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### Rice Memorial MBC

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### **Ignoring the Law's Requirements**

Definitions in **bold letters** are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance  
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or Roget's Thesaurus – **July 3, 2016**

### **Romans 2:17-29**

**Introduction:** The scope of the first two chapters of this epistle may be gathered from Romans 3:9, "We have before proved **BOTH Jews and Gentiles** that they are **ALL under sin.**" This we have proved upon the Gentiles (Romans 1:1-32), now in this chapter, he PROVES it upon the **Jews**, as appears by Romans 2:1-17, "**thou art called a Jew.**" **I.** He proves in general that Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level before the justice of God, to Romans 2:1-11. **II.** He shows more particularly what sins the **Jews** were guilty of, notwithstanding their profession and vain **pretensions** (Romans 2:17-29)  
(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mhm/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 1:31-32, 2:1-2, 9-13 ...**Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the **judgment of God**, that they which commit such things are **worthy of death**, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou **condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest DOEST the SAME THINGS.** But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to TRUTH against them which commit such things.

...Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that **doeth evil**, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But **GLORY, honour, and peace**, to every man that **worketh good**, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For NOT the **HEARERS of the law** are just before God, but the **DOERS of the law** shall be justified.

**NOTE:** And this is because the question is NOT whether men have been willing to HEAR and listen to the Law being read out, thus being 'hearers of the Law', and have nodded their approval. **That makes NO MAN in the RIGHT before God.**

...What matters is whether they are 'doers of the Law.' in other words, are those who have DONE what the Law says. In mind here may be Leviticus 18:5, 'you will keep my statutes and my judgments, which of a man **DO he will live in them**', and Deuteronomy 27:26, '**cursed be he** who confirms not the words of this Law to **DO them**'.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 2:17**, Behold, thou art **called a Jew**, and **RESTEST IN the LAW**, and makest thy boast of God...

**NOTE: (1.)** Thou art called a **Jew** not so much in parentage as profession. It was a very honourable title. **Salvation** was of the Jews and this they were very proud of, to be a people by themselves and yet **MANY** that were so called were the **vilest of men.** It is no

new thing for the worst practices to be shrouded under the best names, for many of the synagogue of Satan to say they are Jews (Revelation 2:9), for a **generation of vipers** to boast they have Abraham to their father, Matthew 3:7-9.

**(2.)** And **restand** in **the law** that is, **they took a pride** in this, that they had the law among them, had it in their books, read it in their synagogues. They were mightily **puffed up** with this privilege, and **thought this enough to bring them to heaven**, though they did NOT LIVE, up to the law. To rest in the law, with a rest of complacency (satisfaction) and acquiescence (obedience), is GOOD but to rest in it with a rest of **PRIDE**, and **slothfulness**, and **carnal** security, is the **ruin of souls**.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mhm/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 2:18**, And knowest **his will**, and **approvest** the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of **the LAW**...

**NOTE:** And knowest **his will**,.... NOT the secret will or purpose of God; nor his revealed will in the Gospel, for of this they **were ignorant; but his declared will in the LAW**, SHOWING what is to be done, and what is not to be done: to know which in express terms was a privilege, that other people had not; but then the bare knowledge of this will be of no avail: for persons may know their Lord's will, as the Jews did, and not do it, and so be worthy to be beaten with many stripes:

**and approvest the things that are more excellent:** or "triest the things that differ"; from one another, and from the will and law of God; or as the Syriac, "discernest", "things that are convenient"; agreeable, which are fit and ought to be done: and having tried and discerned them, they approved of them in their judgment as the things more excellent; but then they DID NOT put these excellent things in PRACTICE which they approved of; and the knowledge and approbation (approval) they had of these things, arose from their **being instructed out of the law**, and NOT **the Gospel**; for the excellent things of the Gospel, they had no discerning, knowledge and approbation (approval) of...  
(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 2:19**, And art confident that thou **THYSELF** art **a guide** of the **blind**, **a light** of them which are in **darkness**...

**NOTE:** And art confident that thou thyself,.... Being vainly **puffed up** in, their fleshly minds, they were strongly persuaded that they were VERY FIT persons to be **a guide to the blind:** ALL MEN are **by nature blind**, as to the knowledge of divine and spiritual things; the **meaner sort** of the people among the Jews seem to be intended here; or else the ignorant Gentiles, whom the Jews were very fond of making proselytes (new converts) to their religion and laws; but **miserable guides were they**, whether to their own people, or others; **blind guides** of the blind. Gospel ministers best deserve this title: **a light of them that are in darkness;** so Christ, John the Baptist, the disciples of Christ, and all Gospel ministers are; but these men, who arrogated (claimed by undue pretensions) such characters to themselves, were **dim lights**, and **dark lanterns**.  
(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 2:20**, An **instructor** of the **foolish (unwise)**, **a teacher** of **babes**, which hast the **FORM** of knowledge and of the truth **IN the LAW**.

