

Ignoring God's Truth Within Us, Romans 2:17–29, July 5, 2026

Bible Basis: Romans 2:17-19

BIBLE TRUTH: Paul declares that some people teach others to follow the Law, but do not follow the Law themselves.

MEMORY VERSE: By the end of the lesson, we will: TELL what Paul reveals about the people who claim to follow God's Law while failing to keep it. RECOGNIZE the hypocrisy of claiming to belong to God while breaking God's Law; and IDENTIFY the hypocrisy in our beliefs and daily actions and ways to comply with God's Law.

Lesson Objective

Students will understand that **true obedience and true identity** are matters of the **heart**, not outward appearance, religious labels, or rituals. Paul teaches that God looks beyond what we *claim* and examines who we *are* on the inside.

Background

In Romans 1, Paul addressed the sins of the Gentile world.

In Romans 2, he turns to the Jews — those who had:

- God's Law
- God's covenant
- God's promises
- Religious rituals (like circumcision)

But many relied on these outward privileges instead of inward obedience.

Paul's message is simple and sharp:

God is not impressed by outward religion. He wants a transformed heart.

Background Scriptures:

Psalm 104, I Peter 1:13-23

The correlation between each scripture with Romans 2:17-29

The Lesson:

Friend or Foe? (Romans 2:17-24)

¹⁷Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God;

¹⁸if you know His will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law;

¹⁹if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those in darkness,

²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

²¹you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?

²²You who forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

²³You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?

²⁴As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

Fill in the missing pieces: Romans 2:1-16

Paul is saying:

“You are not better than the people you judge. God sees the heart, and His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.”

★ What's Happening in Romans 2:17–24?

Paul confronts a very specific problem:

religious people who know the truth but don't live it.

He's speaking to Jews who:

- **Knew the Law**
- **Knew God's will**
- **Knew right from wrong**
- **Taught others**
- **Saw themselves as spiritual guides**

But despite all that knowledge, their **lives didn't match their teaching.**

★ 1. They Relied on Their Religious Identity (vv. 17–18)

Paul lists their spiritual privileges:

- “You call yourself a Jew”
- “You rely on the Law”
- “You boast in God”
- “You know His will”
- “You approve what is excellent”

These are good things — but they became a **source of pride**, not obedience.

Paul's point:

Knowing the right thing doesn't equal doing the right thing.

★ 2. They Saw Themselves as Spiritual Leaders (vv. 19–20)

They believed they were:

- Guides for the blind
- Lights for those in darkness

- Instructors of the foolish
- Teachers of infants

In other words:

“We’re the spiritually mature ones.”

But Paul exposes the problem:

They were teaching others while ignoring their own hearts.

★ 3. Paul Confronts Their Hypocrisy (vv. 21–23)

Paul asks three piercing questions:

- You preach against stealing — **do you steal**
- You forbid adultery — **do you commit adultery**
- You hate idols — **do you rob temples**

He’s not saying every Jew did these exact sins.

He’s saying:

Your life contradicts your message.

They boasted in the Law...

but broke the Law.

They claimed to honor God...

but dishonored Him by their behavior.

★ 4. The Result: God’s Name Is Blasphemed (v. 24)

Paul quotes Isaiah and Ezekiel:

“God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

Meaning:

Unbelievers mock God because of the behavior of His people.

This is the heart of the passage:

- 👉 Hypocrisy damages God's reputation.
 - 👉 Religious pride blinds us to our own sin.
 - 👉 God cares more about obedience than appearance.
-

II Real Circumcision (VV 25-29)

²⁵Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

²⁶If a man who is not circumcised keeps the requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

²⁷The one who is physically uncircumcised yet keeps the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸A man is not a Jew because he is one outwardly, nor is circumcision only outward and physical.

²⁹No, a man is a Jew because he is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise does not come from men, but from God.

★ What's Happening in Romans 2:25–29?

Paul is dismantling the false security the Jews had in **circumcision** — the outward sign of the covenant.

They believed that because they were circumcised, they were automatically right with God.

Paul says: **Not so.**

He explains three major truths:

★ 1. Circumcision Only Has Value If You Obey (v. 25)

“Circumcision has value if you observe the law...”

Circumcision was supposed to be a sign of obedience and covenant loyalty.

But if someone is circumcised yet **breaks the Law**, the outward sign becomes meaningless.

Paul's point:

Outward rituals don't matter if the heart is disobedient.

Modern parallel:

- Baptism
 - Church membership
 - Christian labels
- None of these save you if your heart is far from God.
-

★ 2. Obedience Matters More Than Ritual (vv. 26–27)

Paul flips the script:

If an uncircumcised Gentile **keeps God's moral law**, God counts him as if he *were* circumcised.

This is shocking to Jewish ears.

Paul is saying:

👉 **Obedience > Ritual**

👉 **Heart > Heritage**

👉 **Faithfulness > Physical signs**

And then he adds:

The obedient Gentile will **judge** the disobedient Jew — because the Jew had the Law *and* the sign, but still broke it.

This exposes the emptiness of religious pride.

★ 3. True Jewishness Is Inward, Not Outward (vv. 28–29)

This is the climax:

“A man is not a Jew if he is one outwardly...

A man is a Jew if he is one inwardly.”

Paul redefines covenant identity:

- Not by **birth**

- Not by **ritual**
- Not by **heritage**
- Not by **external marks**

But by:

❤️ **Circumcision of the heart**

🔥 **Done by the Spirit**

🙌 **Not by the written code**

☀️ **And praised by God, not people**

This is the same message echoed in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel:
God wants a **changed heart**, not just a marked body.

★ **Why This Matters Today**

This passage confronts:

- Empty religion
- Cultural Christianity
- Spiritual pride
- Outward performance
- Hypocrisy
- Identity based on labels instead of lifestyle

And it calls us to:

- Heart transformation
- Spirit-led obedience
- Authentic faith
- God-centered living

Fill-in-the-Blank Worksheet

Romans 2:17–29 — “A True Jew: The Heart God Sees”

Understanding the Passage

1. Paul says the Jews were confident because they had the _____ and knew God’s _____.
2. They believed they were a guide to the _____ and a light to those in _____.
3. Paul asks, “You who teach another, do you not teach _____?”
4. Hypocrisy causes the name of _____ to be _____ among the Gentiles.
5. Paul says that circumcision is valuable **only** if you _____ the Law.
6. If a Gentile keeps the Law, his _____ is counted as circumcision.
7. A true Jew is one _____, and true circumcision is of the _____.
8. This work is done by the _____, not by the letter of the Law.
9. The praise of a true believer comes not from _____ but from _____.

Reflection

1. What is one area where I might “teach others” but forget to teach _____?
2. Why does God care more about the _____ than outward religious actions?
3. What is one way I can invite the Holy Spirit to transform my _____ this week?

✓ Answer Key — Romans 2:17–29 Worksheet

Understanding the Passage

1. **Law / will**
2. **Blind / darkness**
3. **Yourself**
4. **God / blasphemed**
5. **Obey**
6. **Uncircumcision (or obedience)**
7. **Inwardly / heart**
8. **Spirit**
9. **People / God**

Reflection (Sample Answers)

These will vary, but here are model responses:

1. **Myself**
2. **Heart**
3. **Heart**

Application

1. **Empty**
2. **Surrendered (or obedient)**
3. **Holy Spirit**