

# Higher Power

Romans 13:1



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**FOCAL Read Together** Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

A strange looking little boxy car passed me on the highway the other day. As I looked at the car, at its off-gray color, at its ugly lines I wondered to myself *why in the world anyone would buy such a thing?* This car – a new model, mind you – had only one thing going for it that I could see. It was so ugly that no thief would want it. Maybe that's its charm – a built in theft deterrent.

As ugly as this car was to me, I'm sure its owner believed it to be pretty. We all have different opinions, different likes and dislikes, different tastes. Some people like chocolate, whereas others prefer chitterlings.

Christians have different opinions, but our opinions – and our world views – are to always be tailored to the teachings of the Holy Scripture. If God forbids a thing according to the Scripture then we who are His are to hear His Holy Word. The Word of God is our command. It is not opinion that rules Christ's Church, but Christ's Word, the Sword of the Lord. We obey its precepts whether we understand them or not. We can do no less. If you have been saved by faith in the Risen Savior then you are required to hear and obey Him. Jesus said quite plainly:

**John 14:23 ... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our**

## abode with him.

**Christ and the Father will not come to you and abide with you if you do not keep His Words.** Here, then, is His Word. This Word, this Scripture, this is His – and we are called to obey it.

**Faith and practice must meet in the Christian,** else dear one you may not be saved. The proof of your salvation is your obedience to Him Who saved you.

The proof of your salvation is that “**ye are Christ's; and Christ [is] God's**” (1 Corinthians 3:23). And if ye are Christ's and Christ is God's then **you are God's**. This is a holy chain that cannot be broken. God watches over those who are His. **And God is always in control – there is no power but of God.**

The Spirit filled Apostle writes:

**Focal Romans 13:1** Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. **For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.**

**There is no power but of God.** No matter what is happening around you, always remember that God is in control. The state is not God, but the state **is surely under the oversight of God**. Whatever is going on around you may not look Godly, but rest assured – **God is in control**. If we who are Christians indeed would remember this truth – God is in control *no matter what* –

then we would spend more time focused on doing His Will and loving Him and less time trying to *do it ourselves*. The Apostle Paul – the very Spirit filled person who writes the text we read today – is a good case in point.

### Consider Paul

Paul was under Roman imprisonment when he wrote

**“Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”**

He was being forcibly taken from one city to the next, kept in dungeons and dank tombs, fed poor rations (if any at all). Yet he writes **“be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God”**. What impressed this truth on the Apostle's mind?

Before the Apostle Paul *was* the Apostle Paul he was “Saul of Tarsus”. Saul of Tarsus was commissioned by the Sanhedrin to chase down and execute members of this new religious cult called “Christianity”. Saul took to his job with relish. He believed himself to be serving God while he chased after these Christians. Saul stood at the **feet of Stephen** while that glorious deacon was stoned to death for serving the Lord.

Saul headed down the Damascus Road before the splattered blood of Stephen had hardly dried. “I must go after more of these Christians” - that was the only thing in his mind.

Then it happened. The Lord Jesus Christ knocked Saul down on the Damascus Road, blinded him, and called him to salvation. Saul was taken blind and helpless to the house of Judas, and made to wait until the Christian Ananias came to pray for him. God told Ananias:

**Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:**

Look at the wonderful humor of our Lord. He takes the worst enemy the Church has ever had, then turns this enemy into our friend!

**Saul/ Paul is a chosen vessel unto God, to bear the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles.** There are times when God's will overrules all else – **there is no power but of God.**

Saul is called by God not to torment the Church, but to preach the Gospel of Christ *so that God can add to His Church*. Jesus did not just die for the Jews – He died for all who will believe in Him.

**1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world.**

He came for the Jews first – but God wanted us Gentiles saved as well. **The early Church was not reaching out to the Gentiles like it should. God needed an envoy, an ambassador to the non-Jewish peoples. He chose Paul.**

Paul was meant by God to be the preacher of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Yet Paul continued to love his Israel. I can understand this, for I love my family. Paul loved his family. He loved Israel so much that he said:

**Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**

Oh, how he wanted to see his people saved, accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah. Paul wrote again:

**Romans 9:1-3 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, (2) That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. (3) For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren,** my kinsmen according to the flesh:

When God saves us, He leaves us with our will. Yet we must never forget that His will WILL be done!

Paul grieved that his Israel would not accept Christ as Messiah. He grieved that these people, his blood relatives, refused to accept the Savior. Paul did his work, going to the Gentiles, telling them of the Savior. He told them of the Blood shed, the salvation offered, the love of God expressed at Calvary for all men. Though he did his work and fulfilled his calling the great Apostle never stopped grieving that Israel – his people – would not be saved. This weighed on Paul's mind. He pondered as he preached until, one day, he decided to go to Jerusalem and try and reason with the Jews in the Temple.

