

The Moral Law of God Romans 2:12-16

Introduction

Crystal Mangum - - - was a woman who accused three young men on the Duke Lacrosse team of raping her – back in 2006

The men were acquitted of all charges in 2007 as parts of her story just did not add up - - - but the case created quite a fury as she was a black woman - - - and the boys were white.

Crystal – who has been serving time at a North Carolina correctional facility since 2013 for stabbing and killing a boyfriend - - - recently spoke to an interviewer about the Duke case – admitted that she lied about the rape story - whole thing was made up.

Crystal seems to reflect some remorse - saying in the podcast interview that she hopes the three falsely accused men can forgive her.

"I want them to know that I love them, and they didn't deserve that," she said.

i.e. – she knows that it's wrong to falsely accuse someone of a crime

One of the Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:16 - 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.'

We noted last week that the message of the Bible begins not with Christ died for our sins - - - but rather with creation and the Law

Genesis 1:1 - 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

That is followed by Adam and Eve's sin – breaking the one commandment given them - - - later we see God giving Israel a Law to obey - - - namely the Ten Commandments

In this next passage of Romans - - - we see that God has given a Law unto the Gentiles as well

This law is revealed to them thru something which we call the conscience

Daniel Doriani: 'When God created humans, He planted a moral compass in them.'

There is a moral code in this universe - - - and certain things ought not to be done

C.S. Lewis: 'Human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it.'

C.S. Lewis: 'Everyone has heard people quarreling . . . I believe we can learn something very important from listening to the kinds of things they say. They say things like this, 'How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you? - 'That's my seat, I was there first' - 'Leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm' - 'Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine.' People say things like that every day . . .'

'Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying that the other man's behavior does not happen to please him. He is appealing to some kind of standard of behavior which he expects the other man to know about. And the other man very seldom replies, to hell with your standard.'

'Nearly always he tries to make out that what he has been doing does not really go against the standard, or that if it does - there is some special excuse. He pretends there is some special reason in this particular case why the person who had the seat first should not keep it, or that things were quite different when he was given a bit of orange . . . It looks in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of law or rule of fair play or decent behavior.' [Mere Christianity]

In this next section Paul addresses the issue of the Gentile – and his sinfulness

How can the Gentile be considered guilty of sin – if he has not been given the law of Moses like the Jews have?

Paul will point to the fact that the Law has in fact been revealed to them - - - this is shown by the work of the conscience

Jesus once summarized the moral law – with the Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12 - 'Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the prophets.'

It is wrong to falsely accuse someone of a crime - - - because you would not want someone to do that to you

Crystal Mangum had a predecessor in the Bible – going all the way back

In Genesis 39 - - - the wife of Potiphar accused Joseph of trying to rape her

If he had done so - - - that was against the moral code - - - you don't sleep with another man's wife / or commit rape [the Egyptians knew this]

But – how did they know that?

This inward testimony of the conscience

However – in her accusation - - - she broke the moral code - - - by lying and getting Joseph wrongly jailed for a crime he did not commit

Such actions reflect the law-violating nature of the sinner

We're often willing to violate the moral law when it suits our purposes - - - but we want to apply the law to the behavior of others - - - when their behavior does not suit us

In the end such things remind us

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God / all are under God's just condemnation – because they have violated God's laws revealed unto them

I. The Jew and the Law - vv. 12-13

Before we look at the Gentile and the conscience – Paul contrasts them with those who have sinned under the Law

This is a reference to the Jew

Paul has just told us that there is no partiality with God who will judge every man according to his deeds [meaning both Jew and Gentile will face the judgment of God]

Partiality – means we treat individuals differently because of some earthly trait - - - he is our color – he is rich and famous or our son or our daughter – so we'll treat them differently

I Peter 1:17 - 'And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth.'

When the mother of a serial killer shows up at his trial - - - she usually is not hollering for the death penalty - - - no - - - she might even say – 'he didn't do it - - - he's a good boy' – the glove didn't fit!

That's partiality

God isn't like that - - - His judgment will not be tainted by partiality

Both Jew and Gentile face this judgment

Romans 2:6 - '[God] will render to every man according to His deeds.'

The Jew had the Law of Moses – and was kind of proud of that fact – along with the temple / their great heritage of being descendants of Abraham / etc.

They saw such distinctions making them a cut above the rest of the rabble who walk this earth

Paul points out that *mere possession* of the Law is not going to save anyone – that is not the way the law works

It's not the hearing of the Law or possessing it that matters in reference to the judgment - - - but the doing of the Law

The Ten Commandments was just the moral law codified – the moral law spelled out in a code of ethics

Jesus shared an interesting short parable of two sons

Matthew 21:28-32

We note: neither of the two sons are sinless

The Pharisee / Scribe - - - they are the first category - - - they hear the Law - - - they agree to it - - - they think they are good - - - but they don't obey the will of the Father

The 2nd category – represents the repentant sinner – the tax-gatherer and harlot – who felt remorse

They initially rejected the Father and His command- - - but then they repent over their sin - - - and begin to do the will of God

That's essentially what a Christian is

We repent over our sins / trust in Christ - - - and begin to follow the will of God

A Christian comes to obey God's moral Law because of his new nature that is no longer in rebellion against God - - - his obedience is a fruit of his faith

II Corinthians 5:17 - 'Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come.'

II. The Conscience and the Gentile - vv. 14-15

One of the questions that often comes up in theology – is the question about the pagans that have never heard of the Bible

What about the native American Indians – or the tribes of Africa – the people who lived in places where there was no access to the Bible

Will God judge them for failing to believe in Jesus of whom they have never heard?

