



Sermon Discussion Questions

August 18, 2024

Unconformed

TRANSFORMED CITIZENSHIP

Romans 13:1-7

1. Opening Discussion Questions: (in a group setting you may only want to choose one)

- a. What new law would you like to see added to the books (avoid hot-button issues like abortion, capital punishment, gun control, etc.)? Why? What law would you like to see eliminated? Why? Do you tend to feel there are too many laws or too few laws in our country?
- b. Have you ever used or heard someone else use the expression “In the world but not of the world” to describe how Christians should live? From a practical standpoint, if you agree with the expression what does it mean to you? What are some ways it would influence how you live your life? If you do not agree, why and what would be your governing principle?

2. Sermon Outline/Key Points

- a. All Governments Are Instituted by Our Sovereign God
 - i. Governments, good and bad, are established by God.
 - ii. Christians must submit to government authorities (with one exception)
- b. God Gives Governments Special Powers Individuals Don't Have
 - i. In God's design, governments have different powers and authorities than people.
 - ii. Christians may serve their nation and neighbors in government.
- c. Be a Transformed Citizen.
 - i. A transformed citizen works within the system of government.
 - ii. Always have financial integrity with the government
 - iii. Respect and pray for governing officials.

3. Study/Discussion Points:

a. *Sunday Afternoon*

- i. As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to ponder these questions prayerfully:
- ii. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?
- iii. What new truth did you learn or of what truth were you reminded?
- iv. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?
- v. What is one specific thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?

- vi. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

b. **Monday:** Focal Passage – Romans 13:1-7

- i. Read and meditate on the focal passage using at least two translations.
 - 1. In your own words how would you summarize Paul's main teaching points?
 - 2. In your view, what is the most surprising instruction that Paul gives the Roman Christians?
 - 3. Based on what you know of the Roman Empire, how would you have felt about receiving such a command if you had been a Christian living in Rome?
 - 4. Neither the Roman government nor the Jewish government Paul was familiar with was a democracy. Do you see anything in the focal passage that would suggest his message would have been in any way different about a democratic government?
- ii. One of the things that bother many people about the Bible is the number of absolute statements.
 - 1. What absolutes do you see in this focal passage?
 - 2. How do you feel when you read the Bible and it says "every", "all" or some similar statement?

c. **Tuesday:** All Governments Are Instituted by Our Sovereign God

- i. Today concentrate on the first two verses of the focal passage, reading them several times and thinking about their implication to your life.
 - 1. First, who is Paul addressing? Who is excluded?
 - 2. The ESV, NIV, and CSB all use the phrase "governing authorities" in verse 1. Who do you think should be included in this category? Think about your answer carefully given what Paul says about the source of any and all authority. Would Paul's teaching apply any less to relatively low-level authority figures (like a school principal or a manager in the company you work for) than it would to the Emperor, King, or President?
 - 3. With that in mind consider who is in a position of authority to whom you are accountable. How submissive are you toward these various authorities?
- ii. It is often said that "you can delegate authority but not responsibility". Read these verses about authority: Daniel 7:13-14, Matthew 28:18, John 3:35 & 17:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:27, Ephesians 1:20-22, and Philippians 2:9-10.
 - 1. In what way should the message of these verses make us more accepting of what Paul is teaching?
 - 2. What is the ultimate purpose for which God has delegated authority – even those that we may consider evil (see especially Philippians 2:9-10)?