**NOTE:** **Of the foolish** - The word "**foolish**" is used in the Scriptures in two significations: to denote those who are void of understanding, and to denote the wicked. Here it is clearly used in the former sense, signifying that the Jew esteemed himself qualified to instruct those without knowledge.

**Of babes** - This is the literal meaning of the original word. The expression is figurative, and denotes those who were as **ignorant as children** - an expression which they would be likely to apply to all the Gentiles. It is evident that the character

bare given by Paul to the Jews is one which they claimed, and of which they were proud. **Which hast the form of knowledge** - The word translated here as “**form**” properly denotes a delineations or picturing of a thing. It is commonly used to denote also the **appearance of any object**; what we see, without reference to its internal character; the external figure. It sometimes denotes the **external appearance** as distinguished from what is **internal**; or a **hypocritical profession** of religion without its reality; 2 Tim. 3:5. “Having the form of godliness, but denying its power.” It is sometimes used in a good, and sometimes in a bad sense. Here it denotes that in their teaching they retained the semblance, sketch, or outline of the true doctrines of the Old Testament. They had in the Scriptures a correct delineation of the truth. **Truth** is the representation of things as they are; and the doctrines which the Jews had in the Old Testament were a correct representation or delineation of the objects of knowledge; compare 2 Timothy 1:13.

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/romans-2.html>)

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

**NOTE: Thou therefore ...** - He who is a teacher of others may be expected to be learned himself. They ought to be found to be possessed of superior knowledge; and by this question the apostle impliedly reproves (censure [rebukes]) them for their ignorance. The **form of a question is chosen because it conveys the truth with greater force**. He puts the question as if it were undeniable that they were grossly ignorant; compare Matt. 23:3, “They SAY, and DO NOT,” etc.

**That preachest** - This word means to **proclaim in any manner**, whether in the synagogue, or in any place of public teaching.

**Dost thou steal?** - It cannot be proved, perhaps, that the Jews were extensively guilty of this crime. It is introduced partly, no doubt, to make the **inconsistency** of their **conduct** more apparent. We expect a man to **set an example** of what he means by HIS public instruction. (Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/romans-2.html>)

**Matthew 23:1-3**, Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees **SIT in Moses' seat: ALL therefore whatsoever they bid (command) you observe**, that observe and DO; but do not ye after their works: for they SAY, and DO NOT.

**Romans 2:22**, *Thou that sayest a man should NOT **commit adultery**, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest **idols**, dost thou commit SACRILEGE?*

**NOTE: Dost thou commit adultery?** - There is no doubt that this was a crime very common among the Jews; see the Matthew 12:39 note; John 8:1-11 notes. The Jewish Talmud accuses SOME of the most celebrated of their **Rabbies, by name**, of this vice. (Grotius.) Josephus also gives the same account of the nation.

**Thou that abhorrest idols** - It was one of the doctrines of their religion to abhor idolatry. This they were everywhere taught in the Old Testament; and this they doubtless inculcated (instilled) in their teaching. It was impossible that they could recommend idolatry.

**Dost thou commit sacrilege?** - **Sacrilege** is the crime of **violating** or **profaning** sacred things; or of appropriating to common purposes what has been devoted to the service of religion. In this question, the apostle shows remarkable TACT and SKILL. He could not accuse them of idolatry, for the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, had never fallen into it. But then, though they had not the form, they might have the **spirit of idolatry**. That spirit **consisted in withholding from the true God what was his due**, and **bestowing** the AFFECTIONS upon something else.

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/romans-2.html>)

**James 4:4**, Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the **friendship (fondness**

[tender passion; warm affection]) of the **WORLD** is **enmity (hostility)** with God? whosoever therefore will be a **friend (dear [LOVER; sweetheart])** of the **WORLD** **IS** the **enemy** of God.

**World defined 2889, kosmos** **Phonetic: kos'-mos; orderly arrangement, fig. (MORALLY [in a moral sense] (The world's) Moral, relating to the practice, manners or conduct of men as SOCIAL beings in relation to each other, and with reference to RIGHT and WRONG)).**

**Thought 1.** The bottom line is they actually committed adultery with demons!

**James 4:5,** Do ye think that the **scripture** saith in vain, The **spirit** that **dwelleth** in **US** **lusteth (yearn [look sweet upon, crave after])** to **ENVY (jealousy)** (exacting exclusive devotion; intolerant of rivalry [a competitor])?

