

Romans Chapter 2:17-29

17. Romans 2:17- Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,

A. Indeed you are called a Jew

1. **called-** The Jews took great pride in their ancestry that they could trace back to Jacob. They loved being called a Jew. However, to God a Jew was one who trusted and followed the Lord. Many today call themselves Christians but in fact they are not. They have not trusted in the Lord Jesus as Savior and have not followed Him. We are saved by believing in the Lord Jesus. Genuine faith will be seen in following the Lord to some degree. The latest statistics show that the majority of Americans call themselves Christians. Only a small percentage call themselves born again Christians. Folks, there are only born again Christians! All true Christians have been born again. To say born again Christian is redundant! It is like saying Christian-Christian. You must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. [Joh 3:5](#); [Joh 3:7](#) It is not important what label you put on the outside of a can. It only matters what is put inside the can that determines what it is. We are determined by the Spirit of God being in us through the new birth.
 - a. This is an important lesson for us today. Are we who we call ourselves? It should be seen by our lifestyles. We should not have to have bumper stickers to show to let others know we are Christians, they should see it in our lives and how we drive!
2. **Jew-** Gr. **loudaios-** *belonging to Judah*
 - a. Technically a Jew is one from the tribe of Judah
 - b. This term broadened over time to include those born of Jacob's twelve sons.
 - c. A Jew is a term to designate one who trusts and follows the Lord. Judah along with the tribe of Benjamin stayed true to God when the northern ten tribes split off and went off into idolatry.
 - d. Jesus was king of the Jews. [Mar 15:2](#) He is the King over all those born of Jacob who trust and follow after the Lord.

B. and rest upon the Law

1. This is one thing that is impossible for those who live by the Law. It is impossible to rest upon the Law. There is no rest in regards to the Law. That is why the priests never could rest under the Law. There were different furniture pieces in the temple, but there was

no chair. The priests could never rest. They had to constantly work. This is what the Law is all about. It is man working for God. As long as man works perfectly for God than all is well, but the minute man ceases to work or is found imperfect then great trouble is found! Praise God we have a heavenly High Priest that is able to sit down. He can sit down because His is a finished work! His is an eternal work. It never has to be repeated, because Jesus shed perfect eternal blood and it was placed upon the mercy seat of heaven!

2. The Law must be constantly kept. If you failed in just one point of the Law you were guilty of it all. The Jews prided themselves in having the Law, but did not realize that the Law was of no benefit of them unless they kept it perfectly. Being under the Law leaves one exhausted, condemned, and empty. Jesus came to these Jews with the offer of rest. [Mat 11:29-30](#) They would have to first forsake their own works however and accept the gift of righteousness that came through Jesus. This is something they refused to do. Instead they chose to crucify the one who offered them rest.

C. and make your boast in God

1. Those who boast in the Law also make their boast in God. They say they do what they do to uphold His holiness. However those under the Law fail to uphold God's holiness. They actually lower it to their level of holiness which is far less than God demands. Jesus was the only one who upheld the holiness of God.

2. Those under the Law really boast in themselves and not in God. As long as a legalist just compares his performance to those around Him, he can find reason to boast as Saul of Tarsus did. [Gal 1:14](#) However, if they compared their performance to God's requirements they will stand condemned. The Law declares all men sinners and need of a savior.

18. [Rom 2:18](#) and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,

A. and know His will

1. The strength of the Law is that it clearly revealed the will of God. It revealed God's holiness in it's demands and it revealed God's love in the sacrifices.

2. The weakness of the Law is that it offered no assistance to one who attempted to keep it. The Law could only command but could not help. Jesus came to fulfill the Law in His life and death and

then fulfill it's righteous requirement in us through the impartation of His life in the heart of the believer. [Rom 8:3-4](#)

B. and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the Law

1. Paul approved of the Law of God but that approval did not translate in the ability to keep it.
2. Even as Christians if we try to perform good for God in our own strength, sin will get the upper hand in us, even if we greatly appreciate God's Law.
3. The Law is an instructor [tutor, discipliner] but not a source of life. [Gal 3:21](#) It can only teach about and point to the Life Giver- Jesus Christ. [Gal 3:24-25](#)

