

Let every soul be subject to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except under God. Now those which are, have been set under God, so that he who is resisting an authority has withstood God's mandate (Romans 13:1-2).

WHAT IS "CONQUERING EVIL?"

The believer seeking soulish excitement sees the words "conquer evil" in Romans 12:21 ("Be not conquered by evil; but conquer evil with good") and imagines him or herself a sworded warrior in the Lord's army. We've all seen Joan of Arc movies; now let's get the Scriptural perspective. Romans 3:4—

Now let God be true, yet every man a liar, even as it is written: "That Thou shouldst be justified in Thy sayings, And shalt be conquering when Thou art being judged."

Jesus Christ conquered evil by submitting to it and by displaying His Father's love by dealing graciously with those who hated Him. His subsequent resurrection justified this submissive behavior, attesting to its rightness and effectiveness. It is this ideal that is set before us for imitation.

One more telling passage for this section is Romans 8:35-37—

What shall be separating us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written, that, "On Thy account we are being put to death the whole day, we are reckoned as sheep for slaughter." Nay! In all these we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us.

In this day of religious apostasy, those in affliction and distress are encouraged to pray their way out of it; persecution, famine and nakedness call for better government, not endurance; danger and sword call for eye-for-eye retaliation; being “put to death the whole day, reckoned as sheep for slaughter” is simply out of vogue, if ever it was in. But what does the apostle say of these things? How are we, as believers, to conquer these things? By fighting to eliminate them? Such is the wisdom of this age. Yet here is the wisdom of God: we conquer in them, through Him Who loves us. Can you see? Rather than presenting an opportunity for dissent, these things give the mature believer a black field against which to display the glorious light of the graciousness of He Who loves us.

All be doing without murmurings and reasonings, that you may become blameless and artless, children of God, flawless, in the midst of a generation crooked and perverse among whom you are appearing as luminaries in the world (Philippians. 2:14-15).

WHAT IS “BEING SUBJECT?”

He who is resisting an authority has withstood God’s mandate. Now those who have withstood, will be getting judgment for themselves, **for** magistrates are not a fear to the good act, but to the evil....do good, and you will be having your applause from it (Romans 13:2-3).



I have emphasized the word “for” because it ties these two clauses together, showing us the relationship between them. What is at issue here in Romans 13, negatively speaking? Answer: Withstanding God’s mandate by resisting an authority. Who will be getting judgment for themselves? Answer: Those who have withstood. Why will a withstander be getting judgment? Answer: because (for) magistrates are a fear to the evil act. Thus, the “resisting and withstanding” of verse two is the particular “evil act” of verse 3.

What is the positive aspect of the issue? Answer: be subject to the superior authorities. Who will be getting applause from the authority? Answer: the doer of the good act. How do we know this? Answer: because (for) magistrates are not a fear to the good act, but to the evil. What, again, is the evil act in view in this passage? Answer: withstanding God’s mandate by resisting an authority. What, then, in this context, is its antithesis? Answer: being subject to the superior authorities.

Thus, the subjection of the saints is the “good act” and the “doing good” of Romans 13:3. Likewise, the resistance of the saints is the “evil act” and the “doing evil” of Romans 13:3,4. This is further proven by Paul’s concluding remark in verse 5: “Wherefore (that is, the conclusion of all this good and evil talk is), it is necessary to be subject...” If the issue in verses 3 and 4 had been the moral judgment of the authorities rather than the subjection of the saints, the apostle might have written, “Wherefore, it is necessary to set watchdogs over the authorities, to make sure they remain morally sound, so that you will know whether to be subject to them or not.” But the apostle did not write that.

Romans 13:1 (“let every soul be subject”) and 13:5 (“Wherefore, it is necessary to be subject”) are bookends that “set” the purpose of the words in-between. “Evil and good,” then, must contribute to the theme of subjection, and nothing else. They should not, in any sense, be considered a litmus test for potential resistance.

