

## ON WHOSE AUTHORITY?

Morgan County Correctional Complex Chapel, January 25, 2014

Good morning. (personal introduction, greeting and announcements.)

Opening Scripture Reading: Romans 6:16-23

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer

I want to talk to you today about authority.

We all live in an Authority, and we're going to examine three aspects of what that means today:

We are going to look at the Authorities we yield to; the Authorities we rebel against ... and we are going to look at our standing is with the ultimate Authority.

Authority *itself* is an important subject because man-made religion is about authority; theology is about authority. When one man agrees with another, that gives the first man's opinion weight. Another agrees with him and so on. Before long you have a doctrine, a theology, a denomination. When like-minded people group together it gives their opinion authority.

Government works the same way. Sometimes by the will of the people, sometimes by force. One man get another to submit to his will, that man convinces ten more to submit, those ten convince ten each and before long you have a governing body or a sizable army.

Either way, it takes authority to govern, to sustain and uphold law, to punish for infractions. The more rebellious the people, the more government is necessary – The proverb says: “For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof ...” (Proverbs 28:2). This Scripture finds fulfillment here in the prison setting, where we're micro-managed.

Because we proved ourselves unable to be governed by laws in the free world, we're now under those laws *and* TDOC policy as well. Continue to mess up, and your security level goes up, and you find even more laws, more rules, more authority.

Yet we still skirt the system. We do things we feel justified in doing, things we think we can get away with, despite the Bible's clear direction to the contrary:

Turn over to Ephesians 6:5. Here Paul address his listeners as “servants” – which is what we are, it's what we made ourselves, here in prison and even once you're released you'll find you're on the lowest rung of society's ladder. And that was the case with Paul's audience here in the first century ...

Paul says, “Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, (not spiritually, but **physically** in authority) with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers ...

(It's amusing to me how many people, especially old heads, call the CO's “boss,” and seek out every way they can to get over on them. It reminds me of those who say “Lord, Lord” and do not the things He says.)

“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men”

Now this command to do service “as to the Lord, and not to men” is repeated over and over in Scripture. If you are taking notes today, jot down: Col. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18 – All these scriptures reiterate the directions that no matter why you’re here – whether you’re guilty or not – Christians are commanded to obey those in governmental authority ... at least to the point that man's government contradicts God's authority. Remember the example of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah or their pagan names: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the “firery furnace” (Daniel 3). They knew that God’s authority is to supersede man’s authority when the two conflict.

Today we're going to look a little deeper into the authorities that govern our lives, the ones that are a little less obvious than man’s government. I want you to think back before you were arrested on your current charge. What authority did you live under? I’m not talking about the state and federal government, the laws of the land, or even city ordinances. I’m talking about, in a free country – what did you submit yourselves to?

If you’re like me, you believed yourself to be a free citizen. I use to say the old southern mantra, that I was “free, white and over twenty-one,” – the world was my oyster. But I wasn’t free at all ... I was a whipped slave to drugs, to cigarettes, to sex – just about all the vices of the flesh.

Several months before I was arrested, I entered into a partnership with a business associated in Sever County and my company was growing rapidly. I soon came to realization that I needed to quit smoking pot. People would call to check on a job or product I was working on and I simply couldn’t talk to them, I couldn't think. I sounded like a bumbling fool. An idiot.

That's when I discovered one authority under which I lived. You see, no matter how I tried to stop, the authority in my life, the people I surrounded myself with, simply would not let it happen. It was always there, in my face “come on dude, burn one with us.” ... “Hey man, I got this hog-leg, sit down for a minute.” Eventually I would comply with that authority.

So its not a question of *if* you live under authority – but *which* authority you choose, because we are all under authority. Most of the time we can't even identify our authority – but we are under it just the same. So what I mean by “authority” is that sum total of every motive in your life, and the source of that motive.

What decides how you present yourself, whether you wear a beard or shave your face? What formed your habits of diet, exercise, dress, entertainment, relaxation? What specific series of influences shaped your beliefs? What about race, religion, politics?

