

Are You A Rebel?

The name, “Rebel” has been given to pets, cameras, sports teams and even southern red necks in pick-up trucks. The Confederate Army of the great Civil War was not the first group of people to be designated “rebels.” The Bible used the term in a very graphic way to describe the wayward nature of God’s people. The prophet Jeremiah shares some of the defining characteristics of a rebel in today’s Templates of Truth.

The call of Jeremiah was the appeal to God’s people to turn from sin and return to faithfulness to God, or experience the wrath & judgment of God. Throughout chapters 2-6 of the prophet’s Old Testament book, God defined the wickedness & evil of His people in various terms of rebellion. They include: degenerate, defiled, faithless, treacherous, foolish, stupid, desolate, lustful, senseless, stubborn, corrupt and rejected. It is not that they did not know what God expected of them, for Jeremiah says – *they know the way of the Lord, and the ordinance of their God, but they...have broken the yoke and burst the bonds* (Jeremiah 5:5). To know what God expects of you and to willfully disobey that expectation is pure rebellion! The book of Jeremiah could have easily been written today for it accurately describes many of God’s people in 2011. Consider some of the other defining characteristics of Jeremiah’s rebel audience.

Rebels have no fear of God (2:19, 5:22) – They do not tremble in His presence. God is holy and He expects His children to live holy lives. When we indulge in activities, behaviors and lifestyles that defy the holiness of God, we grow more and more desensitized to the convicting power of His Holy Spirit reminding us of our guilt. As our sinful indulgence continues without the immediate judgment of God, we develop the arrogant assumption that God must somehow approve of our choices or not regard them as relevant. That is when we lose our fear of God’s righteous & holy character and His imminent response to our disregard of Him and His ways.

Rebels have no regard for God’s Word (5:13, 6:10,19) – It is not in them because they do not engage in any daily, defining discovery of God’s wisdom, insight, knowledge and truth. That which they do know, or hear taught & preached, that challenges the lifestyle choices of their lives is rejected because it is a reproach to their sinful persistence. They take no delight in God’s Word and turn to secular books, television shows, celebrity personalities, educational pursuits and other trendy philosophies, sciences & disciplines that support & allow their sinful & selfish indulgences. At best, they twist & distort God’s Word to suggest that their sin is divinely allowed or that Scripture was relevant for its day but no longer applicable to modern issues (5:12-13,31).

Rebels refuse to repent (3:3, 5:3, 6:15) – They are perverted in their way (3:21), and wicked thoughts lodge constantly within them (4:14). They are shrewd to engage in evil (4:22, 5:28). They are greedy for gain (6:13) and therefore strive to become great & rich through their selfish pursuit of wealth and success (5:27). God has ushered into the experience of their lives certain acts of chastisement and discipline against these sins, but they have ignored and defied all such

efforts (2:30, 5:3). They blatantly decry they will live their own lives according to their own opinions and ideals, whether God's standard supports that or not (6:16).

God declares that *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft* (I Samuel 15:23). It is repulsive to Him because it involves turning your back on Him and forsaking all He is and all He has done to bless you with love and mercy (2:13, 2:11, 2:27). The message of God through Jeremiah and all the prophets of the Bible is simply to repent of your rebellion and return to God. If you do, you will experience once again His grace, forgiveness and reconciling love.

There are several categories of rebels. A *rebel on the rise* is a complacent believer who has a superficial relationship with God because he neglects an intimate pursuit of God through His Word and through worship, service and ministry. A *rebel on the run* is a believer actively involved in selfish pursuit, behavioral compromise and liberal justification for his life's convictions and choices. A *rebel in the ruins* is an exposed sinner who has suffered grave, shameful and life-changing consequences to his folly and evil ways. You may find him in a jail cell, hospital, drug rehab, divorce court or in foreclosure. A *rebel on the rocks* defines the unfortunate Christian who has crashed and burned, accepts no other alternative and resigns himself to moral, ethical and spiritual failure. He builds a house and decides to make a home in his degenerate, fallen condition. None of these rebels are pleasing to God.

There is another rebel, however, that God will turn a compassionate face to and reach graciously toward with loving arms – a *rebel in reform*. This is the man or woman who will repent of his rebellion, come humbly to God and submit to His loving discipline. These are those that God gently guides to rebuild an intimate relationship with Him and gradually restore them back to useful service in His kingdom. Are you a rebel today? If so, which category of rebel best defines you?

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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