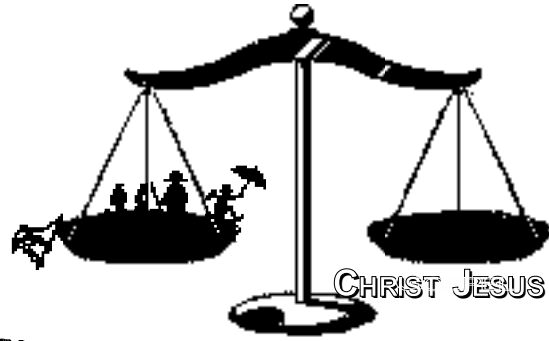




**EVERYONE NEEDS  
GOD'S  
RIGHTEOUSNESS**  
{Ro 1:18-3:20}



**THREE LOUSY EXCUSES FOR SIN**

**Excuse # 1 Ro 2:12-16**

Not Knowledge of the Law

but Keeping of the Law

**Excuse # 2 Ro 2:17-24**

Not Heritage - the name

but Hearing the Law

**Excuse # 3 Ro 2:25-29**

Not Circumcision

but Completion of Law

**PRINCIPLE OF JUDGEMENT**

*"God will judge the secrets of men  
THROUGH CHRIST JESUS."*  
Romans 2:16

**Intro.** Although the focus is on the Jews here, we must remember that they can and do very clearly represent those people who claim special immunity because of their covenant relationship with God such as Christians do. The Jews are being condemned not because they have certain covenantal privileges, but because they do "the same things" as the Gentiles (non-Christians) do and so deserve a similar judgment. Possessing the Law and circumcision is not everything. Or for the Christian, having the Bible and being baptized is not everything. Paul denies "covenantal nomism" where everyone in the covenant is saved and adopts "covenantal pistism (faith)." It is the faith within the covenant which makes them saved. We will now look at three ways that the Jewish people thought their special association with the Old Testament Law would save them. None of them did. In fact they all were judged by this law.

**Excuse # 1 Ro 2:12-16**

Not Knowledge of the Law  
but Keeping of the Law

**Key verse  
Romans 2:13**

Not what you know (in knowledge)  
but  
what you do.

"I have the Law!"

**1. From the Possession or Knowledge of the Law (Ro 2:12-16)**

In this section Paul resumes the diatribe from 2:1-5 and makes the arguments more specific and pointed. *"Just as then, Epictetus contests the claims of some to be "true Stoics" because they do not live the philosophy they teach, so Paul questions whether one who does not obey the law has any right to claim the title "Jew" (Moo, p. 154).*

**Inclusive judgment**

Paul is being inclusive in his arguments so that no one can excuse themselves for their sins. Judgment will be fair for it will be based on the same standard: whether they have sinned. They will not be excused by what they know but judged by what they have done.

Paul speaks of two categories in verses 12 and 14. The word "without the Law" (χωρὸς νόμου) does not refer to law-breakers but to the Gentiles which as a group has never received God's covenant (the Law). Those having the Law are the Jews.

**Differing witness**

Those under the Law will be judged by the Law. The Law stands as their accuser not as their savior.

The Gentiles will not be judged by whether they keep that Law for they are not under it. They don't need the OT Law to condemn them for their societal norm displayed through their consciences will condemn them.

**The Law, whether it be the Jewish Law or the "work of the Law" written in the heart can never save. Man strives to get to heaven by his attempt to fulfill God's standard is ridiculous. This is different than the New Covenant where the Law is perfectly fulfilled through Christ and genuinely implemented within the believers' hearts by the Holy Spirit.**



**Excuse # 2 Ro 2:17-24**  
 Not Heritage - the name,  
 but Hearing the Law

**Key verse**  
**Romans 2:23**

Not who you are (in name)  
 but  
 what you do.

‘I am a Jew!’