19. Rom 2:19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

- A. Those who are under the deception of legalism think they are enlightened although they are blinded by a veil. [2Co 3:15](#) This is why the hardest person to minister grace and the gospel to is a religious person. A religious person does not understand grace and sees no need for it.
- B. A legalistic person makes them self a guide to the blind and a light to those in darkness. They will play the role of the Holy Spirit. They will tell others what they should be doing and what they should not be doing. They will try to convict others of sins. They have a list of do's and don'ts that they judge others by.
- C. A minister of the New Covenant should preach the Word of God which is the general will of God. Then they should commit the people to the Holy Spirit for Him to guide them into the specific will of God for them. The Spirit will guide the believer in what they should and should not do. The Spirit will shed light on the sins of the believer if we preach the Word.
- D. Legalists will try to dictate what a believer does, says, watches, and wears. The Spirit of God will lead and guide believers in these issues.

20. Rom 2:20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

A. an instructor of the foolish

1. **instructor-** Gr. **paideutes-** *trainer of children-* A legalistic Christian boasts in their maturity and their knowledge, but actually they are

the immature ones. Growth in Christ is a growth in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His finished work. [2Pe 3:18](#)

- B. **a teacher of babes-** Gr. **nepios-** *unable to speak; infant-* The legalistic Christian is the one who is a baby!
- C. **form of knowledge-** Gr. **morphosis gnosis-** The Law was just a form of knowledge. Jesus is the substance. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [Col 2:3](#) The Law is a shadow of the person of Christ.
- D. **and truth in the Law-** The Law was a form of the truth. Jesus Christ is the Truth. [Joh 14:6](#) The Law was given, but grace and truth came in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the grace and truth of God. He came to the Earth. The Law was given impersonally through angels and Moses, but Jesus came Himself to reveal God and save us. You cannot have a relationship with two pieces of cold stone [ten commandments], but you can with Jesus!

21. **Rom 2:21** **You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?**

A. **You, therefore, who teach another**

1. Those who are legalistic will take the role of teacher. Legalists love to teach others about what is right and wrong and what to do and what to refrain from doing. They endeavor to take the place of the Holy Spirit, even if it is unwittingly. James tells legalistic people to not make themselves a teacher, because of the greater judgment that comes because of it. [Jas 3:1](#) The Lord calls those who are teachers; we are not to make ourselves teachers.
2. The problem with legalism is that it is based in pride and pride blinds you to your own faults. Legalism ministers pride and insecurity and one thing insecure people can't do is to admit failure, sin, and weakness. What is interesting is that what you condemn the most in others is usually the area you are failing in yourself. You feel guilty and mad at yourself for your failures so you strike out against the sins you see so easily in others. In a weird way this makes you feel better about yourself.

B. **do you not teach yourself?**

1. Legalism will inevitably lead to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is saying one thing but doing something else. A legalist will preach real heavy on living holy, but when they themselves do not live up to what they teach they will make excuses for it and try to hide it. Legalists live

with secret sins though appearing to be most holy. A double life develops.

2. Some legalists such as Saul of Tarsus are able to outwardly live a clean life, but they are filled with inward sins such as pride, lust, envy, and bitterness. Jesus told the Pharisees that if you cleaned the inside of the cup, the outward would eventually be cleaned as well. [Mat 23:25-26](#) Only Jesus can clean the human heart. Once the heart is cleansed by the blood of Jesus and the gift of righteousness is received then the outward actions will start to change as well. The heart and outward life are cleansed by the blood of Christ and the Spirit of Christ. [Heb 10:22](#) In the New Covenant we receive a new spirit and heart. [Eze 36:26](#) and the Spirit of Christ which will cause us to walk in God's statutes. [Eze 36:27](#)

C. **You who preach that a man not steal, do you steal?**

1. Legalism will lead to greater and greater hypocrisy. Legalists will go from **teaching to preaching**. As their personal life becomes less and less of what they **teach**, they will start to **preach** to others to live holy. They just get louder and louder. They do this in order to soothe their own consciences and to avert attention to their own sins.
2. It is interesting that those who are the most legalistic are the loudest preachers. Those that scream their messages are usually the most legalistic also. Legalism and legalistic preachers must rely upon the flesh, fear, and intimidation. Loud preaching is relied upon instead of the convincing power of the Holy Spirit. Most people do not like being yelled at, so they will tune it out or leave. We must not rely upon our delivery but on the Deliverer!
2. It is also interesting to note that many prominent ministers who sins were exposed were practicing the very things they condemned from the pulpit.
3. Legalists are thieves. Satan is the author of religion and legalism and he is a thief. A legalist will try to rob glory away from God and take it for themselves. They boast in their performance and ability and therefore will take the glory and credit that only belongs to God and to His Christ. Robbing God is a greater sin than robbing man.

