



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Romans 39 False Security-02

Romans 2:17-29, *Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,¹⁸ and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,¹⁹ and are confident 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 babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.²¹ You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?²² You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?²³ You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law?²⁴ For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.*

²⁵For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?²⁷ And will not the physically

uncircumcised, if he fulfils the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

The purpose of that entire section from 1:18 through 3:20 is to point out that man is a sinner and man stands before God without resources, without any means of salvation or security.

Romans 1:18-32, God has revealed His wrath in judgment against the sinful pagan world because the world is guilty of rejecting His revelation and then of descending into idolatry and horrifying vice.

Romans 2:1-16 are a single section and gives us the principles on which God judges men.

Romans 2:17 to 29 deals with false security.

From **Romans 2:17-29**, the Jew had three great privileges which gave him a false sense of security.

1. Part of the nation of Israel. Heritage
2. Possessed the law of God. knowledge
3. Symbol of circumcision.

Knowledge.

V 17, Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,

From verse 17 to 24, the heart of it is knowledge.

This is the security in their knowledge.

Now they basically had the knowledge, no question about that. They had received the truth from God.

Their confidence was that they were secure because they had that knowledge.

Now there are four points that Paul makes here.

- a) Learned
- b) Taught
- c) Did
- d) Cause

Paul talks about what they learned, what they taught, what they did, and what they caused by the knowledge.

a) Learned.

They felt themselves secure because of what they had learned.

They rested in the law.

In verse 18 they knew God's will.

Also, they approved the things that are more excellent, or they were able to discern, having been instructed out of the law. So that sort of talks about what they had learned.

Based on what they had learned they felt themselves secure. They had all this knowledge. They knew God's will. They were able to discern what was right and what was wrong based upon biblical principles.

b) Taught.

They were instructed out of the law, *katech*.

We get a word from that word, "catechism." It means to be taught something orally.

There would be this oral repetitious teaching. They had been catechized out of God's law.

Oral instruction they had learned in the home and in the synagogue, they knew God's law, and God's will. They were able to discern what was right and what was wrong. They had tremendous knowledge of God's truth as revealed in the Old Testament. But it was all in their heads for the most part. They did not perceive that the knowledge they had was to affect the way they lived. They went on living in a sinful manner with this knowledge. In effect, they ignored it.

To the Hebrew, true wisdom is to do what you know to be true. To the Greek, wisdom was just to know.

To the Hebrew, wisdom was to do. The biggest fool of all was one who knew and did not do. So, they are fools in the classic Hebrew sense. They had all the privileges. They had all the knowledge. They felt secure in them.

But security does not come in what you know. It comes in what you do in response to what you know. If you don't do what you know to do, you simply wind up in a greater state of guilt.

Romans 9:31-32, *"Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness. ³²Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, [e]by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone."*

They knew it in their minds, but they never apprehended it in their hearts. and it simply meant greater judgment.

So, they felt secure in what they knew. But that is no security at all.

What you know is not your security. You may know about Christ, you may know about the Bible, you may know about

heaven and hell, you may know about the devil and God, you may know about sin, and you may know about goodness. What you know is not the issue. What you do about it is?

If it remains in the head, it only becomes the basis for greater condemnation. So, they were falsely secure because they knew. God held them responsible for knowing and not doing.

Romans 2:12, *For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.*

James 1:22, *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

You are deceived if you think just knowing is a security. It is not. It only gives you the greater responsibility for behaving properly.

V 19-20, *and are confident 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 babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.*

They felt that they had not only received it but they had taught it. God would certainly never pass them by. After all, they were the teachers of the law of God.

Wouldn't God be greatly pleased not only that they knew it but that they taught it to someone else?

They considered themselves to be capable of instructing all other nations. They saw themselves as the guides and lights of the world.

They should well have been the channel through which God could reach the rest of the world. They were not in fact, but they saw themselves as those who could teach the whole world. They just never got around to doing it properly.

