

OBEY GOD-DEFY TYRANTS #27

“The Courage of Christian Nonconformity”

Part 2

I. Introduction

I want to continue with Part 2 of the teaching on...

“The Courage of Christian Nonconformity”

My text is taken from the Apostle Paul’s clear commandment to the Church/Rome

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (NKJV)

Do not be conformed to this age (HCSB)

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world (NLT)

Matthew Henry

All the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus must be nonconformists to this world.

“Nonconformist”

One whose behavior or views do not conform to prevailing ideas or practices; one who refuses to conform to (unjust) rules, laws or standards; a dissident

“Dissident”

A person who opposes official policy, especially that of an authoritarian state

We live in a time of rising totalitarianism in the western world. But...

Theme

The great danger of our day is not what the world is doing; it is how many professing Christians are being conformed to it.

God's people today must replace the 'cowardice of conformity' with...

I. The Courage of Christian Nonconformity

A. Why Are Most People Cowards?

1. I want to show you some video clips from the secular website 'AcademyOfIdeas.com', that created a powerful presentation asking the question:

Why Are Most People Cowards?

How Conformity and Obedience to tyrants lead to the rise of Totalitarianism

a. Clip #1 comments on how people come to accept and conform to authoritarian overreaches of government because they feel themselves individually powerless to do otherwise...

Video #1

<https://academyofideas.com/2022/01/why-are-most-people-cowards-obedience-and-the-rise-of-authoritarianism/>

Begin: 00:14

End: 2:58 '...is automaton conformity'

Total: 2:44

b. Here is the full quote of the last line...

Rollo May

The opposite of courage, in our particular age, is automaton conformity.

2. The first totalitarian political state was Babylon, which the Bible tells us was built with bricks! (As opposed to the 'City of God' built with 'living stones')

3. Tyrannical governments conform the cowardly into 'automatons'...

'Automaton'

A person who acts like a machine, without thinking or feeling

4. This is really what we witnessed with the onslaught of the COVID crisis 3 years ago; we became a society of automatons conforming to the commands a few elites.

a. We experienced a redefinition of morality: a good person was the one who conformed, complied, and followed the rules.

b. The evil person was the one who thought for themselves, asked questions and resisted a blind conformity.

c. Actually, we allowed the world to redefine who was good and who was evil.

d. This next clip warns us that a blind obedience to conformity causes the one who conforms to lose their ability to distinguish the difference between what is legal and what is moral; the committed conformist lets the world define both.

Video #2

<https://academyofideas.com/2022/01/why-are-most-people-cowards-obedience-and-the-rise-of-authoritarianism/>

Start 2:59: "One of the ways conformity manifests in the West...

End 4:05 ends 'one could train a dog to fulfill the requirements very well...

Total: 1:06

5. This is a most important point: When a culture becomes conformed to this world, there is a redefinition of ethics; of good and evil; of right and wrong. Conformity confuses ethics with obedience.

Rollo May

Our particular problem in the present day is an overwhelming tendency toward conformity. In such times ethics tend to be more and more identified with obedience.

Rollo May

**One is 'good' to the extent that one obeys the dictates of society; the more unquestioning obedience the better. But what really is ethical about obedience?
One could train a dog to fit the requirements very well.**

6. A blind obedience to the dictates of society creates a culture of cowards who conform to authority in even commanded to do what they don't agree with.

Israel W. Charny, Israeli Psychologist and Genocide scholar

“How Can We Commit the Unthinkable?”

The worst problem of all in any society is that the majority of human beings are sheeplike in their obedience and conformity to authority, even when they are instructed to commit acts that go against their real values and beliefs.

a. In his book, “Hitler: The Pathology of Evil”, George Victor asked the question: What needed to happen to the German people in order for them to conform to the commands of the Nazi government?

George Victor, “Hitler: The Pathology of Evil”

“Unfortunately, nothing needed to happen. In nations across the world, people accept government crime.”

b. Once the German people continued to conform to a government they knew to be committing crimes, there was nothing to save them; and some of the greatest atrocities of human history followed.

