

﴿you study the scripture? Will you not understand?﴾. The root meaning of the word 'aql (reasoning or understanding) is to make a person understand that which will benefit him and restrain him from doing that which will harm him. Reason encourages the individual to be the first one to do what he tells others to do, and the first one to refrain from what he tells others not to do. If a person tells others to do good but does not do it himself, and he tells them not to commit evil but does not refrain from it himself, that indicates that he in fact has no understanding and is ignorant, especially if he does that knowingly. Thus proof is established against him.

Although this verse was revealed concerning the Children of Israel, it is general in meaning and applies to everyone, because Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most loathsome to Allah that you say that which you do not do.﴾
(as-Saff 61: 2-3)

There is nothing in the verse to indicate that if a person does not do what he is enjoining others to do, then he should give up enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, because it is well known that the individual has two duties: enjoining (what is good) and forbidding (what is evil) to others, and doing likewise for himself. The fact that he gives up doing one of them does not mean that he has a concession allowing him to give up the other. Perfection is attained when the individual does both duties, and the worst-case scenario is when he gives up both. As for doing one of them and not the other, it is not as good as the former, but it is not as bad as the latter. Moreover, it is human nature that people do not follow those whose deeds contradict their words; deeds are more likely to be heeded and emulated than mere words.