

The Spirit Of Absalom

A Look at Rebellion in the Church

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the King James Version of the Bible

INTRODUCTION

I began this study to address a problem in the church today. It's not a new problem and, unfortunately, it's always been among us. It has caused God's people much misery due to His judgment and the curses associated with this problem. This "problem," which is better defined as what it is — sin, is **rebellion**. To you, it may not seem too bad but my concern is how it shows up in sensitive areas of the church — the leadership of the local church and how it affects the future blessings of God's people. Rebellion is not new. Rebellion is manifested in any resistance to God's will which started with Lucifer (Satan) in heaven. **Isaiah 14:12-14** *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.* Those "I will's" were decisions of rebellion.

However, if I chose to go after rebellion in all its ugly appearances, I would have to rewrite the Bible (not a new translation, just another writing of what's already there). The Bible gives us many examples of sin and its consequences as well as God's remedy for sin. No, the rebellion I want to discuss is better termed *mutiny, division, schism, contention*. All of these terms relate to the same issue — **a refusal to do as you are told combined with a conscious decision to undermine the source of the instructions**. This rebellion is the type that Judas Iscariot demonstrated when he turned his back on Jesus and turned him over to His enemies. This rebellion is the type that divides churches, that makes ministers pull out from their pastors (with the intent, of course, of taking as many members with them as possible), and that makes members begin factions and coalitions in the church against the plan of the church leadership.

While we are doing this, the church makes itself look extremely foolish and unholy to the world. While they laugh and mock, they reject what we have — the remedy for their distress. Why is this? Because of our rebellious, contentious, fighting ways. We fight each other within a church, we fight other churches within our denominations, we fight other denominations that teach a similar doctrine, we fight other Christian denominations if their doctrine is a little too far from ours. We have fallen into the trap that the Apostle Paul warned about in **Galatians 5:15** *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* We are consuming each other while the devil sits back and laughs because we do not know how to submit to our leadership.

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Demonic spirits manifest themselves in a number of ways but most often in your attitude, personality, character, and, of course, the things that you do. Rebellion is not only an action but it is the very nature of the devil. We will take, as the main subject of this look at the spirit of rebellion, Absalom, the son of King David. We will look at his actions, attempt to understand the infection in his spirit, and determine what remedies we can use to avoid his judgment. The spirit of Absalom is having its way in our churches. We must be careful to keep it from having its way in our lives.

DEFINITIONS

Before getting into the details of our Scriptures, let's make sure we understand what we're talking about with this word "rebellion."

What is rebellion as defined by the Bible? **I Samuel 15:23a** *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.* The Bible says that rebellion is so serious, that those that engage in it are considered by God to be in the same category as those that practice witchcraft (and notice the Bible's proclamation against them **Exodus 22:18** *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*). No witch or person engaged in witchcraft or person doing things as this (rebellion) will have any part in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, **Galatians 5:21b**, *they which do such things SHALL NOT inherit the kingdom of God.*

The Bible is clear on God's attitude toward rebellion: **Proverbs 6:16-19** *These six things doth the LORD HATE: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and HE THAT SOWETH DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN.* Anything that God hates, we should distance ourselves from. "Discord among the brethren" is colorful King James Version English for rebellion. Now let's look at what the dictionary says on this word:

<p>REBELLION 1. Open, armed, and organized RESISTANCE to a constituted government. 2. An act or a show of DEFIANCE toward an authority or established convention. SYNONYMS: <i>rebellion, revolution, revolt, mutiny, insurrection, uprising.</i> These nouns represent acts of violence intended to change or overthrow an existing order or authority.</p>
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In looking at the definition, there are two words that are very disturbing, **resistance** and **defiance**. These are not attitudes of those who plan to partake in the heavenly kingdom. These are not attitudes of those that say that they are trying to live like Jesus Christ. These are simply attitudes of a rebellious spirit in its ugliest display. These two words are best demonstrated in a parable the Lord Jesus told during His final week before His crucifixion: **Matthew 21:28-30** *But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. 29 He answered and said, I WILL NOT: but afterward he repented, and went. 30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and WENT NOT.* The first son demonstrates RESISTANCE (to keep from giving in) when he says I WILL NOT. At that point, he was openly rebellious. However, as the story goes on, he repents and “gives in” or gives up his rebellion. The second son’s rebellion is more subtle and devilish. He acts as if he will go and even adds, “Sir,” to his response. But he didn’t go. This demonstrates DEFIANCE (an intentionally disrespectful behavior or attitude). Usually defiance is bolder than in the actions of this son but his actions show his contempt for the wishes of his father.

Look how the Bible views a rebellious spirit even in one as innocent as a child: **Deuteronomy 21:18 - 21** *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: 19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; 20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. 21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.*

Many will be quick to point out that this is the Old Testament and we, as New Testament believers, have a new foundation founded on better promises. That is true. However, the Old Testament was written as our (New Testament believers) example (**I Corinthians 10:11**). Let me share with you what this verse says in the Amplified Version: *Now these things befell them by way of a figure — as an EXAMPLE and WARNING [TO US]; they were written to admonish and fit us for right action by good instruction, we in whose days the ages have reached their climax — their consummation and concluding period.* As an old preacher once said, who has since gone on to be with the Lord in his interpretation of Proverbs 1:5, “a wise man will take a hint and increase in learning.” We should take a hint, as we are admonished in the verse in First Corinthians and not stir up God like this!

