

**Romans Chapter 2**  
**Verses 17-19**

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February, 2011

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**Romans, Chapter 2 V:17-29**

**The Jew Is Condemned by the Law**

<sup>17</sup>But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God, <sup>18</sup>and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, <sup>19</sup>and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, <sup>20</sup>a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, <sup>21</sup>you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? <sup>22</sup>You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup>You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? <sup>24</sup>For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written. <sup>25</sup>For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup>So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup>And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? <sup>28</sup>For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. <sup>29</sup>But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

In the first 16 verses of Chapter 2, Paul shares the 5 ways God deals with men.

- 1 – According to the truth
- 2 – According to a man's works
- 3 – Without partiality
- 4 – According to opportunity
- 5 – According to the secrets of men

In the first 16 verses of Chapter 2, Paul shows us that God is very much a realist. He sees through everything we profess and all of the cover-ups we put forth. In spite of whatever secrets we keep from others, how well we hide the nature of our true self. God sees what is actually there and those parts of our character base his evaluation of our lives,

Paul's thoughts now turn to the Jews and how they (we) try to divert God's attention from what we actually are, hoping that we will possibly satisfy God, divert him from the truth about our condition and escape wrath.

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Paul says that we attempt to convince God that we have an acceptable creed – that our religion is proper and correct. In his letter, Paul singles out the Jews, who relied on thousands of years of religion to boast of their perfection in thought and understanding – not necessarily in practice. They were great teachers of what should be done (guiding the blind, lighting the way for those in darkness, correcting the foolish teaching the immature, and holding onto a thorough knowledge of the Law. Paul's comment is that although the knowledge of the Jew was great, their practice was lacking. Their hope was that they would be found acceptable in God's eyes because of their great knowledge of the Law and their faithfulness of teaching the Law to others, never understanding that compliance with the law indicates more about our true nature of the teacher than our knowledge of and ability to teach the Law.

In these verses, Paul lists the five great advantages which the Jews of his day had and on which they relied for their position before God:

1 - They possessed the Law. It is the same with Christians today. We have the Bible in 25 (35?) different versions. We have Study Bibles, Solder's Bibles, Sportsmen's Bibles, Open Bibles, Color Coded Bibles. Many Christians cling to one translation above all others, perhaps saying "I am a King James Christian! It is the only version we should read." Maybe they say "I use the closest translation, which is the American Standard Version!" Or "I'm a NIV guy!" People brag about these things, which is very close to what the Jews were doing in Paul's day.

2 – They claimed to have the one true relationship with God. Jews made it clear that they had a special inside track with the Almighty. You hear people talking like that today. "I belong to the one true church." All other denominations are less than my demonization" Someone used the example "God, Billy Graham, and I were just talking the other day..." Like the Jews, we brag about our relationship to God.

3 - The Jews were the people who knew God's will. They had the Scriptures, they had the Ten Commandments, the prophets and the knowledge of what God wanted. There are many today who boast about their knowledge of the Word of God and who rest upon that fact. "God spoke to me about this and I know what he wants."

4 – The Jews approved of what was superior. They claimed to choose only those things that were morally superior. Many church members do this. They take pride in the fact that they do not do certain things. "We don't dance, we don't drink, we don't go to the movies, we don't go to theaters, we don't play cards, we don't drink coffee," and on and on.

5 - The Jews were instructed in the Law. Many Jews could quote great passages of Scripture and they took pride in that. It was said that several of the great Rabbis could quote the entire Talmud. That is admirable, but not if the ability to do that is a reason for claiming righteousness. If we believe having such skills (alone) gives us special standing with God it may be different from what we think.

Paul goes on to list four privileges which the Jews felt were theirs because they had these advantages:

1 - They believed they were a guide to the blind (non-Jews). There are always those who are ever ready to correct anybody and everybody around them, to impart truth to those unfortunate people who have not learned anything yet.

2 - The Jews believed they were a light to those in the dark. The example here is the people who are always ready to dazzle us with their knowledge of the Scriptures. They know all about the antichrist, they know when Christ is coming again, they know all of the promises of God and they take great pride in their knowledge.

