

Chapter 1

Romans 12 Does Not Allow for Romans 13 to be Interpreted to Reflect Secular Government

The chapter subdivision between Romans 12 and Romans 13 did not exist in the Apostle Paul's original Epistle to the Romans. If you remove this arbitrary subdivision and let the Epistle flow naturally from one thought to another as intended by Paul, much of the confusion regarding Romans 13 dissipates.

Internal *and* External Transformation

Romans 12 begins with a call to internal transformation and ends with a call to external transformation—that is, *personal* transformation intended to collectively consummate in *societal* transformation:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

This is where it begins: surrender to Yahweh, resulting in personal transformation, separation from the world, and performance of the will of God. Performing God's will is accomplished in advancing His kingdom and His righteousness, and thus His moral law at all levels of society, beginning with ourselves and our families:

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.... But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:10, 33)

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.... And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [*anomic*, lawlessness]. (Matthew 7:21, 23)

We begin with Christ as Lord and Savior which, in turn, manifests itself in Christ as King. Maturation in Christ should be evidenced by a transformation of our respective spheres of influence:

When I was young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family.

Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could have indeed changed the world. (Author Unknown)

It's this kind of societal impact that's assumed in the last verse of Romans 12:

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

Paul says, “overcome”—not lay down and be trampled upon, not tolerate, but subdue.¹

Is there any area of life God does not intend His servants to subdue on His behalf by overcoming evil with good? Is it only in our personal lives that He intends this to be accomplished? Or does the same apply to our families and all of society, including government? Does Romans 12:21 end at the doors of government? The answer to these questions is apparent in God’s all-encompassing sovereignty over His entire creation. Because Yahweh is Creator, He is sovereign over the entire universe, time without end:

The earth is Yahweh’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. (Psalm 24:1)

[H]is kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. (Daniel 4:3)

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:25)

Yahweh never abdicated His throne. He is as much King now as He was at creation. Those who look to Him as King have a responsibility to advance His kingdom here on earth *as it is in heaven*.² There is nowhere in heaven God does not reign, nowhere His kingdom is not evident, and nowhere His morality (as defined by His laws) is not supreme. This is His will for earth as well, but He has left the task of establishing His kingdom on earth to His subjects, at least to whatever extent possible for us as humans:

The heaven, even the heavens, are Yahweh’s: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. (Psalm 115:16)

The Kingdom: Definitively, Progressively, and Finally

As Christians it’s imperative we account for the definitive, progressive, and final aspects of the kingdom.

This extremely important principle of Scripture is demonstrated in 2 Corinthians 1:10. Note in this one verse alone the past (definitive), present (progressive), and future (final) treatment of the subject matter:

[God] Who delivered us [definitively] from so great a death, and doth deliver [progressively]: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us [finally]. (2 Corinthians 1:10)

There are also scriptures that declare we are saved, being saved, and will be saved. The definitive, progressive, and final aspects of Scripture are also evidenced in our initial justification, our continuing sanctification, and our future or final glorification.

The kingdom has been definitively established *with* the remnant, it's being progressively realized in time and history *by* the remnant (the extent at any given time dependent upon the remnant's obedience in overcoming evil with good), and it is finally established with each of us when we fully become like Christ when in His presence, per 1 John 3:2.

Definitively, the kingdom has already been provided to us under the New Covenant by means of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It's ours in its entirety here and now, *definitively*. It's an accomplished fact that we acknowledge and experience by faith.

He *has delivered* us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom his beloved son. (Colossians 1:13)

This same definitive victory over the domain of darkness or the kingdoms of the world was prophesied in Daniel 2:

And in the days of those kings [of the Roman Empire] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed ... it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. (Daniel 2:44)

Regardless the government in power at any given time, the freedom we have in Christ is ours definitively and cannot be taken away from us. King David, who was often surrounded by enemies (state and otherwise), understood he had still been provided a feast "in the presence of [his] enemies" (Psalm 23:5). *In Christ*, we, in fact, rule in the midst of our enemies, per Psalm 110:2.

But this definitive aspect of the kingdom does not relieve us of the *practical* necessity of establishing the kingdom at all levels of society (in the government of our personal lives, our families' lives, and our communities) to whatever degree possible at whatever time in history we find ourselves.

This is the progressive responsibility of *everyone* who claims to be a servant and ambassador of Christ. Whether or not we witness it fully achieved in our lifetime, our ultimate aim remains establishing His kingdom here on earth *as it is in heaven* to the best of our finite ability.