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

**NOTE:** To boast in the Law implied **their conviction** of its **excellence** and **obligation**, as a man does NOT boast of what he esteems (holds in opinion) to be of no value.

**Dishonourest thou God** - By boasting of the Law, they **proclaimed their conviction** that it was from God. By breaking it, they denied it. And as ACTIONS are a true test of man's **real opinions**, their breaking the Law did it more **dishonor** than their boasting of it did it honor. This is always the case. It matters little what a man's speculative opinions may be; his PRACTICE may do far more to **disgrace religion** than his PROFESSION does to honor it. It is the **LIFE** and **CONDUCT**, and not merely the profession of the lips, that does real honor... (Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/romans-2.html>)

**Proverbs 20:11,** Even a **CHILD** is **KNOWN** by **his DOINGS**...

**John 13:34-35,** A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **LOVE** one another; AS I have **LOVED you,** that ye also **love** one another. By this shall all men **know** that ye are my disciples, if ye have **LOVE** one to another.

**1 Corinthians 11:1,** Be ye **followers (imitator)** of ME, even AS I also am of Christ.

**2 Timothy 2:19-20** ...The Lord KNOWETH them that **ARE HIS**. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ **depart from iniquity**. BUT in a **great house** there are not only vessels of GOLD and of SILVER, but ALSO of **WOOD** and of **EARTH**; and SOME to **honour**, and **SOME to dishonour**.

**1 Timothy 4:12,** Let no man **despise thy youth (youthfulness)**; but be thou an **EXAMPLE** of the **believers**, in **WORD (something said including the thought)**, in **conversation (behavior)**, in charity, in spirit (frame of mind), in FAITH, in purity.

**Romans 2:24,** *For the **name** of God is **blasphemed (vilify [reviled { MOCKED}])** among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.*

**NOTE:** Indeed he declares that as a result of **their activity** the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, and claims Scriptural support, without citing it. It may be that he had in mind Is. 52:5, 'those who rule over them **howl**, says the Lord (Yahweh), and **my Name is continually blasphemed all the day**'. The Scripture might be seen as not applying directly for it has in mind that WHAT CAUSES the Lord's name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles is that His people are **ruled** there by **foreign rulers** who intimidate them, but Paul's point was probably simply that it was an instance of how His people **could cause** His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 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.

**NOTE:** The Jew was wont to fall back on **his circumcision**, as some still do on some outward ordinance. His answer to Paul is, Are we not the circumcised? **Are not the circumcised the people of the covenant?** He replied, "I admit that circumcision availeth, IF one **KEEPS LAW**. The outward observance profits IF ONE BE a LAW-DOER; that is, complies with its moral commandments. But if he fails to do this, his circumcision is as **worthless as though he was uncircumcised**." The effect of habitual transgression is to ANNUL the COVENANT.

The converse of this is also true. If the Jewish law-breaker can ANNUL his circumcision thus, then **if the uncircumcision** (the Gentiles) **KEEP the righteousness of the law**, his uncircumcised state will NOT be counted against him. He supposes the possible case of a Gentile who might render such an obedience to the moral precepts of the law AS a pious (godly) Jew could render, and argues that his uncircumcision would NOT make his obedience less acceptable. **Circumcision** is NOT, then, the thing that the Gentile needs, but **righteousness**. (Source: <https://www.study-light.org/commentaries/pnt/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 10:1-4**, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for **Israel** is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a **ZEAL** of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of **God's righteousness**, and going about to establish their OWN righteousness, have NOT submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the **end (GOAL) of the law for righteousness** to every one that **BELIEVETH**.

**Romans 13:8-10**, Owe no man any thing, but to **love one another**: for he that **loveth** another hath **fulfilled the law**. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery....., and IF there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**. **Love worketh NO ill** to his neighbour: therefore (for this reason) **LOVE is the fulfilling of the law**.

**Romans 2:26**, Therefore if the **uncircumcision** **KEEP the righteousness of the law**, shall NOT his uncircumcision be counted FOR circumcision?

**NOTE:** ...**the uncircumcision** - If those who are NOT circumcised, that is, **the pagan**. **Keep the righteousness of the law** - Keep what the Law of Moses commands. It could not be supposed that a pagan would understand the requirements of the **ceremonial law**; but **reference** is had here to the **moral law**. The apostle does not expressly affirm that this was ever done; but he supposes the case, to show the true nature and value of the rites of the Jews.