Rebellion **ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS** is divisive. It causes the people of God to choose sides, to determine which “camp” they are in. **I Corinthians 1:12-13** *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* It is often intended to demean one in order for the rebel to rise to prominence. But even in this, the end result is schism, division, and segregation of the people of God within the church. Sometimes the division is not easy to see. One camp may pronounce themselves holier than the other and they attempt to side with God. Another camp may not want to hear about sin in the church in teaching or preaching because of their actions. These, knowingly or not, side with the devil against God. However, the reality is that **ALL REBELLION IS AGAINST GOD.**

The last point that I want to make about the definition of rebellion is that rebellion is different from disobedience (even though they often work hand-in-hand). **Disobedience** refers to a refusal or failure to obey. **Rebellion** goes further in that rebellion questions with the intent of eventually wrecking the work. Rebellion involves resistance or a show of defiance (a challenge) toward authority (government). One can be disobedient without also being rebellious. However, one is rarely ever rebellious without also being disobedient. In fact, the more obedient one is while in the midst of their rebellion, the more evil are their intentions because they are working to hide their true nature. Now let’s get into our discussion of Prince Absalom, the son of David, and look at this spirit.

ABSALOM, THE SON OF DAVID

Absalom was the third child of King David born to him while he was king in Hebron, (**II Samuel 3:3b**) *the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur*. These were the early days of David's kingdom and it was a time when the kingdom had not yet been established. David was reigning in Hebron and had not become the king over the entire country of Israel. His attentions were divided between establishing the kingdom, establishing his family, and staying alive. **II Samuel 3:1** *Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker*. It was during this time of turmoil that two children who played a prominent role in his future were born, Amnon, his first born, and Absalom, his third child.

As time went on and the two children grew into men, Amnon looked at his half sister, Tamar, Absalom's sister, and lusted for her. His lust was so overpowering that the Bible says it drove him to sickness — **II Samuel 13:2a** *And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar*. A plot was conceived and Amnon raped Tamar to satisfy his unfulfilled lust. When he had completed the deed, his lust turned to extreme hatred and contempt for Tamar — **II Samuel 13:15a** *Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her*. Ultimately, in revenge for this deed, Absalom killed his brother Amnon and fled to safety in his grandfather's homeland. Absalom stayed there for three years until Joab, David's General of the Army, intervened and brought him back to Israel. An important point in all of this is that David was aware of the rape of Tamar but did nothing about it. He was angry but did nothing else. Absalom gave him two full years after his return to resolve the issue before he took it upon himself to act. However, in spite of David's errors, this was no excuse for Absalom's rebellion.

When Absalom acted, he proceeded to "steal the hearts of the men of Israel" (**II Samuel 15:6**) through flattery and sowing seeds of discord among God's people. Ultimately, he was able to persuade the people that he should be king instead of David. He went so far in his rebellion as to entice David's key cabinet members to join the rebellion. After assuming power, Absalom had sexual intercourse with David's concubines in a tent on top of the palace in full view of all. This was done to show his contempt for David and all that he stood for. Eventually, the rebellion was put down and Absalom met his death. His death caused many other lives to be spared because oftentimes a rebellion only lives as long as the ringleader is there to give it life.

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In examining this sad episode in the life of King David, I want to look at Absalom and find out what is involved in having a spirit like his. What characteristics did this person exhibit that we want to steer as far away from as possible? There were things in Absalom that I have seen in so many cases of rebellion in the church. All of these will be discussed in great detail in the next section as we look at what caused the rebellion in the life of Absalom. As we look at the causes of rebellion, please note that there are many more answers, which are not covered here. However, these might be the reasons that Absalom might give when he stands before God.

WHAT CAUSES REBELLION?

1. INJUSTICE: REAL OR PERCEIVED.

(As Absalom stands before God, this might be his first excuse: “*David did me wrong! Something had to be done!*” These are the words of the spirit of Absalom — don’t let it be you!)

The roots of a rebellious spirit go deep. **Hebrews 12:15** *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.* The root of bitterness, and rebellion also, has its origin in things that were not properly dealt with in the past. Absalom did not deal with his sister’s rape properly. King David knew of this crime in his own house and did not deal with it properly. After Absalom left Israel, King David did not deal with the exile of his son properly. When Absalom returned, King David did not deal with his return properly. There are a lot of errors here by the leader but that was no excuse for the rebellion.

The seeds of rebellion often are sown when one feels that they have not been treated fairly. Even in business, if one feels that their supervisor is treating them unfairly or unjustly, they can either deal with it through the proper channels of the business (while keeping their spirit right) or they can begin to work to undermine the success of the business with the intent of destroying the success of that supervisor. It may start small with theft of company supplies, malicious gossip, or contempt toward company rules but the origin of this rebellion is still seated in some real or perceived injustice.

With this reason for rebellion, let’s make something very clear. You may have actually been, or may still be, the victim of an injustice or many injustices. You may have been mistreated, insulted, lied on, etc. However, this gives you no right to undermine the authority of the one who has done this. Before you let things bother you, go to the Word of God for an answer. The Bible gives clear remedies to situations where you feel you have been wronged:

A. What do you do when you feel a brother or sister has treated you unfairly or unjustly? If you find yourself the subject of an injustice or unfair treatment (perceived or otherwise) and the source is one of your brothers or sisters in the Body of Christ, here is what the Bible says: **Matthew 18:15-17** *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, (there’s the unfair treatment) go and tell him*

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his fault between thee and him alone: (there's the solution if they will do what's next) *if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* But **don't** begin a gossiping campaign against your brother! Follow the Bible steps:

- First, talk to them one on one and try to get it straightened out. Unfortunately, many Christians today will, without blinking an eye, lie and tell you that “nothing is wrong, you’ve got it all wrong” when they KNOW what they did. The Bible foresaw this time also and gave a second remedy.
- Second, get someone else (one or two or more) to go with you who have personal knowledge (not hearsay from you) about this situation to try to get it worked out. Perhaps when the person hears that their actions have been viewed by a number of people, they will repent. But again, the Lord saw how we are today and presented a final solution.
- Third, bring it to the church. In bringing it to the church, you need to bring the one, two, or more witnesses that you had in step 2. The church must be convinced that this is not in your mind but is truly a problem that the other person should have dealt with. Now if they refuse to repent, you and the church are to separate yourselves from them. The integrity of the church is the goal of the Scriptures. The church must be spotless and without any blemish. To be that way, we’ve got to work together to keep it clean. In this case, you have one that is more interested in themselves, in the face of overwhelming facts, and not the integrity of the Body of Christ. Paul admonished the Corinthian church to use this same approach in dealing with sin in I Corinthians 6. Notice that through all of this, the one who has suffered the injustice has no right to rebel but to do things the Bible way.

