

# Romans 2:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

## Analysis

**An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes**—παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων (paideutēn aphronōn, didaskalon nēpiōn). Παιδευτής (paideutēs, "instructor/disciplinarian") from paideia (education/discipline). Ἄφρων (aphrōn, "foolish/senseless") describes Gentiles as morally undeveloped. Διδάσκαλος (didaskalos, "teacher") addresses νήπιοι (nēpioi, "infants/immature ones"). Jews viewed Gentiles as spiritual children requiring Torah instruction to mature.

**Which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law**—ἔχοντα τὴν μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ (echonta tēn morphōsin tēs gnōseōs kai tēs alētheias en tō nomō). Μόρφωσις (morphōsis, "embodiment/formulation") suggests Torah contains γνώσις (gnōsis, "knowledge") and ἀλήθεια (alētheia, "truth") in structured, systematic form. Jews possessed God's revealed truth in Scripture, not philosophical speculation.

Paul concludes the catalog of Jewish privileges: confident guides, lights in darkness, instructors and teachers, possessors of truth's very blueprint. These are legitimate advantages! But verses 21-24's devastating questions expose the tragedy: teachers who don't teach themselves, preachers who don't practice what they proclaim, guardians of truth who dishonor it. Morphōsis may hint at "mere form"—outward appearance without inward reality (2 Timothy 3:5's "form of godliness, denying the power").

## Historical Context

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Jewish teachers (rabbis) held honored positions, training students in Torah interpretation. The title "teacher" carried authority and respect. Synagogues functioned as schools where Jews—and interested Gentiles—learned Scripture. This educational infrastructure preserved Judaism through dispersion and persecution. However, Jesus condemned teachers who placed heavy burdens on others without lifting a finger (Matthew 23:4), and Paul here echoes that critique: possessing truth's 'form' without its transforming power.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. Do I have 'the form of knowledge and truth' in biblical doctrine without corresponding life transformation—orthodoxy without orthopraxy?
2. How can I avoid the tragedy of teaching others truths I don't personally apply?
3. In what areas might I be an 'instructor' or 'teacher' in name while remaining spiritually immature myself?

## Interlinear Text

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παιδευτὴν	ἀφρόνων	διδάσκαλον	νηπίων	ἔχοντα	τὴν		
An instructor	of the foolish	a teacher	of babes	which hast	G3588		
G3810	G878	G1320	G3516	G2192			
μόρφωσιν	τῆς	γνώσεως	καὶ	τῆς	ἀληθείας	ἐν	τῷ
the form	G3588	of knowledge	and	G3588	of the truth	in	G3588
G3446		G1108	G2532		G225	G1722	
νόμῳ·							
the law							
G3551							

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Timothy 3:5** (Parallel theme): Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

**Titus 1:16** (Parallel theme): They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

**2 Timothy 1:13** (Word): Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 6:17** (Parallel theme): But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

**1 Corinthians 3:1** (Parallel theme): And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.