

Disciple or Rebel - The Choice

by Stella Paterson

We live in a time when extremely tough choices are being made. Many Christians have left organized religion, or the "institutional" church, but what is the reason? Is it out of rebellion for reasons unknown? Or, is it a true call from God to forsake an apostate system and be a faithful disciple of His? The question is clear - are we in Christ or are we merely "in church"? Are we being sanctified through faith in the living Christ? Or, are we being "churchified" by a dead system?

This article is a must-read for all - not only those who have walked away from churchianity. If you happen to be one of those rare ones who has a wonderful place to worship God in Spirit and truth you are indeed blessed. And what a blessing if your shepherd has a heart after God to Whom he points those in his care. If only all churches were the same! But they are not, and God knows and is calling His people out, as we read in Revelation 18:4.

If God has called you out of apostasy, you are blessed! You have heard His voice. But it is only the beginning. We must practice listening to His voice for there will be many voices out there, using enticing words to draw us back into bondage. This is what the apostle Peter said about it:

These are springs without water, mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved. For uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; while promising them liberty, they themselves are bondservants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again; and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire. (2 Peter 2:17-22)

It is with deep sadness that I include the words "*for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved.*" There are throngs of religious people to whom Jesus will say, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity* [practice nothingness]." (Matthew 7:23) These same people believe they are His and are doing His work but their hearts are far from Him. It is all about **doing** - not **being** in relationship with Jesus.

Let's look at the next sentence. *For uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; while promising them liberty, they themselves are bondservants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.* These people in the apostate system use great sounding words but their "enticement" is according to the flesh. The revisers translated a Greek word as "[lasciviousness](#)". Taking into consideration God's strong words about relationship we see how the Greek word suggests "continent" which means "a thing that retains or contains something" (or someone). This is born out in the next words about their promising liberty *while they themselves are bondservants of corruption.* They are in bondage and don't know it. Their attempts to "bring us back into the fold" are actually attempts to place us back in bondage.

For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. Anyone who has truly repented (turned from) the life of the flesh through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ but becomes entangled in bondage, it is much worse for them. They have rejected Jesus and turned to disbelief. *For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*

That last sentence speaks for itself. Allow me to give you a personal story to accentuate its meaning even further. My husband and I just returned from a two week trip where we saw such incredible beauty in the fall colors found in southern Ontario and Quebec, here in Canada. It was tempting to take in the grandeur around us, without stopping, rather than keep our eyes on the road. I was reminded of how my mother used to tell my "sight-seeing-while-driving" father that he should look where he was going so that he didn't go where he was looking. There is a spiritual application in Mom's words. If we look to the right or to the left we will begin to go in that direction. We must keep our "affection on things above, not on things on the earth." We will be bombarded with so many things that have the appearance of righteousness. But, in reality, they are simply turning our attention from the true Righteousness found in Jesus. It takes dedicated surrender to the Spirit to keep our eyes on Jesus and not become caught up in the religious trappings of churchianity. The much-speaking of those who think they are on the side of righteousness will sound good. But upon looking closer we will see that their righteousness is a self-righteousness. Jesus is not the total desire of their heart and mind. We will hear in their words a multitude of "thou shalt..."

So what are we to do?

Even though we may recognize the bondage others are in, we are never, never to judge them, but pray that their eyes would be opened. If through discernment we see the error, we simply must walk away. God is never done dealing with anyone and He is able to reach a soul as long as there is breath. Our choice is to not follow man but to follow Jesus. Yes, there will be many who say "this is the way" but Jesus is the only Way to Life. If He is not central to their attempts to persuade, we must make the choice to follow Him. Only in Jesus is there Life. The church cannot add to that Life - we are complete in Him.

Let's take a look at the definitions of "disciple" and "rebel", according to the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries. Their definitions shed enormous light on this phenomenal exodus from apostate "christianity."

The word "disciple" comes from a Greek word which means "*a learner, that is, pupil.*" We also know that Jesus was referred to as "Master" which means "teacher." If we are going to be a pupil of the Master and follow Him, we must never stray from that path. Look at this mirrored image of the word "teach" -- it reads "learn".



