

ROMANS 1-4: What Makes a Man a Believer

A Disciple Maker's Understanding of Judgment and Law

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello, men. Welcome to Man In The Mirror Bible Study. I'm Pat Morley, and today we're going to talk about **A Disciple Makers Understanding of Judgment and Law**. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter two, verse one. When I first read this passage at the beginning of the week, I said, "Oh man, this message is really going to be a snoozer. What in the world is Paul talking about?" I was reminded how Peter said about some of Paul's writings in Second Peter three. He says, "His letters contain some things that are hard to understand as do the other scriptures." And I'm thinking, wow, that really applies. But then as I got to looking at the text, I realized that basically it's talking about two subjects that are inescapable, judgment, nine references, and law, 10 references. So that's what we're talking about.

Then I started wondering, how do these old fashioned sounding concepts apply in a world, the world we live in, where we're, basically, it seems like everybody wants to do whatever they want to do, whenever they want to do it. And I think I found a couple of nuggets that would be interesting, so let's go ahead and take a look at the text.

WHY DISCIPLE MAKERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT JUDGMENT

First, we want to look at why disciple makers need to know about judgment. Let's start at verse one, reminding ourselves here that Paul is writing to the Christians in Rome, Gentile Christians who have been there, and then Jewish Christians who have recently returned. And there is a little bit of a clash of cultures that's going on.

Verse one starts, "You therefore have no excuse you who pass judgment on someone else," and there's the word judgment. "For at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself because you who pass judgment do the same things." Well, what's he talking about there? In Brett's message on Romans chapter one, the end of it, in verses 29 to 31, he talks about the disobedient and he says, "They're filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice." These really sound like bad people, don't they? They're gossips. They're slanderers. They're God haters. They're insolent, arrogant, and boastful. They disobey their parents. They're senseless. They're heartless, skipping over a few of them.

And what Paul is saying here in the first verse, you have no excuse you who pass judgment on those people, those heathen, because you do the same things yourselves. So think of it this way. When you start doing a diatribe on Facebook against some people group, then you really are doing the same thing that the people we judge and that we don't think are supposed to be doing certain things that they're doing. So, basically, the situation that he's talking about is sinners telling sinners not be sinners. That it's a bad thing for them to be sinners. Verse two. "Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth." So God's judgment is right, but he's talking about us as disciples and disciple makers when we judge others.

Verse three. "So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape god's judgment?" Essentially, Paul is giving a warning here. Don't be a hypocrite. Don't be looking down on other people. Essentially, the man who looks down on others and acts like a hypocrite and passes judgment on others when he's doing the same things himself, he's not the man in the mirror, he's the fool in the mirror, if you will. Verse four, "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" Second Peter chapter three, verse nine, "For God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance."

So the reason that God is patient with these people, all these people, that are doing this malice and deceit and strife is that he wants them to come to repentance. He wants them to come to repentance, but he also wants us to come to repentance too. From the perspective, I'm really enamored by taking the perspective, of a disciple maker, in this case, Paul, the author of this book and talking to you so that you and I would be looking at this text, from that perspective, not from the perspective of somebody who is lost or trying to find their way back to Jesus. But rather disciple makers, how would we think about this text? Well, the reality is the more you know about Jesus, the better you are, the more righteous you are, and then the greater of the temptation to look down on other people. That's what Paul is talking about right here.

Verse five, "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart," he's talking to these Roman Christians now, he's talking to Christians, "and a disciple maker, you will have disciples who are doing these things, who are talking down about other people, judging them, but because of your stubborn and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed." So where does God draw the line? The next few verses here, it's called a chiasm, I'm going to throw up here a PowerPoint of the chiastic structure of verses six through 11. Chi is the Greek word for, basically, X, and you can see the indentation and then it comes back out. And so the first and the last verses are parallel. And then the second verse in the next to last verse are parallel, and then the middle two verses here are parallel.