Somebody who leads a person along a path, that you were really the kind of person who can lead people along the path to truth, people who are blind.

They saw themselves as those who could guide the people who were ignorant, who could teach the untaught, the unlearned. They saw themselves as teachers of the ignorant and teachers of the inexperienced.

Matthew 23:16, *“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’*

They thought they were teachers. Jesus said they were anything but and were in fact leading people into the same pit that they themselves were falling into.

They fancied themselves also to be a light of them who are in darkness. They saw themselves as a light to those in darkness. Because this is all basically what they were supposed to have been.

A guide to the blind.

In the Old Testament that Israel was to be a guide to those who could not see. They were to be a guide to the blind, to those who are in spiritual ignorance.

Isaiah 42:6, *"I have appointed you as a light to the nations."* They were to bring light to the darkness of the world.

Matthew 5:14-16, *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

They were to be guides to the blind, they were to lead those who were spiritually ignorant, and they were to be a light to those who were caught in the darkness of sin. That was their calling.

They thought they were able to do that. They thought they were capable of doing that. But the fact was they were condemning the very people they taught.

Matthew 23:15, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of [hell](#) as yourselves.*

Why?

Because you are not giving them the true message but giving them the message of works. It was not the purpose of the Pharisees and scribes to convert people to God.

They also saw themselves as instructors of the foolish.

The term “instructor” there means a “corrector.” It emphasizes training or discipline.

They saw themselves as those who were to correct the foolish. The Jews used that very frequently to speak of Gentiles.

They saw themselves as teachers of babes. The word simply means infants. It is used in the New Testament to speak of sort of baby Christians. It is used to speak of Jews who are infantile in their understanding. Here it is probably used of Jewish proselytes. It is a term that was commonly used by the

Jews to speak of those who were entering into Judaism from a Gentile background.

They felt capable to instruct the converts from paganism.
Because they had learned the law, verse 17 and 18,
Because they had taught the law, verse 19 and 20,
They felt that they were secure.

V 20, *having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.*

That really was their confidence.

The word "form" has to do with the idea of a sketch or a scheme or an outline or a framework. It is only used here and in **2 Timothy 3:5** where you have a form of godliness without power.

Exactly what they had. They had a sketch or a structure or a framework or an outline or a scheme of things. But they did not have the full content. They lacked the substance. But they felt secure in their knowledge.

The rabbis had said that studying the law is equal to keeping the law. Paul says that is not true.

They said, we are secure because of what we have learned and taught.

c) Did

V 21, You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

If you make all these claims of what you know and what you teach, do you do those things?

Because the issue is not what you know, it is what you do.

It is not what you teach, it is what you do.

Our country is full of people who teach Christian truth who will never enter God's kingdom. Nations are loaded with disguised as angels of light, false teachers, false prophets, who under the guise of true prophets and true shepherds are teaching.

There are other people who may be teaching the law of God, teaching principles out of the Bible, teaching things out of the Scripture. But it is not what they teach, it is what they do.

The terrible gulf between profession and practice.

Paul says you are guilty of what you condemn in other people. You are a teacher, and you don't even live up to your own lessons.

- You are like a crooked cop, somebody out there under the pretence of upholding the law, all the time breaking it.
- You are like an unjust judge, somebody who sits on the bench with the task of rendering justice and living out injustice. The worst kind of hypocrisy.

They pretended and they did not obey.

Psalms 50:16-22, *But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth, ¹⁷Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you? ¹⁸When you saw a thief, you consented with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers. ¹⁹You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit. ²⁰You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. ²¹These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes. ²²"Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, And there be none to deliver:*

Why are you so wrapped up in My law, seeing you hate instruction and you cast My words behind you? What is this big external preoccupation with My law when you will not even abide by it?

What good does it do to teach something you do not live?

