

ROMANS 5-8: Living Your Life God's Way

The Disciple Maker's Goal

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible Study. I'm Pat Morley. Today, we're going to be talking about the disciple makers goal.

Mark was not a particularly religious person, but he did want to become a good man. He wanted to lead a good life, and so he did his utmost to follow the 10 commandments. Everybody's heard about the 10 commandments, right? But he kept failing, over and over again. Then one day he learned that salvation was by faith, apart from keeping the law. He heard it, he understood it, he believed it, and Mark became a disciple of Jesus, like hopefully you and hopefully me.

However, Mark had come out of a performance based system in the world, where if you want a reward, you have to do the work. So he began to do his best to continue to keep the law in his own strength that he continued to fail. One day, he asked his disciple maker, tell me what I need to do to obey the rules. How do I follow the rules? Today we're going to clarify the role of the law in the life of a believer. But first I want us to step back a little bit and just think about what's going on here in this book of Romans. It's kind of like trying to understand the tax code, isn't it? It's very complex, a lot of minutia and detail. Here's the thing to remember.

Jesus Christ is the one who is instructing Paul what to write. He's the Jesus who said to Paul on the Damascus road, why are you kicking against the goads? He's the Jesus who said to Paul, my grace is sufficient for you because my power is made perfect in weakness. And the Jesus that was telling Paul what to write is the same Jesus that you and I have leading our lives as well. Paul had the same Holy Spirit in him that you have in you, and that I have in me. The thing to remember about understanding what a text means is that there is one meaning. In other words, Jesus didn't have five different things he wanted to mean by what he said today. One meaning, but many applications. We are using the mindset of a grace based, application oriented Bible study. We're also talking to you who are listening in the context that you are a disciple maker, like Paul is a disciple maker.

So there are many different ways we could teach this text. We could teach it like a seminary class and go through it point by point theologically. But our focus is on, okay, how can we make this news that you can actually use? So we're putting a lot of emphasis then on simplifying the text so that you can understand it and help the men that you're trying to disciple.

A DISCIPLE IS RELEASED FROM LAW TO LIVE BY THE SPIRIT

With that said, the first thing I want us to talk about then this morning is this. A disciple is released from the law to live by the spirit. So we're looking at the role of the law in the life of believer. The first thing is that a disciple is released from the law to live by the spirit. Romans chapter seven, verse one. "Do you not know brothers and sisters, for I am speaking to those who know the law."

So let's pause there. He's speaking to brothers and sisters. He's speaking to disciples, and he says, "For I am speaking to those who know the law," the law that's referred to here, it's not a hundred percent. Nobody can tell you a hundred percent exactly what Paul had in mind, but based on a reasonable

reading of the rest of Paul's writings, he probably was referring to the mosaic law, the teaching, the preachings of Moses. By some counts, Moses has over 600 different commands in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, and the people that Paul is speaking to are Gentile Christians, but they would have picked up their understanding of Christianity through Jewish Christians, who were very familiar, of course, with the mosaic law. And these Gentiles were most likely God fearers before they became followers of Jesus, a little background there.

He goes on, "So do you not know, brothers and sisters, that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives." The first thing that Paul is talking about here is to help us understand that death dissolves any kind of legal obligation. He goes on here in verses two and three, and gives an example of a woman who is married. She's bound to her husband. But if her husband dies and she's released from that law that binds her. Contrary, if she has sexual relationships with another man while she's alive, she's an adulteress. But if the husband dies, then she's released from the law. So this pertains to you and me as well as we'll keep reading on here. But the point is that death dissolves any kind of legal obligation. So then in verse four, Paul writes, "So my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ."

It says you died to the law. Now it's not the law that died, it's that you died to the law. We die. The law doesn't die. The law continues on, but we die to the law through our figurative death, through the body of Christ. That's been talked about in a previous message. "That you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God." What kind of fruit? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and so on. Neighbor love, good deeds. Then in verse five, "But when we were in the realm of the flesh," just pause there. What is the realm of the flesh? That is the unregenerate state. So before you were a disciple, when you were still not walking with God, "For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us so that we bore fruit for death."

