

"Obey them that have the rule over you..." v. 17

Tom Schreiner: "The author assumes in giving this command that the leaders teach and live in accord with the theology taught in the letter. The readers should not submit if the leaders deviate from the gospel. In our antiauthoritarian age the call to submit to leaders is often misunderstood. The author isn't supporting the unbridled authority of leaders. If the readers flout the authority of the leaders, they are resisting the gospel itself and are in danger of committing apostasy."

The concern of the author throughout this letter is that these Hebrew Christians were drifting away from the gospel, casting away their confidence, and drawing back to the legalistic rituals of the old covenant, thus denying the Lord who bought them. Their obedience and submission to their leaders who faithfully proclaim the gospel to them is a safeguard against apostasy.

Beyond that, the original Greek word *peithō* translated *obey* in verse 17 is translated *persuaded* in 6:9 and 11:13 and *trust* in 2:13 and 13:18. To obey then means *to be persuaded* by the words and the lifestyle (see 13:7) of those whom God has placed over them. Leaders do not coerce. Godly leaders persuade, exhort, and appeal – they don't dictate or lord over.

"...and submit yourselves..."

Submit here is to stop resisting, and rather yield to or give way to the gospel that is being preached by the leaders.

Why should we be persuaded by our leaders:

- ***They watch for our souls*** as "overseers" Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2
- ***They must give an account*** for their watching for our souls.
 - The leaders do not have free reign. They are accountable to the chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:3-4) who is "the great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20)
- ***That they may exercise oversight with joy and not grief:***
 - The leaders are joyful or grieved for God's sake as they observe how God's people respond to the gospel, not by how the people respond to THEM.
 - The leaders have joy when those they lead are making progress in grace: Rom 15:30-33; 2 Cor 2:1-3; 2 Cor 7:4, 13; Phil 2:2; 4:1; 1 Thes 2:19-20; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:4; 3 John 4
- ***That we may profit from their faithfulness to the gospel:***
 - Our yielding to the gospel as it is taught to us is not only for the benefit of those who teach and lead. It is profitable for us: 2 Timothy 3:16 (cp. Heb 4:2). We do injury to ourselves when we fail to yield to the gospel preached by our leaders.

“Pray for us...” v. 18

“Us” as used here is a literary plural, meaning the author is asking prayer for himself. Such requests are customary at the conclusion of the New Testament epistles: Romans 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thes 5:23.

“...a good conscience...willing to live honestly.”

The language reflects the authors own desire for his personal perseverance under the same pressures his readers are facing, although there seems to be an indication that he himself is either imprisoned or otherwise restricted from freely coming to them (13:19). His plea that he maintains “a good conscience” and “honesty” reflects Peter in 1 Peter 2:11-17 and 3:15-17 where Peter exhorts his readers to submit themselves to their persecutors while staying true to the gospel (Peter: *“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles...”* [2:12] and *“Having a good conscience”* [3:16]).

The Benediction vv. 20, 21

This closing prayer for these believers whom he has been exhorting in this letter to not draw back to perdition, to not fall away, to not cast away their confidence, but hold fast their confidence firm to the end and to draw near to God (13:22) grounds their perseverance in “the God of peace,” or the God who is the source of peace and gives peace. Verse 20 indicates what the God of peace did in raising Christ from the dead, and verse 21 indicates that this same God of peace uses this same power which raised Christ from the dead to make us perfect in every good work, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight. In 13:16 the author indicated God is “well pleased” with our sacrifices of praise, the good works which we do, and our sharing our material resources with impoverished believers. This Benediction makes it clear that even these sacrifices which we offer do not come from ourselves or our own resources, but from “the God of peace.”

Verses 20 and 21 form a parallel. What the God of peace did in raising Christ from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant is what he does for us in making us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ.

<i>“Now the God of peace...”</i>	
“...that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ...”	“...make you perfect in every good work to do his will...”
“...that great shepherd of the sheep...”	“...working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight...”
“...through the blood of the everlasting covenant...”	“...through Jesus Christ;”
	“...to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”