



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

Romans 2:17-29

LESSON: IGNORING THE LAW'S REQUIREMENTS — July 3, 2016

SYNOPSIS:

Chapter 2:1-16 ¹Having vividly depicted the condition of the Gentile world in chapter one, Paul now addresses his comments to those who pass judgment on others when they themselves are guilty of the same things (**2:1**). He points out that they are in danger of God's righteous judgment, who "will render to each one according to his deeds" (**2:2-6**). This judgment will offer either eternal life or wrath and indignation, given without partiality, and the decision is based on whether one does good or evil (**2:7-11**).

To justify the condemnation of Gentiles who did not have a written Law (like the Jews), Paul affirms that the Gentiles could "by nature do the things contained in the law" and that their own consciences will bear witness of their guilt on the Day of Judgment. In this way Paul demonstrated the Gentiles' need of salvation (**2:12-16**).

LESSON: I. NOT SAVED BY LAW Romans 2:17-24

2:17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,— Israelites who remained in Palestine, or who returned to it after the Babylonian captivity, were designated as Jews, even though tribes other than Judah were included. Israel is the national name, and Jew is the religious name of the sons of Jacob.

1. Paul first calls attention **to thou art called a Jew**, making it known that this is a privilege and an honor. For some it was— only in appearance. The Jew already believed that they were good enough for God as they were, and doing enough good for God to accept them. They could not believe that God would reject them when they stand face to face with Him.
2. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he rests in the law**—the Word of God. By having God's Word, the Jew feels that he has God's approval and acceptance. But his mistake is that God does not accept a person because he happens to have God's Word in his profession. God approves and accepts the person who does (a doer of) the Word of God; who lives and obeys the law of God.
3. Paul also calls attention to the Jew that **he boasts in the law**; brags, and openly professes God to feel proud; feeling that God accepts him because of his profession. But his mistake is that God does not accept a person because God is not interested about how much one brags or boasts of God, but God is interested in a man's life—(how he's) living for Him, not just professing and talking about Him. Is God living within him?

2:18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;—

4. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he even knows God's Will**. He is familiar with the law and the commandment of God. He knows what God wants done; he knows right from wrong. Therefore, he feels he has God's approval. However, the religionist Jew fails to see something: a man must do

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/ro/ro_02.htm
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God's Will, not just know God's Will.

5. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he even approves the more excellent things that comes from the law**. He approves, expresses, and proclaims pleasure in the right things; that he can test and discern what's right. The religionist Jew then feels that he pleases God. But his mistake is that God is not interested in man's approval of things in life. God wants man to live in the right way; living on the level of the more excellent.
6. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he was instructed out of the law** by family, teacher, preacher, or friend. He learned from someone and because he knows God's Word, he feels he has a right relationship with God. But again, God's concern is not in what a person knows, but in what a person has in his heart and does. God expects a person to take what he has learned and put it into practice. God expects a person to live as he has been taught.

Because he had received catechetical training in the law as a youth, and rabbinical teaching as a man, the Jew felt confident that he could prove or discern those things that were more excellent.

2:19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,—

7. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he is confident**, persuaded and sure **that he is a guide to the blind**. By him being a guide to the blind, he would be an example to men and he could cure men of their blindness to God and religion. However, the religionist Jew fails to see something: a man must be sure he himself is following the truth because there are many guides in the world who are leading people down the wrong road. They are the blind leading the blind—blind guides.
8. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he is a light to them which are in darkness**, for there are those who stumble about searching for the light, but are unable to find it. The religionist Jew feels he has found the light to those who are searching for it. Convinced that he would be saved by his law, the Jew was able to assume four roles: **1)** a guide of the blind (the blind being the Gentile in his unjewish darkness) v.19; **2)** a light of them which are in darkness (the Gentile needs to be enlightened by the law) v.19; **3)** an instructor of the foolish (because he did not know the law, meaning the Gentile was a fool) v.20; **4)** a teacher of babes (the Gentile was immature, being an object of Jewish disgust) v.20. He makes a serious mistake because religion is not the light of the world, Jesus Christ is! By the Jew being a light to them in darkness, he himself must know and serve the light in his heart and his life.

2:20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

9. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he is an instructor of the foolish**. The Jews thought they could answer the basic questions of life. Therefore, he could help the foolish discover meaning and purpose and significance in life.
10. Paul calls attention to the Jew that **he is a teacher of babes**; teaching the immature, the proselyte, the new church member.

The point is that being an instructor or teacher is to make sure that he is the embodiment of knowledge and truth of the law and not a form of it; he must be an example of this truth he teaches.

2:21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?—

We have five questions before us (vv.21-23). The questions are for everyone and anyone because we are all accountable. The Jews were prepared to teach the heathen Gentile

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the commandment of the law, but were themselves breaking the commandments.

1. *You who teach others, do you not teach yourself?* When we share and teach, we have listened to truth and therefore are teaching ourselves. What right do we have to tell others how to live if we do not live that way?
2. *You who say that a person should not steal, do you steal?* If you steal, what right do you have to say that others should not steal? Stealing (the eighth commandment) is a sin that leads to utter chaos. The Jews were ready to preach morality, but their lives did not back up their message. They were stealing from one another, perhaps by collecting an extreme interest.