3. End the day by reading Psalm 2 and thinking about how it applies.

d. Wednesday: All Governments Are Instituted by Our Sovereign God

- i. Read Romans 13:1-5 meditatively then reread it pausing to think about historic events of the past 100 years and current world events. Compare these five verses to what Paul tells Titus in 3:1-2 and Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:13-15.
 1. What questions come to mind as you consider this instruction in light of real-world situations?
 2. Read Acts 4:1-3 & 21, 5:17-18, 12:1-5, 16:16-24 and 2 Corinthians 11:23-25. How likely do you think it was that Peter or Paul had a mistaken idea about the true nature of the governments in power at the time?
 3. Read Deuteronomy 32:8, Job 12:23, Jeremiah 25:8-12 & 27:4-8, Ezekiel 30:20-26, Acts 17:26, and Romans 9:17. Based on these passages who does the Bible teach is responsible for the existence of all nations and controlling what they do? How should this background reassure us that what is being taught in the focal passage is in our best interest (consider Romans 8:28)?
- ii. One of the great illustrations of how God uses nations was seen in the two passages from Jeremiah listed in the previous paragraph. But God also works in the lives of their rulers. Finish today by reading Daniel 4 about how He disciplines the king even while using the nation.

e. Thursday: Christians must submit to government authorities (with one exception)

- i. Read Romans 13:1-5 again, meditating on what it says about your personal response to authority.
 1. What reasons does Paul provide for submission to authority?
 2. In the ESV the word “resist” is used but in the NIV the stronger term “rebel” is used. With which translation do you feel most comfortable? Why? How would you distinguish between the two ideas? The same Greek word is used in Acts 18:6, James 4:6 & 5:6, and 1 Peter 5:5. After reading these passages does it change your view of how much we can oppose authority?
 3. “Submit” is used to describe proper relationships to others in a hierarchy such as wives to husbands (Ephesians 5:24 and Colossians 3:18), Christian slaves to their masters (Titus 2:9 and Ephesians 6:5), Christians to their spiritual leaders (1 Corinthians 12:26), and Christians to one another (Ephesians 5:21-6:9). In all of these hierarchical structures what (who) is the uppermost authority? How does Paul capture the combined importance of all these examples of submission in Titus 3:1-2?
- ii. What is the one exception to the requirement to submit (see Exodus 1:17, Acts 4:19-20, and 5:29)?
 1. Consider the example of Daniel and his 3 friends (see Daniel 4, especially verses 16-18 & 28, and Daniel 6, especially verses 6 & 21-22). What do these accounts tell us about when and how we can apply the one exception?

f. **Friday:** God Gives Governments Special Powers Individuals Don't Have

- i. Read the entire focal passage again.
 1. What reason does Paul give for God establishing governments?
 2. Many say that God established three institutions for man: the home, governments, and the Church. Read 1 Kings 10:9, Psalm 72:1-4, and Proverbs 31:8-9. What role does the government play that the other two cannot?
 3. How does Paul capture this idea in verses 3-4 of the focal passage? How does the “sword” reinforce the role of the government?
- ii. Paul ends this section by telling us that not only must we submit but that we are to pay respect and honor to those to whom it is owed. Read his parallel passages in Titus 3:1-2 and 1 Timothy 2:1-4.
 1. Taking all three passages together, what should be our goal for how we live?
 2. What place does the current emphasis on political activism and partisan politics play in achieving that goal?
 3. Close by reading 1 Timothy 2:3-4 again. What should (must) be or primary emphasis?

g. **Saturday:** Be a Transformed Citizen

- i. Read Romans 13:5-7 in several translations if possible and then also read Matthew 17:24-27.
 1. How would you respond to someone who said a Christian should not pay taxes to a government that is corrupt or allows abortion, homosexuality, etc.?
 2. How would it affect your answer to remember that Jesus said to pay taxes to the government that was going to illegally execute Him?
 - ii. Why is it generally harder to show honor and respect than to pay taxes? Is showing honor and respect primarily about how we interact with the one honored or is it the attitude we display and the comments we make to others when they are not present? If a young child heard us, would they think we were honoring and being respectful?
- h. **Application:** Spend time this week thinking about how you are (or are not) obeying the instructions Paul has given in this passage. Are you honoring and respecting those God has placed in positions of authority? It has been said that the best way to honor and respect someone is to honestly pray for them. Make a list of people in authority that you may not have honored and respected as you should and commit to praying for them daily this week.

4. **Prayer Points:**

- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
- b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
- c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
- d. Supplications –Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19