

ROMANS 1-4: What Makes a Man a Believer

Discipling Religious Men

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men. And welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible Study, I'm Pat Morley, and today we're going to talk about the discipling religious men. So let's get started by turning in our Bibles to Romans chapter two, verse 17. History is filled with fearless preachers, names like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, George Whitfield, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, and all the way up through Billy Graham. All of these fearless preachers stand on the shoulders of the apostle Paul. We've already begun to see how fearless Paul is. And today we're going to take an additional step in that direction.

THE PROBLEM PAUL SAW AND HOW HE TACKLED IT

First thing we want to talk about is the problem that Paul saw and how he tackled it. So from Romans chapter two, verse 17, let's read, "Now you, if you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law and boast in God, if you know his will and approve of what is superior, because you are instructed by the law." So let's just pause here and ask the question about what's obvious about this text? What's obvious about this text is he is talking to religious people.

We're going to apply this to the church today, what he was speaking to the religious Jews of his day. Notice already in this first passage, he's already mentioned the law two times, we talked about judgment and law last time. And today's text again, there are 10 references to the law. So we're going to need to say something about that, right?

So here's the situation. You have Paul speaking to people who are religious. And you and I, we have men all around us who know exactly what the right thing is to say, but nevertheless, have a hard time putting it into practice. And let's go ahead and continue on and see what Paul has to say about these religious people having difficulty putting what they believe in the practice. Verse 19, "If you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark and instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law, the embodiment of knowledge and truth."

So in other words, these are people who think that they have the ability to instruct others even. Verse 21, and then this is what really calls this text into existence. "You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing? Do you steal? You say that people should not commit adultery. Do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?" And so this law that Paul is talking about, these three examples are part of the decalogue, The 10 Commandments, the Torah, the law that Moses gave that God gave through Moses.

And he is talking about people there in Rome who are religious, who basically are not practicing what they preach. As a result of that, let's take a look at what happens when we don't practice what we preach. Verses 23 and 24, "You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law as it is written, 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles among the unbelievers, because of you.'"

We've all heard the charge before that the church is full of hypocrites. This is where it comes from, as it is written, "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

So we see three things here. We see that when we don't practice what we preach, when these people were not practicing what they preached, God was dishonored, the law was broken and God's name was blasphemed. So what's really wrong here? What's really wrong here is that these religious people were trying to earn their righteousness on the basis of works or through performance or through human effort, rather than relying on the gospel. But now I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

Well, why does it matter? When people rely on their own human effort and their own good deeds to attain righteousness, hypocrisy seeps its way into the church, into the religious community. Hypocrisy and then pride, the false teaching abounds, there's a type of legalism that comes about. There are sinful thoughts. People become unsure of their salvation. In a religious community like this, where the emphasis is on the outward behavior, the external acts to be righteous. There's just a lack of power, a general lack of power. Paul's audience here is the Jews, but today this can be applied to the church of Jesus Christ. It can be applied to me and it can be applied to you. And so the application here today is how about us? Are we practicing what we preach? Are you practicing what you preach?

I know that I have benefited immensely from studying this text this week and the Big Idea for me, and I think it's a good one for all of us that have picked up here by studying this text. Here it is, **I need to hear the gospel every day**. I just do. I just need to hear the gospel every day. I needed to hear this part of the gospel. The problem that Paul saw and how he wanted to tackle it, but we're not finished yet. So why is it a good idea to hear the gospel every day? And that's because of the second thing to talk about here today. It's not enough to be outwardly religious.

IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO BE OUTWARDLY RELIGIOUS

Look at verse 25, "Circumcision has value if you observe the law." Now we should probably talk about circumcision here. A little bit. Circumcision is an outward sign or symbol of something that's supposed to be taking place on the inside. Abraham was declared righteous because he believed God because of his faith. And then after that circumcision given as a sign and a seal of the Old Covenant. But Abraham was not saved by circumcision by the outward practice of religion, he was already saved by righteousness through the faith that he had.

Circumcision is simply an outward sign that isn't enough if you don't practice what you preach. It's just not enough if you don't practice what you preach. Let's read on and find out why. Verse 25, "Circumcision has value if you observe the law. But if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. So then if those who are not circumcised, keep the laws requirements." In other words, the Gentiles, "Will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?" So in other words, circumcision, and it says elsewhere in scripture, I can't remember exactly where, but First Corinthians somewhere that circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing.

"So then if those who are not circumcised, keep the laws requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?" Verse 27, "The one who is not circumcised physically, and yet obeys, the law will condemn you." You who don't practice what you preach. "Even though you have the written code and circumcision are a law breaker." So you are a law breaker, even though you have the written code and circumcision. Even though you have religion for the church today, even though you have these outward signs of baptism, communion, even though you have these things, we still break the law. So the bottom line is the Big Idea. Because of these things, **I need to hear the gospel every day**.

DISCIPLING MEN TO SEE THE WHOLE GOSPEL

Next, let's talk about discipling men to see the whole gospel. You probably have heard me say, probably on many occasions that Christianity is not behavior modification. Christianity is heart transformation. And we see that here in verses 28 and 29, "A person is not a Jew who is only one outwardly." In other words, the behavior, "Nor is circumcision, merely outward and physical." In other words, outward religion is not enough. Again, that's why the Big Idea, **I need to hear the gospel every day**. Then in verse

29, "No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is circumcision of the heart." This is heart transformation. So what is circumcision of the heart? How do you circumcise the heart? Well, it really is a symbolism. It's the inner reality of the external signifying act for the church.

