

THREE WORDS TO THE SPIRITUALLY REBELLIOUS PERSON

30 Woe to the rebellious children, declares Jehovah, [those] who receive counsel, but not from me, and who make an alliance, but not with [the consent of] my Spirit. Consequently, they heap sin upon sin. ²[Woe to the rebellious children] who start out on their journey down to Egypt, (but who do so without having sought counsel from me), in order to strengthen themselves with Pharaoh's strength and to take refuge under Egypt's shadow. ³Therefore, Pharaoh's strength shall be your shame, and the refuge under Egypt's shadow shall be your humiliation. ⁴Their officials are at Zoan, and their ambassadors have arrived at Hanes. ⁵All of them will be ashamed because of a people who cannot help them, [a people] who will be neither a help nor a profit to them; but rather, will be a source of shame and disgrace. ⁶The oracle concerning the beasts of the South. Through a land of hardship and distress—the habitat of the lioness and the lion, the viper and the darting snake—[the ambassadors] carry their riches upon the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people who will be of no help [to them]. ⁷Egypt's help is useless and worthless; therefore, I call her, Rahab, [The Boaster,] who sits still and does nothing! ⁸Go now, write this on a tablet in their presence, inscribe it on a scroll, so that it may be perpetually preserved for the future; ⁹for they are a rebellious people, deceitful children, children who will not listen to Jehovah's instructions. ¹⁰[They are children] who say to the seers, Do not see any more visions! and to the prophets, Do not prophesy to us what is right; [rather,] tell us pleasant things, prophecy illusions! ¹¹Get out of our way! Move out of our path! Stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel! ¹²Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel declares, Because you have rejected this message, and have put your trust in oppression and deception, and have relied on them; ¹³therefore, this iniquity shall be to you like a breach bulging out in a high wall, ready to burst—[the wall] will collapse suddenly, in an instant. ¹⁴He will break it in pieces like pottery, shattering it so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found [that is large enough] for scooping burning coals from the hearth or for dipping water out of a cistern. ¹⁵This is what the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, says, Your salvation is found in repentance and rest, your strength is found in quietness and confidence; but you will not accept this. ¹⁶You said, No! [On the contrary,] we will flee on horses! Therefore you will flee. And [you said,] We will ride [away] on swift horses! Therefore those who pursue you will be swift. ¹⁷A thousand shall flee when they are threatened by [only] one man; when threatened by five men, you will all flee, until you are left like a [lone] pine tree on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.

¹⁸Yet Jehovah longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion; because Jehovah is a God of justice, blessed are all those who wait for him. ¹⁹O people of Zion, you who live in Jerusalem, you shall no longer weep. He will surely be gracious to you when you lift up your voice and cry [for help]. As soon as he hears you, he will answer you. ²⁰The Lord will give you your necessary food and the water you need. Your teachers will no longer hide themselves; with your own eyes you will see your teachers. ²¹And when you turn [aside] to the right or to the left, with your ears you will hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk in it. ²²You will defile your idols overlaid with silver, and your [sacred] images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a filthy menstrual cloth and say to them, Get out of here! ²³He will send the rain for

your seed that you shall sow in the soil; and the food that comes from the soil will be rich and plentiful. On that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. ²⁴The oxen also, and the donkeys that work the soil, will eat savory fodder that has been spread out [for them] with pitchfork and shovel. ²⁵On the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall, there will be streams running with water on every lofty mountain and on every high hill. ²⁶Furthermore, the moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day that Jehovah binds up the fracture of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.

²⁷Look! The name of Jehovah comes from a distant place, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke. His lips are full of indignation and his tongue is like a consuming fire; ²⁸and his breath is like a rushing torrent rising as high as the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction. He places in the jaws of the people a bridle that leads them away* [to perdition]. ²⁹You will sing as [you do] on the night you celebrate a sacred festival; your heart will rejoice as when you go up with flutes to the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel. ³⁰Jehovah will cause his majestic voice to be heard and will make [the peoples] see his fist coming down with fierce anger and the flame of a consuming fire, with a cloud burst, thunderstorm and hail. ³¹At the voice of Jehovah the Assyrian will be terrified; he will strike them down with his rod. ³²Every blow Jehovah lays on him with his punishing rod will be to the music of tambourines and harps, as he fights them in battle with the brandishing of his arm. ³³A Topheth* [—a place where they burn abominable things—] has been prepared for a long time; indeed, it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of wood to make a great fire. The breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, will set it ablaze.

