

WARM-UP

- What rule do you have difficulty obeying? Why?
- Was there a time when you were given a set of instructions but did not follow it completely? What happened as a result?
- Share an instance when you did something that you had, but did not want, to do. How did the way you felt affect your actions?

WORD ²⁸*For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.* ²⁹*But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.* **ROMANS 2:28,29**

(Read also **ROMANS 2:17–27.**)

The Jews were God’s chosen people. They were the first recipients of God’s laws and kept these laws by obeying them and passing them down to their children. Circumcision was a mark that gave a male Jew the assurance and confidence that he was part of God’s people (Genesis 17:9–12). The Jews argued that circumcision was also required for Gentiles to be assured of their salvation. In this passage, Paul confronted this mindset by pointing out that it is not the outward or physical practice that saves someone and puts them in right standing with God, but it *is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit*. Today, we will look at two truths about God’s commands that Paul wanted the Jews to understand.

1

We must know and teach God’s commandments, but it is more important that we obey them.

²³*You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.*

²⁴*For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”* ²⁵*For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.* **ROMANS 2:23-25**

The Jews prided themselves on knowing and observing God’s laws. They treated circumcision like a badge or seal that proved that they were right with God and belonged to His people. However, just like the Gentiles, the Jews did not fully obey the law. As a result of their hypocrisy, *God is blasphemed among the Gentiles*—the Jews who were supposed to represent Him to the unbelievers failed to do so with the honor He deserved. Paul said that knowing God’s law is only useful if it is obeyed, and those who fail to obey are just like the uncircumcised. According to Luke 6:46–49, why is it important that we obey God’s commands?

2

Having a relationship with God and obeying His commandments are a matter of the heart.

*²⁸For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. **ROMANS 2:28,29***

Paul explained further that it is possible to act like a Christian and still not please God or have a right relationship with Him. Having a true relationship with God is not a matter of the outward appearance or physical obedience, but a matter of the heart and spirit. It means to seek not the approval nor applause of men, but to please God. According to John 14:15, what are we expressing whenever we obey God's commands?

APPLICATION

- How can you know if you are boasting in the law (Romans 2:23)? Are there areas in your life from which you draw security and praise from men rather than God? How can your faith in God grow more as you rely on Him for the grace to live a life that is pleasing to Him?
- Are there commands from God that you are obeying out of obligation or compulsion? How does knowing that true obedience is a matter of the heart change the way you will obey God from now on?
- Think of a friend or family member whom you can encourage to obey God willingly and joyfully. Commit to pray for this person this week.