You are the sum total of a series of personality-shaping AUTHORITIES.

To some people, their church is their ultimate, final, absolute “authority” for doing this or not doing that. To other people, it is their family; their traditions; their friends; their club or lodge; their political party; in here, it could even be their gang.

What decrees what **you** believe? Did you HONESTLY and TRULY search out every source of information, every resource available to you? Did you study it out for yourself, apart from outside influence? Have you PROVED the source of each motivating action in your life? Do you know why you react the way you do?

I read an interesting article the other day about a Muslim who converted to Christianity – and he wasn’t just a Muslim, he was in the bloodline descended from Muhammad, the Qureshis tribe. That’s a big deal in the Muslim world, especially with the Shiites.

And he had a lot of doctrinal issues with what he understood as Christianity, and he would debate with Christians on a regular basis about what they believed and the absurdity he saw in some of their doctrines.

In medical school he met a Christian named David who wasn’t offended by his attacks and challenged him to investigate the evidence on both sides.

What he found initially was a doctrinal argument that struck accord with him, but the historical accounts of sources outside of Christianity and outside of Islam that verified the reliability and accuracy of scripture.

And then on the other side of that he went back and looked at the early biographies of Muhammad and what Muhammad was actually like, and what he was going on in his life as he was crafting this 7th-century religion.

It was these historical proofs that caused him to seriously consider the faith of Abraham, Issac and Jacob.

*The article reads: After three years of investigating the origins of Christianity, I concluded that the case for Christianity was strong – that the Bible could be trusted and that Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead and claimed to be God.*

*Then David challenged me to study Islam as critically as I had studied Christianity. I had learned about Muhammad from imams and my parents, not from the historical sources*

*themselves. When I finally read the sources, I found that Muhammad was not the man I had thought. Violence and sensuality dripped from the pages of his earliest biographies, the life stories of the man I revered as the holiest in history.*

*Shocked by what I learned, I began to lean on the Qur'an as my defense. But when I turned an eye there, that foundation crumbled just as quickly. I relied on its miraculous knowledge and perfect preservation as a sign that it was inspired by God, but both beliefs faltered.*

This man had based his entire life on the authority of “imams” – Muslim teachers and preacher and his parents, and defended it viciously, only to find out that he was wrong. From his childhood he had been taught a lie. How many of us are relying on preachers or parents for some belief or another?

Do you really know why **you** “believe” what you do about members of another religion, race, social class, or even another church? Your authority for all this is that collection of people who have made you what you are. Most would be shocked to find out how little they themselves, by themselves, have had to do with it.

Take education for example. In this, and most western countries, the backbone of our educational system is science. Yet science can't give us any purpose in existing – no reason for being. It can't tell us why we are – what we are – or where we're bound. But science gets all-fired AUTHORITATIVE when it comes to WHERE WE CAME FROM.

“In the beginning,” goes the modern fable, “was the hydrogen atom – amino acids mixing in a primordial soup.” Throw in a lightning strike for the power and “wa-la,” you get life. Science can't replicate it, or reproduce it – you just have to take it on faith.

And by such faith, evolutionary, atheistic, God-denying science preaches its own peculiar dogma, all the while ignoring, and pitying those of us who believe the more accurate version, “In the beginning, God created ...”

Psalms 33 says (6) “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made ... (9) For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalms 104 (30) Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

The Bible states plainly that God created everything we see by His Word and the Power of His Spirit. This implies purpose to our existence, meaning to what's going on here below. And that meaning transcends Satan's authority. It frustrates his purpose, and it angers those under his command.

The famous evolutionist Aldous Huxley wrote about the philosophy of a "meaningless" world, saying it **"was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was ... liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom ..."** (*Ends and Means* 1938, pp 270, 273.) His brother, Julian Huxley, another prominent evolutionist, later wrote, **"The sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a superhuman being is enormous"** (*Essays of a Humanist*, 1966, p. 223).