2:22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?—

3. *You who say that a person should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?* The Jews were committing adultery (the seventh commandment). Therefore, if we look and watch, read and listen to sexual suggestions, our thoughts center upon fleshly desires. Do we also commit it in our mind?
4. *You who abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege* (to violate one's commitment to God and rob from God)? This means you take what belongs to God—your commitment, your time, your energy, your tithes. They were profaning the house of God by commercialism; and thus Paul asked the biting question and next the true statement.

2:23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?—

5. *You who boast and take pride in the law* (the Bible), *through breaking the law, do you not dishonor God?* Transgression of the law brings dishonor to God. The Jews claim to have known the law, but were silent in claims to have kept it. We dishonor God when we talk about His Word, yet break His commandments. We do dishonor God before men, causing His name to be blasphemed. And then we give great occasion for the world to do the same. Mark 7:6 "*This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*"

2:24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. The lifestyle of the Jews caused the Gentiles to speak lightly of the God of Israel. Much the same thing could be said today about hearers of the Word only, they not being doers. The Jews rested in the law, but since he did not keep it, the law could not make him righteous.

II. NOT SAVED BY CEREMONY Romans 2:25-27

2:25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Circumcision was required by law for all Jewish males for entrance into the Covenant. It is not a meaningless rite if it aids in keeping the law. Well, being circumcised was obeying the law, but, if the Jew trusts in his circumcision for salvation, but does not keep the law, his circumcision is made void. It does not benefit him. If what was done as an outward sign does not correspond with the inward authenticity of an obedient relationship with Christ, the outward sign would not profit him whatsoever. Those that violate the law are counted before God as uncircumcised. In other words, they are outside the covenant, having no more of a saving relationship with God. If one has an external church membership, it's



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profitable if one obeys and keeps God's Word. But, if that inward relationship with Christ was broken, the church membership would count for nothing, the same as uncircumcised. We are acceptable to God because we live for God and obey Him. It would not because we have undergone some ritual or ceremony.

2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?— Now the tables are turned completely. If an uncircumcised Gentile gives his heart to God, and lives in a righteous relationship to the law, should he be more pleasing to God, than the circumcised Jew who does not regard the law? The fact is: ²The act of circumcision does not free a person from sin. People who are not circumcised can serve God loyally. And many people who are circumcised refuse to obey God. The important question is whether a person obeys God. A man is not acceptable to God because he has been baptized or joined some church. He becomes acceptable to God because he obeys God, and God's basic commandment is clear.

2:27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?— Shall the uncircumcised who by nature fulfills (obeys) the law, judge the one who's circumcised that breaks the law? Paul lets them know that no ritual will ever save a man if he transgresses the law, and no ritual will ever cause a man to be lost if he keeps the law. If you transgress the law, you will be judged.

III. NOT SAVED BY ETHNICITY Romans 2:28-29

2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:— Paul claims that the true Jewishness and genuine circumcision are not ethnic or physical matter. For a man who is only a Jew outwardly is not a real Jew, and the real circumcision is not something physical and external. Paul makes the point that not all who are called Jews are truly Jewish.

2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. But, Paul makes it clear that to be a Jew is based on the internal being and not the external. It is the true circumcision of the heart, of the spirit. It is of God. It is the inner man being Born Again. It is not of man; not the letter of the law, but the spirit, therefore God is to be praised and not man.

SUMMARY:

Paul spoke and dealt with all the acclimates of the Jews. He told them that it's wrong to just depend on their Jewish heritage to save them. The law could not save them — look you are a Jew, which meant it was a privilege as God's people. They rested in the law and boasted in God. They knew His Will, approved the more excellent things of the law, for they were instructed out of the law. All were revolved around the law. The

² <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/romans-lbw.htm>
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Jew was convinced they would be saved by the law. Four roles were listed: 1) a guide of the blind; 2) a light of them which are in darkness; 3) an instructor of the foolish; 4) a teacher of babes. So, Paul blasts the Jews with five questions that sums up to whatever they teach, preach, say what should, commit, or make boast of to others, they are to be teachers of themselves. But they didn't. They used the law to establish their own self-righteousness; doing these acts externally, instead of having their lives reflect what they were teaching. Thus, they robbed God causing His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. The Gentiles began to speak evil of God as they watched the lives of the Jews. Their lives were to reflect what God is like. God's name is not to be blasphemed as the Jews caused it to be. When one disobeys God, they dishonor His name (**2:17-24**).

Circumcision has its value if you are obeying the law, but if the Jew transgressed the law, their circumcision was made uncircumcision. But, suppose that uncircumcised Gentile obeyed the law, God will accept them as if they were circumcised. And if the uncircumcised obey the law, he shall judge the circumcised that disobeyed the law (**2:25-27**).

A person is not a real Jew if he is only a Jew on the outside. A person is a real Jew if he is a Jew on the inside; referring to an individual's heart being changed, which is done in the spirit (being Born Again), not of the written law (referring to rules and regulations of the law), whose praise is not of men, but of God (**2:28-29**).