

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on November 19, 2017**

**"Transformed Living: Giving Thanks and Respect
For Government Authority (Romans 13:1-7) – Part 4
Expository Series Romans 12-15"**

[In today's sermon, "Transformed Living: Giving Thanks and Respect for Government Authority (Romans 13:1-7) – Part 4", Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows that it is God's will for us to be in subjection to civil governments as part of our Christian relationships.]

Notes

- First of all, Happy Thanksgiving, which is a season of gratitude.
- Please wish each other a happy Thanksgiving to the person beside you or behind you.

- Psychologists use the Rorschach test to record a person's perceptions of inkblots and what their first impression or response is.
- The two slides, which represent the inkblots, say, "Happy Thanksgiving" and "You and Your Government."
- Now, if you are a little bit skeptical, we need to know that it's because of government that we even have this Thursday to celebrate Thanksgiving.
- President Abraham Lincoln, back in 1863, made Thanksgiving a national holiday.

- Now our New Hope metaphor is likened to a family seated around a dinner table.
- So this Thanksgiving, we need to share with each other around the dinner table all the wonderful things we are grateful for.

- Pastor Craig then asked if someone doesn't have family plans or somewhere to go for Thanksgiving dinner, then let him or any of the pastoral team members know (Cella, Manny or Fred) to find a place for you.
- Yes, we have so much to be grateful for.
- It should be part of our Christian DNA that we think about all the blessings we have been given on a regular basis.

- We need to be thankful for family and thankful for God's gift of grace.
- So, what did we recently say about gifts? "An ungiven gift is a gift not given."
- So then, what are we to do in return? Give it back.
- That also goes with the spiritual gifts we've been given to serve others.

- Concerning spiritual gifts, all of us need to be prayerful and we also need to be players, meaning that we serve others with those gifts.
- We need to give those gifts with our talent, time and treasure not only to our members but to all those we come in contact with.
- We are to be a light and an example to others.

- So, today, we're going to take a look at what God had to say through the apostle Paul related to the Christians' approach and lifestyle towards government.

- So today's sermon is titled, "Transformed Living: Giving Thanks and Respect for Government Authority."

Summary – Romans 12:

- 12:1-2 Summary - Living Sacrifices not conformed to the world but having our minds transformed and renewed proving the will of God. That's our purpose for Life.
 - So, we established that, in this lifetime, the one most important thing we can realize and understand is our salvation.
 - But after we've realized and received that gift of grace, then we know that God's will and purpose for us is to engage in the transformed living out our lives.
- 12:3-8 Summary – Serving God and the body with spiritual gifts whom God has given to each. We've established: "Ungiven gift is a gift not given."
- 12:9-21 Summary – Christian Living – devoted to each other in love and unity meaning "Loved People Love."

Summary – Romans 13:

- Submit to authority; love neighbor fulfilling the law and walk in Christ.
- 13:1-7 summary – Be subject to authorities as servants of God.
- We might abbreviate that by saying, God expects and inspects our respect – certainly not just for government, but the way we behold and honor all people.
 - Now, respect is not something easily given out these days, especially when talking about government.
 - When you turn on "Saturday Night Live" and watch their skits, you'll find our government and certainly our president are mocked and laughed at.
 - Now when those conversations go on out in the public or at work or at school, are we showing respect in our conversation and in our attitude?
 - It's kind of easy to get sucked into that negative thinking about politics.
 - So what Paul wrote to those at the church at Rome and now to us who are believers and have been given the gift of grace, is that we need to reflect something different.
 - Paul tells us that we are held to a different standard.
 - Now when we show respect, that doesn't mean we have to necessarily agree or go along with blind obedience when there are injustices being demanded.
 - We can disagree with injustices, but do it in a way that in a way that reflects respect.
 - But we can disagree with others about the government without being disagreeable.
 - We are encouraged to be a light and that reflects upon how we engage in those conversations.
 - We need to be careful to reflect a transformed life in the way we communicate.

- So, as we live out our transformed life, and as we are living sacrifices, the next thing we see here is this list of activities to do.

Romans 13:1 (NASB), Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2) Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

- This isn't part of our Western mindset to be in subjection to governing authorities.
- We like to live our own lives and if someone gets in our way, then it becomes their problem.
- When we live out our lives with faith and trust in God, it allows us to be different.
- It allows us to show love, even though that person or that institution isn't showing love to us.
- We held to a different standard and that's what makes us a light in this day and age.
- And when Jesus came to live on this earth, He lived a different life than others.
- Jesus was the one who hung out with sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes.
- Jesus had relationships with those that society had rejected.
- So, it shouldn't be any surprise to us that Paul tells us to go against the grain of society.
- But, sometimes our natural knee-jerk reaction is injustice for injustice, which makes it difficult to do otherwise.
- Paul is reminding us that we don't just share that love for others with people we're close to, but rather it extends to all.

