

most earnest of disciples. As iniquity abounds (Matt. 24:12), and a universal hatred of Christians intensifies (Matt. 24:9), one particular expression of the wholesale anti-Christian sentiment will be an unprecedented uprising of youth against their godly parents. Jesus said, *“Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Mk. 13:12,13). The Greek verb employed to describe the action of this recalcitrant, latter-day youth movement is ἐπανάστημι, which literally means to “stand up against.” During this period of time formerly subdued and compliant young men and women will seemingly be carried along by a swift current of evil and rise to challenge the “landmark” beliefs and practices of their God-fearing parents. Heartbroken moms and dads will groan under the deep wounds of rejection by their children who have seemingly lost every trace of natural affection. Sobbing parents will not understand, as children who were given a Christian upbringing and every inducement to an early piety, break the yoke of the covenant (Jer. 5:5), and burst the bonds of restraint. Their parental hearts will bleed as they are emotionally murdered by their own offspring concerning whom they had entertained such bright hopes. Weeping Rachels will be the order of that day: *“Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not”* (Jer. 31:15).

But ah, dear beloved parent, who hath labored in love to lay your young upon God’s altar (Ps. 84:3), and hath sought to bring up thy children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4): refrain thy voice from overmuch sorrow and from

the lamentation of those who have no hope; for as saith the prophet Jeremiah, “Thy work shall be rewarded.” *“Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy”* (Jer. 31:16). What a comfort to know that God foresaw this day of disobedience to parents (II Tim. 3:2), and has promised to not forget the parental labor of love. All is not lost. Seeds have been sown that will reap a later harvest. Influence has been exerted that will leave a lasting mark. Minds and souls have been moulded by Scriptural thoughts not easily forgotten.

To godly parents feeling the pains of an emotional martyrdom and the scourge of a whip made of their own bowels, there is an encouraging word of instruction and guidance in Micah 7:4-7: *“The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.”* In the midst of a deplorable decadence, domestic disruption, and family fragmentation foreseen by former prophetic watchmen, and part of a wider scale judgment that begins in the covenant community, the prophet offers hope to the remnant that God will eventually reverse the low estate of His people, and bring them to the light of Divine vindication. Micah foresees a time when God will shew the faithful remnant a marvelous token for good, by answering prayer (“My God will hear me”- Micah 7:7b); granting illumination in the midst

of her affliction and perplexity (“The Lord shall be a light unto me”- Micah 7:8b); and eventually vindicating her, despite the taunts of her enemy (“He will bring me forth to the light”- Micah 7:9). To use the language of Jeremiah, in recording God’s destiny for His remnant in a time of peril—*“Verily it shall be well with thy remnant”* (Jer. 15:11).

Recognizing The Reality

“A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him” (Prov. 17:25).

The book of Proverbs sets forth a realistic view of life from the standpoint of an insightful fear of the Lord. Among its many observations is a commentary upon parental joys and sorrows, and the causes thereof. Children, especially those born to godly parents, have the unique ability to make their parents glad or sad, happy or miserable. Our text, Prov. 17:25, is a case in point. Along with other proverbial maxims, this passage underscores the vexation and bitterness occasioned by a foolish son to the heart of his father and mother. Perhaps Solomon could speak poignantly to this subject because he himself had experienced the agony of a wayward child, or was concerned about how Rehoboam might fare, despite his consistent training; certainly he observed that it was a relatively frequent occurrence, even among pious families that seek to maintain a spiritual environment and observe Divine order in the home. Indeed, one reason for the piercing pain of such a situation is the righteous parent’s deep spiritual concern for a son or daughter (which unsaved parents seldom have) who chooses to live a life of indifference to God’s commandments. The grief (עָצַב- “vexation, anger, grief”) and bitterness (אִימָר) alluded to in this passage is none other than the consternation spiritually minded parents feel when facing the harsh and heartbreaking reality of a child

who has been provided every spiritual advantage and inducement to early piety, only to have their carefully and prayerfully raised child rebel against their godly instruction and example. Of course, sometimes the parents themselves have contributed to their son or daughter’s wayward course by an unworthy example, lack of Biblical training (Prov. 22:6) and supervision (Prov. 29:15), or a prayerless indifference to their spiritual needs (contra Job 1:5). And in all such cases, parental repentance is certainly in order.

