

REBELLION

By Denver Cheddie

Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam 15:23). The Bible correctly says so. Many preachers and leaders however, incorrectly apply this to anyone who dares to disagree with or criticize them. In fact many Christians are afraid to question the teachings of their leaders and prominent ministers for fear of "touching God's anointed". It is important to know what the Bible has to say concerning rebellion and not what certain people would like us to believe.

What Rebellion is NOT

Disagreement. One could hardly imagine that Paul was in complete agreement with everything the Sanhedrin believed. They were Judaists who were trying to convict Paul of breaking the Jewish Law. However Paul only perceived himself to be in rebellion when he spoke evil against the high priest (Acts 23:3-5 cf. Ex. 22:28). In other words there is absolutely nothing wrong with disagreeing in principle with someone in authority. That is not rebellion. It is wrong however to speak evil against such a person. So meeting with other church member to investigate the teachings of one's pastor is not rebellious unless it is done in a way to belittle or ridicule him.

Disobedience. Rebellion is an attitude. Disobedience is an act. Many acts of disobedience result from a spirit of rebellion, however it is very possible to

disobey someone without rejecting that person's authority. Peter and John blatantly disobeyed the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:18-20). They even had no hesitation in voicing their dissatisfaction to others (vs. 23). Daniel and the three Hebrew boys disobeyed yet were considered heroes not rebels. All these men recognized a higher authority than man and whenever man's laws contradicted God's laws, they were not liable to obey. It would have been rebellion if they had attempted to usurp authority. Instead they subjected themselves to whatever consequences followed their disobedience.

So what if a pastor preaches something contrary to God's Word, what are we to do? We reject the teaching in favor of the higher authority without rejecting the person. If we can no longer respect someone's authority, we always have the option to leave. It is rebellion if we try to displace the person or turn others against him.

What Rebellion IS

Rebellion is any attempt to usurp authority. Miriam and Aaron were entitled to their opinions about Moses' wife. But they crossed the line when they spoke against Moses and challenged his call to be God's representative (Num. 12:1, 2). It is also noteworthy how a true man of God responds when his authority is being undermined – he prays for the guilty ones and leaves it up to God (12:13).

A very much downplayed aspect of rebellion is that of delegated authorities rebelling against God. It is one thing to disobey man because he can be

wrong. Disobedience to God is always rebellion. There were two incidents where King Saul disobeyed God. In 1 Sam. 13, Saul impatiently offered burnt offerings when he should have waited for Samuel to do so. This could be considered an abuse of power. In 1 Sam. 15 he failed to kill every living thing as was commanded, choosing to save some good animals for sacrifice. He stated that he listened to the people rather than God (vs. 24). Leaders have a greater responsibility before God. They have to strike a balance between pleasing the crowds and abusing their power. Many leaders tend to be over domineering or too soft. Saul was guilty on both counts. Both render someone unfit to properly represent God.

Summary

Rebellion against God's delegated authority is rebellion against God himself. However we are not guilty of rebellion when we disagree with or disobey that person, only when we attempt to usurp his authority. Leaders are in rebellion when they fail to properly represent God, by either abusing their power or trying to please people rather than obey God.

(c) 2001 Denver Cheddie

All Rights Reserved