Thus, in Romans 13:3-4—

**Good=subjection,
Evil=resistance
Subjection=applause
Resistance=fear.**

Remember, the theme of subjection to authority in Romans 13:1-5 is subordinate to and merely an expansion of the great theme of this whole section, which begins in Romans 12:12 and finds its apex in 12:21: conquer evil with

good. Shall we say: “We will be subject to the authorities until they become evil?” No, for how would that be conquering evil with good? Evil authorities are a field on which to display the grace of Christ. Let us not submit only *until* the authorities become evil, but *because* they are.

CONCLUSION: The good and evil acts of Romans 13:3-4 are not, in the context, the generalities of morality or immorality, but the specificities of submission and resistance. Thus, subjection can, and should, be rendered to all superior authorities, especially evil ones. This is in complete harmony with the preceding and proceeding texts, which emphasize enduring affliction, persevering in prayer, and doing good to enemies.

With this correct understanding, Romans 13:1-2 becomes absolute rather than relative, a timeless truth rather than a subjective contingency. It verifies and expands, rather than beclouds and nullifies, the rarest qualities of spirit-filled believers.

Thank God for His precious Word, which, ignored, will lead to danger and strife; heeded, it ushers us into the safety and peace of His presence. —MZ

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The Role of an Ambassador

by Matt Rohrbach

Though I appreciate Earl’s point about peaceful resistance and participation in governments that are set up to allow such things (see last week’s ZWTF, “All Authority is of God”), I believe there is one verse of Scripture which absolutely disallows participation of any form, in government, by members of the Body of Christ. That verse is 2 Corinthians 5:20: “For Christ, then, are we ambassadors ...”

Ambassadors never participate in the politics or internal affairs of their host countries. Never. If found to be meddling in the affairs of the host country, they are quickly expelled. It is not the function of an ambassador to influence or to be involved in any way with the affairs of the host country. The only function of an ambassador is to represent his/her home country’s interests within the host country.

Paul uses the word “ambassador” to show that the Body of Christ is not of this world (the host country, as it were), and as such we are prohibited from meddling—legally or not—in its affairs. Our only job is to represent Christ to the world.

I am confident that I am not the first person within the Body to see that our being “ambassadors for Christ” puts us in an ambassadorial pickle if we are found bucking the governments set by God. This doesn’t even factor in the verses quoted by Martin in his response to Earl, which stand alone.

I wanted to write on our ambassadorship because I see arguments against it coming from those who won’t be able to differentiate between an ambassador representing a fallible human government and an ambassador representing Christ. Such individuals will take the similarity to illogical conclusions. They will argue, I think, that human ambassadors are known to protest to the heads of their respective host countries when said host country acts contrary to the interests of the ambassador’s home country. Therefore, they will say, we are allowed to protest to governments even if they are set by God. Of course, the ambassador—any protests notwithstanding—*still* has no political or governmental standing within the host country

Paul’s reference to us as ambassadors for Christ meshes well with his exhortation in Romans 12 and 13 that we be subject to superior authorities, which exhortation Martin defended well in his replies last week to Earl. ■

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Matt Rohrbach, Clyde Pilkington and me in Windber, PA. September 26, 2015

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Your letters 



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crj7DDJQlrM>

Dear Martin, you do not look terrible. I wonder what this person would have thought of Paul. I think it is just concern for you, perhaps. Well, of course. I don't know anyone else in the world who teaches this evangel the way you do, and I'm sure 99.9% of us thank God every single day for you. Your transparency through all trials reassures us that we don't struggle alone, and that we have you and each other. I'm so very grateful for your sacrifices in obedience to the Lord and how incredibly committed you are to this vital ministry.

My prayer is that you will soon be acclimated to FL, that your health will be strong, and that you will never lose your hilarious sense of humor. How can we make your journey a little easier for you? I'll be able to send you a donation in March, but please let me know if you would ever want a care package with specific items, like non-chewy sweet tarts.