B. What do you do when you feel your leader has treated you unfairly or unjustly? This is probably where most Absalom rebellion in the church begins. This may take any number of forms in coming to this point. It may have started in the prior step. When you brought the situation to the church, perhaps the leader

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didn't want to follow Bible order. Perhaps you were passed over for a promised position or one that you felt should have been yours. Perhaps the leader is doing like David did with Absalom and not dealing with sin in the camp properly. Perhaps, God forbid, the leader is obviously in sin. In whatever the case, what do you do?

Before answering, remember that your life is not your own. I hope that you are in the place that you are in because of following the will of God. If God did NOT lead you to the situation you are in, you need to quickly find out the will of God for your life! (See a later section on Missing the Will of God.) In this case, however, I will assume that you are exactly where God placed you. If so, you must become like David. David endured many years of torment from King Saul. One commentator stated that Saul attempted to kill David twenty-two times! In all of that, whenever David had the opportunity to fight back, he would not. Look at one scene where David had the opportunity to end this: **1 Samuel 24:3-7** *And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. 4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. 7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.* Friends who wanted to get in good with Saul had betrayed David. He had to move his parents to Moab to protect them from Saul. Finally, he ended up moving all his men to the country of the Philistines to avoid Saul. In this movement, remember that David had numerous opportunities to kill Saul and take the kingdom by force but HE WOULD NOT! Why, because Saul was the Lord's anointed and, more importantly, David recognized and respected that anointing. After you have exhausted every remedy and you realize that you are in the will of God, there is no step-by-step process as in the prior example. You've got to go and take a lesson from David in **Psalms 23:1-4** *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.* (A shepherd's job is to lead the sheep. If God led you into that situation, He knew exactly what you would encounter when

you got there.) **2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he LEADETH me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he LEADETH me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.** God does not always lead you through the still waters or the paths of righteousness. Sometimes He EXPECTS you to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. During those times, lean on His rod and His staff. That's God's servant you're upset with. The same God that put that servant in place will deal with them. In the meantime, you keep on leaning on His rod and His staff. These are the sources of your comfort. But by all means, don't pick up that Absalom spirit!

C. What do you do when YOU are the one that has treated a brother or sister unfairly or unjustly? Before leaving this section, let me remind you that YOU (AND I) ARE NOT PERFECT. Our perfection is a spiritual perfection but we are working daily to make our outer man line up with the inner man. This will help keep us from being the rebel. **Matthew 5:23-24** *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* The New International Version makes this passage very clear: **24** *Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 23 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.* This may seem out of place with our discussion of the source of rebellion but it's added to, once again, maintain the integrity of the Body of Christ and to keep us from the spirit of Absalom.

2. AN INFLATED IMAGE OF YOURSELF.

(As Absalom stands before God, this might be his next excuse: *"I could do a better job than David! He wasn't doing what he should have been doing as king. Something had to be done!"* Again, these are the words of the spirit of Absalom — don't let it be you!)

Leadership or at least being the one in charge of anything is a tough position to be in. It not only means that you receive all of the credit (and usually it's not as much as deserved) but it means that you also receive all of the blame (and usually it's more than deserved). In a leading position, you

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are accused of either taking too much on yourself or not taking enough on yourself. Young preachers must be careful when they view the work of older ministers. Often the thought will cross their mind, “I can do better than that.” They have not thought about the price the older minister has paid to get to that point or the opportunities that are now available that may not have been available to the older minister. All they know is that when they get the opportunity, they will show the people of God how it’s supposed to be done and, whether intentional or not, will usurp the position of that minister. By doing this, they will bring themselves under the judgment of God.

Too many times we find the people of God in the condition of **Jude 16** *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.* In viewing this same verse in the Amplified Version, it states as follows: *These are inveterate (habitual) murmurers (grumblers), that complain [of their lot in life], going after their own desires — controlled by their passions; their talk is boastful and arrogant, [and they claim to] admire men’s persons and pay people flattering compliments to gain advantage.* I call these types of people “users.” They live to use someone to gain an advantage in their life. If the church service is not the way they like it (or the way they could get it done), they complain. If they need to get ahead and you’re already there, they stick around you to enjoy your favor. They boast about what they have and what they can do but they have never proven anything. The real problem with these boasters and complainers is that they don’t complain lawfully — they do it behind closed doors in a devious, treacherous, rebellious manner. **Romans 12:3** *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, NOT TO THINK OF HIMSELF MORE HIGHLY THAN HE OUGHT TO THINK; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

Absalom was of the same lot. After he had been forgiven for his crime and allowed to live in the royal city once again, he began to feel that he could do better than David. He had not paid the price that David paid. He had not suffered through the twenty-two attempts on his life by Saul. He had not fought the wars that David had fought. He had not secured Jerusalem from the Jebusites as David had done. Absalom had done nothing! His only claim to fame was that he was pretty (II Samuel 14:25) and that he was of the royal family. He began to think more highly of himself than he should have. **II Samuel 15:3-4** *And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. 4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I WOULD DO HIM JUSTICE!* (I would do better than David because he’s just not doing the job!)

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While we're on this subject of inflated egos, let's look at one more example from the Scriptures. **Numbers 16:1-3** *Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: 2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: 3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, YE TAKE TOO MUCH UPON YOU, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?* Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On gathered men around them but not just men, men who were famous among the people of God, men of renown. They took these men and came to Moses with this distorted image of themselves and of their leaders:

- You think too much of yourself. After all, we're just as holy as you are.
- Not only are we just as holy as you are, ALL the congregation (all of the children of Israel) is holy and the Lord is among them. In other words, you aren't the only ones that know the Lord, we can pray too.
- Because of that, you don't have any right to lift yourself above the children of Israel. How dare you call yourself our leader and lead us out into this wilderness!