That's just a little tidbit about some of the writing technique to some of the Bible that scholars have discovered over the years. Anyway, let's take a look at it. Verse six, "God will repay each person according to what they have done." Well, when is he going to do this? Verse 16, "This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ as my Gospel declares." So why do disciple makers need to know about judgment? Because there is a day coming when God is going to judge people's secrets, everyone's secrets, through Jesus Christ. Everyone is going to experience that day of reckoning as it were. And so, for some, it will be joy, those who are covered by grace and it will be sorrow for those who don't have grace, as we'll continue to read on here and discover.

Verse seven, "To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life." This is Paul's first mention of the words eternal life here in the book. "To those who by persistence in doing good," this would be the theological doctrine called the perseverance of the saints. Basically, it's once saved, always saved. It's a promise and it's not based on performance, even though at first blush, you might think it is, but rather this persistence, this perseverance that we have to do good, seek glory, honor, and immortality, this all comes as a gracious act of God by grace through faith. So it's not based on performance. Then in verse eight, the opposite, "But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger." It's a warning.

If you think about it, a warning from God is actually an act of kindness in and of itself. Then this chiasm coming back out again, "There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil. First for the Jew, then for the Gentile." In verse 10, "But glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good. First for the Jew, then for the Gentile." So that would correspond back to verse seven, "To those who by persistence in doing good, seek glory, honor, and immortality." And then finally in verse 11, "For God

does not show favoritism." So this chiasmic structure started that God will repay each person according to what he has done, and it ends up for God does not show favoritism. So the point of all this is God doesn't show favorites. He treats everyone as they should be treated and that everyone is welcome in the tent.

Some of the political parties, they keep talking about how they have a big tent. God has a big tent. He invites people from every tribe, language, people, and nation to be part of his kingdom. Martin Luther, in his commentary on Romans, says this. Distinguishing the righteous from the unrighteous, he says, "The righteous invariably try to see their own faults and overlook those of others. They're eager to recognize good things in other people and disregard those of their own." On the other hand, he says, "The unrighteous look for the good in themselves and for the evil in others," and that's part of the point that Paul is seeking to make here.

The Big Idea today, **Judgment and Law are tutors to lead men to Christ, not barriers to keep them away.** Judgment and law are tutors to lead men to Christ, not barriers to keep them away. And he is cautioning Christians, the Roman Christians, and you and me and the men that we disciple to not put stumbling blocks in front of people, to not judge them, to not make them feel like they are less than worthy, to not use judgment here in this case as a barrier to keep people from Christ, to not look down on others. And we're going to talk about how to use a judgment as a tutor to help him come to faith in Jesus Christ.

WHY DISCIPLE MAKERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE LAW

Next, we want to talk about why disciple makers need to know about law, why disciple makers need to know about law, and there are 10 references to law in this passage here in 12 to 16.

In verse 12, "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law. And all who sin under the law will be judged by the law." Okay, so what in the world is the law? What is the law? The law is all of scripture, Old Testament and New Testament. Traditionally, and I believe it might've been Thomas Aquinas who first came up with this idea, I'm not sure about that, the law is made up of three parts. Ceremonial law, like the washing of animal sacrifices before they're burned and things like that, civil law, which deals with justice in the conduct of everyday life and culture, and then moral law, which is typically understood to be the 10 Commandments, and if you think like I do, the 10 Commandments and the Golden Rule. Now, for the Jew, however, they were not thinking in terms of making any kind of distinction like this because they lived in a theocracy.

So, for them, it was all one thing. They were living under the old covenant, which included all of this. And then the Gentiles that we've been talking about, they have no covenant. But we, as Christians, we have a new covenant, a new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ. A couple of things about that. Paul said, "He has made us ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter kills but the spirit gives life." And nothing in the law is removed. Jesus said, "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." Then Paul goes on and clarifies in Galatians 3:24 and 25. "Therefore, the law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ so that we may be justified by faith." But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. So we are part of the new covenant.