Now here is where the mystery of the sovereignty of God and the free-will of man is hardest to comprehend. Paul had been given a job to do by God. He was to preach the Gospel unto the Gentiles. He knew this was his calling. He said:

**Romans 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:**

His office was **Apostle of the Gentiles**. This was where God wanted him. Yet Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem to try *one more time* to lead his people to Christ. Though

We may misuse our will and stand against His will, but Beloved – His will WILL reign!

this was not where God had placed him, here he went. Paul was warned repeated by God not to go to Jerusalem. God warned Paul at **Tyre**:

**Acts 21:4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.**

Paul continued on his way to Jerusalem. God told Paul again when he arrived at **Caesarea** through the **Prophet Agabus**:

**Acts 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver [him] into the hands of the Gentiles.**

Paul continued onward. His calling, his office was to be **Apostle to the Gentiles** – yet he felt that he must go to Jerusalem. What happened when Paul got to Jerusalem? A riot started. Paul was beaten and arrested. Not one soul was saved through his preaching in the Temple.

When Paul went to Jerusalem anyway – though twice warned by God not to go – what happened? Did good come of this? Was God's will thwarted?

And Paul was *made to be the Apostle to the Gentiles*.

Imprisoned by the Romans military he was taken bound

before the High Priest, chief dignitaries, and even Caesar the Emperor of all Rome. Imprisoned and bound, Paul had the greatest opportunity to preach Christ to the Gentiles of all. For this reason Paul never considered himself to be a *prisoner of Rome*, but said:

**Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,**

(see also **Philemon 1:1; 1:9**). Paul was a **prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles**.

Given the office of **Apostle to the Gentiles** Paul was made to fulfill that office – regardless of his free will. **All power is of God**. God is in control.

### **There Is No Power But Of God: Other Examples In Scripture**

**FOCAL Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God:** the powers that be are ordained of God.

If we would understand this great principle of Scripture our lives would be greatly enriched. Why do we need to learn this truth the hard way?

**There is no power but of God**. If this is indeed true then we need to focus our energy and our faith on

being obedient to our Lord and Savior – and trust the rest to God. Align your will with God's, and God will protect you.

Do what Jesus said:

**Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

The goal of every Christian is to serve the Lord our God, to magnify Him, to exalt Him, to do His bidding. The nations are but pawns in the hands of Almighty God. He is in control of all things – His Will will be done!

### **Consider Egypt**

Pharaoh was given power for one reason and one reason only – that God might be magnified. The Lord told that old idol worshiper Pharaoh:

**Exodus 9:16 And in very deed for this [cause] have I raised thee up, for to shew [in] thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.**

Pharaoh existed for the glory of God. **All power is of God**. Pharaoh was Pharaoh because God allowed him to occupy this position. God put His nation Israel in Egypt to nurture her, to protect her, and – at the appropriate

## Why was Pharaoh given power over Egypt?

time – to release her. Pharaoh refused to release Israel until the Lord forced his hand. Hear the cries of the mother wailing as their children die under the hand of the death angel. “**When I see the Blood, I will pass over you**”. No Blood was on the Egyptian household. They were too busy glorifying themselves, worshiping idols, satisfying their own desires. It is as if God said to them:

**Proverbs 1:24-29 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; (25) But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; (27) When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. (28) Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: (29) For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:**

God is God, and **there is no power but of God**. How terrible to fail to heed Him when He cries out for our

repentance! How I wish I could shake all the Pharaohs in our audience today and beg you *do not turn away from the Sovereign*. If He commands you come, you had best come today. The nations are in the hand of God.

## Consider Tyre

God proved His power over the nations and over people time and time again in the Scripture. One of the significant proofs of God's control is found in the city of Tyre. You may have never heard of Tyre. Tyre was a principle seaport on the Phoenician Coast, 25 miles south of Sidon and 35 miles north of Carmel. It had two great harbors, one on the coast and another on an island not far from the coast that was linked to Tyre by a great causeway. Tyre was founded in 2700 BC as an independent city-state. It controlled most of the other Phoenician coastal cities. The mainland port was linked to the harbor island. Upon invasion the citizens quickly withdrew to the island, destroyed or raised the causeway, and were then safe from the invading forces. Tyre lost her governmental autonomy from 722-627 BC to Assyria under Sargon the Great. After Assyria's fall (627 BC) Tyre regained most of her strength and autonomy.