31 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, those who rely on horses and trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen—but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek [help from] Jehovah. ²But he, too, is wise and can bring calamity. He will not take back his words, but will rise up against the house of the wicked and against those who come to the aid of those who practice iniquity. ³Now the Egyptians are [only] men, and not God; and their horses are [only] flesh, and not spirit. When Jehovah stretches out his hand, the one who comes to aid will stumble and the one who receives his aid will fall—both will perish together. ⁴This is what Jehovah has said to me, As a lion, a great lion, growls over his prey—and even though a whole band of shepherds should be called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor—so Jehovah of hosts will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. ⁵Like birds hovering [overhead], so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect it and deliver it, he will pass over it and preserve it.

⁶Return to the one from whom you have so greatly revolted, O children of Israel; ⁷for on that day everyone will throw away the idols of silver and gold that your own hands have made as [an act of] sin. ⁸The Assyrian will fall by the sword, [though] not [the sword] of man; and the sword, [though] not [the sword] of men, shall devour him. He will flee from the sword and his young men will be subjected to forced labor. ⁹His fortress will fall due to the terror, and his commanders will panic at the sight of the battle standard, declares Jehovah, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem. (Isa. 30:1-31:9)

Note on Isaiah 30:28; The Hebrew word **תָּעַה** generally has the meaning “to go astray,” or “to lead astray.” When a man is pulled off of the pathway of righteousness and is dragged down a path that leads to sin, he is being led astray. But here the LORD is pulling the Assyrian off of the path of defiant sinfulness and is dragging him down the road that leads to perdition.

Note on Isaiah 30:33; Topheth (**תֹּפֶת**) comes from the root word, **הָפַח**, meaning, “to spit,” “to spit out with contempt.” Topheth was the name of a place in the valley of the sons of Hinnom near Jerusalem, the place where the apostate Israelites offered their infants as sacrifices to the pagan god Moloch. In Isaiah 30:33 there appears to be a play on words. Whereas the original Topheth was the place where they offered abominable sacrifices, the LORD has prepared a place where he will burn the abominable thing, namely, the king of Assyria who represents all that defies the kingdom of God and is a threat to His people.

Introduction

When you think about rebellion and rebelliousness, what images come to mind?

The image of rebelliousness in the America of the 1950’s was the motorcycle gang member: the young man who wore a black leather jacket, whose hair was unkempt and greasy, and who could be seen riding a powerful Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

The image of rebelliousness in the 1960’s was the hippie: the young men and women who wore beads and granny glasses, who had long straight hair, who smoked pot and listened to psychedelic music.

When you think of rebellion and rebelliousness, does there ever come to mind the image of an attractive young woman, a professing Christian, offering up the following prayer to God?

“I know You don’t approve of this,” I told God one morning as I combed my hair before the studio mirror. “This” was an interview I was about to do that compromised my values and ethics. “But,” I added, “I’m going to do it anyway!” (*POWER*, 2/19/92, pp.4-5); the young woman was a T.V. hostess on a local morning news and talk show

Sometimes, within the garb of outward conformity, there dwells a life of rebellion against God. You may bear the name of Christ, you may identify yourself with Christ, but does your life indicate that—like the young woman T.V. hostess, and like the people of Judah—you are in fact a rebellious person?

Let us consider the LORD’s message to those who are spiritually rebellious, and let us heed that message where it applies to us.

I. If You are Spiritually Rebellious, Your Life is in Opposition to the LORD (Isa. 30:1-2,9-11,15-16a)

In verse 1 the LORD describes the people of Judah as *“rebellious children.”* The Hebrew word, סָרָר, has the meaning “to be resistant to authority,” “to be stubborn.”

One dimension of their rebelliousness was their refusal to seek the LORD’s counsel: *“[they] receive counsel, but not from me”* (vs. 1.) They would not look to the LORD and His prophets for their counsel and guidance; rather, they made their own plans and then proceeded in their effort to bring those plans to pass. By way of personal application: Do we really mean it when we pray the petition of the Lord’s Prayer in which we request of God, *“Your will be done”*? Do we seek to understand His will for our lives in a given situation by consulting His Word, seeking His face in prayer, and soliciting godly Christian counsel? Or do we totally ignore the LORD and pursue our own plans with regard to career, dating/marriage, and the everyday decisions of life? The LORD goes on to protest, *“[they] make an alliance, but not with [the consent of] my Spirit.”* They entered into an alliance, but not with the direction and sanction and blessing of the Holy Spirit; rather, it was a covenant that violated their covenant with the LORD their God—as verse 2 indicates, they were looking to the pagan nation of Egypt for deliverance from Assyria, rather than looking to the LORD. Again, by way of personal application: Are we committing ourselves to practices and relationships that cause us to compromise or violate our commitment to Christ (like the young T.V. news show hostess referred to in the introduction)? The LORD goes on to declare, *“[they] heap sin upon sin.”* They compounded their previous sin of departing from the commandments of the LORD, (which sin brought the Assyrian armies to their nation in divine judgment), with this present sin of seeking deliverance by the Egyptians rather than returning to the LORD their God. Once more, by way of personal application: When we have disobeyed the LORD and have suffered the consequence, do we compound the problem by seeking our own “solution” rather than confessing our sin and returning to the LORD?