This view was distorted. Their thinking of themselves was inflated. First, everyone knows that among three million people, there's NO WAY you will have 100% holiness. Jesus had only twelve and His testimony was that one of them was a devil. How many more devils were there here? Next, Korah and his crew forgot two big things: God put Moses and Aaron in charge and God had used them mightily to distinguish them from the rest of the people of God. In other words, by choice (God's choice) and by experience, Moses and Aaron had earned their position in God. Their view of themselves was distorted and brought them to rebellion. Later, when I talk about the judgment of God upon this spirit of rebellion, we'll finish this episode and talk about their tragic fate.

While we're on this subject, let's look at one last thought on an inflated image of yourself: **COMING TO THE CONCLUSION THAT YOU HAVE MORE THAN YOUR LEADER.**

Let me shock you with something: **THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH KNOWING MORE THAN YOUR LEADER.** A number of pastors may have just cringed and shuddered thinking that I am encouraging rebellion rather than speaking against it. The first thing that the church must realize and pastors must realize is that it is the **anointing of the office** that determines who follows and who leads. In talking about the rebellion of Korah earlier, Moses had an office. His office was higher than that of

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Aaron who was the high priest. Moses was chosen by God to lead the people. The anointing of his office was more important than the abilities of others because he was the one that God put in charge. **Ephesians 4:11-12** *And HE GAVE some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Jeremiah 3:15* *And I WILL GIVE YOU pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* The anointing of the office is the determining factor on whether the results that God is looking for will be accomplished or not. Also, the best leader knows how to put to work those people that have special talents to edify the Body of Christ. Your knowledge and your anointing are important to the body but everyone must be in subjection to someone. Only one is the leader.

The problem with this thought (“*I’ve got more than the pastor*”) comes from pride in the one that feels that their knowledge is more important than the office. Often this arises in young Christians who try to insert the world’s standards for promotion and success into the church. That’s why Paul clearly instructed Timothy that a novice should not be installed as an overseer (bishop, preaching elder) lest they be lifted up in pride and fall into the devil’s trap (**I Timothy 3:6**). Pride is the problem and he (yes, “he” because pride is a spirit) brings with him his friends, Rebellion and Destruction. **Proverbs 16:18** *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.* If you feel that God has given you something, find out what He wants you to do with it. Whatever God gives is given for the edification of the body, not for the edification of you and the Body of Christ works in order.

I Samuel 24:4-6 *And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6 And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S ANOINTED, to stretch forth mine hand against him, SEEING HE IS THE ANOINTED OF THE LORD.* Did David know more about God than Saul? Without a doubt I think we would all have to answer, “Absolutely!” However, Saul was God’s anointed and David clearly understood the importance of the office. And because David understood this, he would not lift a finger against Saul for fear of falling into the judgment of God, in spite of the promise that he had on his life. **Psalms 105:14-15** *He suffered NO MAN to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; 15 Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.* R.A. Torrey was the first head of the Moody Bible Institute. He was the minister of D.L. Moody much like Elisha was to Elijah. He was university trained at Yale, a highly acclaimed

university to this day. Mr. Moody, on the other hand, was not a “man of letters” but was, at best, a high school graduate. He was, however, the man anointed for that time. So when Mr. Moody would tell Mr. Torrey what to preach and Mr. Torrey would balk, Mr. Moody’s response was, “You do as you’re told.” And you know what? Mr. Torrey did as he was told and respected the anointing of the office.

As a footnote to what has been said earlier, many insecure leaders may be disturbed at the words in this section. Some of you have taught that, as a leader, you should never reveal any weaknesses to the people. You should know all the answers and be the one that God speaks to. I’ve got news for you; the people will find weaknesses in you that you didn’t even know were there. Also, if God is in your ministry, He will place people in your midst to support you with prophetic words and insights from God. Why? **Ephesians 4:12** *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* Your confidence must be in God and in what He has called you to do. Your testimony must be that of Paul’s: **I Timothy 1:12** *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.* Your source must be Christ Jesus for it is He who enabled (empowered) you and put you into the ministry that He wanted. Your life and your ministry is in His hands. This is not a call to relaxation but a call to confidence in the Lord Jesus for He is the one that empowers and sends. **I Corinthians 12:18** *But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, AS IT HATH PLEASED HIM.*

3. CONTEMPT FOR THE LEADER.

(In his third appeal, as Absalom stands before God, he might realize that he is without excuse and let his true feelings come out: “*I disgraced David by laying with his concubines! He was a pitiful excuse for a king. Something had to be done and I’m glad I did it!*” Once again, these are the words of the spirit of Absalom — PLEASE, don’t let it be you!)

2 Samuel 16:20-22 *Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. 21 And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father’s concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. 22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.*

This reason for rebellion and the next are the two most evil sources of rebellion. These are things that should not be once mentioned among the people of God but, unfortunately, they do

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occur. There is no excuse for this attitude towards ANYONE but, unfortunately, it has happened in the body of Christ.

I chose the word “contempt” rather than “hatred” because contempt covers more areas. Contempt refers to something (or someone) that is despised, dishonored, or disgraced. Someone who is looked upon with contempt is viewed as vile (evil, low, bad, detestable) or worthless. (To bring it down to every day life, the one you roll your eyes at is the one you view with contempt.) In the legal system, when someone is in “contempt of court,” they disobey and show open disrespect for the rules of the court and, because of this, it’s a quick way to spend a night in jail. Christians will never admit to hating someone but their actions show that they have contempt for their leader. (Remember: This “leader” could be your choir president, Sunday School superintendent, Usher Board president, your supervisor on your job, your parents, or your pastor. Rebellion can appear in any area of your life.) Because you just can’t stand the person or you resent the position they are in, you refuse to show them respect, you refuse to obey them, and you work to make them look bad. All of this is part of the spirit of Absalom. Someone will see your actions and will be inspired to treat the leader the same way. By your actions, you have brought not only yourself into judgment but you have led someone down the same path.

