

This second section of final exhortations relates to the responsibilities the Christian community has toward their leaders:

- **“Remember them** which have the rule over you...” (v. 7)
- **“Obey them** that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves...” (v. 17)

Between these two exhortations to *remember* and *obey*, in verses 9 – 16 the author expands on the “why” of *remembering* and *obeying* their leaders:

- **so that his readers are not “blown away”** (compare Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:14) **from the gospel** which was taught to them by their leaders (compare 2:1 – 3 and “[*God has*] *spoken unto us by His Son*” in 1:1-2] by false teachers who would deny the gospel and lead them back into the bondage of the Old Testament Levitical cult of sacrifices and legalism (“meats,” and “an altar” (vv. 9 – 10), and ultimately to “deny the Lord who bought them” (2 Peter 2:1 – 3; Jude 4).
- **so that his readers are prepared to be ostracized** by their unbelieving family and by the unbelieving community, both Roman and Jewish, in which they live and work; that like Christ they must be prepared to “*suffer without the gate*” (v. 12) as they “*bear his reproach*” (v. 13)
- **so that by Christ his readers “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually”** (which relates to “*servicing God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” 12:28). This praise to God is offered in the context of their *suffering reproach for the name of Christ* and the *material sacrifices they are making* in sacrificially giving out of their own resources to meet the material needs of their brothers and sisters in the Christian community (v. 16). Note that it is with these sacrifices “*God is well pleased*” and not with the sacrifices under the old covenant (10:6, 8),

“Remember them which have the rule over you...” v. 7

The leaders in view in verse 7 are not the same leaders in view in v. 17. The sense of the original language is past tense – “**who HAVE spoken unto you the word of God**” (KJV) or “those who SPOKE to you the word of God” (ESV). The leaders in view are in some sense FORMER leaders (rulers), or they have died, which is the most likely scenario. The readers are exhorted to “remember” these leaders, a clear indication that the leaders in view have died. “...the end of their conversation” in v. 7 is also an indicator that these leaders have died.

In identifying these leaders, the KJV uses both present tense (“them which HAVE the rule over you”) and past tense (“which HAVE spoken unto you the word of God”). It is what the leaders taught and preached (the gospel) which is to be esteemed, even as what they taught (the gospel) still rules over them in the word of God which is presently being preached by their present leaders.

Specifically, the author may have in view Stephen (Acts 7) and James (Acts 12:2), both pillars in the New Testament church, who both boldly preached the gospel, and who both gave their lives as martyrs for the gospel. These leaders are the “apostles and prophets” upon whose teaching the Church is founded

(Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:20). This is *“the things which we have heard”* (2:1), things *“spoken by the Lord”* (2:3) and **“confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”**

Note the qualification: not all leaders in the church are to be remembered and obeyed. Only those leaders *“who have spoken unto you the word of God”* (v. 7). Clearly there were “false teachers” among the leaders who ought NOT to be remembered or obeyed, but rather exposed. The false teachers are to be tested by the word of God which the readers had received from the apostles and prophets.

Beyond this, the fact that these leaders had died may have caused some to believe that what they taught was no longer applicable or valid, which is the explanation for the seemingly out of place statement in verse 8: *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”* In other words, the words of the apostles and prophets were the words of Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-2 and 2:1-3), and those words will never “pass away” (Luke 21:33). This also becomes the criteria for “obeying them that have the rule over you” in 13:17. If the leaders are not speaking the words of the apostles which were the words of Jesus, those leaders no longer have legitimate authority over God’s people. It is the word of God which “rules,” not merely the men who are speaking it (see Colossians 3:15-16)

How are these leaders to be remembered?

- *“Whose faith follow”* (KJV) or *“imitate their faith”* (ESV)

Pink: “The reference (to faith) is not only to the grace of faith which was in them, but in its whole exercise in all that they did and suffered. Amid much discouragement and bitter opposition those Christian leaders had not fainted, but held on their way.”

What is in view is the steadfast commitment of these leaders to what they believed, a commitment that the author has been exhorting his readers to almost from the beginning of the letter.

- *“Considering the end of their conversation”* (KJV) or *“the outcome of their way of life”* (ESV)

Pink points out that the word translated “end” here is not the usual word which means objective or conclusion. It’s a word that means “a going up out of,” the use of which in this context Pink interprets to mean “a going up out of this world of sin and sorrow...deliverance from all their trials, an escape from dangers and difficulties.” Pink points out that the same Greek word is used in 1 Corinthians 10:13, but there it is not translated “end;” it’s translated “way of escape.”

Pink: “The whole force of this second exhortation is that we are to so ‘remember’ our leaders as to be thereby influenced unto the living of a holy life. To ‘follow’ their faith means to ponder their trust in God and pray for an increase in our own.”

It must be understood that the exhortation to *“remember them which have the rule over you”* does not mean that the mere fact that a man holds a leadership position in the church that he is to be esteemed. **It is what these leaders are in terms of their commitment to the word of God, their steadfast faithfulness to the gospel and the Lord Jesus, and the holy character they modeled which warrant the esteem they receive.**

One final note: there is nothing in verse 7 that justifies the veneration of dead saints, an error of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. It is the word of God which they preached and taught that is to be venerated. Our response is to imitate their faith, not to idolize them.