The idea is that by denying God you can free yourself from His authority – but is that even possible?

Even man's science is forced to recognize LAW – even as it denies a Lawgiver. It searches and explores a Lawful, LAW ABIDING universe. It ponders the marvelous LAWS of the solar system. It investigates the wondrous LAWS of the environment of earth and all the living creatures upon it.

But science stops short of realizing it takes an AUTHORITY to sustain and uphold a law. And it takes an authority to punish for infractions of law.

For the professor who first shook violently a vial of nitroglycerine, it was instantly too late to ponder the law he violated. But in the aftermath of that explosion, it would seem logical that the principle would have been firmly impressed on the survivors.

You see, you live in an authority. The whole universe is bound by authority: the solar system, earth and all life. But the only authority of which you really become *aware* in early life is whatever authority obstructs your desire – restricts your impulses. Usually, you resent **this** authority.

On the other hand, you unknowingly follow whatever authority comes along which appeals to the pull of your senses. You don't *recognize* it as "authority" because the experience is pleasant to you, but you submit to it, just the same.

So let's investigate, briefly, your own *physical* beginnings. We're speaking of you as a baby! *Not* the philosophical or theological question of where men come from but just where you, personally, began.

When you were born, you were immediately governed by AUTHORITY!

Even your bodily processes could be considered an authority. Your nervous impulses were all the authority you needed for otherwise unacceptable and disgusting behavior – personal enterprises of babies – near mindless, thoughtless, but vastly important to a little, struggling creatures.

Hungry? You cried. Wet? You cried – and it was nobody's fault but your own. “Lonely?” (you didn't even know what that meant) but you still cried. Sometimes you cried just for bodily exercise. You didn't know why, but you cried.

If you were overseen by somewhat “average” parents – they probably let you gradually work out, FOR YOUR OWN SELF, whatever system of authority appealed to you the most!

If they were like millions of parents who relied on the authority of Dr. Spock and other like-minded child psychologist, who abhorred the idea of corporal punishment, then you began finding yourself living in a frustrated limbo of NOT KNOWING what your limitations were.

You were utterly without guiding principles. There was no COUNTER authority in your life which would help you realize your emotional frenzies had to be *controlled*.

Maybe this sounds hypothetical. It's not. Every time you see a kid pitch a fit in a Walmart or restaurant, and his mom can't seem to do a thing with him, you see this result. It's absolutely true in too many millions of cases. And the outcome of hands-off parenting is filling up our prisons, our hospitals, and our morgues.

Your first “authority” SHOULD have been loving, corrective, kind, merciful but FIRM PARENTAL authority! You should have, at the tender age of WEEKS, begun finding out there are LAWS in this environment of yours – LAWS TO BE OBEYED – and AUTHORITIES to punish if those laws are broken!

But regardless of your upbringing, by the time you reached your teens, your authorities were most awesome, demanding and important. You didn't know what these authorities were – didn't even recognize you were under these authorities (you fancied yourself “free”) but still you obeyed. Without a complaint. Usually instantly.

Where did you go? With whom? Why?

In hanging out at the skating rink, the mall, the arcade, the backyard party, the pot guys house or the bootlegger, sort of “waiting to see what happens” you were actually cowering in front of a giant dictator – a huge authority in your life that DROVE you to do what you did, dress as you did, cut your hair as you did (or refuse to), and eat, drink, talk, walk, play sports, date, and even repair cars like you did!

Teens DESPERATELY try to “belong.” They must be *just* as “mature,” rough, tough and ready - JUST as “in” as all the others. Who, incidentally, hope to be “in” like the ones they consider worthy, who are in turn emulating someone else.

Were you striving to be popular, handsome, the life of the party? Or did you have acne, or were you awkward?

If so, you probably resented the good complexion of the attractive kids; the smooth conversation of the cool kids. You likely found friends who mirrored your situation. Complete with all habits and modes of dress to match – long hair, cigarettes, cars with huge rear wheels, and a rebellious attitude. Or was it tattoos, piercings, spiked hair and leather?