22. [Rom 2:22](#) **You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?**

A. You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery?

1. Jesus said that if you lust after someone in your heart that you have committed adultery in your heart. [Mat 5:28](#)
2. The Pharisees in Jesus day were guilty of adultery. How did they catch the woman in adultery that they brought to Jesus? Was it not an inside job? When it was turn to throw a stone at the adulteress, their own conscience could not cast it because of the guilt of the same sin. [Joh 8:9](#)
3. Legalism is adultery against God. Legalism is based upon the worship of self. The worship of anything other than God is adultery, especially when it is done by the bride of Christ- the Church.

B. You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

1. The Jews in there early history had a love affair with idols. This was the reason they were removed from their land to Babylon. Once in Babylon they were cured of physical idol worship. They came to abhor natural physical idols.
2. An idol is not just a natural piece of wood or stone. It is anything that is worshipped other than God. Money, possessions, people, position, fame, and even self can become an idol.
3. Legalism is a type of idolatry. It is the worship of self instead of God. Once God and His gift of righteousness are rejected then idolatry is inevitable. As a empty vacuum demands to be filled, so it is with the human heart. Once God is dethroned something or someone else will take His seat. The Pharisees loved themselves and money. [Luk 16:14](#)
4. The Jews were known throughout the ancient world to plunder heathen temples and make financial gain from the booty. This is mentioned in Ephesus. [Act 19:37](#)

23. Rom 2:23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

A. You who make your boast in the Law

1. Legalists are filled with boasting. They boast in the Law. They are always speaking of God's holiness and our need for it. They proclaim the need to keep God's Law but only boast of the parts of the Law they can and will keep externally. The rest is ignored by them. Even the parts they attempt to fulfill they do it imperfectly and fall short of it in both their inward and outward life. They offer

God their best when only perfection is accepted. God does not accept your best, He only accepts perfection! The problem with those who proclaim that they do their best for God are lying. No one ALWAYS, EVERY TIME, IN ALL ASPECTS does their best. Making this claim shows that man is a liar. [Rom 3:4](#)

2. This is preached from pulpits all around the world- "God will only bless you if you live righteous and holy." I heard just recently at a conference this statement, "God's promises can only be obtained by living at a certain level of righteousness". My question to this misguided Christian leader is this- What level must you obtain before you can have the promises of God? What is that level? Most would say, "It is trying your very best to live for God" SORRY THAT IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH!!!! Your best is NOT GOOD ENOUGH! And as we have said before, the problem with that is that we do not always do our best!

B. do you dishonor God through breaking it

1. Those who preach hot and heavy about God's holiness and the need to keep God's holy Law by our observance and obedience to it end up dishonoring God because they are not able to and do not keep the whole Law. [Jas 2:10](#) They break the Law and thus dishonor God. Many of the commands deal with what must be done in Jerusalem and at the temple. Since the temple does not exist any longer it is actually impossible to keep all of the Law anyway!
2. Legalists greatly dishonor God and His Son's finished work by resting upon their own level of obedience and holiness under the Law. They observe the outward commands that they can do and excuse or ignore those they can't. They end up with their own top ten shall and shall not's list from the Law and often some that they made up. These they think they got a handle on pretty good and they preach them to others vigorously. They are ignorant that the Law is 613 commands which must be kept perfectly as a whole unit. [Gal 5:3](#); [Jas 2:10](#)
3. Instead of fulfilling all of God's Law they offer up to God their imperfect obedience and righteousness and expect God to be excited about it and honor them with His smile and blessings. God's standard of obedience and righteousness to obtain His smile and blessings is perfection! There has only been one perfectly obedient and Righteous One under the Law and that was the sinless Son of Man- Jesus Christ. If we are to obtain God's

smile and blessings we must come bearing His Son's righteousness as a gift through faith.

4. Anything other than the perfect obedience and righteousness of Jesus Christ actually dishonors God and dishonors His holiness and attempts to lower God's holiness to their pathetic and filthy level of purity, holiness, and righteousness. All of man's righteousness's are as filthy rags! [Isa 64:6](#) The Legalist boasts in God's holiness, but he dishonors it by coming short of it and refusing the gift of righteousness that His Son achieved and has offered as a gift by His finished work of redemption.