3) For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

- We know that God established civil governments to help maintain peace in our societies.

4) for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

- Thus, the government's function, encouraged by God, is to promote and reward good, and to restrain and punish evil.

5) Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6) For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7) Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

- Paul encourages us to take the higher road concerning government and not to avoid paying our taxes.

Romans 13:1 (Mirror), Submit to the authorities with your whole heart. Any authority only has its relevance in God. God is a God of order. 2) To rebel against a God ordained structure of authority is a criminal offense.

3) Rulers are there to encourage good behavior and frighten off any evil intention. 4) They represent God's desire to protect you and to do you good. The sword they carry is not for decoration; they know how to use it against evil.

5) Do not let fear of punishment be your motivation, rather embrace a good conscience.

6) The taxes you pay is to show the government that you support what they represent on God's behalf. 7) Fulfill all your obligations to the government, whatever the tax is that they require of you. Give them their due honor and respect.

- In our day and age, like's Paul's, it isn't a popular thing to get along with others.
- But yet that's the life we've been encouraged to live.
- When we engage in practices that are different from the norm, it helps us to see what Jesus is doing in us.
- When we act in a loving way and don't respond in like kind with the current trend of the day, then that shows our heart and our mind is different than those around us, which they may consider strange.

Conclusion:

- Respect for governing authorities is one identifier of the transformed life.
- It may not necessarily be a popular thing to do, but we need to remember that God isn't always talking about what is always popular to those around us.
- So, let's reflect. As we said earlier, God expects and inspects our respect
- Aren't we to live in respect and honor to everyone around us? Isn't that the way of love?
- And when we show respect and honor and love for others, it changes us.
- This sometimes goes contrary to what we might naturally think.
- And when we go against what we might naturally think, we are on the path of grace.
- The path of grace leads us to what God would think.
- So when we show respect and honor to those, by the world's standards may not deserve it all, we're lifting ourselves up to a level that would appear strange.
- Now when we live out or practice the transformed life, we're on the same path of living an "abundant life" that Jesus said He would give us.
- An "abundant life" isn't just about physical bounty, it's about grace, it's about love, and it's about peace and joy and those other things that flow from the fruit of the Spirit.
- And those are things we can't buy; those are things we can't earn – they are given to us by God.
- We need to remember that salvation is about relationship – relationship with God, relationship with others.
- We need to realize that this flourishing relationship with Jesus isn't natural or easy.
- There has to be intentionality, there's participation, there's involvement, but it always comes out of our faith.
- And as we engage in prayer and study and meditation in other words what we call conversation, curiosity, and contemplation, then that transformation process starts to happen.

- Now Jesus made the promise Himself that if we engage in those spiritual habits of prayer, study and meditation, then the Holy Spirit fans the flames of our relationship with Jesus and thus our flourishing relationship with Jesus will grow.
- And then we won't be limited to, as a church, 11% who have a flourishing relationship with Jesus.
- Now, if pastor Craig had to bet, he would bet that each one of us here, whether we always feel like it or not, desires to have a flourishing relationship with Jesus.
- If we didn't have that desire, we wouldn't be here. We'd be at the beach or the mountains or the desert enjoying ourselves.
- But, just because we walk into a church building, doesn't necessarily make us any more a Christian than stepping into a garage makes us an automobile.
- But coming to church is a good place to start.
- So church is much more about than just Sunday morning – it's more about Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday and Saturday as we share the love of God with others.
- When we love God first, He naturally then loves through us.
- When God sees someone out there in need or who is hurting, he will lay it on our hearts to extend a hand and show respect.
- That's how God develops this flourishing relationship to His Son.
- A change starts with a decision. It starts with the reality that we want what Jesus promised – that abundant life of love, joy, peace, self-control, all the fruits of the Spirit.
- Now, as we said, those things don't come naturally. It comes to us supernaturally as we live out our transformed life.
- Now some of us might have some trouble complying with what Paul said about how we should react to government and its leaders.
- We've all done our share of political bashing, but we have to realize that God holds us to a different standard.
- When we mess up and aren't respectful to people or to the government, God doesn't hit us over the head by His spiritual two-by-four.
- Rather, God nudges us, encourages us, perhaps sometimes prunes us, always to show us a better way.
- This is what transformed living is all about.
- When we do the things that are more difficult for us to do, that's when our hard edges are rubbed off and more of our change comes about in our hearts and minds.
- Paul, in Romans, gave us a check list of how to live out our transformed life.
- In this chapter, Paul is saying we should have respect for individuals and governing institutions, which is a part of our checklist.
- A transformed life is proving God's will for us as we engage in that transforming process.
- So, at this time of thanksgiving, let's thank God for His grace and abundance He gives us.

Closing Prayer