**“Transforming Love”**

**Introductory Points:**

* John 1:12 and Matt.28:19-20 both indicate that much of what we might call “the heavy lifting” of our Christian *transformation* (from Greek *metamorhoo,* cf. Rom.12:2) occurs **after** our initial conversion to Christ.
* Question: Is any *admonition* or *prohibition* that God requires of us that wherein obedience isn’t better for us even in the *here and now* (all are certainly such in the *hereafter!*)? I’ve never come up with a single one.
* So, putting these two points together, I conclude that God’s requirements of me are: 1) in my best interest even in the immediate; and, 2) are meant to help *transform* me into what He would have me to be *eternally.*

**With those things in mind, let’s think about how His commands to *love* help *transform* us.**

**1. The command to love *Him,* Mark 12:28-30**

1. It is *easy,* in one sense (cp. Luke 6:32) to love *One who loves* and has done so much for us, 1John 4:19;
2. But *difficult* to love Him *as He loves us-* with *everything that He is* (as God), cf. 1John 4:8,16!
3. How does such *transform* us? It changes *the way we love* from “selfishly” for our own interests to “selflessly” for His interests. This *transforms* **“me.”**

**2. The command to love your *Neighbor as yourself,* Mark 12:31**

1. Again, *self-love* is *easy,* cf. Eph.5:28-29.
2. But *loving your neighbor* as *you love yourself* is much more difficult! Sometimes we, like the *lawyer* in Luke 12:25-29, attempt to *justify ourselves* with *“Who is my neighbor?”* But the answer of Luke 12:30-37 make it abundantly clear.
3. Loving *your neighbor as yourself* not only ***transforms* not only me**, **but also *society****!*

**3. The command to love *your brethren,* 1John 3:23-24**

1. Some *brethren* are *easy to love* because they have been *transformed* into maturity by God’s love, Rom.12:9-15.
2. Some *brethren* are *more difficult to love* because they (or I!) have not yet been fully *transformed* into maturity by God’s love, cf. Rom.12:17-21. I recognize that this text seems to extend the scope of requirement *beyond* brethren to *anyone,* but such certainly still includes *brethren!*
3. But if we are going to be *transformed* by *loving* as *God loves,* this means *loving brethren* because they are *brethren,* not because they are deserving brethren, 1John 3:11-22. Such love *transforms* ***me* and*****the church****,* Eph.4:1-3!

**4. The command to love *your enemy,* Matt.5:43-48**

1. Loving a good God, good neighbors, and good brethren is fairly *easy,* as we’ve realized from the previous points, vv.46-47.
2. Loving *our enemies,* and those who *persecute us,* is *hard.* But as is often the case in nature, so it is with our *spiritual nature-* the *final, major transformation* is difficult. But although it may be the most difficult of all the steps of *transformation,* it is perhaps the most important… for it makes us *like God, perfect* (the Greek word *teleios* here means *whole, complete, mature, lacking nothing*), vv.45,48.
3. Loving in this way completes the *transformation* of **me** from “selfish” to “selfless.” But when I/we love our enemies as God did us (cf. Rom.5:8), it *transforms* not only me/us, it transforms **the world,** Matt.5:13-16!

**Take-Home Points:**

* **God wants *the best* for you both *now* and *forever.***
* **This doesn’t mean that He won’t require *difficult* things of you that are necessary to achieve *the best* for you, cp. Heb.12:10.**
* **His commands to love *Him, our neighbors, our brethren,* and *even our enemies* “transform” us into His image- and therefore “fit” us for eternity with Him.**

**How’s your “love” life *transformation* going?**