The answer of Scripture is 'No, But - they will be judged for failing to live up to the light of their own conscience as given to them by God'

The pagan who has never heard of Jesus Christ will not be condemned for failing to believe in Jesus – He will be condemned for failing to do what he knew was right

The answer to these kinds of questions are given in Romans 1 and 2

All men have knowledge of God revealed to them thru the creation - - - so that they are without excuse – Romans 1:18-20

Now – Paul asserts that all people have knowledge of the moral Law – with the conscience bearing witness to that truth

Take another example from the Ot – before the Law of Moses was given

Genesis 34 – the daughter of Jacob - - - named Dinah - - - was out and about - - - and Shechem – a Hivite - - - sees her - - - and takes her and lays with her by force

Shechem wants to marry her – but Jacob's brothers have a problem with this

Genesis 34:7 - 'Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.'

There is the moral law - - - a person should not act this way – that's wrong!

Where does the moral 'ought' or 'ought not' come from?

It comes from God – it's the moral law – 'do unto others . . .'

You wouldn't like it if we defiled your sister – so don't defile ours!

Matthew 7:12 - 'Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the prophets.'

There is no where in the world – you and I can go to live where the Golden Rule is carried out perfectly - - - such a place does not exist at the present time

Sin in our world is universal – affecting all cultures and people groups – but all people know of this standard

The Golden rule shows up in nearly every religion and culture

Buddhism: 'Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.'

Confucianism [China]: 'Is there one maxim which ought to be acted upon throughout one's whole life? Surely it is the maxim of lovingkindness: Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.'

Hinduism [India]: "This is the sum of duty. Do not unto others that which would cause you pain if done to you"

Plato [Greek]: "I can do to others what I'd like them to do to me"

Seneca [Roman]: "Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters"

Shintoism [Japanese]: "Be charitable to all beings, love is the representation of God"

Zoroastrianism [Persians]: "Do not do to others what is harmful for yourself"

C.S. Lewis: 'If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks and Romans, what will really strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own.'

Try to imagine a civilization with a completely different morality

C.S. Lewis: 'Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five.'

Paul asserts that the difference in knowledge of God's will is not that much greater between the Jew and the Gentile – due to the moral law / and the conscience

John Murray: 'It is not therefore a different law that confronts the *Gentiles* who are without the Law but the same law brought to bear upon them by a different method of revelation.'

The conscience bears witness - - - but is fallible / can be manipulated / seared / stifled / etc.

i.e. – in our sin - - - we go against the conscience and try to tell ourselves that what we did was in fact – not wrong

Prov. 30:20 - 'This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, "I have done nothing wrong."'

In January – MLB came down with a judgment on the two fans who tried to steal the ball out of Mookie's glove! – during the World Series between the Yanks and the Dodgers

Both individuals are banned indefinitely from any and all games - - - anything that has to do with MLB

To my knowledge – they have never expressed any repentance or said: 'we're sorry'

Perhaps they think they were just trying to help out their team!

The conscience is that little voice or sometimes even a blaring horn that goes off inside your head and says, 'that was wrong'

The conscience can be ignored / listened to / seared / etc.

The conscience is not infallible – because of that

People are often more likely to go against conscience if they see others doing the same thing they are contemplating

That is the nature of mob violence – or being in thrall to a mob

Martin Luther once made the great statement about the conscience and the Word of God - - - when he was called upon to recant his views at the Diet of Worms

Luther: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me."

Good way to live: Scripture! / conscience – follow them!

I Tim. 1:5 - 'The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.'

Christian truth when embraced leads to love, a clean conscience and a sincere faith

As a teenager - I professed to be a Christian – but lived a life that was far from sincere about the faith – and not with a very good conscience either

I played in a rock band that played around different bars in Lincoln [around 18]

Our band had a flyer that we would post for our different gigs

We actually put a Bible verse on our flyer – even though most of the music we played was not Christian music at all

One night at work – I worked in a restaurant as a cook – one of the waitresses who was Catholic – I don't remember what I said or did – maybe she was just having a bad night - she unloaded on my shallow non-Christianity

‘You profess to be a Christian – you guys put this Bible verse on your flyer – that’s a joke’

In my conscience – I knew she was right - - - because God had been telling me the same thing!

Most of us can spot a fake faith a mile away - - - so can God! - - - in fact – He’s even better at it than we are!

The goal and outcome of embracing the truth is a good conscience and a sincere faith

Is your faith sincere?

Do you have a good conscience about how you are living?

If your conscience tells you something is wrong - - - listen to it! / act upon it

The goal of our instruction: love from a pure heart / a good conscience / a sincere faith

III. The Secrets of Men - v. 16

Here Paul includes judgment as part of the gospel message

Matthew 16:27 - 'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.'

The judgment of God will expose all sin / all wickedness

What should we do with all this?

Conclusion

We should put our trust in Jesus

For there is coming a day when God will judge – that judgment will include every act – and even the secret things of the heart

For the sincere Christian - - - there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Ralph Venning: 'It is all the same to the devil whatever way people go to hell, so long as they go there, whether through the common road and dirty highway of profanity, immorality, and irreligion; or through the fields and pleasant walks of a form of godliness.'

You can go to hell as an out and out pagan - - - living in the lap of sin and filth

But you can also go to hell – being a fake / a phony Christian - - - who really doesn't care what the Word of God says or have any desire to follow Jesus in any meaningful sense of the word

Satan is fine with either

But – our prayer for all here - - - is love from a pure heart / a good conscience and a sincere faith