So we talked about fruit for God, well what's fruit for death? Isaiah, chapter 64, verse six says "All of our righteous deeds, were as filthy rags." So all of the work that Mark was doing to keep the 10 commandments, all the good things he was trying to do were still bearing fruit for death. Verse six, "But now by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law," or we have been delivered from the law. Why? "So that we serve in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code." The point here is that your death to the law has dissolved you from any legal obligation to the law. This, of course, is extremely important to Paul in Acts, chapter 15, at the council at Jerusalem. Acts 15 tells us that some people were teaching believers that unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved, and so Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about that question.

Peter said that God had showed him that the Gentiles were being accepted by giving them the Holy spirit. And in verse 10, he says, now then why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the Gentiles, a yoke that neither we or our ancestors have been able to bear? No, we believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are saved just as they are. Peter goes on in verse 24 in the letter that they were writing back to the Gentiles. "We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said."

In other words, telling you that you had to keep the law. "It seemed good to the Holy spirit, and to us, not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements. You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things." This is the law of Moses. It was being taught throughout the known world. Every synagogue, Moses was read every week. These Roman Christians were aware of what this mosaic law was, and in the same way that the council of Jerusalem said that the legal obligation to law was not part of what it meant to be a Christian, Paul is here telling us the same thing.

So what does this mean then to Mark? And what does it mean to you as a disciple? And what does it mean to you as a disciple maker? I'm going to go ahead and give you the Big Idea. The Big Idea today is this: **The goal is to help men grow, not to get them to obey.** The goal is to help men grow, not get them to obey. The disciple maker, when he's asked by Mark, what does he need to do to follow the rules? The answer is that you have been set free from the law to live in the new way of the spirit.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW IS TO MAKE US DESPAIR OF OUR SINS

Okay, so if that's not what the law is for, well then what is the purpose of the law? That brings us to our next area, the next set of verses. The purpose of the law is to make us despair of our sins. The purpose of the law is to make us despair of our sins. In verse seven, "What then shall we say is the law sinful? Certainly not. Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was, had it not been for the law." I'll just pause there. Notice, first of all, that he's changed this to the present tense personal pronoun I. Paul is now starting to give a personal testimony of his own experience with the law and notice again, what he says. "I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. The purpose of the law is to show us what our sins are and lead us to despair of them."

It's kind of like this. Picture a painter comes to your house and you want him to paint an interior room. You turn on the light. It doesn't look too bad, but he brings in a flood lamp, a floodlight with a 400 watt bulb and shines it into this room. All of a sudden you can see every little blemish, every little problem. The painter does his work with a 400 watt bulb, and then when he's gone and you replace the light in the room by turning on your 100 watt regular overhead lamp, everything looks absolutely beautiful. The law is like that 400 watt flood lamp. It shines a light on our sin.

Then in verse eight, I guess we have to finish verse seven don't we? "So I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law" for this big flood lamp that was shined on me. "For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law that said you shall not covet."

So the law is like a friend who's willing to tell you the truth. Have you ever had a friend that's actually willing to tell you the truth? I have. His name was Jim Seibert. He used to be the administrator of this Bible study, and he had this uncanny ability to just tell it like it is. In my entire career, I've had maybe two or three people who would actually speak with genuine frankness to me and tell me the truth. But the law is a truth teller. In addition to being a 400 watt lamp, it's like a friend who's willing to tell you the truth. Verse eight, "But sin seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment," the commandment to not covet, "produced in me, every kind of coveting, for apart from the law sin was dead."

This coveting is so interesting. It's like this, you see a sign that says don't walk on the grass. Well, what's the first thing you want to do. You want to walk on the grass. Or you see a sign that says, do not touch, wet paint. What's the first thing you want to do? You want to touch the paint. Paul says that sin produced every kind of coveting in him. As soon as he heard that he wasn't supposed to covet, what did he want to do? He wanted to covet.

