



transformed

studies in Romans 9-16

SCPC term 4 2007

sunday 18th november 2007

study 5 transformed citizens Romans 13:1-7

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. **Romans 12:1-2**

As things turned out last Sunday, we focused really on just a few verses in depth—Romans 12:9-13—working phrase by short phrase through those many specific snapshots of how we are to relate to each other in view of—the big picture—God's mercy. This filled out the detail of the 'body-relating' already painted by verses 3-8 (that we looked at the previous week). We were then a lot more rushed in our glance at 12:14-21. On reflection, that may not have been a bad thing. Romans 12:14-21 may belong more with 13:1-7 in that it seems to start a shift of focus to the outside world that flows into the start of chapter 13... a shift from how relating *inside* the church should be transformed, to how our relating *outside* the church should be transformed. Indeed, it may be that some of the persecution mentioned in 12:14 comes from the rulers mentioned in 13:1-7. The brutal persecution of Christians by Emperor Nero is only a few years away, so no doubt such issues were already emerging.

some notes on questions

Q1. The answer to this question may not be immediately obvious but it is very significant (see also notes on Q6). Paul states twice that governing authorities get their authority from God. This is actually a subtle critique of these rulers: they are not themselves God (as the Roman Emperor would claim) but are servants under God. As in masters/slaves passage in the New Testament (Colossians 3, Ephesians 6), the teaching in this passage is not just for those under authority but also for those wielding authority (and the message is: "you're under authority too!"). Remember also that the opening verse of Romans are a major assault on the pretensions of the Roman Emperor, as Paul calls Jesus Lord, King (Christ) and Son of God—all titles the Emperor would assume for himself. Yes, he has been given authority by God... but he is not God.

Q2-4. Although Paul is subtly critiquing the emperor (and all human authorities), he is not suggesting Christians therefore ignore or defy these authorities. Precisely because these authorities are there to punish wrongdoers (vs3), Christians must be careful to submit to such authorities and not be such wrongdoers (see how 12:7-8 might relate to this). It would be excellent, in that light, to look up 1 Peter 3:8-17 which has very similar teaching: it's the idea that while you may still suffer or be persecuted by authorities even when you do what is right—make sure it is NEVER because you have done what is wrong ("as far as it depends on you" Rom 12:18).

Q5-6. It would be good to take these questions together with the **digging deeper**: I hope to make reference to it in the talk—a very significant passage where Jesus offers the subtle critique of human rulers Paul is stating here in Romans: pay your taxes to them... but they're not God.

Q7. We meant to do what's right... because it's right!

Q8. Let's work hard on applying this to our context (e.g. 'why aren't we persecuted more?')



remember that once the talk goes up on the website you can always post a question/observation by leaving a comment—it's easy to do and then others will also be able to see the response when it goes up and leave their thoughts too.

coming events
carols at lismore high: sun 16 dec

small group bible study leaders' notes