4. MALICIOUS INTENT TO DESTROY.

(As Absalom continues to stand before God, realizing that he is without excuse and letting his true feelings come out, he might add: “*I intended to take the kingdom from David! I wanted to see him off the throne and DEAD! He was a pitiful excuse for a king. He did nothing about my sister. Something had to be done and I’m glad I did it!*” Once again, these are the words of the spirit of Absalom — PLEASE, don’t let it be you!)

II Samuel 15:1, 5 & 6 *1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 5 And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. 6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. 2 Samuel 17:1-4* **Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: 2 And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: 3 And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. 4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all**

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the elders of Israel. The death of David, Absalom's father, the sweet psalmist of Israel, the anointed of God, pleased Absalom well. God help us!

This is probably the most evil source of rebellion. This rebellion has no excuse. It fully intends to overthrow what you have for personal gain or for your embarrassment. **This is the spirit of Absalom.** Yes, he could claim past injustices but he too had done wrong. He had murdered his brother and, by the mercy of the king, continued to live even though he should have died according to the law. Somewhere in all of this, Absalom lost sight of what HE had done and set about to destroy his father. How often do we see ministers who have been saved and blessed because of a church and a church leader and then turn around and attack that leader? This is the same spirit that caused the "friend" of Julius Caesar, Brutus, to turn on him and literally put a knife in his "friend's" back. This type of rebellion will be brutally judged by God. The person who engages in this should hope that God judges them in this life and opens their eyes that they might repent and not have to face the wrath to come.

5. MISSING THE WILL OF GOD.

(Finally, as Absalom stands before God, this might be his final excuse, now that he realizes that God is unimpressed with his anger and he tries to humble himself but it's too late: "*I didn't know what I was doing. I thought David didn't care about what happened with my sister or even with his oldest son. I figured that since he didn't care about his oldest son, certainly he doesn't care about me. I felt that something had to be done!*") In our dialogue, these will be the final words of the spirit of Absalom as he stands before God to give account of the deeds in his body — please, please, please, don't let it be you!)

2 Samuel 13:37-39 *37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. 38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.* Isn't the attitude of David interesting? He was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead. That's what David was supposed to have done to keep sin out of Israel. Amnon had sinned a sin with a death penalty but David did not carry it out. Absalom did carry it out and David now felt at peace about the whole thing but he sure missed his son.

This source of rebellion does not always stem from the type of evil desires and intents as the previous kinds mentioned but it has the same effect. This source is rooted in a lack of

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understanding of the will of God whether it be for you or for someone else who impacts you. An example of this type of rebellion is Lot, the nephew of Abraham. **Genesis 13:7-12** *And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. 8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. 10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. 11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. This move represents one of the stupidest mistakes ever made.* Lot had prospered but only because of Abraham. This prosperity between the both of them caused strife but Abraham, understanding the will of God, was willing to do whatever needed to be done to put down the rebellion. (The rebellion was among the hired hands. Abraham fully understands that this was something that he could fix and that he would fix it. Lot obviously did not have the same mind.) Lot, in his carnal mind, looked up and chose the prosperous ground, which led to the wicked city of Sodom. Almost every school child understands what happened later with Lot, his wife, and his children. The problem was that Lot did not appreciate or understand that Abraham had a promise while he (Lot) only had a bloodline. **Genesis 12:3** *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in THEE (Abraham, not Lot) shall all families of the earth be blessed.* Does God judge us for this kind of rebellion? Would God be so unfair as to require this of me when I did not understand the will of God? The answer is clearly stated in **Ephesians 5:17** *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

Before leaving this source of rebellion, there is another subtle method in which this source manifests itself. This is best explained using an example. This is a fictitious example but one that, just the same, has been repeated in various forms through the years in the church.

Brother Slydula is a faithful member of a local church. He has been a member a number of years and has grown up to a point. Now, however, the growing has basically stopped. He visits other churches when his church is not having service and has become exposed to all types of wonders that are expanding his soul. The more he sees, the more frustrated he becomes with his home church. God sent him to his home church and God has let him know that soon (but not yet) He will

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move him on. The waiting on God's time is eating at him and he has become less faithful, less punctual, and less Christ-like in his attitude while waiting.

Brother Slydula is spreading seeds of rebellion through his actions. Many pastors would look at this example and say that this is a reason why people should not visit on their own but that's a shortsighted approach. Even if you have the most dynamic ministry going, the people belong to God and He will place them where they will best benefit His kingdom. Brother Slydula must realize that no matter how frustrated he is, HE IS IN THE WILL OF GOD ... if he stays where he is. However, every time he complains, he is NOT in God's will. Be careful! The seeds of rebellion are deceitful, elusive, and sly. We must not be unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is!

JUDGMENT ON REBELLION

God does not like rebellion and He deals with it harshly. We'll look at two examples in detail beginning with Absalom. After that, as promised, we'll take a look at the end result of the rebellion of Korah.

2 Samuel 18:14-17 *14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. 15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armor compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him. 16 And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. 17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.* In concluding the history of Absalom, he brought the rebellious country into battle against King David. Many were killed in the battle as part of the judgment against rebellion. (**2 Samuel 18:7** *Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.*) After the battle began to be lost, Absalom fled and got his magnificent head of hair caught in a tree that he rode under. From that vantage point, he became an easy target for Joab, David's general. Notice one key point in verse 17, **when the cause of the rebellion was eliminated, the rebellion ceased.** Once Absalom was killed, the people of God went home and the rebellion stopped. Rebellion is a cancer among God's people. To eliminate it, the source of the rebellion must have a heart transformation or they must be moved out of the picture. (Are you viewed as a source of rebellion, a ringleader in a cause to stir up something? Are you afraid that you may be the reason others have turned from the one(s) in authority over them? I urge you to quickly repent and work to fix what you have done before God begins to move you out of the picture!)

