

• Jesus Christ will judge our inner secrets

• Part of the gospel message

• Three things about 'moral and upright and respectable' people

1. They claim many advantages

(i) The name Jew

(ii) The law

(iii) National relationship with God

(iv) Knowing God's will

(v) Their superiority

2. They claim a superior relationship to others

• The difficulty with people with fixed ideas is that they feel they are beyond improvement

3. They are full of subtle sins

¹⁶The doers of the law will be vindicated in the day God shall judge the secret things of men and women according to my gospel through Christ Jesus. There are three matters emphasized here. (i) 'Secret things' get judged. The inner secrets of sinners come out into the open, but the secret thoughts of those who are walking in the Spirit also get revealed. This is what vindication is. It is the inner godliness of our lives becoming public. God does not invent anything; he just lets the truth be known. (ii) The judge is Jesus. The Father does not judge anyone directly but has committed his judgement day to his Son^{□1}. (iii) Judgement is part of the message of good news preached by Paul. It is good news to believe that sin will be dealt with.

The moral and upright person is unable to stand in God's judgement day unless he has Jesus as his Saviour and sanctifier^{□1}. Judgement will be based on reality, and based upon our works. Knowledge of the law of God will not be of any value to any people if they do not know Jesus. Only those who have fulfilled the law will come through in God's judgement day and that only happens by persistent faith in Jesus^{□2}.

1. Moral and upright and respectable people claim many advantages^{□1}. (i) Paul begins to address the Jewish friends at Rome directly. They delighted in the name 'Jew'. ¹⁷*But if you bear the name 'Jew' and rely on the law, and boast in God...*

(ii) They delighted in the Mosaic law: 'if you . . . rely on the law . . .'. The Jew felt that the mere fact that the Mosaic law had been given to his nation only meant that he was safe and secure in the salvation of God. (iii) They delighted in the relationship the nation had with God: 'if you . . . boast in God . . .'

(iv) They delighted in their knowledge of God's will. In Romans 2:18 Paul continues: *and if you know the will of God, and approve the things that are superior, being instructed out of the law . . .* The Jew felt quite sure that the Mosaic law was a revelation from God and that because he had the law he knew God's will.

(v) They were proud of what they felt was their superior way of living. Paul says, 'if you . . . approve the things that are superior'. The Jew felt that his religious customs were obviously far superior to the pagan life. Such people know God's will but their knowledge exercises no pressure upon them to live a godly life even when no one is observing them.

2. Moral and upright and respectable people claim a superior relationship to others^{□1}. Modern 'churchy' people are the same. Their imagined salvation shows itself in the way in which such people relate to others. Paul mentions four ways in which they think about themselves. He continues: ¹⁹ . . . *and if you are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,* ²⁰*an instructor for foolish people, a teacher of children, someone who has in the law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth . . .* (i) They felt themselves to be spiritual guides to the rest of the world. (ii) They felt themselves to be 'a light to those in darkness'. Yet all their knowledge and separation from the wickedness of the gentiles was only wickedness in a different form. (iii) The Jew felt himself to be 'an instructor for foolish people'. (iv) The Jew felt himself to be 'a teacher of children'. The difficulty with people with fixed ideas is that they feel they are beyond improvement. Then they just 'answer' the people they meet with their fixed orthodoxy. Others are just children!

3. Moral people are full of subtle sins^{□1}. Romans 2:17 was the beginning of a long sentence, beginning with three 'ifs': 'But if . . .'^{□2}, 'and if . . .'^{□3}, 'and if . . .'^{□4}. Now comes the end of the sentence: ²¹ . . . *you, those who teach others not to be angry, are angry yourselves!* ²² *Those who despise the things of God, despise those who are created in the image of God.*

□1 John 5:22, 23

□1 2:1-11

□2 2:12-16

□1 2:17-18

□1 2:19-20

□1 2:21-24

□2 2:17

□3 2:18

Five questions

then, who teach others, do you teach yourself? Then comes a string of questions that presses the matter firmer upon our consciences: *You who preach that one should not steal do you steal?* . . . (and so on to the end of verse 23). Paul has some questions for us: (i) Do you teach yourself? How often we have moralized others but failed to apply what we know to ourselves! (ii) Do you steal? The Jew of Paul's day knew all about Exodus 20:15. 'These pagan people!' he said to himself. 'They need the law of God. So many of them are thieves!' Yet the Jewish person was as good at stealing as anyone else! Paul is not accusing every Jew with committing all of these sins. It is simply that Jewish society was well known and it was obvious to everyone that plenty of adultery and stealing and robbing temples went on among them.

2:19-20

(i) Do you teach yourself?

(ii) Do you steal?

(iii) Do you commit adultery?

(iv) Do you rob temples?

(v) Do you dishonour God?

²²*You who tell people not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?* (iii) Paul's third question is: Do you commit adultery? It is plain from the next question ('Do you rob temples?') that he is thinking of plain and literal acts of sin! The Jews announced publicly that they were against adultery, but it was not so unusual for them to be privately guilty of it! So Paul asks religious people: Do you commit adultery?

(iv) Paul's fourth question is: Do you rob temples? The law noted the fact that the idols were often overlaid with gold or silver and it said, 'You shall not covet the gold or the silver that is on them, nor take it for yourselves'¹. The Jew denounced people who went to the temples to worship idols, yet it sometimes happened that he himself went to the temple to steal idols. But 'covetousness is idolatry'!

Deuteronomy 7:25

The Jew felt that his law guaranteed that he had a superior culture and superior principles of living. But Paul says: ²³*You who boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law?* (v) So his fifth question is: Do you dishonour God? Paul refers to Isaiah 52:5: ²⁴*For, as it is written, 'The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you.'* Jewish people in Paul's day had a bad reputation. They were known for their meanness, their driving a hard bargain, their lack of compassion, their Pharisaical spirit, the way they either tried to impose their culture on everyone or else regarded others as pitifully wretched because they knew nothing of Jewish ways! Isaiah long ago saw a day when God's people Israel would be not only in bondage to the Babylonians but in bondage to sin. It is possible to die spiritually in a highly religious atmosphere. Jewish law did not bring salvation then or now. 'Church' does not save, then or now. Only Jesus is the Saviour. We have to know him to experience salvation.

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• Only Jesus is the Saviour

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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