God promised to defeat Tyre and utterly destroy it in **Ezekiel 26-28** (prophecies were written around 589 BC). Why? **Because Tyre worshiped false gods (idolatry) and persecuted the people of God (the Jews)**. The prophecy was very specific:

- Many nations would try to destroy Tyre: **Ezekiel 26.3**
- Mainland Tyre would be destroyed by Babylon,

rendered as desolate as a flat rock: **Ezekiel 26.4**

- The mighty city of Tyre would be leveled, and be made into a place fit only for fishermen to spread their nets:

**Ezekiel 26.5**

- The city would be thrown into the sea: **Ezekiel 26.12**

- The mainland would never be rebuilt: **Ezekiel 26.14**

- Tyre would never be found again: **Ezekiel 26.21**

God will always *destroy the nation that will not honor Him and protect His people no matter what may come.*

Did God do what He promised? Yes! From 585-573 BC He caused Babylon to lay siege to mainland Tyre. When the gates of the city were broken down in 573 BC Nebuchadnezzar found the city deserted. The people had retreated to the island one-half mile off the coast. In retaliation Nebuchadnezzar totally destroyed the mainland city.

In 333 BC Alexander the Great (of Medo-Persia), after defeating the Persians at the battle of Issus, marched on Egypt. On his way he passed the Isle of Tyre and demanded entry. Tyre refused to allow Alexander to enter so he lay siege to the city. Having no ships he took the stones and rubble of the destroyed mainland city and cast them into the sea – a fulfillment of prophecy. He had his army built a walkway 200 feet wide and erected towers from which to attack Tyre. The Tyrinians had such a great wall erected around the city that Alexander still couldn't get in. So Alexander left and conquered Sidon, Aradus, Byblus, Rhodes, Soli, Mallos, Lycia,

Macedon, and Cyprus. All of these coastal cities had ships. Alexander commandeered these 224 ships and, *after seven months*, took the city. Over 8000 inhabitants were killed while 30,000 were sold into slavery. The Island's walls were destroyed. Historian Phillip Myers stated,

**"Alexander the Great reduced (Tyre) to ruins...the larger part of the site of the once great city is now as bare as the top of a rock, a place where fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry.."**

**There is no power but that of God.** God is in control. He is Almighty, all sufficient, invincible in all He wills to do.

### **No Power But That Of God: Practical Application**

If God is indeed Almighty as the Scripture says, if He is invincible and His will is always fulfilled, **if there is no power but of God, and if the powers that be are ordained of God** – then how should these truths impact my life?

1. I must realize that the power of salvation and eternal life rest only in my **right relationship with God**. The Apostle wrote:

**Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto**

**salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

The world and the worldly may not believe this, but **the only power ordained of God that will bring you to salvation is that power in the Gospel of Christ.** I must believe and trust in Him as my Lord and Savior. I must believe that Jesus Christ and *Jesus Christ alone* is the Lamb of God, the payment for my sin burden. **All have sinned and come short of God's glory.** No person in this room has the **God ordained power to save themselves.** God has ordained one method of salvation. What must I do to be saved? **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy household.** Mock the Gospel if you will, but remember:

**1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.**

2. Our immediate context also discusses our relationship with governmental authorities. Though Paul was imprisoned he saw this imprisonment as *under God's control*. This is why he could write:

**Romans 13:3-5 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: (4) 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. (5) Wherefore [ye] must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.**

Does this mean that we don't occasionally have bad rulers? No, it **doesn't.** **Babylon, led by King Nebuchadnezzar**, conquered Jerusalem. Among the captives that were deported to Babylon were the **Prophet Daniel, Hananiah (or Shadrach), Mishael (or Meshach), and Azariah (or Abednego).** From the moment of capture Daniel decided that he would honor the Lord our God – no matter what! Though he was in a strange place and under the rule of a strange king Daniel *kept looking Godward, serving Him with all his heart.* What did God do with Daniel? The Bible says:

**Daniel 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.**

Did you read that? Daniel honored God, and God protected Daniel by *changing the prince of the eunuchs heart*. When that old heathen **Nebuchadnezzar** later had a dream and decided to have all his wise men killed – the Hebrew children mentioned above *included* – God revealed the dream to Daniel. When Daniel explained the

king's dream **Nebuchadnezzar** promoted him to co-regent status, making Daniel the most powerful person outside of the king in the whole empire. When Daniel was commanded *not to pray* the prophet was respectful, but prayed anyway. Tossed into a pit filled with hungry lions he spent the night rested because he kept his eyes heavenward. God is in control! **There is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God.** The Hebrew children, ordered to worship a false god, respectfully refused to do so. Tossed into a fiery furnace they came out of the fire – and not even the smell of smoke was on their clothes.

If there is **no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God** then I as a Christian (if I am a Christian) need only make sure I am being obedient to my Lord and Savior. **I must study His Word. I must obey Him in all that He commands. I must not be consumed with worry about that which is going on around me.** God is in control. Obey Him! Surrender to Him. Live for Him. Glorify Him in all that you do. And let God be God!

May the Lord bless you by His Word.



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