

Transformed Citizens

I. When the Lord calls us, he transforms us. John 10:27-30; Matt.11:28-30

- A. Come to me.
- B. Learn from me. (follow)
 - 1. If you really come, you will want to learn. Jn.10:27-30
- C. *Rest will result—but not apathy.*
 - 1. The disciple of Jesus rests in grace, but wants to learn.
 - 2. *Discipleship, Rest, spiritual wisdom, do not happen by accident.*
- D. This is spiritual formation, transformation into Christ's mind.

II. We are being transformed by the Holy Spirit. 12:1-2.

- A. This informs everything from 12:1-15:13
 - 1. These are instructions and commands, but not simply “rules” that earn righteousness.
 - 2. *They are the ongoing and growing results of spirit formation in Christ.*
- B. It is supernatural: The Spirit does it inside us.
 - 1. Be transformed: passive imperative
- C. It is cooperative: We cooperate with the changes He is doing in us.
 - 1. We allow our feelings and opinions to be changed to be more like Jesus and less like worldthink.
- D. It is obvious: It changes our desires, character, feelings and behaviors.
 - 1. People should be able to see that you are a Christian by your moral, spiritual, community, ethical, behavior = love of neighbor.
- E. It is counterintuitive. Gal.5:13-18
 - 1. *So that you may not do what you want...*
 - 2. There is a struggle to walk in the Spirit at times.

III. How spiritual transformation takes place in a fallen world. Rom.12:1-21

- A. Radical release of life to the Lord. 12:1-2
- B. Meaningful integration into the body of Christ. 3-8
- C. Proactive actions in Christian love. 9-21.

IV. Voluntary Compliance with legitimate authority. Read 13:1-7

- A. Hypotasso = to comply, defer, give in.
 - 1. To view life not as autonomous, but as arranged under various authorities, ultimately sourced in God's authority.
- B. *This is a central spiritual virtue. Titus 3:1.*
- C. *Is this spiritual? Yes, because material life in a fallen world is the venue for true spiritual transformation. Without the challenges of life in the darkness we would not experience the depth of the light.*

V. Three things to know about imperfect Human Government. 13:1-7

- A. **Its authority derives from God Himself. 1-2**
 - 1. All authority derives from God's authority.
 - a) Authority: the right to impose obligation, by force if necessary. To enforce laws.
 - b) Heaven and the New Creation have Trinitarian authority permeating all levels of life—but there is no desire for evil, so life is loving, cooperative, productive, fulfilling, beautiful.
 - 2. He has ordained human government. (ordain: establish, order, appoint)
 - a) Established by God
 - b) He who opposes, opposes God's ordinance.
 - 3. He sovereignly puts leaders in place. Dan. 2:21; 4:17
 - 4. *But does He endorse the actions of all governments? Obviously not.*
 - 5. *But simply “hating government” is not KingdomThink, not learning from Jesus, following the Shepherd, or growing spiritually.*

B. Its job is to restrain evil and promote justice. 3-5

1. *To protect citizens from each other.*
2. This is something God wants done.
 - a) minister of God (2 times) = diakonos v.4
 - b) servant of God = leitorgos , minister, v.6
3. Coercive force is part of the project—if necessary.
 - a) Bear the sword. They didn't spank people with the sword. They forced them to do or stop doing things.
 - b) avenger (agent of wrath, NIV) = ekdikos, punisher
4. *All laws more or less "legislate morality." So, complying with government reduces your risks & frees your conscience.*

C. Its support comes from taxation of some sort. 6-7

1. Like tithing supported the Temple, so taxes supported the civil government. **Matt. 22:15-22**
2. So, pay your taxes, your fees, and give due respect to civic leaders
3. This does not mean that you can't legally challenge taxation, avoid paying extra taxes etc. It says that the concept of taxation is not wrong.

VI. Three situations the passage is NOT addressing:

A. When government forbids obedience or commands disobedience to God.

1. **Acts 4:19-20; 5:28-29.** Peter and John deliberately refuse to obey the Sanhedrin, even in a "theocracy" like Israel.
2. Later, when Roman government required people to declare "Caesar is Lord," the Christians wouldn't do that.
 - a) Polycarp was executed for not worshipping Caesar. (mid 2nd cent)
3. Nazi Germany, the "confessing church" did not go along with Hitler and paid dearly for its civil disobedience.
 - a) The "politically correct" church became a pawn.
4. *But They did not let the one issue become an excuse for wholesale rejection of all governmental authority.*

B. When a government can be legally challenged and changed.

1. Peaceful or passive resistance is legal in a democracy and should be used.
2. Our court system allows for challenges to all sorts of laws.

C. When governments become so evil that they must be overthrown.

1. As in Egypt at the time of the Exodus.
2. As in Canaanite civilization in the time of Joshua. Gen.15:16; Deut.7:25-26
3. As in Solomon's spiritually failed empire, civil war, idolatry. (1 Kings 11-13)
4. As in Israel and Judah's judgment by God through the Assyrians and Babylonians.
5. As in Israel's destruction by the Romans following Christ's crucifixion. Lk.19:41-44
6. As in the judgment against the cities around Galilee that rejected Christ. Matt.11:20-24
7. As in Antichrist's "Beast" government at the end of the age. Rev.13
 - a) much of Revelation is devoted to heroic (passive) civil disobedience of the saints on earth under the ultimate evil government.

VII. So, our spiritual formation is shaped by these radical and counterintuitive realities.

A. Moral virtue (goodness) is a higher value than personal freedom. (absence of restraint, autonomy) 3-4

1. *God is not as interested in our being autonomous as in our being good.*
 - a) We define freedom as the absence of any restraint.
 - b) God views freedom as the desire and the ability to do what is right and good.
2. Moral goodness is much more important to God than unfettered human freedom.

B. A mature conscience is a higher value than self-actualization. 5b

1. Self Actualization, being who you want to be without reference to anything or anybody else, and especially no higher authority of any kind. Songs and movies are all about this.
2. Conscience: suneidesis = the inner intuition about right and wrong. In a Christian it is what is being transformed and renewed and is the place where we can hear the Lord's voice. (Pr.20:27)
3. The willingness to put one's will at somebody else's service, to comply with other's wishes and directions is a very mature skill and contributes profoundly to peace, productivity, unity, love, all the virtues of the Spirit.

C. Because Jesus our Lord obeyed a higher authority in order to rescue us. Matt.26:39; 1 Pet.2:13-25

1. Because the ultimate judgment and condemnation has been absorbed by the Lord Himself.
2. He suffered unjustly at human hands so that he could justify us forever.

VIII. Spiritual transformation happens in the textures of mundane, ordinary, daily, frustrating life. Three considerations when I encounter legitimate authority in dilemma:

A. It may be a test of my discipleship rather than simply an "attack of the enemy."

1. These are very often simultaneous experiences. Luke.22:31-32

B. It may be an opportunity to cooperate with transformation, rather than simply an obstacle to my fulfillment.

1. It may be the way of rest for my soul—the direct result of cooperating with the Spirit's transformation.

2. *There is no law of God that says I must be "fulfilled" in this age*

C. It may be the way of providence rather than simply injustice. Acts 2:23-24