

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 5 Issue 42

October 29, 2006

The Path to Rebellion, Part 7

Diagnosis, Treatment, Prognosis

When it comes to an illness or sickness, there are three questions that need to be answered:

- What is wrong with me? This addresses the issue of diagnosis.
- What ought I to do about it? This addresses the issue of treatment.
- What's going to happen to me? This references the concern of prognosis.

Now it is interesting to note that each one of these questions are answerable because there is a predictability when it comes to injury or illness. Generally speaking, a certain form of cancer typically acts a certain way. A broken arm typically heals the same in everybody. Accordingly, without claiming any divine prerogatives, a doctor can determine with some accuracy what is wrong with an individual. Predict what is going to happen. And finally, prescribe a course of treatment.

Family of God, before us is a passage which yields a definite prognosis when it comes to rebellion. Though this text gives us a description of a sin which occurred more than 3000 years ago in the life of God's people, nevertheless what is recorded here indicates the general path of most sin. Accordingly from this text, we can predict with some accuracy the steps that will have been taken when a child of God flagrantly rebels against God.

The Course of Sin

Thus far we have seen that rebellion begins with callousness when it comes to the word of God.¹ It includes a blinding on account of lust. Now, we observe the final course of sin ends with the anticipation of a life without thorns.

1 Samuel 8:19-20, "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

At the outset it should be obvious that the people here have accumulated for themselves quite a few expectations with regard to what life would be like if they had a king like the nations which surrounded

¹ Compare 1 Samuel 8:10; 19

them. In fact, these expectations rested so heavily upon their minds that they pretty much were deaf to any contrary message.

Consider these truths. Samuel has just detailed the negative consequences which WOULD occur if God's people went forward in their rebellious quest for a king.

- The loss of their children, verses 11-13.
- Their property and prosperity- foretastes of the glory that awaits all in Christ- would become sour and yield no kingdom benefit, verses 14-15.
- Their productivity would be severely retarded, verse 16.
- Their worship would be compromised, verse 17a.
- Though recently delivered from the bondage of slavery, nevertheless they once again would be enslaved, verse 17b.

Again this list is not a potentiality, but that which certainly would come to pass if the people continued in their rebellion. Yet look at verse 19! It is as if Samuel had not spoken and no dire warning had been given. They were convinced of the benefits of a secular monarchy so they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us!” (1 Samuel 8:19). Their minds clearly were made up; they could taste the life afforded by a national identity... by a ruling class... by a king!

A King to Judge Us

Well, what benefits did these elders see in a secular monarchy? What was it that they were so willing to sacrifice for? Notice three expectations here.

1 Samuel 8:20, “That we also may be like all the nations; and **that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.**”

The first of these exceptions is that “our king may judge us.” Remember our treatment of the office of judge in relation to Samuel. We saw that in Judaism, the Judge's primary responsibility was the exhorting, encouraging, and helping of the people of God via the word both to serve the Lord and to take delight in Him. That meant that the faithful Judge in God's Kingdom would have been one whose life revolved around encouraging the people of God to fulfill their call unto the Lord.

Samuel gave this exhortation as a Judge to God's people after they admitted that they had sinned in asking for a king.

1 Samuel 12:23-24, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.”

And yet in our text, the people want a judge akin to the nations surrounding them. Accordingly we conclude that the people here envisioned an individual who would NOT concern themselves with the spiritual welfare of the people of God. In other words, the religion of Yahweh no longer would be of national concern; rather it now would be a private thing left to the individual.

The people wanted a Judge (based upon the office as it existed in the ancient near-east) who would:

- Make laws — of course they'd all be just.

- Interpret laws — which of course would be in their favor.
- Execute the law.

This was the role of a judge in the secular nations surrounding Israel. As a military leader he exercised all branches associated with civil government. Now, the beauty of this system is that justice was speed. If you had a dispute, there were no councils or ascending governmental structures to go to. All one had to do was to simply approach one man and its done! The downside of this system is if the man/judge is a sinner — for then justice could be perverted and skewed.

Yet there is no use talking about this because the people here are convinced. The sacrifice of one's children or the loss of freedom would be more than compensated when the king arrived because

He'll judge us with equity and fairness.

He'll erect laws which will result in our gain.

He'll rule with grace, honor, dignity, and justice.

He'll be what we always wished Samuel would have been, for he won't be in God's back pocket!

Now, what a wonderful fantasy! No more Samuel holding them accountable to God; just secular individuals who would uphold the right! And yet that is not all.

A King to Go Before Us

The second thing is that “our king may . . . go out before us.” It is tempting to interpret this in conjunction with the next phrase, “and fight our battles” such that what we have here is simply a statement that if Israel had king, he would go out and fight for them. Yet while that is partly what is being said here, there is more. Notice the key phrase, *before us*. Brown, Driver, and Briggs said that this expression denotes the idea of “under the eye of [or] at the disposal of.”²

Thus the statement details a second activity anticipated by the people with regard to a king: he would be under their watchful eye and so be at their disposal. Accordingly:

- He would do what they wanted him to do.
- He would act in accordance with what they wanted.
- He'd be reasonable, take orders, and serve the national cause.

