

**What Kind of an Example Are You?**  
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**Text:** Romans 2:17-24

**Romans:** [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

**UBS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Paragraph Topic:** The Jews and the Law

**Central Idea of Message:** Knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different things.

**Introduction:** In this section, the apostle Paul elaborates upon some of the advantages which the Jews have over other people groups. He then proceeds to rebuke the Jews severely for not putting into practice what they claim to know.

Parallels can easily be drawn between the Jews cited here and between those of us raised in a Christian environment. Both have advantages and should, therefore, be models of how to live righteous, God-fearing lives; yet, such is not always the case. Knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different things. What kind of an example are you?

- I. Advantages of the Jews (vv. 17-20)
  - A. Jews relied upon the law and boasted in God (v. 17)
    1. Words associated with Jewish people
      - a) Jew
        - (1) Denotes nationality as opposed to Gentile (cf. Robertson 4:337)
        - (2) Judah means "praise" from God (cf. Barclay 55)
        - (3) Jew came to be "a common designation of anyone who belonged to the people of Israel" (Moo 159)
      - b) Hebrew: denotes the language (cf. Robertson 4:337)
      - c) Israelite: denotes the nation as a member of a theocracy (cf. Wuest 2:46)
    2. Relying upon the law
      - a) **Some are dependent upon the law to provide them with secure standing before God, perhaps even thinking being a Jew and having the law of Moses [evidences of election] result in exemption from judgment because of their**

**status as being "elect," a frighteningly erroneous conclusion**

- b) Those relying on the law were about to hear that it is the law which accuses them (cf. Barrett 55)
- 3. Boasting in God
  - a) Most Jews gloried in God as a national asset (cf. Robertson 4:338) who had given to them the law, and to no one else
  - b) **Many modern citizens may view God as a national asset, but fail to regard him as their personal Lord**
  - c) The Jews were confident of certain salvation
    - (1) Because of election
    - (2) Because of God's promises to forefathers
      - (a) Given the law of Moses
      - (b) Given the rite of circumcision
      - (c) Given the promised land
      - (d) Given the Davidic dynasty
    - (3) No doubt felt morally superior to every other nation and people group
  - d) They boasted in themselves that they were rightfully God's instead of glorifying God that he was righteously theirs (cf. McBeth 80)
    - (1) Knew about him but did not know him (cf. McBeth 81)
    - (2) Prayed about him not to him (cf. McBeth 81)
- B. Knowing God's will and approving its essentials (v. 18)
  - 1. Knowing his will
    - a) Knew by experience (γινώσκεις)
    - b) Knew God's clearly revealed will (τὸ θέλημα)
  - 2. Approving the essentials
    - a) Knew right from wrong (cf. MacGorman, *Layman's*, 35)
    - b) Being instructed out of the law
    - c) **Recipients of Special Revelation, like Written Revelation, can know God's will but do not always perform God's will**
- C. Confident they were guides to the blind (v. 19)
  - 1. **The Jews were intended by God to be his appointed guides to the Gentiles toward him, morality, and truth**

2. **The Jews were to be the "priest-nation"**  
(MacGorman, *Layman's*, 36)
  3. **The Jews were to be light to those in darkness**
  4. But what resulted was conceited arrogance (cf. Robertson 4:338)
  5. **Similarly, Christians are to be Christ's light bearers to the unenlightened and Christ's teachers to the untaught**
- D. **A corrector of the foolish must not be the biggest fool (v. 20; cf. McBeth 83)**
1. **Those who know right from wrong are not only expected to correct the foolish, which is awkward but necessary, but also live right over wrong**
  2. The immature are to be taught by the mature, not vice versa
  3. Having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth: God's word is truth in visible form
  4. Paul says, "Somebody would have to be blind to follow you!"

## II. Do You Not Teach Yourself (vv. 21-24)?

- A. Regarding stealing: stealing is sinful (v. 21)
1. Stealing is taking what is not ours
  2. Eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal" (Exod. 20:15)
    - a) Dishonest balances (scales)
    - b) Price-gouging
    - c) Inside trading
    - d) Ridiculously high interest rates
  3. The preaching of the Jews Paul spoke of was fine, but their practice left much to be desired
  4. Thus, Paul would say, "Repent or else"
- B. Regarding adultery (v. 22a)
1. Adultery is sinful
    - a) Adultery is sex outside the marriage covenant
    - b) Biblical marriage is always a man and a woman
  2. Seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exod. 20:14)
  3. Have you attached yourself to another other than your spouse in body or in mind? Repent or else!
- C. Regarding sacrilege (v. 22b)
1. **Sacrilege is showing open disrespect for God and the supernatural**
  2. Stealing valuables from pagan temples to sell?
  3. Withholding temple tribute (cf. Vincent 3:30)?

4. Withholding tithes?
- D. Regarding dishonoring God (v. 23)
  1. Boasting in the law but transgressing the law
    - a) **A transgression is an explicit violation of expressed law**
    - b) These hypocrites knew the demands of the law and violated them anyway
  2. **God is dishonored when his law is known but not kept, doted about but not done**
- E. Regarding bringing scorn upon God (v. 24)
  1. Breaking God's law blasphemes his holy name
    - a) Paul asks why any Gentile would want to embrace the God of the Jews based on what they had observed
    - b) **A gross contradiction occurs when those who are supposed to bring glory to God instead bring scorn upon him**
  2. **Christians can be guilty of bringing God into disrepute just as Jews were guilty of doing so (cf. Isa. 52:5; Ezek. 36:20)**
    - a) People act according to the gods they worship
      - (1) Immorality of Baal worship
      - (2) Child sacrifice of Molech worship
      - (3) These pagans are consistent in their behavior, for they act like their gods
      - (4) **Jews were, and Christians are, all too often inconsistent in their portrayal of God seen through their actions**
    - b) **Immoral, unethical, or lawless conduct on behalf of Christians gives the impression that God is immoral, unethical, lawless, and permissive**
    - c) **Orthodoxy (right belief) without orthopraxy (right practice) is meaningless**
    - d) **"The reverence in which God is held is determined not by his holy and righteous nature, but by the way in which by our lives and conversation we commend him to those among whom we live" (Cragg 417)**
    - e) **"Often faith in God is weak because the persuasives thereto are so faulty" (Cragg 417)**

**Conclusion: What we genuinely believe and what we are devoted to are demonstrated each day by the way we live. What kind of an example are you?** Hymn #359, "God's World Today."