Be honest with yourself. Regardless of the mode of the times – forgetting the era in which you grew up, what were the *real* authorities in your life?

What were YOU like? Not what you THOUGHT you were like or what you *wanted* to be like but what were you *really* like?

You were striving desperately, chances are, to be just like all the others in your particular circle of friends! So those friends, THEIR modes of dress, THEIR likes and dislikes, THEIR morals and habits – THEY BECAME YOUR AUTHORITY!

You can probably remember MANY occasions when your parents and those friends of yours were in complete opposition one against the other. Which one did you follow? If not *follow*, which one did you WANT to follow – even though you were forced to follow the dictates of your parents?

Like *most* young people, you very probably respected the “authority” of OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE your own age, and THEIR customs, far more than the authority of your parents.

So really, the GREATEST authority in your life, during those years was VANITY.

Some want to be “rugged,” tough, calloused, indifferent – want to “drop out” and become known for their “don't care” attitude. This was the image that I wanted to put on as a teenager. So, like my friends, I adopted that particular pose.

How many here in the prison are still stuck in that “rebel without a clue” mentality? They're unhappy. They don't REALLY want to drop out – they want to drop IN - IN with a group whose acceptance they covet, that's why they act the way they do, they are cowering to the authority of their peers.

Others want to be popular, the life of the party, active in sports and school activities – and so try to become *that* type of person.

But in every case VANITY is behind it all. And vanity is human nature.

You *are* the sum total of all the thoughts experiences, and occurrences that have made you what you are. Without realizing it – you have been *subject* to certain powerful AUTHORITIES all your life.

I said at the opening, you *live* in an “authority.” That's just another way of saying you live in a LAW ABIDING universe, a LAWFUL solar system, and an ecology that follows patterns and LAWS. In all of the creation, **only man** is lawless.

Because, just like the physical laws that act upon you, there are certain *spiritual* forces at work as well.

*Human nature* in you exerts a powerful PULL. Just as the PULL of gravity pulls you DOWN to this physical earth – so is there a powerful MENTAL and EMOTIONAL pull inside of you that pulls you in a downward direction, spiritually.

That PULL is a hidden, unseen, spiritual FORCE. Please turn to Romans, chapter 8 and verse 7. Romans 8:7

The **only** source which you can go to *understand* human nature – to see WHAT it is, and WHY it is that way, is the source of the inspired Word of Almighty God.

Psychology may observe human nature, but only the Bible accurately explains **why** we have it. In the Bible, and in the Bible ONLY, can you come to understand your own nature!

God REVEALS what your nature really is. In verse 7 He says: **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”**

It just CAN'T be subject – according to God.

Sometimes, it kids itself it WANTS to be – that it *wants* to obey God, and live according to the laws of God, but it just can't seem to resist an unseen, powerful AUTHORITY that is everywhere present in this world!

Jeremiah was inspired to write: **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can now it?”** (Jer. 17:9.)

The heart is DECEITFUL – above all things. We like to KID ourselves we're FREE. That we are in bondage to NO man (as the Jews said to Christ) – when ACTUALLY WE'RE SLAVES.

Slaves to our own NATURES. To the PULL of our flesh, and to a hidden SPIRIT BEING WHO RULES OVER MEN IN THIS PRESENT WORLD!

Human nature IS the same KIND of nature as that of Satan, the devil.

His nature is described in the Bible, in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. He is represented as the epitome of VANITY. Vanity consists of JEALOUSY, LUST and GREED. The devil is described as the originator of all lies (John 8:44), as the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2) and as the very god – the LEADING AUTHORITY – of this present world (II Cor. 4:4).

As such, the devil HOLDS SWAY over the minds and hearts of men.

Let's understand this! Human nature can be likened to a powerful NEGATIVE CURRENT. For the sake of analogy, the devil is like a powerful POSITIVE electrical current. That's why pop lighter work, the attraction is so strong, current will jump through the air to make the connection and that spark lights the cotton or tissue – there is a terrific ATTRACTION between the two – for the *flowing* of that powerful current.