Another dimension of their rebelliousness was their refusal to hear the law of the LORD. The LORD again defines them as *“a rebellious people”* (resistant to God’s rightful authority over their lives) and *“deceitful children”* (they professed allegiance to the LORD, but did not render such allegiance.) Do we take seriously our Christian vow to acknowledge Jesus Christ as our sovereign Lord and, by reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in us, to forsake the world, to put to death our old sinful nature, and to lead a godly life?

They are further identified as *“children who will not listen to Jehovah’s instructions.”* They say to *“the seers”* (i.e.; the prophets as they received visions from the LORD as to the judgment that was about to befall this rebellious people), *“Do not see any more visions!”* (vs. 10.) In effect they are saying, “Do not tell us

what lies in store for us in consequence of our personal and national sin, such visions disturb us and are at variance with our own vision of continued tranquility and a future of uninterrupted happiness!" They instruct the prophets, *"Do not prophesy to us what is right; [rather,] tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions!"* They desire to abandon what is right in favor of what is pleasant and comfortable to hear, fully knowing that such preaching is deceitful. Do we, likewise, desire preaching that departs from what is right in favor of what is comforting and entertaining? Preaching that makes no mention of discipleship, commitment, spiritual growth, or service, but which offers a means of escape much like a good novel or a T.V. show? They further command the prophets, *"Get out of our way! Move out of our path! Stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"* (vs. 11.) In effect they are telling the prophets to step aside and not block the way between the people and their sins by confronting them with the LORD in His righteousness and His identity as the Holy One of Israel—they desire to indulge in their sins without the conviction of guilt or the fear of just retribution.

Yet another dimension of their rebelliousness is evidenced in their refusal to place their confidence in the LORD, as is indicated in verse 15, *"This is what the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, says, Your salvation is found in repentance and rest, your strength is found in quietness and confidence."* The LORD counsels them to return to Him and to rest in Him; the way of repentance will bring security and blessing. *"But you will not accept this. ¹⁶You said, No! [On the contrary], we will flee on horses! ... And [you said,] We will ride [away] on swift horses!"* (vs.15b-16a.) Rather than heed the LORD and trust in Him, they chose to flee to Egypt for safety and deliverance from the Assyrian foe. By way of personal application: When we encounter a trial or a hard time in our lives, do we bring the matter to the LORD, placing our confidence in Him; or do we blame Him, spitefully turn our backs on Him, and try to take matters into our own hands?

Let us not be spiritually rebellious, so that we do not set ourselves in opposition to the LORD, opposing and rejecting all that He is: our Counselor and Guide, our Lord and Master, our Savior, Refuge, and Source of Help.

II. If You are Spiritually Rebellious, You will be Opposed by the LORD (Isa. 30:3-8,12-14,16b-17)

Verses 3-5 speak of the consequence that would be suffered by these people for pursuing their own course instead of seeking the counsel of the LORD their God:

Therefore, Pharaoh's strength shall be your shame, and the refuge under Egypt's shadow shall be your humiliation. ⁴Their officials are at Zoan, and their ambassadors have arrived at Hanes. ⁵All of them will be ashamed because of a people who cannot help them, [a people] who will be neither a help nor a profit to them; but rather, will be a source of shame and disgrace. (Isa. 30:3-5)

Because they have aligned themselves with Egypt, the LORD will cause them to be put to shame and thrown into confusion and bewilderment when Egypt proves to be incapable of providing for their defense. Verses 6-8 present *“The oracle concerning the beasts of the South:”*

Through a land of hardship and distress—the habitat of the lioness and the lion, the viper and the darting snake—[the ambassadors] carry their riches upon the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people who will be of no help [to them]. ⁷Egypt’s help is useless and worthless; therefore, I call her, Rahab, [The Boaster,] who sits still and does nothing! ⁸Go now, write this on a tablet in their presence, inscribe it on a scroll, so that it may be perpetually preserved for the future. (Isa. 30:6-8)