Let's go back and revisit the rebellion of Korah from Numbers 16. Korah was of the tribe of Levi. He was already privileged to be a part of the priesthood and, with that, came the unique opportunity to minister unto the Lord. When Korah and his crew presented their rebellion to Moses, he reminded them of what they already had. **Numbers 16:8-10** *And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: 9 Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? 10 And He hath brought thee near to Him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?* (While on this topic, we must never

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lose sight of what we already have. As stated before when we dealt with the sources of rebellion, it often comes from wanting what you don't have or a desire to move up without paying the price that God wants you to pay.)

Korah and his crew were not finished in their evil ways. Rebellion often brings with it an ugly attitude that makes the people of God scratch their head and wonder about the salvation of the one who is rebelling. Look at how those who were in the rebellion with Korah responded when Moses called for them to come to the tabernacle. **Numbers 16:12-14** *And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: 13 *Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? 14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.* This is awful! Look at the attitude of the people of God. Because they are so deceived in the rebellion, they refuse to listen to what Moses says. They see Moses as an opportunist who has made himself the leader over them (see how they refuse to acknowledge the anointing of his office?), as one who has not fulfilled his promises (*thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards*), and as one who may do them bodily harm (*wilt thou put out the eyes of these men*). They see this because they are blinded by their rebellion and the ugliness of their attitude has begun to come out. This kind of spirit invites the judgment of God on the life of the rebel. Beware! This ugly attitude compounds the judgment because they turned meek Moses into an angry man who prayed against them. **Numbers 16:15** *And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.* When we rebel, we make it difficult for the leader to remember us kindly in prayer. The quick response is, "If they have the Spirit of God, then they'll do right." That shoe also fits on the one who rebels.*

Let's go to the conclusion of the sad story of the rebellion of Korah. Unfortunately, the conclusion is worse than with Absalom. I'll let the Bible speak for itself. **Numbers 16:28-35** *And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. 29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. 30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. 31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: 32 And the*

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earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. 34 And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. 35 And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

Everyone involved in this rebellion was eliminated unlike with Absalom where only the rebel was punished. That's the danger. You don't know how God will judge the rebellion but rest assured that He will judge it. In concluding this section, here are some additional Scriptures to meditate on regarding God's judgment on rebellion. Some of them deserve a study of their own but here's the main point of them: **Please saints, let us be careful!**

Proverbs 17:11 *An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a CRUEL MESSENGER shall be sent against him.* Who is going to send this "cruel messenger?" Let's take a quick side road to see the workings of God in the spirit world. **1 Kings 22:19-20** *And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. 20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.* The cruel messenger is sent by God! Also compare what it says in First Timothy 1:18-20.

Isaiah 1:19-20 *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But if ye refuse and rebel, YE SHALL BE DEVoured WITH THE SWORD: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.* Many swords have come into our lives and we cannot see the hand of God working against us for our rebellious ways.

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: FOR THAT IS UNPROFITABLE FOR YOU.* While you're looking for a blessing, you're also messing up your blessing because you make the work of those watching for your soul grievous.

1 Peter 1:17 *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:* Let's learn how to fear God and do as He says!

FIGHTING REBELLION

I Corinthians 15:57 *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* I have asked the Lord this before and He was faithful and just to give me a ready answer that enables me to keep my soul right. However, it's a never-ending battle to keep the flesh under submission and the spirit of Absalom from coming in. "Rebellion is so deceptive, so subtle. It can sneak in when I'm most vulnerable – when I've been hurt by the one who God has told me to obey. How do I fight it? How do I keep my spirit right? The Bible warnings are so terrifying that I want no part of this sin! On top of that, there are things that I will run into in my Christian life that I will not like. There will be times that I KNOW I can do better. There may even be situations where I feel like God has called me to do something that my leader is keeping me from doing. What shall I do? I must have the victory over this in my life! I don't want to find myself working against God's program. What shall I do?" I don't have a ready answer but thanks be unto God that He does. These are remedies that He impressed upon my spirit to share with you.

1. LEARN TO DO AS YOU ARE TOLD.

Isaiah 1:19 *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.* Why beat around the bush, let's jump right into the bush! The Scripture given has been used before but it adds another element besides just doing as we're told. It adds the word "willing." This word refers to something that is readily and gladly done. Therefore, there's no place in obedience to this Scripture for an attitude whether demonstrated or not. Many preachers preach and teach about prosperity but prosperity is promised to those who perform the tough assignments. Many are excited about prosperity. Many are claiming the blessings of prosperity. Many are confessing the catchy slogans of prosperity ("The blessings are mine in '99! It's going to be great in '98! The battle will be won by 2001!"). However, the essential part of this Bible promise is that we must be WILLING and OBEDIENT. Many are willing, they want to obey but for some reason they can't. Bring your flesh under control and do as you're told! **Proverbs 25:28** *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

I could add to the statement, "learn to do as you're told," the statement "no matter how harshly you were told." Since the late sixties, this country has had to continually fight rebellion against

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some of the basics of our society: patriotism, morality, honesty, and personal responsibility. This rebellion has carried over to the church. We have seen, in a number of fundamental, evangelical, and Pentecostal churches, rebellion among prominent preachers. Churches have been split over simple direction by a leader or by a church's governing body. People have left churches because they were asked to do something that they did not want to do. Others have left because of the *way* they were asked. Thank God for the Bible! It addresses this also.

We've talked about this first example before but it bears repeating. **Matthew 21:28-31a** *But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. 29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. 30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. 31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first.* Why did the Lord Jesus focus on the first son? Look at this fellow's attitude! Is this the kind of attitude we want? No and yes. No we don't want that attitude. That attitude next time may cause us to disobey. However, the "yes" comes when we look at his spirit. He knew he was wrong and was committed to obedience. He didn't make a big deal about going back to repent to the father and then go. He went. The principle being demonstrated is that the will of the father is based on doing as you are told.

