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# Romans

**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... Romans 2:12**

Today's verse begins an amazingly sobering thought concerning the nature of man, our relationship with God as fallen creatures, and our desperate need to "get the word out" to the people of the world.

The thought begins with "for." This begins a confirmation of what has been previously stated. To understand the context, take a moment to review verses 1-11. "For as many as have sinned without law" is speaking about the entire scope of the people of the world who had not yet received God's law as given to the nation of Israel. The words "without law" are translated from *anomos*, the *a* is negative and *nomos* is speaking of the law given through Moses to Israel.

This is the world at large and is speaking of all people since the beginning of the world. They "will also perish without law." How can this be? If there is no law to instruct the people, then how can they be condemned? Where is the fairness in this? These are the often asked and obvious questions of the people of the world. "It's not fair!" But this is making the assumption that there is no standard at all by which we can be judged. Paul showed in the previous chapter and will show in the coming verses that there is a universally understood "law" that is written on our conscience.

A major premise of the Bible is that man is fallen. In order to reconcile this, God has worked through several “dispensations” to show us that fallen state and our need for Jesus. Each of these dispensations leads us to a new understanding of our corrupt nature and our deserved condemnation before His glorious perfection. Jesus confirms this fallen state in John 3:18 –

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

As He notes, we are “condemned already.” Fallen man needs to do nothing to go to hell; he is already on that road. What He needs is an avenue of escape from that path. This is the plan of salvation as the Bible reveals and which ultimately takes us to Jesus and the cross of Calvary. Along that path, God introduced the law. This period is one of the dispensations God gave the world. It shows us His standards and what man can do to live by them. Paul explains though that no one can meet its standards perfectly (Romans 3:19, 20). Even the law itself shows us this by offering the Day of Atonement – a needed cup of grace found each year in the midst of an ocean of works. Without the Day of Atonement, the law merely condemns those under the law.

The second half of today’s verse shows us this – “...as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.” This is the fair and equitable standard to which the Jew (whom Paul has been addressing) could find no place to object. They were the recipients and bearers of God’s law and they lorded their position of favor over those who didn’t possess the law. And yet, the very law they felt favored them is actually what brought about stricter judgment and greater condemnation.

In essence, and as Paul will explain in his writings, the law was given to demonstrate two great lessons to the world –

1) To show us how utterly sinful sin is to God – “Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.” Romans 7:13

2) To show fallen man his desperate need for something better, something apart from the law, something without which there is no hope – “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Galatians 3:21-25

The law is a tutor which was meant to take us by the hand and lead us directly to our need for God’s unmerited favor, His grace, His mercy... His Son, our Lord Jesus.

Life application: Are you trusting in deeds of the flesh to obtain God’s favor? If so, turn away from this mindset and the futility it produces and come to God’s Fountain of grace – Jesus. Place your faith and trust in Him alone for your salvation and then accomplish works which will demonstrate the change that has taken place in you. And be sure to tell others about what God has done. All are under a sentence of condemnation and all need Jesus.

**...(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; Romans 2:13**

We are continuing on with a series of verses which need to be looked at from a broad scope of Scripture and not as individual, stand-alone, thoughts. If we take these verses and cite them without proper context, a completely wrong conclusion of what Paul is actually trying to tell us will be derived. What he says

here in verse 13 ought to be obvious in the plain sense. If you only hear the law and don't do what the law says, the law is of no value at all.

To understand this, just think of a sign by the train tracks, "Stay off the tracks when a train is approaching." The people who live in the area have this law, just as Israel had the law. But then one guy in town (a real smart fellow) decides to take his family for a stroll on Sunday... on the tracks. Obviously being one who has the law posted was of no value to him and his family, and yes, the funeral is Tuesday at 10am.

James writes similar words in his epistle as well – "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." James 1:22-25

The law, which is only a portion of the word, has a particular part and purpose in God's redemptive plan, but that purpose ended at the cross of Jesus. In Matthew 5:17, it notes that Jesus came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. And fulfill them He did. They are now set aside in Christ (Hebrews 10:9).

The point that needs to be more carefully evaluated is what the law itself says in Leviticus 18:5, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord." Paul quotes this verse twice, once in Romans 10:5 and then again in Galatians 3:11, 12. He states that "no one is justified by the law in the sight of God." So what is he talking about in today's verse? Is Paul confused? No. The reason is that the law, just like all of God's dealings with man, is ultimately based on faith, not works.

The law itself requires works, but they are works which demonstrate to us our inability to meet the very law on which the works are based. As was noted in evaluating the previous verse, the law was given to show us the utterly sinful nature of sin and to lead us to seek out God's mercy and forgiveness. The law itself shows us this in the book of Habakkuk –

“Behold the proud,  
His soul is not upright in him;  
But the just shall live by his faith.” (vs. 2:4)

Therefore, what Paul is saying today is not that the law justifies a person or can justify a person, only that the “doers of the law will be justified.” And, none except Jesus are truly “doers of the law” unless they are living by faith.

So here we have the resolution: The law was given and no one can meet its standards perfectly. Therefore faith is required that despite not meeting it God will provide salvation to those who will trust in Him and not in themselves; self-reliance in meeting the deeds of the law is not trusting in God, but in self. Then Jesus came to fulfill the law we cannot fulfill. Now, by faith in His accomplishing the law and then becoming our sin-offering at the cross, we now stand justified before God. It is faith in God's providence at all times and in all dispensations which reconcile us to God.

Life application: Are you living by faith in what Jesus did or are you trying to please God through your own deeds? Have faith in what God has done through Jesus and then you will be able to please God with your deeds, because they are based on faith and not on the act itself. Above all, God looks for faith in His faithless creatures.