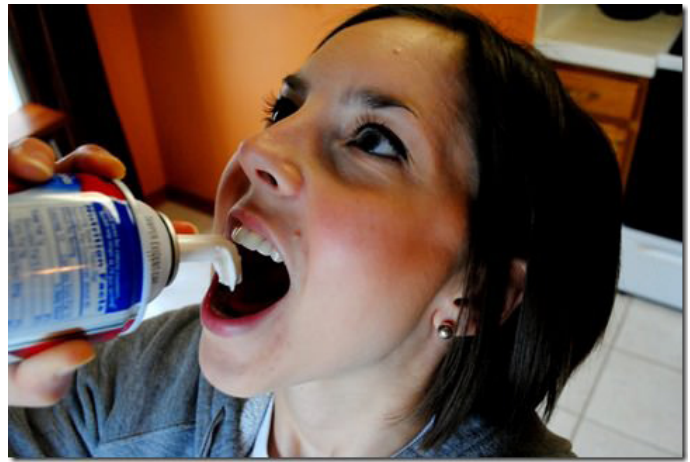
Martin, when you sit in front of your computer monitor, wherever you are, try to see us sitting behind your screen. At least, see me sitting behind your screen because I will be there. I'll sit and listen to God teach me, train me, and alter me through the words He puts forth from your mouth. I listen to every broadcast and I want to learn, to change, to grow. I want what God has chosen for me. We do forget sometimes that it is the message, not the messenger. We all need prodding a bit to remember. You are so right. Satan vexes the hell out of us.

I've noticed that, since I was given this understanding, trials have increased in number and are prolonged. I realize what they are but I also long for some release and relief and reprieve. Does this mean that things are picking up in the world? You know how I mean that. Or is it just the way of things? Not only does Satan vex me, but the state of the world, the people, the things that are accepted as the norm, etc., etc., etc., vex me something awful. I have to divorce myself from everything or I will have a heart attack, panic attack, and every other kind of attack. Physically, I just can't handle that kind of stress. I sometimes feel that the snatching away will not be in our time. Sometimes I feel the opposite. This waiting is tough. And, yes, I find myself trying to be more than I'm supposed to be—to attain what has already been attained for me. Thanks for setting me straight once again.

Thank you Martin for all your effort to bring us the truth it is sooo appreciated. If it hadn't been for your work, I would have never had the great life I have now, my mind would be in a terrible state by now, and I would have probably killed myself.

“I’LL HAVE WHAT HE’S HAVING”

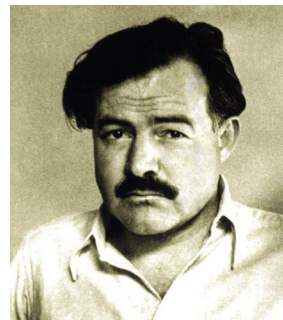
Before I watched the beginning of today's show I thought the Reddi Whip prop was gonna be an inside joke between you and a friend. By the way, there is nothing the matter with the way you look, M. You look real. Human. Raw. You are doing whatever it takes to bless our socks off. I don't see any of us exposing ourselves in front of a camera five days a week to



faithfully get the evangel out whether we feel like it or not. And anybody who is showing up there for the right reasons wouldn't be distracted with outward appearances anyway. They'd just be happy you're alive, and there.

In my opinion, you're rockin' the beachcomber look. I dig the disheveled thing you've got going on. And come to think of it, maybe I'll post my thoughts on the site.

Pass me that can!



Hi, Martin: Don't worry! You're looking good on the car cam! The question for me becomes, Do I take the RediWhip, or am I ready to whip my ass into shape, or do I sit in the celestials?

By the way, I did some writing on my Mac in two laundromats, so you're not alone in that literary environment.

Hemingway wrote in Paris street cafés, so I guess a laundromat or Starbucks will be sufficient to the task.