The second example is a little bit different. **Judges 6:27** *Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.* Some have preached on the cowardice of Gideon at this point but God, speaking through the writer, focuses on the fact that he did as the Lord had said unto him. His desire to obey was stronger than his fear of his father's household or of the men of the city. Since God did not tell him *when* it must be done, he obeyed God and did it at night. He showed willingness because he used every resource to bring himself in line with the word of God even if it meant doing what God said do at night.

O how many pastors could live longer and do more work for Christ if they had only a handful of members who would do as they were told without days of interrogation and questions. How many pastors must turn on the heat and make sure the lights are on because too often the ones they have asked have said, "I go, sir," and went not? This is the root of rebellion. **When you can boldly say that you will do something without any intention of doing that, you are on your way toward the judgment of rebellion.**

2. DON'T BE SO QUICK TO MOVE.

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* Sometimes the will of God can be mysterious (in fact, if we would be honest we must admit that it is mysterious *most* of the time). You pray and try to get direction but the clear answer isn't always there. You put out a "fleece" before God, as Gideon did, to make sure that your move is right and even that doesn't work out — one day the fleece says, "Yes," and the next day it says, "No." How is one to know the will of God for their life? The Lord gave me this illustration after my wife and I had been married only a very few months and we were faced with a decision crossroad in our life. The wrong answer to this decision would have completely changed the direction of my life and, in retrospect; I feel that it may have doomed our ministry and our marriage. I was like Jehoshaphat when the children of Moab and Ammon came against him. **2 Chronicles 20:12** *O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.*

In this illustration (at this time I cannot recall if it was a dream or a vision), there was a large flat plain in an open area. At the end of the plain were five doors standing freely. There was no way to get beyond these doors without opening one of them and going through them. In the next scene, I ran across this open plain, not in a panic, but with a mission in mind. I ran to one door, found it locked, forced it open anyway, and ran through. Upon doing so, I fell into a large chasm on the other side of the door. That was the end of this scene. The scene began again and, again, I ran across the open plain, ran to another door, found it locked, forced it open, and ran through. The same results occurred — I fell into a large chasm. That ended scene number two. The scene began again and, again, I ran across the open plain. However, this time I stopped before the five doors. I asked the Lord, "What shall I do?" He directed me to one door. I opened it (it was not locked) and walked across a covered bridge across the chasm. In obtaining the interpretation of this illustration, the Lord showed me that each door was locked except the one that the Lord had opened. He showed me further that there was only one door that would lead me across the chasm and only He knew which one it was. The theme of the illustration was to listen to God's voice and let Him open the door or fall in the pit!

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With this illustration, we need to ask some questions so that we fully understand what's going on. First, was it necessary to rush across the plain and rush through the doors? God knows exactly the timing of everything so He does not rush you into hasty decisions. I learned through this illustration and how it affected our lives to be cautious of prophecies and "words" from others that encourage me to "quickly" do things that I had no unction about before. It would be different if the stall was because of me but, at this time, I had received a prophecy that did not line up with anything God had said in the past and we were told to "do it quickly." Yes, you can immediately start the wheels in motion but until the door is open, the final step is not to be made.

Second, what if God did not open the door in this case? The same answer holds if God does not open the door in your case. If He doesn't open the door, pitch your tent and stay right there! You have no direction to go forward so you have no reason to move. As a young Christian, I thought about the children of Israel in the wilderness. It made no sense to me that all of these people could be stuck in such a small area of real estate for forty years and that no one had the drive to launch out on their own and get out of there. Yet, in spite of their rebellious ways, the children of Israel learned how to follow God and, while doing so, God kept them in the wilderness until the rebels had been consumed. **Numbers 9:18-23** *At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. 19 And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. 20 And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. 21 And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. 22 Or whether it were TWO DAYS, or a MONTH, or a YEAR, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. 23 At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.* The children of Israel learned that unless the cloud moved, they did not move. If they stayed in the same place two days, a month, or a year, they did not move! These represent the rebellious church in the wilderness. If this is so, we are even more rebellious! God may have spoken to you but wait until He shows you the open door. With the Word of the Lord comes the how to do and when to do.

3. PRAY FOR YOUR LEADER.

Hebrews 13:17 (Amplified Version) *Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them — continually recognizing their authority over you; for they are constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare, as men who will have to render an account [of their trust]. [Do your part to] let them do this with gladness, and not with sighing and groaning, for that would not be profitable to you [either].* After reading this verse, there are two things that I want you to think about:

- (1) Did God send you where you are? (This verse addresses “spiritual leaders” so our focus must be on churches and ministries.)
- (2) Does your leader satisfy the requirement of this verse of “constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare, as men (or women) who will have to render an account?”

If either one of these is true, beware that you don’t find yourself fighting against God’s servant and God’s will!

Regarding the first question, if God sent you, you don’t even need to go on to the second question. If God sent you He will move you on **HIS** timetable. If God sent you, it is part of your covenant responsibility to stay there until **HE** amends the covenant. While waiting, your job is to obey the principle of **Luke 19:13** *And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.* The Amplified Version says, of the last part of this verse, *Buy and sell with these while I go and return.* In other words, do the work the Lord has sent you to do until He returns and tells you otherwise. Now while you’re doing that, you lift up your pastor, overseer, supervisor, or whoever is over you spiritually, in continuous prayer before God. This is part of your responsibility while you are “occupying.” It is difficult to rebel against one that you’re praying for. If you pray earnestly and in expectation that your prayer will be heard, you will want to see the blessing on your leader and not the curse of rebellion within the ranks.

Regarding the second question, be very cautious how you answer this. I must first assume that if you have moved on to this question, you are in a situation that God did not **specifically** direct you to get into. Perhaps you joined the church or ministry on your own or perhaps this is the church in which you were raised. Maybe you just didn’t pray before you made this step. Upon examining your leader (a dangerous undertaking which I discuss in the paragraph after this), you

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have come to the conclusion that this leader does not satisfy the requirement of one who is constantly keeping watch over your soul and guarding your spiritual welfare, as a man (or a woman) who will have to render an account. Now what are you going to do?

