

Where does authority lie?

More and more our society is rooting authority within the psychological category of the individual's own emotions, perceptions, assessments, and values.

In other words, we, as a society and culture, have moved away from the belief that truth and virtue are categories that are revealed to us, either by God (if one is religious) or even by community or culture (if one were culturist) and progressively have moved toward the belief that truth and virtue are purely individual categories over which no other person, family, community, or governance has any authority. Thus, **my soul's** desires and values are the authority by which I understand what is *ultimately* good and *ultimately* true.

We come to inner war, however, when we see that what we want in one area of life, and believe to be for our ultimate good, comes into conflict with what we want in another area of life, and also believe to be for our ultimate good. For example, we pursue the pleasure of personal comfort for our good and the security of adequate monetary resources for our good, but often our pursuit of one will, by necessity preclude the other. Work is hard and uncomfortable. What anxiety comes over us! Or, we desire that people to do what is right by us (or, to put in another way, we want to control our world to line up with best suits us) and we desire true and real relationships of openness, to know and to be vulnerably known by another, but these exclude one another. What anxiety, fear, and anger we feel when we feel that we must control others and we must know and be loved by others, but reality will not bend to our will. **Life doesn't bow to our desires, yet I cannot believe that it is out of my control.**

So, in entrusting our own souls' with the supreme authority of Truth, we have learned how to cope with such a cognitive dissonance. We do so by suppressing and ignoring this antagonism between our very desires. Knowing the facts, we lie to ourselves and others, we become filled with fear and anxiety, and by the necessity of being unwilling to admit our depravity and powerlessness we ignore the reality of such dissonance. Choosing, consciously or sub-consciously, the lie of control and autonomy over the reality of powerlessness and the need for rescue from a heart and a world beyond our power. This unwillingness to admit such antagonism is based in our unwillingness to submit to the authority of God, deliberately or otherwise assuming that we have the wisdom to rule ourselves and the power to control our world, if not externally at least internally. In fact, one could argue from recent history that our Western society initially believed that we could control our external world through science and medicine, but failing to do that we moved to believing that we could at least control our own culture, but failing to do that we did not consider that we are simply not that powerful, but rather we moved the battlefield ever more internal, to the individual soul. At least we can control our own souls, right?

The result of this individualization of authority, however, has not proven to be the freeing sweep of utopian cleansing that we thought it would be. In reality, though more and more independent of external authority, we are more and more dependent upon various means of simply coping with life, whether that be by chemical means of narcotics or substances, the distracting comforts of entertainment or food, or the transient pleasures of sexual fantasy or digital anonymity. These means, though promising freedom from our cognitive dissonance, have enslaved us. **Though more entertained than ever before, we are more bored than we've ever felt.** We have been captured by the pixel and the pica, taken prisoner by the fleeting false promise of pleasure, and from the darkness of our preferred pits we ironically, and perhaps masochistically, still cling to the belief that we can rule ourselves and that authority lies within our own ability to perfect ourselves and our world. We simply keep trying to love ourselves more, serve ourselves more, **harkening to the suppressing soul's siren as our** internal world and external culture sails towards the jagged rocks of infamy.

The Bible speaks of this internal struggle, not in terms of psychological needs or strength, but rather in term of warfare. Deep within the human heart is a burning animosity, an intense antagonism, and even a searing hatred of the Almighty God and His absolute authority and control. It is not just an indifference to God, but a contempt and an anger for God and we refuse to admit it. We suppress it and pursue our own power. We bury it and run after empty promisers. We stuff it and cover our eyes and our ears and chase the things that destroy us. **The Scriptures say, in Romans 1, that we “suppress the truth in unrighteousness”.** And also, in Romans 8:7, **“For the mind that is set on the flesh is *hostile* to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.”** And we were all in this category, as it is written in Ephesians 2:3, **“among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”**

Thus, in arrogantly presuming authority over our own lives, we are acting out of this fundamental animosity, and Jesus addresses this underlying hatred of God and of Himself, the Son. Because in the story, when God reveals Himself to the servants of the vineyard, they want to kill him. If they could kill the owner, they would, and **they'll kill the Son given the chance**, so that they can have authority over the vineyard, to use *as they wish*. **So were we all.** Let's see what Jesus says about our condition in this parable.