It's like a powerful *magnet* – human nature. It PULLS you in the direction of covetousness, lust, jealousy, greed, VANITY.

Your desires to HATE one person, and COVET the affection of another – your DISGUST toward one race, or feelings of SUPERIORITY toward another – your physical, sensual PULLS of the flesh – all these are the same feelings of the devil. They are the powerful AUTHORITY that holds sway over most men!

Without knowing it – you have allowed your vanity to DRIVE you – to WHIP you into submission, to COERCE you into committing acts, harboring resentments and attitudes, doing things you KNEW WERE WRONG!

Human nature, believe it or not, is *VANITY, jealousy, lust and greed!*

It is as if the nature of the devil himself had been put WITHIN man.

But only a RARE one-in-a-million person will ADMIT he has been a slave!

Only a tiny handful have come to the place they have been willing to *see* themselves *as* in literal BONDAGE to the hidden authority of the devil, to the pull of their own nature, and the authority of THIS WORLD around them!

Millions fancy themselves as FREE. They especially believe they are *free* from any necessity of having to OBEY GOD!

They speak of “grace,” which means, to them, being in some sort of spiritual CONDITION which releases them from obligation to OBEY GOD'S AUTHORITY!

But grace is NOT a spiritual “condition” – it is a quality of the character and nature of God! Grace is merely GOD'S FORGIVENESS – His attitude of MERCY and PARDON; unearned, undeserved, which He will show toward anyone who REPENTS of sin! Who willingly submits to His authority.

Never make a mistake! You ARE under authority. You always WILL be under authority. The only question is: “WHOSE?” Turn over to 2 Peter 2:19

You *have* been under the authority of *this world* and its customs, habits, beliefs, fables, false religions, dogmas, prejudices, politics, warped history, and its people. You *have* been, though you didn't realize it, and may still deny it – but you have been UNDER the authority and sway of the hidden *god* of this present age, who is Satan the devil.

But the great influence who presently holds sway over mankind likes to *allow* man to believe himself *free*. He even has *ministers* (II Cor. 11: 13, 15) who preach his special kind of “freedom.”

Listen to this, **Peter** says, “While they [the false ministers of Satan] promise them [their followers] Liberty [freedom, grace, absolution] they themselves are the *servants of corruption*: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (II Pet. 2:19). The bondage of sin, the curse of the law.

Peter was inspired to write of these teachers, calling them in verses 14 and 15: “... beguiling unstable souls ... cursed children: Which have ***forsaken the right way*** and are gone astray ...” in verse 17: “... wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever” (2 Pet. 2:14-17).

They preach FREEDOM – and they cite grace.

And, inevitably, that “grace” they preach means their listeners are “free” from ANY OBLIGATION TOWARD GOD'S LAWS. They preach it is perfectly all right to BREAK God's laws, and that such DISOBEDIENCE and law-BREAKING is “liberty.”

But true to the prophecies of Romans 1, and the modern-day admissions of evolutionists, there is always an underlying MOTIVE in such messages.

And what is the motive **Peter** reveals? Verse 18: “**For when they speak great swelling words of VANITY [words that *appeal* to vanity!], they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error**” (II Pet 2:18).

“Wantonness:” immorality, sexual sins, “Lust of the flesh:” – these are underlying MOTIVES in many a false doctrine, many false teachings. It is the theological equivalent of evolution. A God with no authority is no God at all. Jesus can't be your Master unless you obey Him.

And what a striking parallel between the false ministers of Satan; PREACHING FREEDOM, all the while slaves to their own lusts, and busily trying to enslave *others*; what a parallel between these and the political preachers of the same doctrines, the scientific teachers with the same motives.

Would-be “leaders” in various movements scream about lack of freedom, deprivation of rights, social injustices and the like. They decry the virtual SLAVERY of the peoples they wish to incite.

