

“Grace & Peace to You”

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Voice of China and Asia

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ROMANS-19 PART 1: LEGALISM: “A Sense of Superiority”.

READ: **ROM 2:17-29**

Having dismissed the Hedonist and the Moralist, Paul now moves to *the most stubborn of his “opponents”* – **THE JEWS** and their pride in “*Keeping THE LAW.*” We call it **LEGALISM**.

This is also the viewpoint with which Paul is MOST familiar:

PHIL 3:2-6 Look out for the **dogs**, look out for the **evildoers**, look out for those who **mutilate the flesh**. **FOR WE (Believers)** are the [true] **circumcision**, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no **confidence in the flesh**—⁴ though I myself have reason for **confidence in the flesh** also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for **confidence in the flesh**, I HAVE MORE:
⁵ **circumcised on the eighth day**, / of the **People of Israel**, / of the **Tribe of Benjamin**, / a **Hebrew of Hebrews**; / as to **THE LAW**, **a Pharisee**; ⁶ / as to zeal, **a persecutor of the Church**; / as to **righteousness under THE LAW**, **blameless**.

ONLY a **JEWISH PHARISEE** could hold that position. AND obviously, in **ROME** there must be some who hold that same view. YES, they are now Believers, saved by their faith in the work of Jesus Christ, but they still see their “**righteousness**” as a result of “**obedience to the Law of Moses.**” Some even holding to the demands of the **Sacrificial System**.

ACTS 11:2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, **the circumcision party criticized him**, saying,
³ “**You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.**”

¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” ¹⁸ When they heard these things, **they fell silent** (doesn't mean they changed their minds). And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

ACTS 15:1 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**”

⁵ But **some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees** rose up and said, “**It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.**”

⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ and **he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.**

¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing **a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?** ¹¹ But we believe that **we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.**”

ACTS 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how **many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law,** ²¹ and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs (Paul did NOT teach this – only that their “**righteousness**” was NOT by THE LAW, but by faith in JESUS as their MESSIAH). ²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.

²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ **take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses**, so that they may shave their heads. Thus

all [the Legalist Believers] will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.

ROMANS-19 PART 2: LEGALISM: “A Sense of Superiority”.

²⁶ *Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled, and the offering presented for each one of them.*

At the end of the period of consecration *they would present an offering in the temple, and their hair, which they had now cut, would be consumed in the sacrificial fire.*

The offering comprised *one he-lamb, one ewe-lamb, one ram, and accompanying food and drink offerings* (NUM 6:14–15).

Together with the “hair of consecration” the whole was called a “HAIR OFFERING”

THIS took place within a few months of Paul’s LETTER TO THE ROMANS!

These “**Law-Requiring Christians**” were in GALATIA, EPHESUS, COLOSSE, PHILIPPI, JERUSALEM, AND ROME.

The “Superiority” of Law-Abiding Self-Righteousness

F.F. Bruce “*Paraphrase of ROMANS 2:17-29*”

‘**You** bear the honored name of **JEW**,’ *Paul says*, ‘**your** possession of THE LAW gives **you** confidence, **you** glory in the fact that it is the ONE TRUE GOD whom **you** worship and whose will **you** know.

‘**You** approve the more excellent way,’ *Paul continues*, ‘for **you** have learned it from THE LAW. **You** regard **yourself** as better taught than *those lesser breeds* (Gentiles) without THE LAW; **you** consider **yourself** a *guide to the blind* and an *instructor of the foolish*.

‘*But why not take an honest look at yourself?* Have **you** no defects? **You** know THE LAW, but do **you** keep it? **You** say, “**You shall not steal**”; but do **you never** steal? **You** say, “**You shall not commit adultery**”; but do **you always keep** that commandment? **You detest idols**, but do **you never** rob temples? **You glory in THE LAW**, but in fact **your disobedience** to THE LAW brings **you** and the God whom **you** worship into disrepute among the pagans.

‘**To be a JEW will do one good** in the sight of God **only if he keeps** THE LAW OF GOD. A JEW who breaks THE LAW is **no better than a GENTILE**. Conversely, a GENTILE who keeps THE LAW’s requirements is **as good in the sight of God** as any law-abiding JEW. Indeed, a GENTILE who keeps THE LAW OF GOD will condemn a JEW who breaks it, no matter how well-versed that JEW may be in the sacred scriptures, no matter how canonically circumcised he is. **YOU SEE**, it is not a matter of natural descent and an external mark like circumcision. The word “JEW” means “*praise*”, and *the true JEW is the man whose life is praiseworthy by God’s standards, whose heart is pure in God’s sight, whose circumcision is the inward circumcision of the heart*. He is the true JEW, I say—*the truly praiseworthy man*—and **his praise is** not a matter of human applause, but of **Divine Approval**.

** Notice the Highlighted “**IF**” – In the Greek language there are “**conditional**” statements used throughout Paul’s Letters: **1st**; **2nd**; **3rd**; and **4th** each with an implied relation to reality. These are ALL “**1st Condition**” – indicating a positive statement: “**IF it were True AND it is...**” We might say “**since...**” **When taken into consideration**, their “**questioning statements**” become very “**offensive / arrogant / haughty**” - EVEN as they are directed to God. They are not asking as one who has “**no understanding**” of God’s ways... They are asking like a “**bratty teenager**” – **almost mocking the God they question.**”

THEIR HYPOCRISY:

ROM 2:17-24 **But IF YOU call yourself a JEW and rely on THE LAW and boast in GOD¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from THE LAW;¹⁹ and IF you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in THE LAW the embodiment of knowledge and truth—**

God's Question / Indictment – “Since ALL these statements are true...” – the implied answer SHOULD be that they are living an example of what God demands in the righteousness of a person's life... And THIS example should lead others to glorify God...

²¹ **YOU THEN who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² YOU who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? YOU who abhor idols, do you rob temples?**

The Problem... - ALL their “righteousness was a façade – they were unable to live a “righteous witness before other Jews... LET ALONE the Gentile Nations...

²³ **YOU who boast in THE LAW dishonor GOD by breaking THE LAW.**

Israel's History is a History of FaithLESSness – consistently abandoning the Righteous Demands of an EVER-FAITHFUL GOD –

SEE: PSALMS 50; 78; 105; 106

²⁴ **For, as it is written, “The NAME OF GOD is blasphemed among the GENTILES because of you.”**

This was a consistent indictment of the PROPHETS in the days of the Kings...

ISA 52:5 **Now therefore what have I here,” declares the LORD, “seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail,” declares the LORD, “and continually, all the day, my name is despised.**

EZEK 26:20-21 **But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land.’ But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.**

23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them.

➤ **The Jewish people had a religion of outward action, not inward attitude.** They may have been moral on the outside, but what about the heart? [JESUS' indictment of the Pharisees in MATT 23]

2 COR 3:9-11 **For if there was glory in THE MINISTRY OF CONDEMNATION – THE LAW, THE MINISTRY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS [THE GOSPEL] must far exceed it in glory.¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it.¹¹ For if what was being “brought to an end” [fading away] came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.**

ISA 1:11-18 {READ}