

Romans 14:10-12

Discipleship

Jesus predicted there will be times of great distress of nations, in perplexity, with people fainting with fear and foreboding of what is coming on the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken (Luke 21:25-26). This sounds a bit like this week's news headlines. God is shaking the nations, and this is why we need Jesus. This is why we need to become better disciples of Jesus. The good news is that the gospel is still the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), and has the power to change the lives of sinners. It is by grace, freely given, but it is not cheap. *Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24).

Romans 14:10-12 has something to say to us about Christian discipleship. Addressing the believer (the strong in faith) Paul says, *You, then, why do you judge your brother?* Discipleship involves being corrected, just as Paul is seeking to bring a word of correction to the Gentile Christians at Rome.

But what is discipleship? In first century Judaism to be a disciple was to follow, in loyalty and dedication a Master Rabbi / Teacher. It involved memorizing the words of the Master (plagiarism wasn't a problem!); studying the biblical interpretations of the Master; imitating the behavior of the Master (not just head knowledge); with the hope the disciple (student) would become like his Master in every way; that one day he himself would make his own disciples. The goal of discipleship was to pass the torch of God's Word (Torah) on from one generation to the next.

Jesus had 12 disciples. However, there were a couple of important differences in Jesus' approach. Jesus' disciples did not chose Him, but He chose them (John 15:16). They were to become like their Master (Romans 8:28-29), but they were not to make their own disciples. Rather they were to be co-workers with God (1Corinthians 3:9) in making more disciples of Jesus. The Gentile Christians in Rome were already on this path of discipleship. But that didn't mean they were perfect, and neither are we. As we have already seen they were arrogant, especially towards their Jewish brethren. This is why Paul brings a word of correction.

We might think, "How can these believers act in such an unchristian and judgmental way?" Well, they can, and they do, and we act in unChristian ways as well! But we also are on the path of discipleship.

Their problem was pride, which is an attitude of mind, thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought (Romans 12:3). Charles Spurgeon was a remarkable man who achieved much, but his was also noted for his humility. Jesus was a humble man, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* (Matthew 11:29). 18th century revivalist preacher Jonathan Edwards described pride in this way: *Proud people tend to speak of others sins; the miserable delusion of hypocrites; the deadness of some saints with bitterness; or the opposition to holiness among many believers. Pure Christian humility, however, is silent about the sins of others, or speaks of them with grief and pity. The spiritually proud person finds fault with other saints for their lack of progress in grace; while the humble Christian sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with [the] other hearts. He complains most of himself and his own spiritual coldness and readily hopes that most everybody has more love and thankfulness to God than he.* This is the same kind of godly humility exemplified by David as he asked the lord to search his heart (Psalm 139:23-24).

As we consider the many problems for those around us who have chosen to live outside the protection of God, it is easy to become judgmental (I told you so!) But if God's purpose in the shaking of the nations is to bring a harvest we must prepare. The first part of our preparation must be in our attitude. We must be humble. We must remember where we have come from: *Listen to*

me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug (Isaiah 51:1). We were wild branches, and we have been grafted in by grace alone. (See the words of the song, "Sinner Saved by Grace" on last page.)

Jesus was not judgmental, but he *came to seek and to save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10). *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him* (John 3:17). He came to bring a ministry of forgiveness, and healing, and deliverance, and He wants that ministry to continue through us.

For this to actually happen we need to allow God's word to encourage and strengthen us, but also to correct us. Correction isn't easy because it hurts, and cuts across our pride. But, *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid* (Proverbs 12:1). The famous Christian written Oswald Chambers talked about "the hurt of the Lord". *Unless we get hurt right out of every deception about ourselves, the word of God is not having its way with us ... There never can be any mistake about the hurt of the Lord's word when it comes to His child; but the point of the hurt is the great point of revelation.*¹

The great point, as Graham Kendrick's hymn says, is the revelation of knowing Jesus better (see back page for the words of the hymn.) *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights* (Proverbs 3:11-12). So we should not place ourselves in place of God, as judge, for,

Romans 14:10b-12 *For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

The judgment seat is the judicial bench, the place of judgment. But haven't believers been saved from judgment (e.g. Romans 5:9)? But the scriptures speak of a final judgment of the whole world, of both the living and the dead (Acts 10:42, 17:30-31). Jesus in His parable of the sheep and the goats said that at the end of the age, *when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all his angels with him, He will sit as Judge upon His glorious throne and judge the nations, separating the sheep from the goats; at that time the wicked will be cast into a furnace of fire and the righteous will shine like the sun* (Matthew 25:31-43). The writer to the Hebrews says *It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment* (Hebrews 9:27).

In the light of such solemn statements in Scripture, we cannot play games in the name of grace, and think that judgment is only for those who are not Christian. The Bible does not offer cheap grace.

In regard to justification grace and works are mutually exclusive; but grace does not exclude good works. If the power of God unto salvation is really at work in us, then we will produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, because these are the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

It is certainly true that Jesus has died for us so that we will not come under His wrath. He's taken our sins, and the eternal judgment for our sins, upon Himself. But we must also be aware that each one of us will one day bow the knee, longing to hear the words, "Well done good and faithful servant."

¹ [\[1\] https://www.oswaldchambers.co.uk/classic/the-undeviating-question-classic/](https://www.oswaldchambers.co.uk/classic/the-undeviating-question-classic/)

Sinner Saved by Grace

If you could see what I once was
If you could go with me
Back to where I started from
Then I know you would see

A miracle of love that took me
In it's sweet embrace
And made me what I am today
Just an old sinner saved by grace

I'm just a sinner saved by grace
When I stood condemned to death
He took my place

Now I live and breathe in freedom
With each breath of life I take
Loved and forgiven, backed with a living
I'm just a sinner saved by grace

How could I boast on anything
I've ever seen or done?
How could I dare to claim as mine
The victories God has won?

Where would I be
Had God not brought me
Gently to this place?
I'm here to say I'm nothing
But a sinner saved by grace

All I once held dear

All I once held dear
Built my life upon
All this world reveres
And wants to own
All I once thought gain
I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now
Compared to this

Knowing You Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all You're the best
You're my joy my righteousness
And I love You Lord