So the old parts of the old covenant that don't apply to us still today are these ceremonial laws and then the civil laws, because we have our own judicial system now. However, what Paul is talking about here that is still in place is the moral law, the 10 Commandments. I'm going to talk about that and what all this means to us today here in a few minutes. But I want to point out that in the work of Calvin, he saw the law as being something beautiful for us today because it reveals to us three things, the character of God, it's a restraint against sin, for example, if the 10 Commandments did not say, "Thou shall not commit adultery," then would it be okay then to commit adultery? There is a restraint of sin that takes

place. And then also that the law helps us to please God. "Thou shall have no other gods before me. Thou shall not make any idle or graven image." So it allows us to please him. So why disciple maker, why do they need to know about the law?

Well, judgment and law, the Big Idea, **Judgment and Law are tutors to lead men to Christ, not barriers to keep them away.** Finally today, let's talk about judgment and law today. We live in a culture in which judgment and law seemed to be a burden to Christians and a joke to non-Christians. If you think about preaching, Billy Graham, 20, 25 years ago, the way that he preached, and preachers don't preach like that today. Now, it makes some sense, because as Francis Schaeffer said, "We need to adapt how we reach out to people that don't know God yet or don't know God through Christ yet in ways that are relevant and appealing, but without changing the core message." I'd submit to you though, the real problem here about judgment and law today is that we live in a PC culture. The irony of the culture, the PC culture in which we live, is that it's both legalistic and licentious at the same time. What do I mean?

Well, it's a legalistic culture. The theme of the PC culture is intolerance will not be tolerated. So it's a very legalistic culture, but it's also very much a licentious culture. The word, the technical word here, might be antinomian as to at least to the Christian part of it, anti, against, no mas law, anti-law, antinomian. The idea of antinomianism is that grace releases us from any obligation to observe God's moral law. So the 10 Commandments says, "You shall have no other gods," but it's okay to have other gods. It's okay to have God and love money, things like this. "Thou shall not misuse the name of God. Keep the Sabbath. Honor your father and mother." It's okay not to honor your father and mother. "Thou shalt not murder," it's okay to take the life of the unborn. Adultery, serial marriages. Thou shalt not steal. It's okay to fudge on your taxes. Thou shalt not bear false testimony, not covet.

So we do see a need in our culture today for a sense of understanding that law is important. I wanted to finish with this story. Rick is a lawyer. He's an Emeritus Board Member of Man in the Mirror. Rick always thought that Christianity was based on performance. He pictured God as "an angry judge with a red robe" he said. With a red robe, sitting behind the bench and him being charged with all the different sins that he'd committed in and the judge saying, "Guilty, guilty, guilty." And he thought he could never perform, never do enough, in order to overcome this judgment, this law. Then one day he heard the pastor of his church, and he was a member of a church sitting way up in the balcony, talk about the free gift of God by grace through faith and for the first time it clicked and he understood it. But then after he became a Christian, he was in his office one Sunday afternoon, down on his knees and praying, and just didn't understand how he would ever be able to measure up to this salvation even though he understood it to be a gift.

The thought came to his mind, he heard the words form in his mind, and he understood it to be God speaking to him. The voice said, "You're a fisherman, right?" Rick said, "Yes." And then God said, "Well, like every good fisherman, I catch my fish before I clean them." You, as a disciple maker, should understand everything you can about judgment and law. We don't need to push all of the details of judgment and law onto every person that we meet who doesn't know Jesus yet. He can clean them up after he catches them, if that is the way he wants to do it. It may be though that somebody does need to understand that there is this law. Final verses. "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight," verse 13, "but those who obey the law who will be declared righteous." Indeed, the Gentiles who do not have the law when they do, by nature, the things required by the law are law to themselves, even though they don't have the law.

They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences, also bearing witness in their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times defending them. So if somebody needs to know about judgment and law, tell them. If not, don't worry about it. Verse 16, "This again will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ as my Gospel declares." The Big Idea, **Judgment and Law are tutors to lead men to Christ, not barriers to keep them away.**

You're a disciple maker. I pray this will be useful to you. Let's pray. Our dearest father, thank you for your scripture, your word for judgment and law, and while they make might sound like old fashioned concepts they're extremely relevant in a world where basically everybody wants to do whatever they want to do. So we pray Lord that you would use these things and help us to use these concepts as tutors to lead them to Christ, not barriers that would keep them away. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, men.