



LOVE 102

WE ARE REBELS

When he first created man, God and man had a great relationship. God had ordered the world perfectly - God in dominion over man, man in dominion over the rest of creation. In other words, things are designed to work best when we defer to God in matters of authority and we take responsibility of the rest of creation. This was the created order of things. But even though he created us, and he desired that we would choose him, God left it up to us. We chose wrong (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-19). We chose to rebel against his created order, choosing instead to benefit only ourselves; we wanted to be like God. This set the stage for the rebellion of all mankind.

TERRORISTS

Today, not only do we try to put ourselves in the position of God, choosing our own path regardless of God's desires for us, but we also sometimes worship the rest of creation over God, choosing instead to chase after material gain or some other thing God created. This act, worshiping something created rather than the Creator, is what is meant by the word "idolatry." We have basically scrapped God's order for our own, and in so doing have basically become insurgents or terrorists, rebels against God's order. This breaks his heart.



Share a way in which you have contributed to the confusion of the created order: God/man/creation.

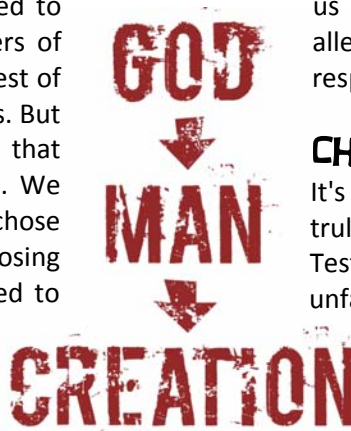


Which is easier to understand, that you are part of this rebellion or that you must follow certain rules? Which one feels more right? Why?

When we put anything else first, God feels betrayed like someone whose spouse has been unfaithful. And not only does this break God's heart, but it ultimately hurts us and others. God alone deserves our first allegiance; we love him by putting him first – respecting that he knows what he is doing.

CHEATERS

It's a lot easier to say we love God than it is to truly love him. God's people in the Old Testament claimed to love God but were unfaithful. They ignored God's love and turned their backs on him.



Open the Bible and read Jeremiah 3:19-22. In this passage, God speaks through

the prophet Jeremiah and uses metaphors of a parent, a child, and a spouse to demonstrate the level of intimacy he desires. Falling short of that level damages our relationship with him in the same way it would damage our relationships with family and friends.



Which of these metaphors resonates most with you? God as disappointed father wanting to shower us with a good inheritance? Man as disrespectful child unwilling to follow? Man as unfaithful spouse turning to others? Explain.

SINNERS

Our core problem is that we don't respect the created order and consequently do not put God first. And to love someone is to put their needs ahead of your own, to put them first. Instead we continue to reject God's loving overtures toward us and openly rebel, choosing our own path over his. We continue to resist his love, like an unfaithful spouse, choosing fleeting pleasure over unity with God. When we act in a way that is contrary to God's order, the Bible calls that act "sin."

Sin might seem like an abstract, outdated concept. We are often tempted to say, "I'm pretty good. I live my life pretty much in line with what's right," or perhaps, "I know I've messed up, but I'm better than most," or even, "I keep all my nasty stuff hidden — nobody ever needs to know, including God." Let's see what the Bible has to say about sin.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. ~ Romans 3:10-12.23



Does this feel a little strong to you? Explain.

None of us deserves God; we have all turned our backs on him and gone our own way. We have all fallen short. The Greek word translated as "sin" simply means "missing the mark." The term is related to falling short of a target, as in archery. If an archer's arrow misses the bull's eye, he can yell out "Sin!" which would mean, "I missed it!" But when we sin, what exactly do we miss?

CRIMINALS

Because God loved us enough to give us FREEWILL to choose whether or not to conform to the created order, and because we chose (and continue to choose) wrong, God also loved us enough to institute something called the law. The law was designed to show us God's ideal. This was necessary because one of the chief characteristics of God is that he is JUST. Because he is good, he must be fair, or just. He must see justice done.

He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice. ~ Psalm 9:8

Now, our natural inclination is to allow sin to point directly back to God's law, that is, your sin is a direct result of disobeying one of a specific set of rules, but from the perspective of those already under Christ, that is an over-simplification...

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.
~ Romans 3:20-22*

This was necessary because, while God is JUST, he is also MERCIFUL. Because he is good, even if punishment is justified, he will show mercy.

The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him ~ Daniel 9:9

So God's law, given to the Jews thousands of years ago, is not irrelevant, but it serves a new purpose. Because "all have sinned," as evidenced by our failure to abide by God's law, we are to seek a new relationship with God, returning him to his rightful place in our lives. As it turns out, there's really only one sin with which we need to concern ourselves: **failing to love God enough to put him first.** We fall short by playing god of life — trying to make life obey our desires, and all other sins are simply symptoms of this "big Sin" — God is not truly God of our lives.



How does this differ from your ideas about sin and the law? Do you find it freeing? Confusing? Does it feel like a cop out?


So does this make our behavior less of an issue? Can we just ignore all of those old laws? Let's see what one of the Old Testament prophets said about it...

But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. ~ Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)

Though we might not think our sins are such a big deal, they are a huge deal to God. Our sins cut us off from him. Our sins lead to death – our voluntary separation of ourselves from communion with God.

And restoring this communion – which is just a fancy word for relationship – is so important, says Paul, that it is worth dying for.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly ... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ~ Romans 5:6&8

 How does this passage in Romans show us the interplay between God’s justice and his mercy?

ESCAPEES


We will come back to this passage again and again because it is central to our understanding of how to live for Christ. Because God loves us, he offers to forgive all of our sins so that we can experience the love relationship he intended all along. We chose separation; Jesus chose restoration.

And even though Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection ushered in this “righteousness from God, apart from law” that Paul talked about, it does not render the law immaterial, but rather fulfills it.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ~ Matthew 5:17

So not only did Jesus give us a means by which we can restore our relationship with God’s created order, he provides an opportunity to rescue us from a bondage to the law and its implications. We escape the punishment we deserve.

...through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ~ Romans 8:2

 What does this mean to you, that you are freed from the law of sin and death?

Jesus broke into the world to rescue us from our rebellion. But that is not all. It is not just about a personal relationship with us as individuals. Jesus came to establish a new kingdom – a kingdom unlike any we have seen before – a kingdom of grace, forgiveness, and restoration – and he is inviting us to take our place in it. How is that possible? If we are here and he is somewhere else, how can we work together? And where is he anyway? We will talk more about this in the next segment.

SO FAR:

Created order: G _____ ➡ M _____ ➡ C _____ .

We R _____ and brought D _____ .

He gave us F _____ so he had to give us the L ____ .

God is J _____ but he is also M _____ .

God instituted the L _____ ; Jesus F _____ it.