**2. From their Jewish Heritage (2:17-24)**

List the things the Jews were confident of (see verses 17-20)?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Paul in **2:17-20** describes how a number of Jews thought about their Jewishness. They bore the name Jew. They tend to look at the outward aspect of their people as a race rather than by the characteristics of the inner person. As a Jew, they claim to know all about God and have been taught by God’s Word. Notice the contrast between Ro 1:17 and Jeremiah 9:23-24 (c.f. I Cor 1:31). They have confidence of their relationship with God in their Jewish heritage along with the associated Law rather than in the revelation of God. Unfortunately they do not back up their profession with a clear obedience of the Law (it is impossible to keep the Law). They lack precisely what should differentiate them from the Gentiles: a righteous life.

**Jeremiah 9:23-24**

*“Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.”*

“... that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

**Romans 1:17**

*“For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”*

We must notice that they wrongly focus on their trust on name and knowledge of God rather than on God Himself. They are boasting in what they know rather than in who they know. Faith in Christ remains crucial.

From **Romans 2:1-2** we find that a self-righteous person finds fault most with people who have the sin that they themselves are committing, except they don’t recognize it in their own lives. Perhaps it is because of this principle, that Paul picks out certain sins in **verse 22** such as idolatry, adultery, stealing, and charges them with doing the same. If we have not experienced grace in a certain area of our lives, we become hyper-sensitive to it and therefore are quick to see the sin in others.

Furthermore, if the Jews have in some areas fallen under the guilt of the Law, does it not disclaim their inheritance by their disobedience? If this is the case, then no Jew can claim exemption of their disobedience by their name. These Jews simply cannot get by with special privileges with God.

In other words, as Paul concludes in **2:28-29**, it is not being part of the outward Jewish community which makes the difference but a life that lives in light of God’s moral law. But none of them have done this. They all need Jesus Christ.

**Application**

Do you see any parallels between these religious Jews and religious Christians today?

Remember, these Jews thought they were good religious people. How do you think they could do these evil acts in good conscience? Do you think we could “say and not do”?



**Excuse # 3 Ro 2:25-29**  
 Not Circumcision  
 but Completion of Law

**Key verse**  
**Romans 2:25**

Not what you have observed (rites),  
 but,  
 what you do with your lives.

“I am circumcised!”

**3. From their Religious Rite of Circumcision (Ro 2:25-29)**

In **25-29** he continues his argument that in being Jews they have no special favor with God excluding them from judgment. In **verses 12-24** Paul has shown that the possession of the law and their Jewish heritage will not protect them from a just judgment and now in these verses (**25-29**) he affirms that circumcision neither is able to protect them from God’s judgment for their sin. **No one cannot escape a fair judgment.**

**Theology** Paul is making a two-pronged preparation for having the Jews accept the Gentiles as equals in their Christian faith (cf. 3:1, 9).

- Firstly, all peoples will be equally judged, the Jew alongside of the heathen.
- Secondly, he shows how those not being circumcised can become one with God’s people (2:29).

This circumcision of the heart refers to the process of being ‘born from above’ where the ‘flesh is cast off’ (**Col 2:11**). This topic is based on the OT: **Dt 30:6**.

“To become uncircumcised means to become like a Gentile and to forfeit any defense that one’s membership in the people of God might provide on the day of judgment... For in contrast to Jewish teachers, who held that only a radical decision to renounce the covenant invalidated one’s circumcision. Paul argues that simple transgressions of the law can have the same effect.” -Moo, p. 165.

*Are we talking about how the Jews are as Gentiles  
 or that the Gentiles can be like good Jews?*

**Application** One of the big problems in our churches today is that religious people call themselves Christians because they were baptized and go to church, and yet live like the world. From the last two verses, how should we think and approach these religious people?

**Study Questions**

- Do any of you know where the rite of circumcision came about in Judaism? (cf. Ge 17:9-14).
- What does that last phrase in 2:25, “your circumcision has become uncircumcision,” mean?
- How does one become a spiritual Jew? Look in 2:29. Are you a spiritual Jew? Why so?
- Summarize the “Three lousy excuses for sin” that the Jews have used. Mention the dangerous parallel that Christians can so easily be deceived by.

**Can any religion save?**

Just as any religion that points to good works, the Law of Judaism cannot save. It only points out flaws that are in the lives of its inheritors. If we perfectly acted out the Law, then indeed there would be no problem but since no one has done such, then we all have failed and need salvation provided by Christ.