What an incredible proposition! Not only would a secular king create, judge, and enforce our laws, but he'd do so much more besides by way of the common good.

A King to Fight our Battles

In fact “our king may . . . fight our battles.” You may not realize it, but this is a brazen sin of rebellion against God for heretofore, it was God who was understood to fight the battles of Israel.³ Yet that was to be no longer. Now, it would be an earthly king!

And yet would you notice that we are not told here how this earthly king would single-handedly fight the

² Quoted in *TWOT*, Volume II, page 728. Compare also *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, BDB, pages 816-187

³ Compare Deuteronomy 1:30, Exodus 14:14, 25; 15:3; Numbers 10:35; Deuteronomy 3:22; 4:20; 20:1-4; 1 Samuel 10:19

battles of Israel. Obviously there was little thought given to the implications here like these:

- A standing army.
- A draft.
- The procurement of the sons and daughters of Israel to support this army.

Yet forget the implications. Somehow and in some way when another wicked king like Nahash of the Ammonites arose⁴ the King of Israel would face him on the battlefield and win!

With this I hope you see the fantasy world in which the people of God lived at the time of our passage, a world fashioned by sin. In Israel's estimation they'd get a King who would do only good such that they would live happily-ever-after. If that required of them their children, their freedom and more, it would be worth it. The Promised Land was had with similar stakes; so the next era of peace, prosperity, and safety would be born!

A Deluded People

I hope you see from this that the people here are deluded! They actually believed that life under a secular king would be better than life under God. They actually believed that the sacrifice detailed in verses 10-17 would be worth it.⁵

From this we observe a third cause of rebellion on the part of the child of God: The fabrication of a delusional world! They were anticipating a life without thorns!

Brothers and sisters, it behooves us to be sober-minded at this point. For this is a formidable temptation presented to us on the part of our flesh. One which must ever and always be fought against: namely, that the “good life,” the “secure life,” the “exciting life” can be ours- we just have to

- Go for it and sin.
- Compromise for the sake of our friends.
- Give ourselves to manipulation and deceit.
- Overlook the sin.
- Do it our way.

In fact, I have never known a sinner who didn't genuinely think that his life would be better if he got his sinful way. Now that's not to say that the child of God can't reference many a down-side to their sin,⁶ yet placed in the balance, they conclude that the benefits far outweighed the costs!

This is the nature of almost all temptation.

- You won't get caught!

⁴ Compare 1 Samuel 12:12

⁵ How they would live to regret this. Walter Brueggemann put it this way, “The governing verb of Samuel's characterization of monarchy is the word 'take' (verses 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). It is the business of a centralized government to 'take,' whether by taxation, confiscation, or the draft” (*First and Second Samuel*, p. 63). Ronald Youngblood wrote, “By nature royalty is parasitic rather than giving, and kings are never satisfied with the worst” (*1 Samuel*, EBC, Vol. 3, page 614). And Samuel warned as much. Truly the day would come when the people of God would, “...cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves...” (verse 18).

⁶ After Samuel's exhortation, the people of God had six negative consequences which they could have referenced.

- Besides you deserve it!
- If you go forward, you only will be fulfilled!
- Misery and sadness is yours today; but if you do this or that, untold joy, happiness, pleasure, and success await you!

Adam and Eve

We see it in the temptation of Adam and Eve. Though they knew there would be negative consequences to their rebellion, nevertheless they took of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Genesis 3:4-6, “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

Notice there is NOT one negative warning here; just the delusion that sin would make life better. The rule of temptation is the promise of thorn-free sinning. If you go for it and sin, your life will be a whole lot better!

The Temptation of Christ

Think of the temptation of Christ. In his final temptation, the devil spoke thus

Matthew 4:8-9, “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

How was this a temptation? Think about it Christ was and is God. According to Philippians 2:9-11; Luke 20:43; Acts 2:35; 7:49; Hebrews 1:13; 10:13, all of these Kingdoms were Christ's already and would someday be restored to Him!

So how could this temptation possibly have appealed to the Lord?

Simply stated, Satan's temptation was the promise of glory, honor, and power without the cross! Though Christ already was going to rule over all the Kingdoms of the world, a fact that He knew, in order to attain to this rule, He first had to be crucified, and then die.⁷ In light of this we see that Satan's temptation was the promise of all these things without the thorn of the cross!

And such is the final element which leads to brazen sin in the lives of God's children! It begins with a callousness with regard to God's word. It includes a blinding on account of our desire for pleasure, peace, security, significance, and the like. And it ends with the anticipation of life without thorns!

Combating the Lie

How does one combat this third lie?

