

# ROMANS: One Verse at a Time

## Romans 2:17-29

### *The Jews Guilty as the Gentiles*

<sup>17</sup> Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, <sup>18</sup> and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, 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> an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. <sup>21</sup> You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? <sup>22</sup> You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup> You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? <sup>24</sup> For “*the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,*” as it is written.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed **you**

are called a Jew,

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Paul now turns to address his principle recipients of his letter in Rome, \_\_\_\_\_, both those who have already believed and those who may be considering coming to faith in Christ. Repeatedly and pointedly throughout the rest of the chapter, Paul says, “**You!**”

He is speaking about all **Jews**. The Jews were previously known as \_\_\_\_\_ because of their language. They were also called Israelites because they descended from \_\_\_\_\_ whose name was changed to Israel. Israel means “one who is ruled \_\_\_\_\_ God” and “one who rules \_\_\_\_\_ God.”

and rest on the law,

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Both translations of the name are appropriate, but the Jews liked the second better than the first. The name “Jew” came from \_\_\_\_\_ which was the name of one of the twelve tribes and the name of the southern kingdom after Israel split following the reign of King \_\_\_\_\_. It was Judah that was carried into captivity by the Babylonians and during that time, all descendants of Abraham through \_\_\_\_\_ began to be called “Jews,” a name they readily embraced. The name meant “\_\_\_\_\_,” and when given to Judah, initially meant “praise to God.” Over the years, Jews saw the praise as coming to themselves, and they believed they were well worthy of it!

The Jews did **rest on the law**. The term law technically refers to the five books of Moses: Genesis, \_\_\_\_\_, Leviticus, \_\_\_\_\_, and Deuteronomy. Together they are called the Pentateuch or the \_\_\_\_\_. The Tanakh, or Old Testament was organized in three parts: the \_\_\_\_\_, the Prophets, and the Writings. However, it was not uncommon to use the expression, “The Law” to refer to all of these together, the whole of God’s \_\_\_\_\_ to man before God sent His Son. That is clearly the way Paul uses it here.

The Jews rested on the law in the sense of relying on the law for their \_\_\_\_\_. The law had been originally given to them when they entered into the Covenant of the Law, the \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant, while camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, soon after God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. The covenant is stated in **Exodus 19:5-6** **Now therefore, if you will indeed \_\_\_\_\_ My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special \_\_\_\_\_ to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. <sup>6</sup> And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a \_\_\_\_\_ nation.**

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and make your boast in God,

<sup>18</sup> and know *His* will,

and approve the things that are excellent,

being instructed out of the law,

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Across the years, Israel as a whole often remembered that they were a special treasure to God, but they often forgot that the Lord chose them as such to be a kingdom of priests to the rest of the nations of the world, because God loved the \_\_\_\_\_ world! "All the earth is Mine!"

They majored on being God's nation, God's \_\_\_\_\_; but they minored on obeying His voice, keeping His covenant (the law), and being \_\_\_\_\_. They celebrated the benefits of being God's chosen people, but they neglected the \_\_\_\_\_ given to them.

They did **know His will, the excellent things of God, because they were instructed in the Law.** But they became satisfied with the knowledge that came from the instruction without having a desire to put that instruction into \_\_\_\_\_. Because they soon learned that no one was capable of obeying 100% of the law 100% of the time, some rabbis began to teach that \_\_\_\_\_ the Law was sufficient to attain a right relationship with God. Others further deteriorated God's truth by maintaining that just \_\_\_\_\_ the law was enough for a person to be pleasing to God. Finally, Jews as a whole came to believe that just being the chosen \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Law kept all the Jews safe from the judgment of God. They believed that \_\_\_\_\_ sat at the gate of hell and prevented any Jew from entering within.

God repeatedly denounced this misunderstanding of His relationship with the Jews. The \_\_\_\_\_ preached to deaf ears and hard hearts. God demonstrated that the Jews were not beyond judgment and chastening by sending both the Assyrians and the Babylonians to take His sinful people into \_\_\_\_\_.