The frequency of such a sad tale of rebellion is borne out by the repetitive references we find in the book of Proverbs bearing upon this theme (Prov. 10:1; 15:20; 17:21,25; 19:13,26; 28:7; 29:3,15), and by the examples drawn from Scripture which reveal the calamity of righteous parents with ungodly children to be somewhat common.

Parents who currently suffer under this affliction may find solace and strength in the realization that they are not alone. Some of the most pious parents in the Biblical record labored under this cross. As we search the sacred pages, we find...

- The very first godly parents, in covenant with God by blood sacrifice, rejoicing at the prospects of a newborn babe that later proved to be a child of the devil (Gen. 4:1; I Jn. 3:12), though religious (Gen. 4:3).
- The faithful preacher of righteousness, Noah, who was perfect in his generations, had three sons, with a wicked Ham among them (Gen. 6:9,10; 9:22,24,25).
- A godly Isaac and Rebekah with two sons, one of whom was a profane man (Heb. 12:16) and fornicator (if Jewish tradition be correct) who earned the hatred of Almighty God (Rom. 9:13). Is this not amazing that the same womb, the same parental training, and the same home atmosphere can produce such radically different results?
- Two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, perished before the Lord for the sin of sacrilege (Lev. 10:1,2).
- Eli, with two sons of Belial, whom God slew in battle because they refused to hearken to their father (I Sam. 2:12,25).

- Samuel, the boy prophet, who served the Lord faithfully from an early age, had two sons who “walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment” (I Sam. 8:3).
- Righteous King Jehoshaphat had a deplorably wicked son, Jehoram, who walked in the idolatrous ways of Ahab, king of the Northern Kingdom (II Chron. 21:5,6).
- Hezekiah was a godly parent with a wicked son Manasseh (II Chron. 33:1,2). The enormity of his sins brought about the Babylonian invasion and the subsequent captivity (II Kings 24:1-4). All this from the son of a righteous man of faith.
- Josiah was the godly father of the evil Jehoiakim, who in disdain for God’s prophet Jeremiah, actually shredded the scroll containing his prophecies (Jer. 36:22-24).

Many of those within the Christian homeschooling movement, who have thought that they may socially engineer their children to produce the polished image and pious pose of godly offspring must, in the days ahead, be brought face to face with the grim reality of a latter-day youth rebellion. High hopes may be devastated, and the harmony of family life disrupted, but out of it all will emerge a righteous remnant that may offer up prayers, with strong crying and tears for alienated siblings, and brokenhearted mothers and fathers.

Yes, there is hope in the midst of this hellish onslaught, for in response to the heart cries of the remnant that remains faithful to God (Luke 18:7,8), the Lord will send a Holy Ghost revival that will, in many cases, grip the seed of the righteous and send them back to their spiritual homeland.

Revival That Reverses Rebellion

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off; even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring” (Isa. 44:3).

The reformation of former rebels will not be the result of convincing arguments, impassioned pleas, or carefully crafted considerations, though these can certainly have their place. The incorrigible, sinful nature of these “sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2) must be radically altered by the Spirit of God as He convicts “of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,” and imparts new life by the new birth (Jn. 16:8; 3:5). God has made ample provision for pious parents by a plethora of precious promises that are well able to exercise them to a particular faith that God will, even in the midst of a child’s wayward course, revive their beloved son or daughter to return to the “wisdom of the just” (Luke 1:17). Such afflicted and storm-tossed parents should remember that the promise of a spiritual outpouring is to them AND to their children (Acts 2:39). Plead, oh plead in prayer, dear parents, the precious promises that are your hell-bound son or daughter’s only hope. If Jesus was moved to deliver the demon-vexed daughter of a stranger to the covenant (Mk. 7:24-30), shall He not much more be disposed to undertake in behalf of the children of the covenant, who cry unto their God day and night that they may be avenged of their adversary, the devil, who has taken their offspring captive to do his will?