The entire Bible can be summed up as paradise enjoyed, paradise lost, and paradise restored. Under the New Covenant, "paradise restored" occurs progressively under the kingship of Christ by means of His servants overcoming evil with good in their personal lives, their families, and ultimately society as a whole. Anything less is a dereliction of duty.

Romans 12:21: A Synopsis of 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

"Overcoming evil with good" is a synopsis of the following dominion mandate. Note especially the words "all" and "every":

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and *every* lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking *every* thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish *all* disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6, NASB)

“Every lofty thing,” “every thought,” and “all disobedience”—what’s left? When every high thing raised against the knowledge of God has been destroyed, when every thought has been taken captive under Christ, and all disobedience is being punished, good will have overcome evil. Until then, our work here on earth is unfinished.

For those who think this charge has “only” to do with our hearts and minds, bear in mind that when hearts and minds are conquered, everything else is likewise subdued. In taking every thought captive unto Christ (internal transformation), all unrighteous foundations are likewise torn down and replaced with Yahweh’s righteous foundations (external transformation).

Arbitrary or Specific Goodness

As ambassadors of the King of kings, we’re charged with subduing evil with good. *How* is this accomplished? Is the good Paul refers to arbitrary or is it specific?

As our Creator, Yahweh is the only one with the authority to determine what is good and what is evil. His parameters on what constitutes good and evil are explicit in the Ten Commandments and their respective statutes and judgments.² This canon provides the specifics for *how* we are to overcome evil with good.

Overcoming evil with good certainly includes what Paul depicts in the four verses immediately preceding Romans 12:21. It *also* includes what’s implicit in the four verses immediately following Romans 12:21:

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome *evil* with *good*. (Romans 12:21)

For rulers are not a terror to *good* works, but to the *evil*. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is *good*, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for *good*. But if thou do that which is *evil*, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth *evil*. (Romans 13:3-4)

This is a clear depiction of overcoming evil with good via Yahweh’s commandments, statutes, and judgments. This is the means for turning an upside-down world right side up by which biblical foundations are reinstated and all creation is restored to its proper and intended order.

Here in America

This societal transformation occurred right here in America at the hands of the 17th-century Colonials:

The Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Compact, 1638

We whose names are underwritten do hereby solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a Bodie Politick and as He shall help, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given in His Holy Word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.

Fundamental Agreement of the Colony of New Haven, Connecticut, 1639

Agreement; We all agree that the scriptures hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in duties which they are to perform to God and to man, as well in families and commonwealth as in matters of the church; so likewise in all public officers which concern civil order, as choice of magistrates and officers, making and repealing laws, dividing allotments of inheritance, and all things of like nature, we will, all of us, be ordered by the rules which the scripture holds forth; and we agree that such persons may be entrusted with such matters of government as are described in Exodus 18:21 and Deuteronomy 1:13 with Deuteronomy 17:15 and 1 Corinthians 6:1, 6 & 7....³

If Romans 13 is about a secular civil government Christians are obliged to content themselves with, what were the Puritans doing establishing biblical civil governments here in America? The Puritans understood Romans 13 has *nothing* to do with secular government. Rather than saltless, four-walled Christianity, good for nothing but to be trampled under the foot of man (evil overcoming good),⁴ the Puritans were practicing biblical Christendom (good overcoming evil).

Paul's Conclusion

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: *let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.* (Romans 13:12)

Romans 13:12 is essentially a reiteration of Romans 12:21. Sandwiched between these verses, Romans 13:1-7 makes it clear God does *not* intend for these instructions to end with our personal lives. Instead, He expects us to leaven *all* of society:

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till *the whole* was leavened. (Matthew 13:33)

Consequently, Romans 12:21 alone demands that Paul is not referring to secular governments to be tolerated as such. Instead, Romans 13 clearly depicts a Christian civil body politic that has fulfilled the dominion mandate of Romans 12:21 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 by overcoming evil with good.

1. [Law and Kingdom: Their Relevance Under the New Covenant](#)

2. See series of ten online books on each of the Ten Commandments and their respective statutes and judgments, beginning with [Thou shalt have no other gods before me.](#)

See also [A Biblical Constitution: A Scriptural Replacement for Secular Government.](#)

3. For more regarding the 17th-century Colonial governments of, by, and for God established upon His moral law, see [Chapter 3](#) "The Preamble: WE THE PEOPLE vs. YAHWEH" of *Bible Law vs. the United States Constitution: The Christian Perspective.*

4. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matthew 5:13)