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\_\_\_\_\_ rebuked this false sense of security on the part of the Jews as he came preparing the way of the Lord. He called each man and woman to personal \_\_\_\_\_ and to look for the \_\_\_\_\_ soon to come who would save them from their sins.

Jesus Himself was quickly opposed by the religious leaders whom He labeled as “white washed \_\_\_\_\_,” pretty on the outside but full of \_\_\_\_\_ on the inside. The Lord told the people that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the \_\_\_\_\_ to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Some Jews understood the folly of their ways, repented of their sin, put their trust in Christ as their Lord and only Savior. Sadly, \_\_\_\_\_ Jews continued in their foolish thinking that they would bask in the glory of eternal life by virtue of the simple fact that they had been \_\_\_\_\_ a Jew. They literally thanked God daily that they were not born a Gentile!

These Jews continued in the false self-assurance that they were **guides to the blind, light to those in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes.** All of these things they were intended to be, but they were not. They had the **form of knowledge and truth**, but not the \_\_\_\_\_. The word “form” is the same word used in **2 Timothy 3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.** The Jews had all the trappings of religion on the \_\_\_\_\_, but had none of the genuine spirituality God had intended on the \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus said to them, “**If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.**” (John 8:39)

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**<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> an instructor of the foolish,**

**a teacher of babes,**

**having the form**

**of knowledge**

and truth in the law.

<sup>21</sup> **You**, therefore,

who teach another,

do you not teach yourself?

**You**

who preach that a man should not steal,

do you steal?

<sup>22</sup> **You**

who say, "Do not commit adultery,"

do you commit adultery?

**You**

who abhor idols,

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<sup>23</sup> **You**

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<sup>24</sup> For "*the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,*" as it is written.

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The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul now addresses the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Jews directly. The religious leaders were ready to stone the woman caught in adultery until Jesus told them that the one who was without sin should cast the first stone. They were ready **to teach her**, but they had not learned themselves.

They were eager to stone someone caught in adultery, but these self-righteous men would \_\_\_\_\_ their wives and take a new lover as a wife to escape the same accusation. Jesus told them that if they divorced and remarried without their partner first having committed adultery, they were guilty of \_\_\_\_\_.

The Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day really did **abhor idols**. Before the captivity in Babylon, idolatry was the most prominent of all of the sins of God's chosen people. However, when the \_\_\_\_\_ returned after the seventy years of captivity, the Jews never again fell into idolatry as a nation, nor was it often a sin even of individual Jews. When the Romans wanted to put the Roman Eagle on the \_\_\_\_\_, the Jews went into an uproar, because they saw the mounting on an \_\_\_\_\_ of an animal on the Temple wall as idolatry.

The **robbing** of (idolatrous) **temples** was a practice of some Jews who stole \_\_\_\_\_ from temples for personal gain in the name of religious righteousness. All in all, the Jews \_\_\_\_\_ the law on which they rested, and the result was that the people they were called to bring to know the Lord **blasphemed** His name because of the unfaithful Jews.

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## ***Circumcision of No Avail***

<sup>25</sup> For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code 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* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

<sup>25</sup> For **circumcision** is

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God entered into a covenant with Abraham \_\_\_\_\_ years before He gave the law to Moses. That covenant is detailed in **Genesis 12:1-3**

Now the Lord had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,  
 From your family  
 And from your father’s house,  
 To a land that I will show you.  
 I will make you a great \_\_\_\_\_;  
 I will bless you  
 And make your name great;  
 And you shall be a \_\_\_\_\_.  
 I will bless those who bless you,  
 And I will \_\_\_\_\_ him who curses you;  
 And in you \_\_\_\_\_ the families of the  
 earth shall be blessed.

Unlike the later Mosaic Covenant of the Law, this covenant was \_\_\_\_\_. God did not say “if;” God said “\_\_\_\_\_...”

