

### *Incurring the Judgment of God*

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. - *Romans 13:2*

In this verse, Paul states a logical consequence (“Therefore”) of the statement given in verse 1, “there is no authority except from God.” So Paul deduces that because it is God (the **primary** cause) who institutes all existing authorities (the **secondary** cause) to resist any God-appointed authority is *de facto* to resist God. However, we noted last month (*Instituted by God*) that even “existing” authorities can and do reject and defy God’s appointment. In other words, not all established governing authorities submit to God’s ultimate authority. There are, in fact, rulers and authorities who oppose and subvert God’s purposes in human government.

It is contextually critical to understand and interpret verse 2 (“B”) in light of verse 1 (“A”) since verse 2 is a logical conclusion of verse 1. In other words, A must be true in order for B to be true as well. In order to affirm verse 2, verse 1 must also be true. The mere fact that a governing authority *exists, i.e., God allows* for a **season** an authority to rule, does not affirm that it is submitting to God Himself and governing according to God’s **institution** (take for example the Babylonian empire whom God used to judge Judah, Jeremiah 25). It may be the case as Paul concludes in verse 2 that God’s judgment will ultimately fall upon an existing authority, either in history (as was the case with Babylon) or on the last Day. We need to analyze two qualifications to determine confidently upon whom God’s righteous judgment falls, that is **who** is the **resister**.

The first issue is of **timing**. God’s providential workings in history are not always obvious to man’s perception. We can find examples of this all throughout human history. God’s judgments do not always follow an immediate chronological progression. On the contrary, there are historical examples when God mercifully **delays** judgement. We need not look any further than the first act of rebellion. God declared to Adam in Gen 2:17, “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Death was the designated sentence for breaking this prohibition. We can rightly conclude that **spiritual** death was an immediate consequence of sin (Gen 3:7-9, the awareness of their nakedness and the shame that accompanied it as well as their need to hide from the presence of God). Adam and Eve lost the blessedness of being right before God as soon as they sinned. In this respect, they were judged immediately. However, they did not physically die immediately. Adam lived to the age of 930 (Gen 5:5). Nevertheless, he eventually died, and God’s judgment was fulfilled. Spiritual and physical death were not simultaneous, but they were fulfilled. God kept His word even if one dimension of the judgment was delayed. In God’s mercy, every sinner born of Adam does not suffer immediate death, but it is inevitable (Heb 9:27). While some are stillborn, others live for more than 100 years. The judgements of God in history cannot be timed according to a

set schedule. God orders them according to His good, sovereign pleasure. Thus God may not pass judgement against an authority who resists His will for a period time. As it was in the case of Assyria and Babylon (and other nations that afflicted the people of God in the OT), God may delay judgement against such authorities in order to use them for other purposes. Likewise, it may be the case in our day that God has delayed judgement against governing authorities who are resistant to His will for purposes that are currently unknown to us. However, we should not presume that God's merciful delay is an act of His forgetfulness or even forgiveness. Judgement will fall upon the unrepentant, if not in this life, ultimately on the last Day.

For many of these authorities who are not ruling according to God's institution (see *Instituted by God*), we can be certain that their rebellion against Christ, the supreme governing Authority, will not be ignored. God will surely judge every authority who does not rule according to His institution, who rejects His authority. In the meantime, we must remain faithful to the Lord and persevere in the midst of injustices. God's judgment, now and in the future, will conform to what He has revealed, and we have the Bible as a sure foundation of His revelation and will. As citizens of the heavenly kingdom and an earthly kingdom, we have the Lord as our King who will eventually make all things right and judge the resisters. Until that Day, may we serve Him faithfully to the end.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seth Y." with a stylized flourish at the end.

11/28/21