3 - The Jews felt they were instructors of the foolish. These people are quick to lecture anyone they see as below them in Biblical and spiritual knowledge, which is almost everyone they meet.

4 - The Jews were teachers of children. Hopefully they taught for the proper reasons to share God and not because they feed their ego as an instructor of the foolish.

Considering all of this, Paul goes on to write that because of the actions of the Jews, the name of God was demeaned among the non believers. This is the case with many Christians today, just as it was with the Jews in Paul's day. We talk a pretty good talk, but our witness of action (what the world sees in us) often falls short.

For us, God is not much impressed with our ability to sing the Lord's Prayer, the beautiful binding on our Study Bible, or how easily we recite John 3:16 or our (my) insights in Sunday School Class. His interest is in seeing how we live, how we act in business, how we carry ourselves socially. How we look as we enter Church may impress other men, but has little bearing on how God sees us. Someone said, God will always ask "What effect does my truth have upon you? It is nice that you know what my Holy Word says. How is my Holy Word expressed in your life?"

In the final analysis, the great issue and how God will judge us will be on the basis of what men think of Him when they see us. Paul expressed the downside of this in verse 24:

**"<sup>24</sup>For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,"**

This is what will concern God as he looks at us. Our relationship with him can't be based on a creed or statement of beliefs, or knowledge of the minute aspects of the Law. It must be based on a love for him that alters the way we live.

**Paul has addressed our error in reliance on creed. Now he will concern himself with our error when we rely on ritual.**

**<sup>25</sup>For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup>So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup>And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? <sup>28</sup>For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. <sup>29</sup>But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.**

The Jews followed of the ritual of circumcision. In fact, a man could not be a Jew unless he was circumcised. They held this ritual in high regard for this act. They praised their belief on the basis of their willingness to require this ritual act. Whenever a Jew was questioned concerning his relationship with God, he would always fall back on circumcision and expect that fact to cover all that needed to be considered. However, Paul says when they led lives that ignored the Law, their ritual amounted to nothing. It ceased to have any meaning.

**“if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.”**

If we move forward to these days and look at Christians we might find a few rituals to substitute in the place where the Jews used circumcision. There are Christians who might place baptism, confirmation, church membership, communion, the prayers of a faithful mother, almost any ritual we honor in the church as equivalent to circumcision. ("Are you a Christian?" answered by "Well, I am a Catholic," or, "I am a Baptist," or "I was raised a Methodist," or, "I've been baptized." Some believe that these make them right before God. Paul would tell them it may not be the way they want to believe. For the Jews, God was not fooled by circumcision. He easily looks past the rituals we claim at our heart and our lives. To God, the way we think and live is the mark of who we are.

Paul would tell us that there are many uncircumcised (as Paul also points out), and also many unbaptized, unconfirmed individuals who behave just as well as those who have been baptized, circumcised, or whatever it is we claim as our justification before God. Paul would tell us these things do not (by themselves) add anything to a person's standing before God. If there is no commitment of the heart, there is no meaning in the things we do and the rituals in which we participate. That is what Paul wanted the Jews to understand.

Paul ends this section of his letter urging the Jews to practice their beliefs in a way that holds to God's will for them and not to achieve the praise of men. Scholars write that Paul's use of the word praise is linked to the word for Jew (Judah) and that he intended for the statement to indicate that their Judaism was from God and not from men. Regardless, we need to be certain that our relationship honors God and not men.

**<sup>29</sup>But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.**

Regarding our relationship with God, we are lost without Christ. We may delude ourselves into the belief that other things matter, but there is one thing that stands over all and comes first. That is Christ. He is what makes a Christian what we are. Anything else may justify us before men, but our justification must come to the father through the son.

Our standing comes not as an answer to whether we are baptized, or what church we attend, or how often we usher or greet visitors. The answer for each of us must come from the question is: "Do you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and have you received the gift of righteousness which God gives to those who do not deserve it, cannot earn it, but receive it by his love and grace?"