of these godly leaders.
- 3) **Considering the end of *their* conversation** - to look at attentively, to consider well, to observe accurately  
  
We are to look at the lives of leaders and, importantly, how they ended their life. Did they complete their life with ethics, morality, faithfulness to God's word?

**17 Obey them that 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.**

We are commanded to obey and submit to those presently in authority over us. The context of this verse is that of church leaders. Perhaps this admonition is given because some of them were forsaking the local church (Hebrews 10:25) and needed to be reminded that they should obey and submit to godly leaders.

Expositors Bible Commentary says: "Having exhorted the Hebrews to keep in mind their former rulers and adhere to their teaching, the writer now admonishes them, probably in view of a certain mutinous and separatist spirit, (10:25) encouraged by their reception of strange doctrines, to obey their present leaders, and yield themselves trustfully (*hupeikete*) to their teaching - an admonition which, as Weiss remarks, shows that these teachers held the same views as the writer."

"Obviously these commands do not call for obedience in situations where the leader is not leading Biblically. We saw this kind of blind obedience to Jim Jones who orchestrated the murder 909 followers by ordering them to commit mass suicide by drinking poisoned Flavor-Aid. Neither does this passage provide any justification for authoritarian churches, like some of the contemporary house-churches whose members submit virtually every decision of their lives to their elders." PreceptAustin.org

Ungodly leaders are not to be submitted to but rebuked according to 1 Timothy 5:19-21:

*Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.  
Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.  
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.*

- Obey and submit (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;  
And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*  
  
*because*
  - Godly leaders watch for your souls (what does this imply?).

Acts 20:26-31

- 26 *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.*
- 27 *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*
- 28 *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
- 29 *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*
- 30 *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*
- 31 *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

- Leaders must give an account of their rule to God.

so

- They may do it with joy, not with grief

3 John 4; Philippians 1:3-4; 2:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

*For ye are our glory and joy.*

- If they are doing it in grief it is not profitable for you.

"*Stenazo* (grief) refers to the utterances of a person who is caught in a dreadful situation and has no immediate prospect of deliverance."

Acts 7:34      *I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.*

**Godly leadership should be submitted to, honored, prayed for, and encouraged as they are servants of God and watch for our souls.**