It would be baptism for the Jewish community. It had been a circumcision. "No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the Spirit and not by the written code." So Paul here is laying the groundwork for what makes a man a true believer, that's the title of the series. And today, he's laying the groundwork that we should despair of being able to please God by any outward religion. But rather we should begin to understand that the gospel is something that takes place by the Spirit in the heart and not by this written code. And then finally, the last sentence of verse 29, "Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God."

So a person who has experienced heart transformation by the Spirit, they're the ones that get praise from God. The person who is not practicing, what they preach, who is depending on outward religion, they're looking for praise from other people. So the application for all of this is what? Well, who are the men that you are trying to disciple and how do they understand this gospel? You have men in your life, men that you know, that know all the right things to say, but they have a hard time putting it into practice.

There's a good chance if that's the case that they have not embraced the gospel of Jesus that comes not by the letter of keeping the law or external acts of performance, external acts of religion, rather than by depending on the gospel of Jesus Christ. These men need to hear the gospel and I would suggest they need to hear the gospel every day. How about you yourself? Have you found yourself, or do you find yourself from time to time in a cycle of wanting to depend on your exterior, external religious acts to make you acceptable to God, rather than relying on the gospel of Jesus? I need to hear the gospel every day.

I want to close today by giving you an example of this gospel in action. As it turns out, I really just need to read you the email so that you could get the sense of the simplicity of this man's heart. A decade ago, or maybe more, I was speaking to a Promise Keepers rally in Canada. And the man who was assigned to be my driver, his name is Dan. And Dan and I have become good friends and we have continued to stay in touch.

Recently, he wrote me an email and he said that he wanted to share something that had happened at work the previous evening. And as I say, I'm just going to read it so that you can get the full gist of this. As you know, I'm a shuttle driver at a hotel here in Calgary. This week on my rotation, I noticed we had some prostitutes at the hotel. During my shifts, I had seen them a few times each day. I always said, "Hello, how are you? Anything we can get for you?" Et cetera. Wednesday night, I had to go unplug their toilet. So when I arrived at their door, I was met by one of the ladies in the nude. She was not expecting me as her roommate forgot to tell her she had made the call. I stepped back to the side and politely asked her to put some clothes on before I came in.

It was obvious she was embarrassed. I was let in, fixed the toilet. And as I was leaving, I said, "All fixed need anything else? Let us know." In a matter of five minutes, in other words, he got it all done in five minutes. Later on, the lady who met me at the door, saw me downstairs and pulled me aside and apologized to me. I said it was all good. I respected her for apologizing, and I was not saying a word to anyone. We chatted in the lobby for a few minutes. I found out she had just moved to Calgary and was looking for a place to live. I told her to try to contact Calgary Real Estate Board to help her.

Last night, I just came on duty. I was doing our different checks at start of shift when I saw her up by the hot tub on the roof. I greeted her smiling and we chatted a bit more. Later on, I was doing a Tim Horton's run, Tim Horton's coffee, Tim Horton, former hockey star in Canada has this chain of if you know anything about Canada, he has a chain of coffee shops like our Starbucks in Canada. Later on, I

was doing a Tim Horton's run for coworkers when I saw the lady's partner. I asked if they would like anything from Tim's, she said yes, an ice cappuccino. I asked if her friend would like one as well, she did. I brought the drinks back, told them to have a good evening, went to the front desk with my coworker.

As I was leaving to do rounds, I met up with the ladies, just outside the lobby. They thank me for the drinks and asked why I would do that for them. I said, I do that for whomever was at the hotel and it was not the first time I bought for guests. I said, "You are good people, so I wanted to treat you well." One of them asked if I wanted anything in return. I politely said, "No, ladies." One was getting friendly. And I said, "Ladies, I know why you are here and that is none of my business. But I treat you as a human being and there is nothing they have I wanted." They were surprised so I asked, "Have you not been treated as a human being before?" They said not from a male. I apologize, but I treat everyone the same. I walked away.

About two hours before I ended my shift, I saw the lady who I had many contacts with. She asked me if I was for real, I was puzzled, so asked her, "What do you mean?" She always believed a man was only good to her but wanted her to give them something for the kindness. I said, "No worries. I have a beautiful wife I love dearly." We chatted more. This lady had seven brothers and sisters. Sadly, there were four different mothers involved.

She was bounced around while she was growing up. I told her that I would pray for her, that her life would settle down. She was taken aback, but said, "Thank you." I told her good night and wished her the best. When I got back to the front desk, my coworker asked me what I talked to those working women about. I said, I'll call her Janice. "I treat them that way. I treat them the way I treat all our guests, friendly and professional, you know that." Janice said, "But they are working women." My reply is they are human beings. And by the way, you are working lady too. She paused and said, "Yes." I said, "We all have to treat all as humans. And if their work is not good, per se, pray for them." And she agreed.

I needed to hear this story. This is the gospel in action. The Big Idea for this lesson, **I need to hear the gospel every day**. Let's pray. Our father in heaven, you have given us your gospel. You have given us this great mind in Paul, who is helping us to understand the simple truth that it's not enough to be outwardly religious. We need to disciple men to see the whole gospel. I pray that as we who are disciple makers work with our men, that we would be alert to see men who are getting confused and who are putting an emphasis on outward acts of righteousness to earn merit with God and encouraged them to understand that the religion that matters to God is the religion of the heart, heart transformation, which is done by the gospel of Jesus. And we pray in the name of Jesus. Thank you, men.