George Victor

“More hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion.”

Judgment at Nuremberg

7. Stop and consider the culture created by Hitler in Nazi Germany during the 1930’s; conformity was commanded; a conformity where ethics were set aside in the name of obedience to authority...and 6 million Jews were exterminated under the orders of ‘good’ Nazis. After the war, the German officers stood trial for their crimes at Nuremberg, Germany, the first international war crimes tribunal in human history. What was their defense?

Holocaust Prison Guards defense at Nuremberg Trials

“I was just following orders.”

a. One of Hitler’s henchman was the notorious Adolph Eichman.

Adolph Eichman

One of the main organizers of the Holocaust; captured by the Allies in 1945, but escaped to Argentina, where he was eventually arrested by Mossad and returned to Israel where he was tried and executed by hanging in 1962.

b. Here is what he said just before his execution...

Adolph Eichman

Now that I look back, I realize that a life predicated on being obedient is a very comfortable life indeed. Living in such a way reduces to a minimum one's own need to think.

c. Paul commanded Christians to be transformed by the renewing of their minds to God's word; salvation includes the mind. But conformists are comfortable to letting others think for them!

Theme

Conformists concede their brains to the world system; they become the puppets of propaganda; the parrots of public opinion; robotically repeating the 'party line' on everything from climate control to race relations to gender identity.

d. But conformists also have another problem...

8. English novelist C.P. Snow believed people who offer blind obedience to authority have a fundamentally flawed understanding of human nature...

C.P. Snow, English Novelist. "Public Affairs"

What can account for this obedience to authority displayed by the majority of people? A childlike ignorance regarding the dark side of human nature is one factor.

C.P. Snow

For many people naively believe that authority figures, solely because they are in positions of authority, are to be trusted, and ultimately have the best interests of the public at heart.

C.P. Snow

They do not consider that authority figures can become possessed by destructive ideas, delusional beliefs, or anti-human ideologies.

C.P. Snow

Nor do they consider the fact that those in positions of authority are corruptible by power and money and can be swayed to sacrifice the truth and human flourishing for the sake of self-serving ends.

a. Conformists are naïve; they tend to trust authority just because it is authority.

9. Vaclav Havel, who overcame Communist oppression in Europe to become the President of Czechoslovakia, wrote this in his book, "Power of the Powerless".

Václav Havel, The Power of the Powerless

True believers in authority turn a blind eye to the idea that some authority figures in the modern day possess one – or all – of the dark triad traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy.

Psychopathy

A common mental disorder characterized by personality traits of deception, manipulation, or threatening, often carried out behind a 'mask of sanity'.

a. The world's leading expert on psychopathy, Dr. Robert Hare, referred to psychopaths sitting in seats of authority as 'snakes in suits'...

Robert Hare, "Snakes in Suits"

Psychopaths are snakes in suits. And what makes them especially dangerous is their remarkable capacity to manipulate and deceive others into believing that they are motivated by benevolent ends.

Dr. Robert Hare

"...psychopaths come from all walks of life; many of them are successful psychopaths...who have the ability and the skill to remain out of the criminal

justice system. Unfortunately, these psychopaths can be found in positions of power in the corporate world or in elected office.”

10. Russia’s Joseph Stalin, China’s Mao Zedong, Germany’s Adolf Hitler, were all ‘snakes in suits’; they were psychopaths who preyed upon the masses of people who conformed simply because they refused to recognize that their leaders were truly *evil*.

Dr. George Simon, Clinical Psychologist, “In Sheep’s Clothing”

Most folks find it unimaginable that some people are simply not ‘normal’. That’s why psychopaths are able to prey on the unsuspecting so effectively.

Dr. George Simon, Clinical Psychologist

Their victims dupe themselves with their inability to accept that the predators they’ve been dealing with are heartless and devoid of normal human empathy... people who can do others great harm with absolutely no compunction.

11. Today, millions of Americans have been duped into conforming to the policies of the ‘snakes in suits’ because they cannot see them for what they are.

a. And history should teach us that the deception is not limited to the uneducated masses...

