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## Viewpoints

*Observing events in our modern world from the viewpoint of our ascended Savior.*

### Unfair Prisoner Exchange? ~ June 7, 2014

*The price to free a captured soldier compared to Christ's Great Exchange*

[Online Version & Archive](#)

Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl was freed from Taliban captivity on May 31st. His freedom was gained through a prisoner exchange that gave up five Taliban commanders who were being held at Guantanamo Bay. Its news has detonated a nation-wide conflagration.

This prisoner swap has been highly criticized by congressional leaders from both sides of the aisle. Of the different issues that have incurred the fury of critics, the one that appears to be at the core of them all is the apparent attempt to hide credible evidence that Bergdahl had deserted his post to become a sympathizer with the Taliban. It's from these toxic and combustible circumstances that erupts this burning question: *why trade five high-profile terrorists (that the Taliban calls heroes) to ransom a soldier who betrayed his country?*

Indeed, those who dare to publicly defend this prisoner exchange also appear to be quick at advocating that Bergdahl now be tried in military court and punished, if found guilty of desertion and/or collaboration with the enemy.

Some might be surprised to learn that Jesus would not object to our military putting Bergdahl on trial, as just described.

Remember the time that Jesus' disciples were vying for leadership positions (Matthew 20:20-28). While correcting his disciples Jesus said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you." Jesus wanted his disciples to know that when it comes to the realm of faith (of following Jesus), things run differently than they do in the earthly realm. But notice that Jesus does not call for rebellion against the earthly realm's reliance on rulers that lord it over, and on officials who exercise authority. In our sin-cursed world, governments, militaries, fire departments, corporations, universities and hospitals (to name a few entities) function with a competitive earn-your-own-way system. Just because this earthly system is highly susceptible to selfish designs, Jesus does not seek to dismantle its existence now, but in fact honors it (see also Matthew 22:21 and Romans 13:1-7) until at the Last Day he'll dismantle it because heaven has no need for it.

When we take these truths and apply them to the Bergdahl situation, Jesus is saying that it's open to debate in the earthly, secular realm whether it was good or bad to trade five Taliban leaders to gain the release of Bergdahl. And specifically, now that Bergdahl has been freed

from the Taliban, Jesus approves of the military putting him on trial to determine if he's guilty of desertion and/or collaboration with the enemy, and punishing him according to military code if found guilty.

Yet at the same time, Jesus did something that to our natural minds is totally unfair and unreasonable. For even if Bergdahl is indeed a traitor, Jesus has already arranged an exchange for his release... at the cross. For there on Skull Hill, Jesus traded himself for all the sinners of the world who daily war against heaven with daily sins. This is a paradox that offers great comfort.

The paradox is that Jesus, who authorizes the military to punish traitors in the secular realm, went to the cross to forgive traitors in the spiritual realm. The comfort that comes from this paradox begins with the discomfoting realization that you and I are, by nature, traitors against God. Our daily sins brand us as spiritual traitors who earn God's holy fury. Yet the Almighty sent his Son to trade places with all sinners at Skull Hill. This, Christ's Great Exchange, has happened for every sinner. But only those who believe it is true receive its benefits. Thus we who trust that Christ gave himself at the cross in exchange for the whole world, are the recipients of heavenly peace.

We, of course, have no idea how our "officials who exercise authority" will handle Bergdahl in the coming weeks and months. But every time his situation makes the news, may it jog us to remember the Biblical distinction between the secular realm and the spiritual realm. And especially may Bergdahl's situation jog us to remember Christ's Great Exchange, famously described by the Apostle Paul: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, *and are prisoners to sin*; and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus *who spilled his blood at the cross*. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement *by offering him up in exchange for all the world so that through faith in his blood we personally receive the benefits of this exchange* (a transliteration of Romans 3:23-25). †††

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[No Evidence of 'Credible Threat' to Bergdahl: Feinstein](#) @ Bloomberg News

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*Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz*

