

*The Rebellious Heart*

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According to Webster's dictionary rebellion is defined as resistance, defiance and disobedience to authority. And it progresses as it is defined: **1)** resistance, followed by **2)** defiance and culminating in **3)** disobedience. As mothers and grandmothers, we can see rebellion very early in our young children, so let's start there—on familiar turf.

Have you ever given your children or grandchildren a command and had them **resist** it—with their body language or even words? Certainly we've all seen that! Sometimes they can be encouraged to give up their resistance—to yield—and the pajamas go on smoothly, or the green beans are eaten or the toy is picked up.

But have you seen them move on to **defiance**...arguing with you about the necessity to do what you've asked and clearly pushing the envelope? Defiance is where the rubber meets the road, because they not only further resist, but they contend and argue with you about the instruction you've given to them—they **challenge** the command and the authority behind it.

If defiance is not dealt with or it's dealt with but the child is not convinced, **disobedience** will follow. Have you seen the progression from resistance and defiance to disobedience? Sometimes disobedience takes the form of cunning neglect (forgetfulness) to do what's been told or by doing the opposite of what's been told. Have you had your child look at you, know they were disobeying, but doing it anyway under your eye—the *challenge*?

In dealing with our children's rebellion, we're wise to begin with the onset of it—the resistance—especially if you know from past behavior that they tend (their bent is) to go all the way through to disobedience. **But dealing with rebellion often means working backwards—insisting that they obey, regardless of whether they defy or resist your authority.**

**A story is told** of a mother whose little boy kept standing up in his seat in church, ignoring her repeated warnings to sit down. Finally, the mother leans over and gives him an ultimatum...you know—"if you stand up one more time I'll take you out and give you a spanking." And the young boy promptly sits down...but under his breath he's heard to say, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I am standing up on the inside." He is obeying, but he's still defiant, and he's still resisting the command and the authority giving it. He is still in rebellion.

Some children are full of it from birth and it only escalates through the teenage years into adulthood if not dealt with consistently and expunged from them. This expunging or extracting is not about taking away their spiritedness or their ability to think critically or to make decisions, but to help them respect authority—to honor father and mother, teachers, principals, police officers, judges, bosses, commanders (if they go into the military) and ultimately the Lord God. Scripture says, “*Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul*” Proverbs 29:17.

**But** we’re not talking about discipline for our children today, and neither are we examining the specific authorities that God has placed over us. Those are other lessons. We’re going to look at Scripture and see three main things:

- 1) That for the believer—the Christ-follower—**our rebellion is always against God**—the supreme authority—because he has established the authorities that are over us and His word faithfully outlines those authorities.
- 2) That rebellion is not an unfortunate slip or a regrettable act. **It is a posture of defiance against a holy God**—defiant of his truth, resistant to his call and disobedient to his commands.
- 3) That **rebellion will not take care of itself**. The rebellious heart needs to yield to the authority of Jesus as **a) Savior** from all sin (including rebellion) and **b) yield to him as Sovereign Lord** in our lives—***He rules!***

We want to examine our own hearts and let the Holy Spirit show us if we are harboring rebellion there. Scripture says that “...*the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?*” Jeremiah 17:9 KJV, and the NIV says “*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*” Then in verse 10 we find the answer to ‘*Who*’ it is that can discern and understand our hearts: “*I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.*”

Do not be deceived: to rebel is to resist, defy and disobey authority and it is sin from beginning to end—from the bottom of our hearts—and it is infidelity to God’s love! Hosea 8:1 “*Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the Lord because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.*” If we have rebelled and rejected Him, we need to repent and return to Him. Hebrews 3:7, 13 and 4:7 says, “*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion....*” Franklin Graham says in *The Name*, “In today’s tolerant culture where ‘anything goes,’ many do not understand what sin means. Sin is breaking God’s laws.

When you **disobey** God’s laws, it separates you from Him.”

The 1960s were known for the rebellion of thousands of young people, yes, but way back in the Garden of Eden when Satan asked Eve, “Did God really say?” he dangled the rotten fruit of resistance, defiance and disobedience to God in her face, and she bit it. And ever since the fall of Adam (and Eve), people of every age everywhere have rebelled against authority—parental, governmental and divine. The fool referred to in Psalm 53:1a (“*The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’*”), denied God’s rule over his life. People in our day do so in their hearts and in their actions.

A *Daily Bread* (12/7/00) article titled *The Cost of Rebellion* said: “It is obvious that rebellion pays bad dividends. It inevitably results in a sense of emptiness that often leads to alcoholism, drug addiction, bizarre religious practices, flagrant immorality, broken homes, incurable diseases and despair. Sadly, many experience the high cost of putting what they call ‘my way’ above ‘God’s way’.