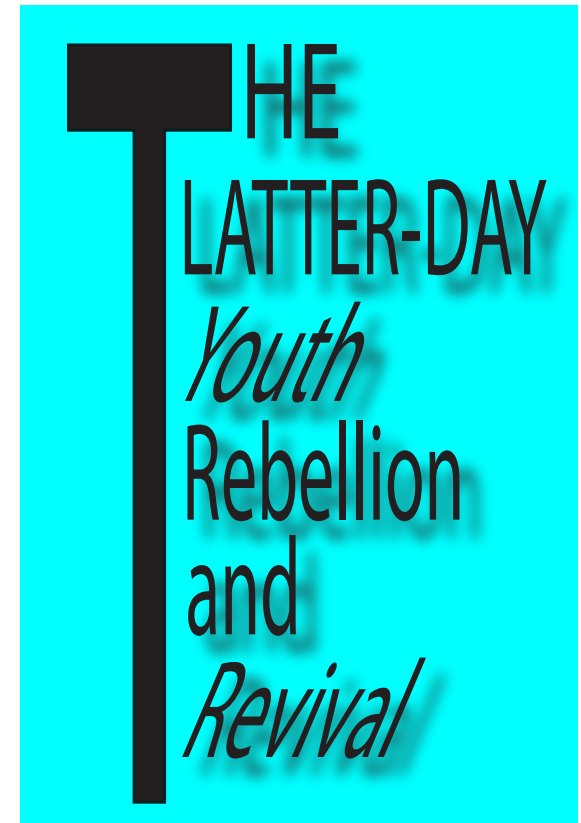
Moreover, the great redemptive rescue of our Lord Jesus Christ, in a rather intriguing, yet comforting way, has made specific provision for the reversal of rebellion. The fourth chapter of Ephesians mentions the five office gifts given to the church for perfection, ministry, and edification (Eph. 4:10-13). In so doing it alludes to a Messianic Psalm that carries in its bosom a delightful phrase of interest to believing parents concerned for a rebellious child. Psalm 68:18 reads, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive:

thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.”

Does the “for the rebellious also” catch your eye? Verily, it should. For therein we witness the marvel of God’s condescending grace, Who for a little while, descended, being made lower than the angels, suffered, bled and died on a cruel Roman cross, only to rise, ascend and become higher than the heavens, that He might fill all things (Eph. 4:9,10; Heb. 2:9). Having conquered Satan, sin, and the grave, He led in His train a host of captive prisoners—these were the “gifts for men,” or “unto men” as Paul writes in Ephesians 4:8. The literal Hebrew reads “מַתְּנוּת בְּאָדָם” – “gifts in the man,” or, “in the form of men,” which well accords with the apostle’s statement that these gifts were distributed, (“and he gave some, apostles....” [Eph. 4:11]) as office gifts for the edification of His church. The psalmist, moreover, as noted before, mentions that these gifts were given “for” (psalmist) or “unto” (Paul) “the rebellious also”—that is, former rebels whose rebellion has been reversed by sound conversion, and are now molded and shaped by God, to be and bring a blessing to the body of Christ, as righteous gospel ministers. What abounding grace to the chief of sinners! Those rebellious children who have grieved your soul and for whom you plead in prayer, dear parent, may include a train of preachers, who as the spoils of His victorious atonement, will bless His church forever!

With such prospects, possibilities, and promises before us, let us continue to beseech God for a reviving in the midst of the years (Hab. 3:2) that will quicken God’s people, and sweep a multitude of unruly youth into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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The Scriptures predict the rise of two interrelated phenomena now at the close of the age: one that will sadden the heart of righteous parents, and the other which will fill their hearts with unspeakable joy. Of what two occurrences do I speak? The rise of a rebellious generation of youth that sets not its heart aright, and a counteractive wave of revival that will reverse the rebellious trend, end the wayward course of many, and bring in everlasting righteousness among those who yield to the power of Holy Ghost influence.

The Rise of Latter-day Rebels

“There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother” (Proverbs 30:11).

The conditions that characterize the close of the age will present unique challenges to even the