- First, you're going to pray and ask God what to do. Since you haven't received God's direction in the past, it is definitely time to receive it. Once He gives you His direction, your second step is to obey. Now, let's assume that the Lord tells you to stay put where you are until He moves you. Don't come back to question #2 again. He has moved your situation into His will — you're now guided by the answer to question #1. You can't move until God says move!
- What if God says, "You're right. You must move! This is not good for your soul." Find out when to move and where He wants you to go. I've seen it so many times and so many will be unhappy with what I'm about to say but it's definitely true — **GOD IS NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF MOVING YOU OUT OF A CHURCH TO SIT AT HOME!** When God finally moves you, He will move you right to where you should be next and He will show you how to move. You won't find a number of Sundays where you're sitting at home watching the television preachers because you have no guidance. You won't find yourself visiting churches here and there trying to find one that's "right." God is not crazy, He knows how to lead us. Once He does that, you learn how to obey.

One last point on this second question before we leave it: **The leader of a church or ministry has been put in place by God.** They have made great sacrifices in their personal lives for the sake of the furtherance of the gospel no matter how poorly, in *your* opinion, they further it. Before you pray about a leader that you feel is not the one to lead you, humble yourself and empty yourself before God. Ask Him to put the searchlights on your soul to find out if there's anything in you that should not be there. You don't want to be in the place of one who is fighting against God. The leader's shortcomings are not to be the topic of discussions but only the topic of prayer. While doing this, read **II Kings 1:9-14**. In these verses, we see the judgment on those that come before the servant of God in the wrong spirit. The first two captains addressed Elijah correctly, as a man of God. However, their authoritative tone said that they did not respect the words they just said and they definitely did not respect the anointing of his office. They paid for this "blunder" with their lives. God's people are precious to Him. Be cautious that you don't find yourself in the position of having offended one of His little ones.

4. BE CAREFUL.

Remember that misunderstanding the will and direction of God is a source of rebellion. You don't want to move or even act like you're going to move until the door is open. Until that time, keep doing what you've been doing heartily as unto the Lord. Why, I'll be out of here soon? You don't know how long "soon" is. If you're in a church and you've joined certain auxiliaries, stay in them and work in them! It may not have been the will of God when you first joined but He has realigned His will in line with what you've done. The real danger is that if you make a move, you may not only lengthen the time to realize His will but others may view your actions and be emboldened to similarly rebel. You will have become the leader of a rebellion without planning for it and, in some cases, without even knowing it!

How we view our leader is unimportant. We use the fact that our leader may not be in the right position with God or that they weren't called by God to do the work that they're involved in or that they just don't have the talent to perform the work, as they should. These points are irrelevant! **WHOEVER GOD HAS PLACED YOU UNDER IS YOUR LEADER AND YOU ARE REQUIRED TO GIVE THAT LEADER DUE RESPECT AND OBEDIENCE.** Two instances at the beginning of the reign of King David illustrate this:

1. **2 Samuel 1:14** *And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?* In this passage, an Amalekite has laid claim to the fact that he was responsible for the death of Saul, king of Israel. His words in this chapter contradict the words of the last chapter of First Samuel. However, it's safe to assume, from the context of this chapter, that the Amalekite intended to endear himself to David with this claim. It cost him his life. Notice David's words and let us learn how to reverence those placed in position by God, "*How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?*" The key word I want to point out here is "afraid." Are you to be afraid of the person? Not directly. The fear is directed toward the one that chose them and anointed them, that is, God. We must respect, yea, and even fear, the anointing placed on an individual because of the one that is behind that anointing. **Matthew 10:28** *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*
2. **2 Samuel 4:9-12** *9 And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, 10 When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is*

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dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: 11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? 12 And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron. In this passage, we have two men who have murdered Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, king over most of Israel. Ishbosheth was not supposed to be king. His captain of the host, Abner, knew it and finally admitted it after two years of his reign and the death of many men. However, Ishbosheth was the king whether he was supposed to be or not. Because he was the king, David executed judgement upon those that had, by subtlety, taken his life. The point is that the position is also important even if the anointing is not there. Ishbosheth did not have the anointing oil poured over his head like his father, Saul. But he was still the king.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I'm finished (actually I'm just going to stop here). I leave this booklet in your hands now to decide what to do. Let me, however, also leave this one sentence personal testimony. **Until my wife and I learned to respect the anointing of the office of those over us and to willingly obey, we had great difficulty in our marriage and had to work at spiritual growth.** Yes, I give you this study not based on a theoretical understanding of the topic but also based on the fact that I have been one of those rebellious ones. However, God has blessed me for He opened my eyes and enabled me to repent. I believe that God will also be gracious to you but I bear spiritual *and* natural wounds as testimonials to my disobedience. A bizarre accident occurred to me in the late 1980's that brought me into the intensive care unit of the hospital. I asked God many times how and why this happened but I was blinded to the answer. While I was asking during my recuperation, He asked me this question regarding the ministry that I was under and that I continually complained to Him about, "What would you do differently?" He commanded me to write out my answer and bring it before Him. He wanted great details. I was excited. I felt like He was going to make me a catalyst for change. I didn't see that He was setting me up to have my eyes opened. He instructed me to write it down first and then to put it on the computer. I did as He said. It sat on one computer, then another, and then another as time went on and I upgraded the technology. He never told me what else to do. I found out, though, that it was difficult for me to talk against a ministry that I was now a "change agent" for. I shut up and I waited . . . and nothing happened except that God was merciful to me and pulled me out from His judgment because I shut up.

I pulled up that document on my computer a few years ago when I became the assistant pastor of West Side Church of God in Christ and again in 1999 when I was appointed as pastor of the same church. Each time, I wanted to see if what I said then made any sense. Most of it didn't. It represented the ramblings of a rebellious man. I find this an important document because it showed me how awful sin can be and how awful I can be when I don't do as I'm told.

2 Corinthians 7:1 *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let US cleanse OURSELVES from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*