“The psalmist portrayed God as seeing the defiance of the wicked, observing their antagonism toward His people, and striking them with bewildered panic Psalm 53:5. One way or another, people who “*despise wisdom and instruction*”—Proverbs 1:7—always pay a high price. To live as if there is no God is foolish, for it leads to pain, despair and eternal death. But to live in the ‘fear of God’ is wise, for it leads to satisfaction, rejoicing and everlasting life. You must decide, so choose wisely” (Reference Psalm 53)!

- **The cost of rebellion demonstrated in God’s word:** Miriam, in the Old Testament, was the sister of Moses and Aaron...and most often we think of her crouched behind the bulrushes along the Nile River watching baby brother Moses in the little basket their mother had placed him in. Do you remember her? Scripture says that Miriam was one who knew and feared God—a prophetess and songwriter who led the women to dance with tambourines, singing: “*Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.*” In Exodus 15:20-21, these women, along with the children, were celebrating their escape from Egypt and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. Miriam was leading and the women and children were following her....

Just 63 chapters later, though, in Numbers 12:1-2 Scripture recounts Miriam and Aaron opposing their brother Moses: **questioning the authority God had placed on him**—questioning Moses’ qualification to lead.

Listen in: “*Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. ‘Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?’ they asked. ‘Hasn’t he also spoken through us?’ And the Lord heard this.” **Woe!** Maybe you remember that the Lord called Moses, Aaron, and Miriam—all three—out to the Tent of Meeting and He came down in a pillar of cloud and spoke to them. In verse 6 the Lord **affirms his call upon Moses as His authority** and asks Miriam and Aaron, “*Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*”*

Notice that they had not even gotten to disobedience yet, but they were resisting and defying (challenging) Moses’ authority. In verses 9-10 Scripture says, “*The anger of the Lord burned against them, and he left them. <sup>10</sup>When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam—leprous, like snow.*”

We don’t know why the leprous condition fell only on Miriam and not on Aaron too, since they both rebelled. It may be because Aaron was a priest and it would have defiled him forever, or that Miriam would need someone to plead for her right away—and who better than the Priest of God. Scripture doesn’t explain...but it’s enough for us to know that God is the Supreme Authority and knows what he’s doing. Scripture records God speaking in the Old and New Testaments something incredibly telling: “*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*” (Exodus 33:19b, and referred back to in Romans 9:15).

When Aaron saw his sister with leprosy, he said to Moses in Numbers 12:11 “*Please, my lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed...*” Notice that Aaron goes to Moses—instead of directly to God—confessing his own sinful participation and asking Moses for mercy, yielding now to his authority. Then Moses cried out to God for Miriam’s healing. And the Lord told Moses to confine her outside the camp for seven days and then she was allowed back in. (15) “*So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back.*”

Oh how we need to be mindful and careful about—our resistance—how we speak against the authorities that the Lord God has established. To begin to complain about our country’s leadership, or our church’s new strategic plan or its leadership, or that police officer who gave us the ticket for speeding, or our husbands’ authority in the home...woe! Our resistance can morph into defiance before we can think straight, and if we are guilty, we need to confess our rebellion to the Lord immediately. Let us not nurse rebellion—it will be at a tremendous cost!

Scripture likens rebellion “as the sin of witchcraft” in the KJV—1 Samuel 15:23a and the NIV says: “For rebellion is like the sin of divination.... ” And the **warnings from Scripture** are many:

**Isaiah 48:18** “If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

**Jeremiah 5:21, 23:** “O foolish people...who have ears and hear not.... **This people has a defiant and rebellious heart.**” The NIV says: “But **these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts; they have turned aside and gone away.**”

**Psalm 106:43** “Many times he delivered them, but they were **bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin.**”

**Proverbs 28:2, 9 & 14; and 29:1** “When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers, but a man of understanding and knowledge maintains order.” **9** “If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.” **14** “Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.” **29:1** “A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.” Woe!

I. We must **repent of rebellion**: “Forgive us, Lord,” we should ask, “and cleanse us from rebellious thoughts, words and actions....”

II. We must **exercise**—practice every day—the **two-step attitude adjustment** for rebellion outlined in 2 Corinthians 10:5—“We

1. **demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we**
2. **take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**”

*Remember*

Rebellion’s resistance, defiance and disobedience to authority...

- will not go away on its own, and it
- will not participate in its own demise!

Rebellion must be **demolished** and **taken captive**...

Or, left unchecked, it will demolish us and take us captive!

III. And we **ask the Lord**, in his love and goodness, to **remember that we are weak**: Psalm 25:7—“Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love **remember me**, for you are good, O Lord.”

Haunting words from pastor and author Max Lucado:

“May we never grow so ‘holy,’  
may we never be so ‘mature,’  
may we never become so ‘religious:’  
that we can see the footprints of Satan and stay calm.”