Final Authority

"Final Authority" – the term might not be as easy to identify or define as you think. We might simply say something like, "the most important authority on a subject," or "the authority to which someone appeals to make a final judgment on a matter."

While these might be helpful, it gets a little stickier when we try to nail down "final authority" in our personal lives. Why? Because we are complicated beings who often have unrecognized biases or conflicting beliefs we haven't unwrapped.

We've all seen it, someone stands strong for a particular standard or authority *until that authority contradicts one of their strongly held beliefs.* Then they conveniently change their source of authority or modify in their minds how broadly they respect or apply the decisions and/or edicts of the previously respected "final authority."

Paul knew the problem well. In Romans 1 he speaks of those were "professing to be wise, they became fools." In Galatians 1:10 Paul makes it very personal:

> **For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?**
> **Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to**
> **please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.**

Jesus tells us that God's word IS truth, John 17:17. If (a big "IF" for many) we recognize and accept Jesus and the Testament He died to ratify, then we must accept His truths as final authority. Many denominations *say* they take the Bible as final authority, but as soon as one of their member churches fails to follow their edicts, they suddenly find themselves excommunicated from that denomination.

Part of our acceptance of God's word as final authority is the recognition that biblical authority does not authorize nor command ***any*** denominational structure for the church God bought with the blood of His only begotten Son
(1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Here is a good practical test: the next time you read a Bible passage with which you disagree, ask yourself at the end of the day, "Did I decide to believe God's word, or stick with my own previous, personal belief system?" The answer will tell you if you have accepted God and His word as your final authority, or if you simply prefer your own personal authority system over the inspired, blood-bought word of God.

Ray Wallace