24. Rom 2:24 For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," as it is written.

A. For, "The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you," as it is written.

1. The Gentiles would hear the Jews preach holiness and God's Law but they saw them do the opposite. They observed them lie, steal, cheat, fight, and murder.
2. The world who seems not to listen to us preach, certainly watches us live. What do they see among those who preach against sin and preach that they must keep the Ten Commandments to please God and get His blessings? They observe among God's people covetousness [which is idolatry], dishonoring of parents, lying, stealing, cursing, hate [which is murder], rampant sexual sin and adultery, divorce, and deeds that they themselves would not do. Is it no wonder the way of Christ is blasphemed among them.
3. The world is waiting and wanting a message of a God who loves them and has the power to change their hearts and habits by His own power, not a long laundry list of rules they can't possible keep.

25. Rom 2:25 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

A. For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the Law

1. Many boast in one or a few things that must be done to please God and to obtain His blessings. It may be church attendance, tithing, not watching T.V. or going to movies. These seem fine in themselves, but they will not profit those who observe them unless

they also keep the WHOLE Law. In the times of Paul, Christian legalists were telling the Galatian church that to please God and to have His blessings that they had to be circumcised. They picked one command under the Law and elevated it above all the other commands. They kept that command because once it was done you did not have to keep up any effort. Paul said that circumcision was wonderful but it would not profit them unless they kept the WHOLE Law. [Gal 5:3](#)

2. Holiness is profitable but only if you have a perfect holiness. This can only be received by faith in the finished work of Christ. By faith we become holy as we can ever be. We receive the holiness of the Lord. By receiving His righteousness imparted by His Spirit and nature into our re-born spirit we can then start to live holy and righteous lives by faith in the finished work of Christ and His Spirit that dwells within us.
3. We become sanctified by faith, not by outward observances of rules. [Act 26:18](#)

B. but if you are a breaker of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision

1. If you break the Law in any degree you are a sinner that is worthy of punishment and death. No Jew except Jesus kept the whole Law, so both Jews and Gentiles were declared all sinners by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. [Rom 3:19](#) All need to be justified by the finished work of redemption through Jesus. **After salvation** we are equally unable to live in our performance to merit God's blessings and provision. They are obtained the same way in which God's greatest gift was received- by grace through faith. As we have received Christ we are to walk in Him. [Col 2:6](#) Once this grace is obtained it empowers a God honoring life and our acts of faith in which the blessing of God is released to us and through us as braches in the Heavenly Vine. [Joh 15:5](#)
2. The uncircumcised were considered the heathen which had no covenant with God, had no hope, and had not God in this world. [Eph 2:12](#) They were sinners of the Gentiles. The Jews did not understand that if they broke the Law they were the sinners of the Jews! This is what Paul told Peter when he got into legalism at Antioch and were leading others into his hypocrisy. He said that they had been found to be sinners and therefore must be justified by Christ. [Gal 2:11-17](#)

26. **Rom 2:26** Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

A. **Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?**

1. Without faith in the Lord no man Jew or Gentile can keep the righteous requirements of the Law.
2. The only way a Jew or Gentile can keep the righteous requirements of the Law is by faith in the Christ and His finished work of redemption. Through faith we receive perfect righteousness that was obtained under the Law.
3. Jesus was born under the Law. [Gal 4:4](#) Jesus was not sacrificed as a baby, as a youth, or as a young man in His twenties. He was sacrificed at 33 years old after He had fulfilled every righteous command of God. He did not do this for Himself, but for us as our representative. Jesus obtained perfect righteousness under the Law and at the cross He took all our sins and transgressions and gave us that very righteousness He obtained under the Law as a unspeakable gift! This righteousness was both imputed [legally placed to our account] and imparted through the new birth.
4. Now as a Christian we fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law by walking in faith in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. This is called walking in the Spirit. [Rom 8:4](#) Walking in the flesh is attempting to become righteous by our works. Walking in the Spirit is to conduct our life in a dependence of the finished work of Christ. The Spirit has come because of His finished work and has come to bear witness to, and bring forth all that finished work has accomplished for us. The Spirit works in us and through us as we walk in faith in this finished work.

27. **Rom 2:27** 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?