In verses 6-7 Isaiah receives an oracle concerning the folly of Judah’s chosen course of action: a caravan is seen making the perilous journey to Egypt through a wilderness inhabited by lions and vipers, the caravan is seen carrying the riches of Judah down into Egypt—a caravan is supposed to bring riches home, not transport them to a foreign land! Furthermore, the futility of their present endeavor is emphasized: they present their treasures *“to a people who will be of no help [to them].”* Judah may put great confidence in Egypt, but the LORD calls Egypt *“Rahab, [The Boaster,] who sits still and does nothing.”* The Hebrew term **רָהַב**, means “to be arrogant,” “to make a noise;” used here in the sense of “empty boasting.”

Isaiah is commanded to record this oracle and this description of Egypt as a witness against Judah’s folly (verse 8); note, also, Isaiah 31:2-3,

But he, too, is wise and can bring calamity. He will not take back his words, but will rise up against the house of the wicked and against those who come to the aid of those who practice iniquity. ³Now the Egyptians are [only] men, and not God; and their horses are [only] flesh, and not spirit. When Jehovah stretches out his hand, the one who comes to aid will stumble and the one who receives his aid will fall—both will perish together. (Isa. 31:2-3)

Verses 12-14 speak of the consequence to be suffered when there is the refusal to hear and heed the law of the LORD. They had requested the prophets to remove the Holy One of Israel from their presence, but the Holy One of Israel will not go away!—it is He Himself who now confronts them: *“this is what the Holy One of Israel declares, ‘Because you have rejected this message, and have put your trust in oppression and deception, and have relied on them ...’”* (vs. 12.) The LORD especially confronts them with the fact that they have refused to return to Him and trust in Him. On the contrary, they have put their trust in *“oppression”* (apparently a reference to the plundering of the peoples’ wealth by means of heavy taxation in order to pay off the Assyrians in an effort to induce them to depart from the land) and *“deception”* (apparently a reference to their alliance with Egypt, which, no doubt, they sought to conceal from the Assyrian invaders.)

The LORD's message is that they will bear the punishment for defying and breaking His moral law. In verses 13-14 their rebelliousness is portrayed as a crack in a wall that causes the wall to bulge and suddenly to come crashing down—indeed, the LORD Himself shall break the wall, like a piece of pottery that is smashed to bits.

In Isaiah 31:4 the LORD further describes Himself as fighting against these rebellious people just as a lion pounces upon his prey and refuses to be frightened away by even a multitude of shouting shepherds:

"This is what Jehovah has said to me, 'As a lion, a great lion, growls over his prey—and even though a whole band of shepherds should be called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor—so Jehovah of hosts will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights.'"

We must clearly understand that the LORD and the righteous demands of His moral law are inescapable. We either submit to Him and receive His blessing, or resist Him only to suffer the consequences—we cannot dismiss the LORD and take His holy law for granted.

Verses 16-17 speak of the consequence to be suffered by those who refuse to place their confidence in the LORD. The people of Judah had chosen to flee upon horses in an attempt to outrun the enemy advancing against them (vs. 16a.) But the LORD will see to it that their pursuers will be swifter and will overtake them, preventing their escape (vs. 16b.) As verse 17 indicates, if we reject the covenant obligations stipulated by the LORD our God, we will not only forfeit the covenantal blessing, we will also be given over to the covenantal curse. Verse 17 is alluding to the covenantal curse recorded in Deuteronomy 28:25,

Jehovah will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven [directions], and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. (Deut. 28:25)

Let us not be spiritually rebellious, or else we will find ourselves being opposed by the LORD Himself.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Pet. 5:5b-6)

III. If You are Spiritually Rebellious, Your Repentance will be Greeted with Mercy (Isa. 30:18-26)

Verse 18 declares that the LORD *"longs to be gracious to you."* The LORD will wait until His people have discovered the folly of turning to other sources for their

help and salvation. The LORD will wait until His people have run out of resources. The LORD will wait until His severe chastising work has had its intended effect of producing contrition and repentance—then He will show Himself to be gracious to them.