Yet they, themselves, preach a NEW kind of slavery – that of mindless obedience to the dictates of their *own* policies. Political correctness, of one extreme or another. Inciters to chaos and violence loudly deplore violence; pro choice people who will blowup an abortion clinic; animal rights people who attack human beings. Radical movements that begin solely as a power play for personal fame. Cults of personality.

And so the human pendulum swings.

For centuries, humans have kidded themselves they can find true liberty for themselves – in their own governments, their social orders, their religions.

That's how the United States started out – this “grand experiment” in democracy. But democracy is dependent on a self-governing populous – a people with morals – that's why it doesn't work in some other countries – and why its beginning to fail here. One of the founding fathers said about our constitution, that “this document is designed to govern a Christian people, it is whole inadequate to govern any other.” (need to verify and find exact quote).

We have only succeeded in drifting from one kind of enslavement to another – and have never achieved true freedom.

We're enslaved by our own inventions. Afraid of our own hugeness – terrified by the works of our own hands.

Today mankind sees himself facing that ultimate disaster of all – the suicide of the whole human race.

And all because we want liberty. Freedom. But we didn't know WHAT it was. And we didn't know WHERE TO LOOK for it.

So, what IS real liberty? What *is* true freedom?

Our child psychologists seem taken with the notion that it's total anarchy; the right to do to whomsoever, at whatever time you choose, whatsoever you please. You can't discipline kids anymore. Nothing that they want to do is wrong by social standards.

In our homes and schools, we have seen the horrible consequences of this utter misconception; in violent youth, juvenile delinquency, riots, homicides between parents and children, and almost constant news of the latest school killing spree.

In our societies today, millions of us believe freedom is the freedom FROM law, to do whatever we can get away with – whenever the opportunity strikes. (The “Knock-out game”)

We lie, cheat, rob and kill; we gulp down pills, medicate every ache, diet and exercise ourselves into a physical limbo; thus breaking every basic law of health; we cheat in school, cheat in business, cheat on our income taxes, and drive too fast ... even in here, we break or bend every rule we think we can get away with, all because we feel “free” to do so – freed by our society, freed by the prison culture; the authority of our peers.

And on the outside whole segments of the free-world feel themselves in virtual slavery to their environment; without jobs, education, or the promise of either – or without jobs, education, or the DESIRE for either.

Prisons are overcrowded and growing. And everybody believes they have right to something, the freedom of gay marriage; bigamy; recreational pot; class warfare; government handouts; redistribution of wealth; to enter the country illegally – then stay as an “undocumented citizen.” We are turning on our own systems of government, we are ignoring our own laws, and we are turning on each other, and the government is turning on itself! All in the name of freedom.

When a people as a whole denounce God – when they throw off His authority and replace it with popular opinion – all bets are off. They don’t want their desires suppressed, no matter how vile. They want to be free – free to sin.

But what is **true** freedom?

Is it freedom of SPEECH – to be sure. It's freedom of ASSEMBLY, too. But it is also freedom from FEAR, and from WANT, and from PAIN and SUFFERING. We seem to avail ourselves much of our freedoms of expression, and especially freedom to DISSENT.

But when will we ever experience freedom of **mind** and **spirit**? When freedom from terror, from worry, from unhappiness, from pain and suffering?

When will we have freedom from DEATH?

This is the freedom God offers – **True Freedom**.

We, above all others ought to KNOW by now that our civil liberties and freedoms are guaranteed **only** so long as we live within the law. Turn over to Romans, chapter 6, verse 12. Romans 6:12.

It's about time we realize LAWS protect, preserve and GUARANTEE our liberties.

But when we BREAK the law; those liberties can be taken away from us.

It is exactly the same with the laws of God! Live *within* them, and we are TRULY FREE. Freedom never imagined by most – the lasting, secure kind that NO human can take away from us.

Listen to the way **Paul** put it in Romans 6:12: “Let not sin therefore *reign* [let it not RULE OVER you] in your mortal body, that ye should *obey it* in the lusts thereof.”