V 21-22, *You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? ²²You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?*

Three things:

- i. Stealing/Theft,
- ii. Adultery and
- iii. Violation.

Three illustrations of sins that were rather common among the Jewish people.

Stealing.

You preach against stealing, do you steal?

Isaiah 56:10-11, *His watchmen are blind, They are all ignorant; They are all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. ¹¹Yes, they are greedy dogs Which never have enough. And they are shepherds Who cannot understand; They all look to their own way, Every one for his own gain, From his own territory.*

Isaiah speaks of the robbery and the extortion, as do many of the other minor prophets. That was true of the people of God before they were judged.

Ezekiel 22:12, *In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase; you have made profit from your neighbours by extortion, and have forgotten Me,” says the Lord God.*

Amos 8:4-6, *Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail. Saying: “When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit, ‘That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals— Even sell the bad wheat?”*

They robbed.

They robbed each other.

Malachi 3 says they robbed God by not bringing their tithes into the storehouse.

It was characteristic of them that they were thieves. Now it is not only true of those in the past generation but even the generation to which our Lord came, to which the apostle Paul wrote.

When Jesus came into the temple the first time to cleanse the temple.

Luke 19:46, *saying to them, "It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

They were in there ripping people off from top to bottom. It was a way of life with them, cheating them on the exchange of money, cheating them on the sale of sacrificial animals.

Matthew 23:14, *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.*

They literally extorted people, robbed from people.

Paul is saying the same thing to them that Jesus said, that the Old Testament prophets said, "You have the law but what good does that do when you don't obey the law? You preach against stealing and then you go around stealing."

Adultery.

V 22, *You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?*

Did they commit adultery?

Matthew 5:27-28, *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

You say not to commit adultery, you teach people do not commit adultery, and then you go around committing adultery in your heart all over the place.

Legalism has no ability to restrain sin. It cannot. All it does is intensify it. Anybody caught up in a legalistic system where they are trying to gain God's favour by their own works finds themselves utterly unable to restrain their evil flesh.

So, they were not committing adultery outwardly but inwardly they were really committing adultery.

Matthew 5:31-32, *“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’³² But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*

If you are going to divorce your wife, just do the paperwork. That is all. You can divorce her if you want, just do the paperwork.

Why were they doing that?

Why were they divorcing their wife?

Because it was a way out of adultery. If they fell in love with another woman or if they saw another woman they wanted, instead of committing adultery, they had just divorced their wife and marry her.

So, they were multiplying their wives to avoid technically adultery, which constituted adultery.

They were adulterous. They were teaching against it, and they were living against the thing they taught.

Violation.

You hate idols, and that of course was definitely of the Lord. The Lord said no other gods and so forth. *"You say you hate idols, and you commit sacrilege."*

The Jews supposedly abhorred — that is what the word means, and the word means to turn away from something because of its stench. You literally cannot stand the stench of idols.

You teach against idolatry and yet you commit sacrilege. The literal Greek word there is "you rob temples."

What does that mean?

The Jews robbed temples.

Malachi show how they robbed the temple of God, but I do not think that is the issue here.

They did rob the temple of God. They robbed their own temple. According to Josephus, they robbed the temple in Jerusalem. They got a noble Roman lady to give a bunch of money to them under the pretence it was going to Judaism, and it was for the temple.

Deuteronomy 7:25-26, *You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. ²⁶Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.*

You are to hate idols. You are to abhor idols. If you come across one in the conquering, you destroy it and you don't save its value, or silver, or gold, but you destroy it.

They were robbing. They were going into pagan temples and stealing the idols, the silver, and the gold, and taking them and finding the value of them for their own personal gain.

So, on the one hand, you are preaching against idolatry; on the other hand, you are robbing temples to make money off idols. Incredible.

There is one allusion in the New Testament.

Acts 19:37, *For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.*

When they captured the apostle and they brought him to the Gentile court they said, you brought these men here and they did not rob any temples.