A. **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?**

1. Uncircumcised gentiles who received Christ received righteousness. They received a righteousness that fulfilled the Law. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.

- [Mat 5:17](#) By fulfilling the Law in His life, and fulfilling the sacrifices in His death, Jesus gave us His righteousness as a gift. By faith in Christ we have fulfilled the Law through Him. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness for all who believes in Him. [Rom 10:4](#)
2. Us gentiles who were saved by faith and thus fulfilled the Law through Christ will be called upon in the day of judgment to witness against those natural Jews who were given the Law, broke it, and worse yet rejected their Messiah who could save them.

28. **Rom 2:28** For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh;

A. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh

1. Jesus told the religious Jews of His day that he could raise up natural descendents of Abraham from rocks. [Mat 3:9](#) A Jew then is one who has faith in the Lord.
2. As Abraham was saved by faith, so all men who are saved by faith become a spiritual Jew.
3. There are some who preach a dual covenant. They say that the natural Jews are all saved because they are descendents of Abraham. This is not the case. A natural Jew that rejects Christ will spend eternity in hell just like a gentile does. Both Jesus and Paul preached that natural Jews that rejected Christ would go to hell. [Matt. 23:33](#)
4. There is no name under heaven by which we MUST be saved than Jesus Christ. [Act 4:12](#)
5. The church is spiritual Israel-[Gal 6:16](#), spiritual Zion- [Heb 12:22](#), and spiritual Jerusalem- [Rev 21:9-10](#).
6. The believing gentiles are grafted into the spiritual olive tree of Israel- believers in the Messiah. [Rom 11:17](#)
7. Since we have been placed into Christ, Abraham's Seed, we are heirs of the promises given to Abraham and to the Jews. We have covenants with God- Abrahamic and New Covenants and we are heirs of all these covenants promise both natural and spiritual.

29. **Rom 2:29** 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.

A. but he is a Jew who is one inwardly

1. Christianity is a by-product of union with Christ in the spirit. By this union, the fruit of God is developed outwardly. Religion is about taping on plastic fruit and masquerading as real.

B. and circumcision is that of the heart

1. Believers have had a spiritual circumcision in their heart.
2. Spiritual circumcision has some similarities and differences then spiritual circumcision
 - a. Circumcision was given by God as a sign of His covenant with His people Israel under the Old Testament Law. The Law was but a shadow of things to come in which Christ would bring forth the substance and fulfillment of the Law.
 - b. In the OT, circumcision was done by humans. In the New Covenant no man does this, but God does.
 - c. In the OT, circumcision was in the flesh, but in the new it is done in the spirit
 - d. In the OT, circumcision was only for men. In the new it is for all who believe- men and women
 - e. In the OT, circumcision was done by a knife. In the new it is done by the sword of the Word of God used by the Holy Spirit
 - f. In the OT, circumcision was for natural protection from infection and contaminates. In the new it is for spiritual protection against pollution and infection.

C. in the spirit

1. When we were born again, the Holy Spirit used the sword of the Spirit to cut away our tainted flesh and soul from our spirit. The flesh cannot contaminate our spirit because it has been severed from the fallen flesh. Once this spiritual surgery took place God sealed our spirit with the Holy Spirit. Now no sin or spiritual pollutants can touch out re-born spirit. This is what Paul is referring to in Colossians when he says we were circumcised and God cut away the body of flesh from us. [Col 2:11](#), [Eph 1:13](#), [1Jn 3:9](#), [1Jn 5:18](#)

D. not in the letter

1. Outward observance of the command to circumcise the eighth day. In the new birth we are circumcised in the eight day. Eight speaks of new beginnings. This is a type of the NEW birth and of REGENERATION.

E. whose praise is not from men but from God

1. Legalists live for the praise of men. Jesus said that if you do things for the praise of men, you have all the reward you will get. [Mat 6:2](#)

Paul said that if he still lived to praise men, he would not be the servant of Christ. [Gal 1:10](#) He used the word still. Paul used to live for the praise of men and tried to please men. Religion is really the pleasing of people, while it promises to please God. People delight in legalism. God delights in faith. People delight in man's abilities. God delights in revealing His ability.

2. God will only praise trust in Him and acts that proceed from faith. Man has nothing else that is praiseworthy from God. Those who refuse to try to obtain righteousness and blessing from God by their good works, and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit in and through them will receive praise from God. [1Co 4:5](#)