

Romans Transformed Community

Interpreting the Text:

1. How much do you sense that Paul is addressing specific concerns of the Roman congregation in chapter twelve and how much is he repeating common themes? What are some examples of either?
2. How does Paul's response to governmental authority draw on Jesus' message to the Pharisees in Matthew 22:15-2? Is Paul's message in line with what Jesus teaches or does it vary?
3. How does Paul's belief that the eschaton, or end times, is near impact what he focuses on? How does his perception of a short, temporal timeline cause him to prioritize the needs of this community?

Applying the Text:

1. Paul looks for signs of Christian transformation, not in the moral lives of individuals but in the Roman congregation's deference to and care for one another in community (ch. 12). What might Paul notice in your own faith communities that model being the body of Christ and demonstrating mutual love?
2. Is Paul's view of civil authority in Romans 13 one to be universally emulated or is it subject to brotherly/sisterly discernment and evaluation? How are his circumstances different from our own? How does this subject get addressed in other parts of the New Testament?
3. Professors Attridge and Bartlett acknowledge that parts of Roman 13 were used to justify the actions of Nazis during their rise to power in Germany. How can we reflect on that event to prevent this kind of misuse of scripture in our own contexts?