That assumes that on other occasions, Jews had been taken captive and brought to the tribunal for doing robbing temples. So, it must have been a somewhat common activity. They probably justified it even though it was in direct violation of Deuteronomy chapter 7.

Cause/Effect.

What have they caused?

V 23, *You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law?*

You boast of the law, but you dishonour God in breaking the law. They broke the standard they supposedly learned and taught. They transgressed against God.

Sin is always against God.

Psalm 51:4, *Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.*

When they broke the law, they sinned against God. The people of God, who boast in God, and break God's laws.

What an incredible way to live, to accept all the blessing of God, the heritage and the knowledge, and then live-in violation of all of that and still think you are secure.

Who call themselves Christians, and believe that all of the gospel is true, and they hang around the church, and they are a part of the church, but the fact is they never live it.

We see it not only in the pew but in the pulpit as well.

V 24, *For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.*

Isaiah 52:5, *Now therefore, what have I here,” says the Lord, “That My people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule*

over them Make them wail,” says the Lord, “And My name is blasphemed continually every day.

If you claim to know Christ, if you claim to know God, and then you live a sinful wicked life, if you say you have learned the truth about God and you teach the truth about God and live a sinful wicked life, you just blaspheme God, that is all.

Two ways in which God gets blasphemed.

Ezekiel 36:17-20, *“Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. ¹⁸Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. ¹⁹So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. ²⁰When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of His land.’*

That is a statement of mockery.

They are saying, "here is the people of the Lord, He must really be something, all He does is chase His people out of their land." What God is saying, when God has to chasten His people, the result is that the world thinks God to be unfair,

unkind, judgmental, burdensome, overbearing and His name is dishonoured.

Some people have shattered, broken lives because the Lord has chastened them. People look at that and say, "You are a Christian, you believe in Christ, He hasn't done you any favours."

Your sin causes God's holy reaction to bring chastening. The result of that causes the world to say, "What kind of a God have you got?"

So, God's name is blasphemed when He has to chasten.

It appears God was evil because He was forever having to chasten His people. It also seemed as if God was impotent. His people always seemed to be strung out in distress.

I have told a few people in my life that I would appreciate it if they did not tell anybody anymore that they were Christians.

Do you adorn the doctrine of God, or do you bring reproach upon Him?

How you live in your family, your school, your job, whatever.

Do you really put to silence the ignorance of foolish men?

Do you shut the mouths of the critics?

Do you let your light so shine before the world and before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven?

Do they glorify God when they see you?

Do they see something honourable?

Something noble?

Something wonderful?

Something pure about your life so that they honour the God who is your God?

Or do they say that your God must be impotent?

Your God must be evil, look at the evil of your life.

For whatever your life is reflects upon the one you say is your God.

The Gentiles begin to hate the Jews because they were so exclusive, so isolated. God was blasphemed. The Gentiles began to regard Judaism as a barbarous superstition.

3. Symbol of circumcision.

V 25, For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

Security of ceremony.

Circumcision does not do you a bit of good if you don't keep the law, but if you keep the law, it's just an added blessing. By

the way, circumcision was a rite that was more ancient than Moses.

Genesis 17 we will find the circumcision. But circumcision became the unique mark of the Jew. The eighth day after the child was born, it was circumcised. That was an indication of the child being set apart to that special covenant relationship with God. It was very important.

In Exodus chapter 4 when Moses forgot or failed for whatever reason to circumcise his child and his wife did it with a stone and told Moses he was a bloody man, and she was angry about it. She did the rite, not because she believed God wanted her to, but she did it grudgingly to keep Moses from getting killed by God.

So, it must have been a very important thing. She circumcised her child with a stone to prevent her husband from falling into the judgment of God. God wanted His people to be circumcised. It was a meaningful symbol of the covenant. It was the mark on the human body that this was the covenant people.

But it did not mean anything, if you did not keep the law. But the Jew thought, just because I am circumcised, I am fine. It is a perfect parallel to baptism.