Fifty-six years later, God renewed this

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Covenant with Abram, changing his name to Abraham. God further promised Abraham that this was an \_\_\_\_\_ covenant and that the Lord was giving Abraham the land of \_\_\_\_\_ for an everlasting possession. God then gave Abraham the rite of circumcision as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the covenant.

**Gen. 17:10-11** *This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; <sup>11</sup> and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.*

This surgery was symbolic of the need to \_\_\_\_\_ man from sin, which was passed on from one generation to another through the \_\_\_\_\_, the males. (The sin nature passes through the \_\_\_\_\_ to the offspring. See Gen. 34:7) This was the outward sign of the otherwise \_\_\_\_\_ covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham.

Paul says that circumcision is profitable or is of \_\_\_\_\_, **if you keep the law**. In other words, the outward sign has value if there is \_\_\_\_\_ reality. If you live as a Son of Abraham, loving and \_\_\_\_\_ God, then the external mark of \_\_\_\_\_ is important. We might say the same thing to an American. If you love America and are glad to be an American, if you support her with your taxes, obey her laws, exercise your right to vote, then mounting a flag on your porch is a meaningful symbol of who you are. But if you despise America's heritage, disregard her laws, cheat on your taxes, and don't take time to vote, then please skip the posting of the flag. It means nothing.

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**if you keep the law;**

but if you are a **breaker of the law**,

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uncircumcision.

<sup>26</sup> **Therefore,**

if an **uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law**,

will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

<sup>27</sup> And will not the physically uncircumcised,

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are a transgressor of the law?

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So, Paul instructs the Jews, if you are a **breaker of the law**, your circumcision counts for \_\_\_\_\_. It is the same as if you were not circumcised at all. He is saying that Jews that transgress the law are just like \_\_\_\_\_, who were not circumcised, and who in fact the Jews called “the \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Therefore**, or in light of the above, Paul says consider the Gentile who does not bear the outward mark of being in an eternal covenant with God but who demonstrates by his \_\_\_\_\_ that he is in covenant with God because the uncircumcised man obeys the Lord. Will God not look on this man as the one who is really in covenant? Will the one without the symbol but who has the inward reality be the one who \_\_\_\_\_ those with the outward symbol but not inward reality?

Can we help but see the clear application to Christians. What is our external sign that we are in the new covenant with Christ? \_\_\_\_\_. What are other things that people might use as external signs of our relationship with God? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Are these of value? Absolutely, as long as they are the external signs of the \_\_\_\_\_. As long as we have truly died to sin and been made alive to Christ through \_\_\_\_\_ in Him. As long as we are truly a part of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ because we have trusted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. As long as we have truly believed that His body was broken for us and His blood shed for our sins.

But if a person is a baptized church member who takes the Lord's Supper frequently, but who has never \_\_\_\_\_ trusted

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 nor *is circumcision*  
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 but from God.

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Christ and received His glorious salvation, then these external things are of no \_\_\_\_\_. They are instead a \_\_\_\_\_ of one who knew the truth but did not appropriate the truth nor properly respond to the \_\_\_\_\_ he was given.

The Spirit of God brings us back to a principle so often repeated in the Scriptures. We remember it being revealed when God chose \_\_\_\_\_ to be the King of Israel. Each of David's brothers looked more "kingly" than David. Even God's prophet was fooled by their outward appearance. But 1 **Samuel 16:7** says

**But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his \_\_\_\_\_ or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the \_\_\_\_\_ appearance, but the LORD looks at the \_\_\_\_\_.*"**

**A real Jew** is not one who is simply marked by the **outward** \_\_\_\_\_ of circumcision. A real believer is not one who has all the right external signs and symbols. A real Jew is an **inward** matter, one of the **heart**. So also for a Christian.

Man may see the outside and thus **praise** those who are false. The praise of the genuine Jew and the genuine Christian comes from \_\_\_\_\_.

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