

# Speaking to the soul



## Spiritual leaders

**Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with**

## **joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. Hebrews 13:17**

The letter to the Hebrews often refers to the importance of obedience to the word of God. The writer therefore urges his readers to obey their church leaders as they teach God's word and watch over them. The responsibility of leaders is a huge one as they lead God's people, and it will only be a joyful experience if people take God's word seriously and seek to obey it. He wasn't encouraging a mindless obedience to church leaders but a thoughtful determination to be obedient to God's will. Having been a Bible teacher for many years I can assure you that I would be terrified if people ever did anything merely because I had said it! It is as leaders faithfully teach the word of God that people need to listen and obey with discernment.

I welcome the fact that we live in days when there is a high level of accountability. Every employed person is likely to have someone to whom they are directly accountable and will have regular reviews to ensure that they are performing effectively. This is entirely right and is helpful for both the employer and the employee. The writer to the Hebrews is clear that leaders have exactly the same relationship with God. We are daily accountable to God and one day will have to stand before the Lord and give an account of what we have done. The task of church leaders is therefore both an awesome responsibility and the most incredible privilege, and we should always seek to make their lives joyful.

In truth, every leader experiences a mixture of joy and sorrow: joy when people respond to God's word and live in obedience to it, and deep pain and sorrow when they reject it and suffer the sad consequences. Church leadership is

tough and we should continually thank God for those whom God has called and is calling to serve him in this way.

## **QUESTION**

What can you do to bring joy to your church leaders?

## **PRAYER**

Lord God, I thank you for the gift of church leaders. Keep them strong and encouraged in the vital work that they do.  
Amen

*Photograph - View of Hereford Cathedral and statue of Sir Edward Elgar*