Infant baptism today cannot be found in the Bible. It is simply translating the concept of circumcision into the church, and instead of circumcising a child, which now is done medically, they simply baptize a child as the sign of the covenant. But it has no New Testament teaching. It is strictly a sort of an extension of Old Testament circumcision. It was the mark of the covenant.

The Jew felt, because I have the mark of the covenant. Paul says, if you do not keep it, it does not mean anything.

Circumcision was a symbol of the fact that men were condemned, not that they were saved. Because if you were circumcised it said you were in the covenant and the covenant was that you had to keep the law. So, it was a sign of your lostness, not your redemption.

It was a constant reminder that you had to keep God's law; you were in the covenant. You had to keep God's law. You could not keep God's law, so you were lost. But to them, just being circumcised was their security.

Rabbi Joel Kut Rabin said, "Circumcision saves us from hell."

In the midrash, it says, *"God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised would be sent to hell. Abraham sits before the gate of hell and never allows any circumcised*

Israelite to enter." Now they believed they were saved by that.

It was an outward sign of an inward obligation and duty before God.

Jeremiah 6:9-10, *Thus says the Lord of hosts: "They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel; As a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches." ¹⁰To whom shall I speak and give warning, That they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, And they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.*

Circumcised became then the concept of a spiritual reality. God wanted ears that were circumcised, that is, obedient to the covenant.

V 26, *Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?*

A Gentile who keeps the law of God is going to be included in the covenant blessing even if he is not circumcised.

If you break the law, it is not going to help you.
If you keep the law, it is not necessary.

Circumcision is not necessary, but everything depends on whether you keep the law. Everything depends on obedience.

Romans 2:6, *who "will render to each one according to his deeds":*

So, circumcision has no inherent value. It has no power to redeem. It is only a symbol.

Not a symbol that everything is fine, but a symbol that everything is not fine because it reminds them that they are obligated to keep the whole law. There is no security in that symbol.

V 27, *And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfils the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?*

An obedient Gentile will be the judge of a disobedient, a disobedient Jew.

They do not want to hear that.

God is the judge. But the Gentile will assume the role of a witness for the prosecution.

Why?

If a Jew comes into the court and says, "I didn't know what I was supposed to do." All God has to say is, "You see this

uncircumcised Gentile, he did what was right and he didn't know what you knew, therefore he is living testimony of your guilt."

The obedience of an uncircumcised Gentile is proof of the responsibility of a circumcised Jew.

There are many sacramental Protestants and people who believe in Protestantism that your baptism at your birth was redeeming. Not so.

Paul sums it up in the last two verses.

V 28-29, *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

Your physical heritage, it is not your biological descent.

Matthew 3:9, *"God could raise up sons of Abraham out of these rocks if He wanted to."*

It is not your biology, but your heart.

Are you inwardly one of the people of God?

Romans 9:6, *"Not all Israel is Israel."*

Not all Jews are true Jews. A true Jew is one who is inwardly a Jew.

You are not the people of God physically but that you are the people of God spiritually.

It is the cutting away of evil from the heart. It is the cutting away of the unclean from the heart. It is the renewal of the heart.

Jeremiah said the people are not circumcised in their hearts.

Jeremiah 9:26, *Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart."*

Having the letter of the law, possessing the knowledge, isn't the issue. It is in the spirit, the soul, the inner self having the Word of God.

Colossians 3:16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

The Jews outwardly sought to receive praise from men, but a true Jew receives praise from God.

By the way, the word "Jew" comes from Judah, and Judah means "praised." "Whose praise is not of men but God" is a play on words. He is a true Jew for he lives up to his name. He is praised by God. That is a true Jew.

So, the Jew is not exempt from condemnation. All his securities are destroyed.

Immediately the question pops up.

Romans 3:1, *What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?*

Why be Jewish?

Come back next week!