**Shall not his uncircumcision** - Or, shall the fact that he is uncircumcised stand in the way of the acceptance of his services? Or, shall he not as certainly and as readily be accepted by God as if he were a Jew? Or in other words, the apostle teaches the doctrine that acceptance with God does NOT depend on a man's **external privileges**, but on the STATE of the HEART and LIFE.

**Be counted for circumcision** - Shall he not be treated as if he were circumcised? Shall his being uncircumcised be any barrier in the way of his acceptance with God? The word rendered "**be counted**," is what is commonly rendered "**to reckon, to impute**"; and its use here shows that the Scripture use of the word is NOT to transfer, or to charge with what is not deserved, or not true. It means simply that a man shall be treated as if it were so; that this **lack of circumcision shall be no bar to acceptance**. There is nothing set over to his account; nothing transferred; nothing reckoned different from what it is. **God judges things as they are**; and as the man, though uncircumcised, **who keeps the Law**, ought to be treated as if he had been circumcised, so he who **BELIEVES in Christ** agreeably to the **divine promise**, and **trusts** to his merits alone for salvation, ought to be

treated as if he were himself righteous, God judges the thing as it is, and treats people as it is proper to treat them, as **being pardoned** and **accepted** through his Son.  
(Source: <https://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/bnb/romans-2.html>)

**Thought 1.** This line of reasoning is just ONE of MANY WAYS of making plain that a BELIEVER on Jesus is righteous with God. Paul also said Believers are "MADE" righteous.

**2 Corinthians 5:21**, For he hath **made** him (*Jesus*) **to be sin** FOR US, who knew no sin; that WE might be **MADE (cause to be generate [bring about]) the righteousness** of God IN him.

**Ephesians 5:8**, For ye **WERE** sometimes **darkness**, but **NOW** are ye **light** IN the Lord...

**Romans 2:27**, *And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature (lineal [family] descent), if it fulfil the LAW, **JUDGE (condemn)** thee, who by the letter (scripture) and circumcision dost TRANSGRESS the LAW?*

**NOTE:** Then logically if someone was **naturally uncircumcised** because he was not a Jew, but fully **fulfilled the Law**, would he not be in a position to act as judge on those who had the letter of the Law and circumcision, but were transgressors of the Law? Thus the tables would be turned. It would not be the Jew who on behalf of God judged the Gentile (which was the Jewish viewpoint), but the Gentile who on behalf of a righteous God **judged** the Jew, in spite of the Jew **having the Law** and **being circumcised**. Paul's whole point is that circumcision in itself does NOT put a person in a position of special privilege unless he 'DOES what the Law says'.

It should be noted that, although he does not cite the fact here, Paul's position is supported by the Old Testament where on a number of occasions the Scriptures emphasize that it is **not outward circumcision that is important**, but the **circumcision of the heart** (mind) (which is not strictly physical circumcision). See, for example, Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Jer. 9:26 where the command to circumcise the heart suggests that their physical circumcision is NOT enough for them to **be truly IN the covenant**. **What is required is a work in the heart, wrought by God.**

With regard to the uncircumcised judging the circumcised compare Jesus' words in Matt. 12:41-42; 'the **men of Nineveh** will stand up in judgment with this generation and **will condemn it**', for they had TRULY REPENTED, unlike Israel.

(Source: <https://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/pet/romans-2.html>)

**Romans 2:28-29**, For he is NOT **a Jew**, which is one **outwardly**; neither is that **circumcision**, which is outward in the **flesh (BODY)**: But he is **a Jew**, which is one **inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the **heart (MIND)**, in the **spirit**, and not in the letter (scripture); whose **praise** is not of (FROM) men, but of (FROM) God.

**NOTE:** He is not a Jew, in the religious sense of one of God's CHOSEN PEOPLE, who is one outwardly alone. **Neither is that circumcision**, the true circumcision, that which **makes** one a member of God's covenanted church, "which is outward in the flesh."

...Circumcision of the heart is a figurative expression for INWARD PURITY, as old as the book of Deuteronomy. **Whose praise is not of men.**

...The Jews, especially the Pharisees, were very eager for the praise of MEN, but the true Jew, the real child of Abraham's by FAITH, will have what is infinitely better, **the praise of (FROM) God.** (Source: <https://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/pnt/romans-2.html>)

**1 Corinthians 7:19**, Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the KEEPING of the **commandments** of God.

**1 John 3:23**, And this is **HIS commandment**, That we should **BELIEVE** on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and **LOVE** one another, as he gave us commandment.