*"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. **Set your mind [affection] on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.** For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3)* Just like in this image, Jesus in us is seen by others. We must stay hidden in Him and never go back to the bondage from which He rescued us.

Paul told the Philippians, *"Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose God is the belly, and whose glory*

is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Philippians 3:17-19) This is very much the same message as that of Peter who spoke of those desiring to entice others with great swelling words. They are enemies of the cross of Christ - they have not allowed their flesh to be crucified.

What is rebellion?

1 Samuel 15:23 tell us, "*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.*" According to the Hebrew dictionary, the word "rebellion" means "*bitterness, that is, (figuratively) rebellion; concretely bitter, or rebellious.*"

Here is how the word "bitterness" is used in Hebrews 12:14-17. "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 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**; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*"

The book of Hebrews is addressed to the Hebrew people so, although translated from a Greek word, the use of "bitterness" would derive its meaning from the Hebrew word, "*mriy*" which was translated "rebellion." (Hebrew #4805)

In looking at the full context of the above passage, we will see that it is not simple bitterness that is the problem. The meaning is deeper and more apt to mean "rebellion." Esau is referred to as a profane person who sold his birthright and *found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

The first verses admonish us to "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.*" We are not told to "follow all men" but to "*follow peace with all men.*" Does this mean we will not disturb some? It is extremely difficult making the choice to follow Jesus. There are so many who will bombard us with "good reasons" to go to church, using Scriptures in an attempt to convince us. At the same time, we will never succeed at convincing them of our correct stand for Jesus. They are blind to the truth and will fight almost to the death to try and "rescue" us from the "error of our way."

We must be prepared to experience much pain. It is not easy to walk away from those with whom we once "fellowshipped". And we can expect to be persecuted because of our choice. This we know from Paul's words to Timothy, where he said, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" (2 Timothy 3:12) There will be more persecution from those in the "church" than from those in the "world." Paul spoke about it in Galatians 4:29. "*But as then he*

that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." Those in the apostate church are "still-born" in the flesh while the true believers are born of the Spirit. They follow the Spirit where He leads them.

Who are the rebels?

Those in the apostate church will see the ones leaving as "rebels." But who really is rebelling? Are not those deceived into apostasy rebelling against God? Are they not without the Life of Christ because they have rejected Him in pursuit of "doing" church rather than "being" the Ekklesia of God?

In the days ahead, there will be multitudes who have been faithful to "church", and when God takes away their "crutch" they will be devastated. This thing they have devoted their life to, thinking it is "Christ's church", will be taken away and they will be forced to make a choice. They will have to decide whether they should cling to their well-structured church life and go down with the sinking ship, or will Jesus be enough? When all is said and done, Jesus is Enough! He is the only One who will rise above the crumbled mess of what once was the center of the world for countless thousands.

Only in Jesus is there real Life. It always comes down to Life or death. Will you be a disciple or a rebel? The choice is yours.

Comment from a reader:

Stella,

You have hit upon a truth that needs to be spoken loudly. For too long people who have rejected illegitimate human authority have been accused of "rebellion". Since no one has any authority in heaven or in the earth except Jesus Christ, it is impossible to "rebel" against human ecclesiastical authority. Scriptures such as "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." do not refer to rebellion against human rule but to rebellion against God. 2 Cor.11:18 & 19 takes the Corinthian Christians to task for NOT refusing to be ruled by false apostles who are taking them away from God. The entire system of ecclesiastical hierarchy, if it is rejected as it should be, would crumble like a house of cards. It may have to do so in order that biblical order may be established. Maybe Christians will have to refuse to play the game any longer. What would happen if everybody stayed home on Sunday morning and the Pastor had no one to admire him? Maybe this is what it will take. I see no weakening of the present system as long as believers toe the line as they have for nearly 2000 years. The world no longer respects the church so the human system is totally ineffective in its divine task of bringing all the world to become disciples of Christ. The church's attempts to make people into disciples of itself is gross error and, like the Pharisees, makes people two-fold

children of Hell. When less than 10% of Christians know anything at all about abiding in Christ and having a living relationship with Him, something is seriously wrong.

*Blessings,
Maurice*