Then in verse nine, "Once I was alive, apart from the law, but when the commandment came sin sprang to life and I died." "Once I was alive, apart from the law. But when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died." It's interesting. Now you call it sexual immorality, but back then you just called it sex.

Once I was alive, apart from the law, it was just sex. But when the commandment came sin sprang to life and I died. Sexual immorality. Our high school motto was sand, sex, and Seagram seven for the class of 67. Interesting. It was not sand, sexual immorality, and Seagram seven, but it was sand, sex, and Seagram seven, because we were alive apart from the law. But when the commandment comes then since Springs to life. Verse 10, "I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death." So when Mark was looking for the 10 commandments to try to obey them, because he thought it would help him become a good person, he couldn't keep it. Couldn't keep the 10 commandments, and it actually brought death. The exact opposite of what he was seeking.

Verse 11, "For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me and through the commandment put me to death." Again, remember this is Paul talking about his own life. "Sin seized the opportunity afforded by the commandment and deceived him. And through that commandment put him to death." Verse 12, "So then the law is Holy and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good." There's nothing wrong with the law, men. The law is like a friend who tells us the truth about sin. Verse 13, "Did that which is good then become death to me. By no means. Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good," the law, "to bring about my death so that through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful."

Remember I said in a previous talk that how are men going to, I asked the question, how are men going to come to Jesus unless they despair of their sins. The law is a tutor that helps us despair of our sins, and I also asked, how are men going to come to God unless they ache for Jesus. So we're learning that the law is a tutor that helps us ache for Jesus and despair of our sins. The purpose of the law, again, is to make us despair of our sins. Here's the point. Once you despair of your sins, the good work of the law is done. That's the point Paul is trying to make here.

That's the purpose of the law, and once it is complete, the work of the law is done. In other words, once the law at 400 watts has exposed all of your sins and you have despaired of those sins and you have turned from the old way of the flesh to the new way of the spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ, then you turn off the 400 watt bulb. A friend of mine, Jim, said to me one day, he said, "Pat, tell me how to be good. I already know how bad I am."

The law helps us understand how bad we are. It's the gospel of Jesus that helps us to understand how to be good. The Big Idea today, **the goal of a disciple maker is to help men grow, not get them to obey.** It's not about obeying this law, but rather using the law for its intended purpose. To understand that we can't keep it, that it makes sin come to life. The sin deceives us, and then we have a death because of that sinfulness.

WHY TEACH MEN TO OBEY RULES YOU CAN'T KEEP?

Finally today, why teach men to obey rules that you can't keep? Why would you want to teach men rules that you yourself can't keep?

Douglas McGregor came up with, he's an MIT professor, came up with a management concept called Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X, simply that people are basically lazy and don't want to do a good job, and you have to supervise them all the time. Theory Y said that people basically want to do a good job, and if you give them responsibility and clear boundaries, they will try their best to do that good job. Theory X is like the law. Theory Y is like the spirit. So in our disciple-making, let's be Theory Y disciple makers. Our Man in the Mirror Bible Study is not about constantly berating men and trying to get them to obey a law that we ourselves can't keep. Rather, our goal is to help men grow. Next week, we will be talking about, the next time we meet, we will be talking about the believers struggle with sin, but today the focus here is on how we can understand the role of law in becoming a believer.

And then the next time, our continuing struggle with sin as a believer, it's going to be great. Look forward to being with you for that. Again, the Big Idea for this session, you are the disciple maker. You have a disciple, you have a Mark, or you will have a Mark, hopefully. The goal is to help men grow, not get them to obey.

Let's pray. Our dearest father, Lord, I do pray that you would help each of us to have a better understanding of this text, which helps us understand the role of the law in the life of a believer. That the first thing is that we're released from the law to live in the new way of the spirit and that the purpose of the law is to expose, and help us to despair, of our sins so that we turn to Christ and Christ alone, not as disciple makers seeking to get our men to be obedient, but rather to help them grow in

their knowledge of grace. We pray, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now men, go ahead, and if you're at a group, do your questions. We'll see you next time. Thanks so much.