John tells us that “Sin is transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Sin is the violation of God's Ten Commandments. And it is a choice. A matter of deciding WHO YOUR AUTHORITY WILL BE?

Will you continue to be RULED, FORCED, *DRIVEN*, like a cowering, whimpering, slave by your own *habits* (smoking, cursing, drinking, arguing, fighting, stealing, and on and on)? Will you be driven by *passions* (lust, covetousness, sexual compulsions; drugs)? Will you be RULED over, by mere human emotion – or will you determine NO SUCH SATANIC AUTHORITY WILL BEAR RULE OVER YOUR LIFE? ... Will you will be FREE?

Paul continues, verse 13: “Neither *yield* ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto SIN – the breaking of God's Law – but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For *sin shall not have dominion over you ...*” (Romans 6:13-14).

God says of His true servants, sin shall NOT drive you, whip you into line, FORCE you to commit acts that bring upon you all sorts of suffering. Your own passions, lusts, vanities and jealousies are NOT to bring you into abject, groveling SLAVERY! Your own prejudices, notions, thoughts, concepts, racial bigotries and religious ideas are NOT TO BE YOUR AUTHORITY!

Turn one chapter over to Romans 7:21. Chapter 7, verse 21. Paul knew there was a literal BATTLE being waged. It was a battle between two different AUTHORITIES, and He was the prize.

Verse 21: “I find then a LAW, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I *delight* in the law of God *after* the inward man: but I see another law in my members, WARRING against the law of my mind, and BRING ME INTO CAPTIVITY to the LAW OF SIN which is IN MY MEMBERS.” (Romans 7:21-23). That “law of sin” in his flesh was his HUMAN NATURE, which is SUBJECT to vanity (Romans 8:20), which is influenced by Satan the devil, by this present world, and by the pulls of the flesh. Turn to Romans 8:2.

Paul said he had been made FREE from that “captivity” to the law of sin.

He said, “... For the law of the Spirit of LIFE in Christ Jesus hath made me FREE from the law of sin and death”! (Romans 8:2.)

Now he was *deciding*, as a FREE moral agent, just WHO **HIS** AUTHORITY WOULD BE.

He decided it *voluntarily*. No other person, no superhuman being, no influence FORCED him into submission.

And he decided his authority would be God the Father, and Jesus Christ, and the WORD of God. He would no longer mindlessly, blindly cringe before the whims of human nature.

He would NOT be a slave to “what people think,” and to the opinions and notions of others, equally enslaved to passion.

He would *not* do obeisance to lust; bow down before vanity; salute jealousy – the instant impulse of greed. He would *not* drift through life as fair game for the multitudes of WRONG authorities all around him.

He would CHOOSE. He would choose HIS OWN AUTHORITY. And he would NOT obey it out of fear!

It was FEAR, fear of other people's opinions, fear of family, friends, associates – fear of all sorts of real and imagined consequences that *made* him part and parcel of his own society.

But he would never be trapped into a FEAR RELIGION again.

Now he would obey because **he** DECIDED to. Because he could plainly see which RESULTS he wanted – what was the BEST WAY TO LIVE. The true freedom of God’s government.

Never again would he stoop before the Molech of fashion, the Dagon of public opinion; the Ishtar of sex, or the Mars of hatred and war.

No idolatrous power would rule *him* – not HIM – not the apostle Paul. He found TRUE FREEDOM. Because he FREELY GAVE Himself to God. He volunteered to SUBMIT to God's authority!

And for that, He'll possess *ultimate* authority, forever! (2 Tim. 4:7,8 with Rev. 20:4.) He will rule with Christ a thousand years, immortal, glorified – an heir of eternity.

God wants to give you authority. But HE first expects you to be freed from the slavery of your own lusts and passions, this world and its societies, and from Satan the devil.

You are UNDER AUTHORITY right now. You LIVE in an “authority.” You ALWAYS WILL be under authority.

The only question is – Whose Authority?

*Bow your heads ...*