Academy of Ideas

In the politically corrupt societies of the 20th century, such as the Soviet Union and Germany, doctors were participants in crimes against humanity, psychiatrists diagnosed as mentally ill and locked away those who opposed the regime...

Academy of Ideas

...while politicians, professors, lawyers, physicians, scientists, and countless other so-called authority figures, adopted lying and dissimulation as a means of maintaining their livelihood or advancing their careers.

12. Once a culture conforms itself to living by lies, the oppression of the people follows in the form of fear.

Vaclav Havel, on communist Czechoslovakia, “a society built on lies”

“For fear of losing his job, the schoolteacher teaches things he does not believe. Fear of being prevented from continuing their work leads many scientists to give allegiance to ideas they do not in fact accept...”

Vaclav Havel

...to write things they do not agree with or know to be false, to join official organizations or to take part in work of whose value they have the lowest opinion, or to distort and mutilate their own works.”

13. This is the very definition of breaking the commandment to not be conformed to this world! When enough people surrender to conformity, we enter into something called...

B. The Continuum of Destruction

1. In his book, “Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism”:

Stanley Feldman, Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism

When a majority advocates for the government enforcement of conformity, a society places itself on what the psychologist Ervin Staub called a ‘continuum of destruction.’

“Continuum”

Something that keeps on going, changing slowly over time, like the continuum of the 4 seasons

Theme

The continuum of destruction occurs when the majority advocates for government that enforces conformity, increases control over social behavior, and punishes nonconformity.

Stanley Feldman, “Enforcing Social Conformity”

As the government uses coercion and force to punish a noncompliant minority, the majority rationalizes their support of such authoritarian measures by further demonizing the noncompliant, thus leading to increasingly severe government measures.

2. The cycle tends to repeat itself: as the government punishes nonconformity more move into the majority that want the government to enforce conformity, which increases control over social behavior and punishes those who do not comply; and on and on. And..

Voddie Baucham

This is where we are at. The dystopian future is here, where we are controlled, programmed and hypnotized into blindly following a set of rules, backed up by technological systems to ensure we all comply and conform.

3. This last video clip offers the answer for how we can overcome this 'Continuum of Destruction'

Video #3

<https://academyofideas.com/2022/01/why-are-most-people-cowards-obedience-and-the-rise-of-authoritarianism/>

Start 6:44 To counter the 'continuum of destruction' more people need moral courage...(risks-penalties)

Stop 8:26 ...choosing what is right for you and your family

Total: 1:42

a. Take a closer look at this closing quote...

Rushworth Kidder, "Moral Courage"

"Of all the agonizing ethical dilemmas facing humanity, few are more wrenching than the choice between what's right for the world and what's right for [you and] your family."

4. This is the great ethical dilemma for American Christians: will we be conformed to this world or transformed by the word of God?

III. Close

A. Balancing 2 Truths That Appear To Contradict

1. In Romans 12, Paul says “Be not conformed to this world”; but in Romans 13 he tells us to obey civil authority. Was he confused?

2. When it comes to being conformed to this world, there are no exceptions. But when it comes to obeying civil authorities, there *are* exceptions.

a. We must refuse to obey any law that would require us to break God’s law or violate our conscience.

Monergism.com

Holy courage is rooted in the conviction that the government of Christ surpasses all earthly authority.

3. Paul himself was put to death for refusing to obey Roman law.

The Reformed Sage

The same man God used to write Romans 13, commanding us to submit to government, was executed by the Roman government because he disobeyed. And he was being a consistent Christian the entire time.

3. Let me be clear:

- I am not saying we should not submit to authority
- I am not saying we should resort to physical violence
- I am simply saying that we must not be conformed to this world

Theme

The greatest danger of our day is not what the world is doing; it is how many professing Christians are being conformed to it.

4. One of the most courageous things we can do is refuse to be conformed to this world. And

C.S. Lewis

One of the most cowardly things people can do is to shut their eyes to the facts.

Closing Prayer

Title