⁷ Compare Philippians 2:5-11

Family of God, may I give you four suggestions? Recognize that the world in which we live is not the Promised Land. Speaking of the faithful saints we read this:

Hebrews 11:14-16, “For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

This is such an important point! So often we struggle with grief and bitterness in our walks because we act as if this world is heaven the final state!

You say, “I’ve never done that! I know this is a fallen world.”

And yet, every time you well up with anger over what God hasn’t given you, resent His providences, and cry “Foul!” on account of what you don’t have you testify to an expectation which differs from what God has intended for your life in this age!

Brothers and sisters! This is not the Promised Land. Accordingly, let us stop expecting that in this life we will enjoy the prerogatives of heaven! And yet, that brings me to the next point. All that sin could ever promise in this age is but a cheap imitation of what we already have in Christ today.

Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Cheap Imitation

One does not need anything else in order to enjoy the life God has promised in Christ; you have it all today! If anything, what we need is the realization of these blessings and the appropriating of them in our lives through faith. Peter said that God has “given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

As we participate in and so enjoy a relationship with Christ, all that we need in order to live out this life is fully enjoyed! Accordingly, whatever you think you might get from sin is that which you already have in Christ today. All that sin could ever give at best is a cheap imitation!

Now this is not to say that we’ve entered into the final state today. (I’m not contradicting the first point here.) However what it is to say is this: The foretastes of glory which God might grant on this side of the grave (love, joy, peace, significance, security, etc) are only realized and enjoyed in Christ. Thus if sin might grant a semblance of these things, at best it will be a cheap imitation.

Speaking of cheap imitations, what we might want from sin today is what we will enjoy in our walks with Christ if we be but patient.

Hebrews 10:35-36, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

The believers in this context were going through the fire of affliction which came at a high cost. Some were tempted to shrink back in their faith. Accordingly the Hebrew writer exhorted them and us this way: “Don’t grow weary in doing well. Don’t shrink back in your faith. Don’t resort to sinful living to get

what you want from Christ. If you will be patient, Christ will meet your needs above and beyond all that you could ask or think!”

Referencing our text this morning, Matthew Henry wrote these words:

“God had intimated to them in the law that, in due time, Israel should have a king (Deu. 17:14, 15), and perhaps they had some intimation that the time was at hand; but they are all in haste: 'We, in our day, will have this king over us.' Could they but have waited ten or twelve years longer they would have had David, a king of God's giving in mercy, and all the calamities that attended the setting up of Saul would have been prevented.”⁸

So family of God, don't shrink back to sin. Wait on the Lord; in time He will meet your needs! Kingdom life is enjoyed today as we gaze upon our Bridegroom and cling to Him in faith!

1 Peter 1:6-7, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

This is an amazing statement. Though the people to whom Peter wrote were going through severe persecution, nevertheless they were filled with joy and rejoicing.

How so?

Because they knew they were the apple of God's eye. The trial and hardship of this life was designed by God to prepare them for life in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was more real to them than the Kingdom of Rome. Christ soon would return, at which time He would usher us into the final state! And thus Peter continues:

1 Peter 1:8-9, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

What a beautiful description of the child of God. They are in love with an unseen Savior! Accordingly, as they cling to Him in faith, they are filled with the fruit of the Kingdom of God, (Inexpressible Joy, Gladness, and everything else which accompanies salvation!)

Do you see it?

If we will but cling to Christ, we will enjoy the fullness of the Kingdom!

And so we are here exhorted to cling to Christ in faith!

And yet, what does that mean?

⁸ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary in One Volume*, page 293

Clinging to Christ

Let me ask you... how hard would you cling to a treatment if you knew it would heal you of cancer? A smoke detector if you knew that some evening it would alert you to the presence of a fire? A friend if you knew that someday he would sacrifice his life to save you?

You would be devoted you'd never let them go.

And yet each of these are not objects to which you would physically cling. Rather they represent concepts, ideals, or convictions. As such, you do not physically hold on to them with your hand, rather your grasp of them takes the form of an allegiance, a devotion, a love, or a commitment which says though all might forsake you, I won't!

It is in this way that we must reject sin and cling to Christ!

Accordingly let us close out this service spending time affirming our devotion to and trust in Him. Saying this with Rhea Miller:

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand;
Than to be the king of a vast domain,
Or be held in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.⁹

Now, in the Old Testament when commitments of this type were made, you sat down and enjoyed a meal whereby you stated publicly your fidelity to another individual, cause, or nation. Well housed in the Lord's supper is just such a commitment. Christ said this:

Luke 22:20, "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Once again this had in mind the process of Covenant Renewal whereby the sinner affirmed his loyalty, love, and devotion to God. If this is your desire this morning — the forsaking of sin and the clinging to Christ — then I invite you to the Table of the Lord!

⁹ *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration*, Hymn #517

About Bethel Presbyterian Church

The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word is published regularly.

VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

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