

### The Context, vv. 9-17

- I. In vv.9-14 the author warns his readers that false teachers were trying to lead them back into the observance of the OT sacrifices. He tells them that Christ's sacrifice had so fully atoned for them that they needed no further sacrifices.
- II. Though God requires no further atoning sacrifice, He does call us to offer sacrifices of gratitude. Four are required of us in vv.15-18: the sacrifice of praise (v.15), good works (v.16), obedience to church leaders (v.17), and prayer for church leaders (v.18).
- III. The call to obey and submit to your spiritual leaders is therefore a spiritual sacrifice which God requires of you as your Redeemer.

### The Church's Duty

- I. Christ has appointed leaders or shepherds to shepherd His sheep for His sake, Acts 20.28
  - A. Of those who shepherd, Christ has provided two sorts: those who *only* rule and those who *also* preach and teach, 1Tim 5.17
  - B. Those who shepherd are not only called and gifted by Christ, but are His very *gift* to the church, Eph 4.8-13, a direct fruit of His *own* love and care for His church.
  - C. The day is coming when Christ will rule over us without any human instrument; but until then, He rules His church through men whom *He* appoints and gifts, and who serve as a testimony, not of His absence, but of *His* loving and caring presence.
  - D. This means how you treat your leaders is evidence of your love and honor of Christ, Lk 10.16
- II. So how should you treat them? You must obey them and submit to them. But this is not some blind obedience or slavish submission. It is:
  - A. An obedience which respects their *office* in Christ's Church. It's due to their office—not to their persons, and it recognizes that they, too, are under Christ's authority.
  - B. An obedience to their authority as *Christ's* undershepherds. They rule in His name and with His authority. It recognizes the honor which *Christ* has placed upon them.
  - C. An obedience *because* and *in so far* as their teaching and ruling agree with God's Word.
  - D. An obedience prompted by submissive and loving *hearts*.
  - E. A *humble* submission to their faithful instructions *and* their faithful reproofs and admonitions.

### The Church's Motivation

- I. Your leaders keep watch over your souls
  - A. Their call has a church focus, and they do all in their power to mature and strengthen the flock, 2Cor 12.15
  - B. Their call is no idler's call, but an extremely demanding one, which drives them to the throne of grace for their sufficiency, 2Cor 3.5-6
- II. Your leaders give an account to the Lord for their calling
  - A. They give an account to the Lord every day as they bring you before the Lord in prayer, thanking God for your growth, groaning before the Lord over your sin, and spreading your needs before the Lord as they seek your upholding and supply.
  - B. Thus, theirs is a stewardship and commission, *not* an ownership.
- III. This should motivate you to obey them in the Lord and submit to them as Christ's shepherds.
  - A. Unless they have spoken or acted of their own accord, you must not blame them for their care and ministry when it hurts, for they have but discharged their duty to their Lord and to you, 1Th 5.12

### The Church's Effect

- I. If your leaders are faithful to the Lord, then they are a fragrance of Christ unto God no matter how "successful" they may be in the church's or world's eyes.
  - A. But so far as the account they give of the sheep, it will be either with joy or groaning, depending on your behaviour.
  - B. If their greatest joy is to rejoice in you, 3Jn 4; 1Th 2.19-20, then it is a great grief to groan over the opposition and backwardness with which they meet in those whom they love and serve.
  - C. Thus, for both your advantage and your leaders' joy, the Lord calls you to obey them and submit to them *for His sake*.

### The Church's Response

- I. Pray for your elders, that they might be faithful.
- II. Pray for yourselves, that you might be obedient.
- III. Don't demand smooth talk from your pastor or weak leadership from your elders.
- IV. Don't complain about your leaders lest you despise Christ's government.
- V. Long with your leaders for that day when Christ Himself will rule from His throne over us all.