Then the LORD will “*rise* (i.e.; arise to action) *to show you compassion.*” When all secular hope is gone and when His people cry out to Him for mercy, the LORD will act on their behalf to deliver them from the Assyrian invader. Note Isaiah 31:6-8, where it is implied that the commandment/invitation to return to the LORD (vs. 6) is met with compliance and repentance (vs. 7), with the result being a miraculous deliverance from the Assyrian armies (vs. 8):

Return to the one from whom you have so greatly revolted, O children of Israel; ⁷for on that day everyone will throw away the idols of silver and gold that your own hands have made as an act of sin. ⁸The Assyrian will fall by the sword, [though] not [the sword] of man; and the sword, [though] not [the sword] of men, shall devour him. He will flee from the sword and his young men will be subjected to forced labor. (Isa. 31:6-8)

Verse 19 declares that the LORD “*will surely be gracious to you when you lift up your voice and cry [for help]. As soon as he hears you, he will answer you.*” At present, His people desire to flee to Egypt for safety (vs. 16), but when the LORD’s work of grace produces repentance in their hearts and causes them to cry out to the LORD, then they will surely “*live in Jerusalem*” (vs. 19a.) That is to say, they shall come to dwell in the security and blessing of the LORD’s very presence. Furthermore, “*you shall no longer weep*” (vs. 19a.) Their sorrow, caused by their own sins and the LORD’s judgment upon those sins, shall be replaced with joy in the LORD.

Verses 20-22 indicate that, in response to the peoples’ repentance, the LORD will supply their needs, he will “*give you your necessary food and the water you need.*” Furthermore, “*your teachers will no longer hide themselves.*” Whereas the people had previously resisted their teachers’ message and commanded them to get out of their way (vs. 10-11), causing those teachers to go into hiding for their own safety, now the repentant people welcome their teachers who instruct them in the way of the LORD their God. As verse 21 indicates, the Holy Spirit Himself will instruct the people and keep them on the pathway of righteousness. As verse 22 indicates, the LORD’s chastening/disciplining work will produce the result of repentance: “*You will defile your idols overlaid with silver, and your [sacred] images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a filthy menstrual cloth and say to them, Get out of here!*” Whereas previously the people had commanded the prophets of God to “Go away!” now they command their idols, “*Get out of here!*” As a true indication of their repentance, the people demolish their idols as they returned to the LORD their God. Note, also, Isaiah 31:4-5, where the LORD turns from being the Adversary of His people (vs. 4) to becoming their Protector (vs. 5) when they turn to Him for mercy:

This is what Jehovah has said to me, As a lion, a great lion, growls over his prey—and even though a whole band of shepherds should be called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor—so Jehovah of hosts will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. ⁵Like birds hovering [overhead], so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect it and deliver it, he will pass over it and preserve it.
(Isa. 31:4-5)

The imagery changes from the LORD arising against His sinful people like a lion attacking his prey (vs. 4), to the LORD hovering over His people for their protection like birds hovering over their young (vs. 5.)

Verses 23-26 further enumerate the blessings that await the rebellious when they in repentance return to the LORD their God. Verses 23-24 present the Old Testament covenantal blessing of material prosperity in the Promised Land of Canaan—a type (or, living model) of the eternal bounty to be enjoyed by the redeemed in the kingdom of heaven. Verse 25 portrays the conquest of all those who are the enemies of the LORD and His people. Verses 27-33 describe that conquest as it occurred in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah when the LORD destroyed the Assyrian armies. But the description is presented in universal terms because what the LORD did for His people in the days of Hezekiah is a type (or, living model) of the final redemption of His people and the final judgment of the world when Christ shall return in power and great glory at the end of this present age. Verse 26 indicates that the whole creation will be ablaze with the light of the LORD's glory on the day when the LORD *"binds up the fracture of his people"*—the ultimate fulfillment of which will occur on the day of His final revelation and the coming of His eternal kingdom.

If you find yourself to be spiritually rebellious, be advised that repentance will be greeted with mercy—and with the blessing of the LORD, both now, and in its fullest measure, in the eternal kingdom of God.

Conclusion

When you think about rebellion and rebelliousness, what comes to mind? The image of the motorcycle hoodlum of the 1950's or the hippies of the 1960's?

When you think of rebelliousness, don't forget the image of that sweet young lady, that professing Christian, who offered up the "prayer" unto God: "I know You don't approve of this [her contemplated action that would compromise and deny her Christian ethics], but I'm going to do it anyway." That, surely, is rebellion! Let us be aware that sometimes even within the garb of outward conformity—outward Christianity—there dwells a life of rebellion against God.

If **you** are *"a rebellious child,"* you need to come to grips with your spiritual condition. You are opposing Christ and all that He is (your Savior, your Lord, your

Counselor); and you will be opposed by God Himself, until He brings you either to the day of your repentance or, in the event that there is no repentance, the day of your judgment. If you are "*a rebellious child*," you need to return to the LORD, knowing that your repentance will be greeted with mercy.