

## Romans 2:17-29

Rom 2:17-29 Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, (18) and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, (19) and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, (20) an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. (21) You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? (22) You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? (23) You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law? (24) For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written. (25) For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. (26) Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? (27) And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfils the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? (28) For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; (29) 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.

### Questions On The Text

#### How does Paul describe the attitude of the Jew?

Verses 17-20: He says that they “rest on the law”. It is implied (see Rom 2:13) that the Jews were relying on the fact that they had been favoured by God in His giving them the Mosaic Law, and that mere knowledge of the law was sufficient to bring them into right relationship with God.

They were also confident that they knew the identity of the one true God, knew His will, were instructed from His law, and that these things qualified them to be guides, lights in darkness, instructors, and teachers.

#### How does Paul describe the law?

Verse 20: He says that it contains the form of knowledge and truth. The word “form” means outline or embodiment.

#### How does Paul correct the attitude of the Jew?

Verses 21-25: He makes it clear that mere knowledge of God’s will and ways is insufficient. Nor is it enough to teach others God’s ways. Obedience is what really counts. Paul says that God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the Jews, the reason being that they knew the law but were not keepers of the law.

#### What effect does disobedience have on the status of the Jew?

Verses 25-29: Paul says that the circumcision of the Jew will be counted as uncircumcision if he is disobedient to God’s law. This is a serious threat. Circumcision was the sign of God’s covenant with the Jew.

Therefore, to be regarded as uncircumcised was the same as being considered outside of the covenant; in other words, on a par with pagans.

Paul says that circumcision – the sign of God’s covenant – is only of value if a person is also obedient in keeping God’s laws.

### **What if a Gentile obeys God's laws?**

Verse 26: If a Gentile obeys God's laws, the fact that he is not physically circumcised will not matter. His uncircumcision will be regarded as circumcision.

Verse 27: In fact, the uncircumcised Gentile who obeys God's laws will be a judge of the circumcised Jew who is disobedient to God's laws.

### **What is a true Jew?**

Verses 28-29: Being a true Jew has nothing to do with physical circumcision; it has to do with the heart and its condition. True circumcision is performed by the Holy Spirit on the human heart. Compare this with what Paul says in Philippians 3:3.

This inner circumcision has to do with putting off the sins of the flesh. See Colossians 2:11.

The true Jew looks for their commendation from God rather than from men.

### **Further Questions For Discussion:**

Do you think that Christians can fall into the same trap as Jews by relying on their knowledge of God's will or Scripture to bring them favour with God?

Why do you think obedience to God is so important?

Do you think that Christians sometimes are in danger of teaching God's ways without actually doing them?

What does it mean to be spiritually circumcised or uncircumcised?