

REBELLION IS AS THE SIN OF WITCHCRAFT

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"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). There are times when we must engage in righteous rebellion and sanctified stubbornness in order to do the right thing. However, we need to be absolutely sure that we are not rebelling against something which God has ordained and established.

Some people rebel by cutting themselves off from all fellowship with other believers. These deluded disciples view themselves as "lone prophets," and refuse to be accountable to any congregation, because no congregation measures up to their expectations. They think they are sacrificing the joys of fellowship for the sake of God's truth, when in fact they are in rebellion against God, because God commands us in the Scriptures to "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25).

Samuel's words of rebuke were spoken to a man who stubbornly insisted that his disobedience was "for the Lord." God had commanded King Saul to totally destroy the Amalekites, including the animals. Saul and his army spared the best of the sheep, oxen, failings, and lambs. When Samuel confronted Saul about this, Saul kept trying to justify himself by saying that he had spared the animals "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." Couldn't Samuel understand that Saul had a spiritual reason for his actions? Saul wasn't doing this for himself; he was doing it "to sacrifice unto the Lord."

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," Samuel said. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

Saul lost his throne, his crown, and his kingdom for refusing to obey, even though his refusal was supposedly "for the Lord." Disciples who refuse to be

a part of a congregation will be deprived of the blessings of God in this life and lose rewards which could be theirs in the age to come, even though their refusal to fellowship is supposedly for the Lord" and for the sake of truth as they perceive it.

In contrast to the story of King Saul, there is the little-known story of the Rechabites. There is some uncertainty about who Rechab was and exactly who these people were and where their descendants are today, but that is not the point. Rechab had a son named Jonadab. Jonadab decided that he and his descendants would live differently than other people: "Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons forever," he commanded his sons. "Neither shall ye build a house, nor sow seed, nor plant a vineyard nor own one. But all your days ye shall dwell in tents, that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers" (Jer. 35:6f).

Jonadab the son of Rechab wanted his descendants to avoid city life and continue living as nomads. It is important that we understand that it was not God who commanded the Rechabites to abstain from wine. It was not God who told them they could not sow seed or plant vineyards. It was not God who commanded them to live in tents throughout their generations. It was Jonadab who commanded his sons to maintain these traditions.

What if a father in our modern American culture were to decide that he wanted to establish some similar traditions for his family? And what if he ordered his adult sons to maintain these traditions throughout their generations? I think most American Christians would tell the sons, "Your old man's crazy. You don't have to do all those things. It's bondage to think that way." And most American sons would heartily agree with this assessment of their father's peculiar wishes.

The Rechabites didn't view their father Jonadab that way, though. The Rechabites told Jeremiah, Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he

hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed; but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (Jer. 35:8-10).

Most Americans would feel sorry for those poor, deluded Rechabites -still in bondage to their crazy ancestor's wild ideas about the best kind of lifestyle. Maybe the Rechabites need deliverance from a "generational curse." Maybe we should utter a prophecy over them to set them free from their terrible oppression. Better yet, let's let Jeremiah utter a prophecy over them, so we can all see what the Lord God thinks of all this nonsense:

"And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, This saith Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel: Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever (Jer. 35:18f).

Read those words again and let them sink in. God commended the Rechabites for their obedience, and promised that they would always have "a man to stand before Yahweh forever." These words normally refer to priests and faithful prophets. (See 2 Chron. 29:11; Ezk. 44:15; 1 Kings 17:1; etal.)

I don't think we realize how un-Biblical our American ways are, nor do we see how deeply rooted the rebellion in our American culture is. Our nation was born out of rebellion against the British because we wanted Independence. Regardless of whether or not America's founding fathers were right to revolt, our culture and the American Church are now permeated with rebellion and an intense desire to be accountable to no one - not to fathers or mothers, not to husbands, not to a congregation. May God slay the rebellion in our hearts and give us the heart of the Rechabites.