ELIJAH'S MESSAGE TO EVERY GENERATION

by Anne Byrd

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5,6

As the Byrd family has travelled and ministered in multitudes of churches and other Christian settings during the past five years, one of the most profound burdens that we have carried is for the young people whom we have encountered. Perhaps this is because our 18 year old daughter, Dannie, falls into that category, but I think that the reason for our deep concern is much more profound than that.

It is significant that our Sovereign God chose to end the Old Testament with a warning concerning the covenant of family and generational continuity (Malachi 4:5,6). The Spirit of Elijah is echoing all across our land convicting the hearts of the fathers to turn toward posterity in a generation that is narcissistic to the extreme -- a generation that can even justify the murder of 25 million unborn children on the alter of convenience.

Those who want to deny the condition of our young people, especially in the Churches, are hiding their heads in the sand. In all our travels, we have met an occasional teenager who is sacrificially commited to the Lord, and even fewer youth groups who are more than marginally commited to the Lord. Each time they bow to peer pressure, the great American excuse for ungodliness, they are proving that their god is their peer group, not Yahweh, God of all creation. Many parents and Church leaders try to make excuses for this when instead, they should be repenting and confronting it, issuing a challenge that will drive their youth into commitment or out the door. Harsh? Yes. Unkind? Yes. Biblical? Yes.

What has brought the Body of Christ to this sad state of affairs? The answer is unbiblical theology that has taught us that we need not be concerned about the future, for God will "rapture" us out of all of our troubles before things get too bad. I don't think the teenage prostitute or drug addict will buy that cheap theology. Nor will the millions of persecuted Christians in other lands, or those in this nation who have taken a stand for religious liberty and have reaped the consequential wrath of our anti-Christ system gone mad! Because of our false theology we have failed for many decades to confront this wicked "kosmos" that kills babies and persecutes anyone who takes an active stand against unrighteousness, and now we must reap what we have sown. Rachel is beginning to awaken and weep for her children.

Our children have been so alienated from the Church that the statistics show that 3 out of 4 young children who are RAISED in the Church will leave it in their teenage years, never to return. They are bombarded on all sides by the adversary, especially if they are abandoned to a wicked

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public school system that has declared war on Jesus Christ! Many "Christian" teens are allowed to watch whatever they like on television, go to Satanic movies, and listen to horrendous music constantly. At best, most of our Churches provide little more than a baby-sitting service for them that equips them with no call to radical and uncompromised commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The result is a generation of young people who are disgusted and bored with the whole Christian experience, and who are charting their courses for Hell as surely as God lives. This is an unspeakable tragedy when one understands the incredible power that the FULL Gospel of the Kingdom has to transform lives and nations.

As we stand in front of congregation after congregation and see this phenomenon played out before our eyes, we almost despair, especially Dannie who is so burdened for these lost ones. Parents, please don't make the naive mistake of thinking that just because your child walked a Church aisle when he or she was 9 years old and said the right words and then was baptized that they are saved. Those who are saved will bring forth the fruits worthy of repentance as internal relationship with the King brings about a renewing of the mind that manifests itself in external obedience and commitment to Christian lifestyle.

One morning as our family was preparing to go to minister at one of our Texas engagements, I was standing before the mirror primping and praying. I was thinking of all of the times we have worked so hard to get through to the young people in our audiences, sometimes successfully, and sometimes not. We have been known to plead with them to get serious with God, and if that doesn't bring an attitude of softening, we get very tough with them and issue the following challenge: We tell them that it is a very simple matter to recognize a legitimate experience with Jesus Christ because it is ALWAYS followed by fruit that is meet for repentance. If that fruit is absent in the lives of adults, teens or children, then there is no saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in that person's life. Away with the rhetoric that says otherwise and dooms our people to a life devoid of meaning and an eternity of Hell! God forgive us for our dishonesty!

Anyway, this particular morning I had a tremendous burden for the hard-heartedness we see so rampantly among "Christian" young people, not to mention those who don't come from Christian homes. I asked the Lord, "Father, what can we do to reach our youth that will cause them to respond to the Gospel of the Kingdom in a real way, birthing lifelong commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?" The Holy Spirit responded in a way that made me weep in shame and conviction: "The generations representing the grandparents and parents of the present generation of youth [i.e. the 'fathers' spoken of in Malachi 4:5] must ask their forgiveness for selling their own children and grandchildren into slavery through unbiblical debt. They must repent of this grievous sin, and make restitution for it before the young people in this land will be 'loosed' to respond in a significant way to the Gospel of the Kingdom." The enormity of our national and individual sin in this area then came crashing down on me, as I recognized a new significance to Matthew 16:19 which says, "Whatsoever is bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatsoever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven."

How in God's name can we expect our children to respond to our "Gospel" when we have literally sold their birthright for our own convenience and covetousness? How many families and churches do we see in our modern America who are out of debt, or who are working to that end through entering into debt short-term as mandated by the Bible with the ability to repay within the six year

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