***Privilege Doesn't Count, No. 1  
RO14-01***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1975)**

Please open your Bibles to Romans 2. We want to establish for you the fact that privilege doesn't count.

**The Moral Unbeliever**

In Romans 2, we have looked at the moral unbeliever, a fine person; and, yet this person is condemned in the eyes of God, because morality is not to be equated with salvation. Morality is not Christianity. Christianity is a good deal more than morality. A person's spiritual condition, as a matter of fact, Paul points out, is revealed by his works. Some people produce human good works. But human good works, because they come from the old sin nature, are evil. It makes no difference what you do, whether it is sins, or whether it is human good. It comes from the old sin nature, and God condemns it.

**The Believer**

Some people, however, produce divine good. This is the result of God the Holy Spirit working through the life of the believer who is responsive to doctrine and, thereby, this believer, we have been told by Paul, reflects the glory of God. He is honored by God in his service, and he finds peace in his soul. Whereas the person who is producing the evil of human good finds his life under external pressures that he cannot cope with, and he finds himself filled with internal frustrations.

**God is no Respecter of Persons**

So, a person's works will be a signal to him which direction he is going, and where he stands with God. But Romans 2:11, that we stopped at in the last session, makes the dramatic statement that God is no respecter for persons. Whoever you are, or whatever you are, God is no respect of persons. So, those with more spiritual enlightenment are not given special favor. You might think that because you have been reared under spiritual instruction, and you have been raised in a Christian home, and that you've attended church all your life, that somehow this is going to be something special in your favor with God. That's legalism, and it counts for nothing. Those with more spiritual enlightenment are not specially favored by God.

Neither is your religious heritage or your record of sin, in any way, brought into your access to eternal life. God doesn't care how bad you've been. So, whatever your religious heritage is, or your record of sin, it's of no consequence with God. And no matter how winsome the person you are, and no matter what the level of your human good production is, God will not give you special consideration when it comes time to face Him and His righteousness.

So, no matter how sincere you are about all of this in your good works, it will not protect you from the wrath of God.

Our problem today is that we have many unsaved, untaught, or just downright carnal preachers who falsely suggest that God will not send unbelievers to hell. You can find any number of pulpits that will suggest to you that God is too loving to send a person where he will spend eternity in hell, perhaps in darkness of solitary confinement, where he does not see anybody else in that outer darkness; and, where all he can do is sit there in complete, total darkness, remembering what had once been his opportunity, and experiencing separation from God.

**Grace is the only Way of Salvation**

There are many preachers who say, "That's too horrible." The liberals all the time deny that God, if He is loving, could do such a thing. Consequently, many people are confused. So, the only righteousness that impresses God is the righteousness which He gives you. You and I can come up with a lot of righteousness that impresses other people, but never forget that the only righteousness that counts with God is the one He gives you. So, the human good works of the moral unbelievable, whether he's a Jew or gentile, will only serve to increase his condemnation. Grace is the only way of salvation. No human merit and no background counts in this situation.

So, beginning at verse 12, the apostle Paul says, "For as many as have sinned without Law shall also perish without Law." The Greek word for "for" is the word "gar." "Gar" is a word that signals the introduction of an explanation. It is an explanation here in reference to verse 11. For verse 11 says that God is no respect of persons. This is a confusing statement to the moral Jew, because the moral Jew automatically felt that somehow he had an in with God, and that, therefore, God would treat him in a much more favorable light than He would treat the immoral unbeliever.

**Sin – Missing the Mark**

So, this was a confusing statement to the Jew to hear Paul say that God is no respecter persons. This word "gar" signals to us that Paul is now going to give an explanation of verse 11: "For as many as." This is the Greek word "hosos." This refers to the gentile unbelievers: "As many gentile unbelievers as have sinned." The Greek word is "hamartano." "Hamartano" is a word which simply means "to miss the mark."

When we go to summer camp, and we get out on the archery range, and a kid pulls his arrow back in the bow, and he lets fly, and he misses the target, we say that he has sinned. And if we were talking in Greek, we would have just said, "You just 'hamartano.'" You missed the mark. This is the idea of sinning. The mark here, of course, is the standard of God's absolute righteousness. Therefore we just simply say "sin," which means falling short of being absolutely perfect in every thought and in every action – every internal and every overt action.

**Greek Culture**

The Greek culture was a marvel of human reasoning. Human reasoning, has obviously influenced our civilization, as any student knows to this day. It was Greek culture that gave the impetus to the Renaissance. After 1,000 monstrous years of darkness under the Roman Catholic Church, along comes the breaking through of a revival of learning. Men were turning back to learning; to knowledge; and, to using their minds again, and to getting away from all the superstition that had controlled them for 1,000 years of the Dark Ages. It was Greek culture that was the impetus and the enlightenment that moved the Renaissance into high gear. The Renaissance was an era of fantastic artistic achievement, because the Renaissance again was influenced by the great artistry of the Greek culture.

However, at the same time, we must remember that Greek culture was grossly immoral. It was a base society. Homosexuality and lesbianism was rampant from the highest echelons to the lowest. It was a degraded society. At the same time, it was highly intellectual and highly artistic.

So, the immorality in the Greek culture permeated society, and it expressed itself in all kinds of perverted forms. The Jews, on the other hand, who lived within that Greek society, had certain guidelines because they had the Old Testament Scriptures. No Jew would tolerate the perversions that were commonly accepted in Greek society. Consequently, an unbelieving Jew, who was obeying the moral rules and the regulations of his society for the enforcement of those moral rules, would look upon himself very naturally as being considerably better than all the intellectual and artistic Greeks who lived around him. And in practice, he indeed was. He had a much higher moral standard.

The problem with this was that it led him to think that he was superior, consequently, to the unbelieving gentile. And that's what Paul is trying to do here. He's trying to show the Jew (which is going to really be a bombshell to him) that he, in the sight of God, with all of his morality and all of his advantage of knowing the Word is not one whit better than the degraded Greek (the degraded gentile).

This word "hamartano" in the Greek language is in the aorist tense, which means that each individual act of sin made up a lifestyle. It was degraded sin that constituted the lifestyle of these gentiles: "For as many as have sinned without law." It is active voice, which means that it was the gentile's deliberate choice to be negative toward the righteousness of God. It's indicative – a statement of reality. This was the fact that he, in truth, chose evil against righteousness.

These are described as "Those who have sinned without the Law. The Greek word is "anomos." l. "Nomos" is the Greek word for law, and "a" is the Greek negative, so it means "no Law." They were living without the Law. This specifically refers to the Law of Moses, the system of the Mosaic rituals and the Mosaic way of life. It is referring to unsaved gentiles to whom the Mosaic Law simply did not apply. It never did apply. It doesn't mean here that they were living wickedly, which they were. But what this refers to is the fact that it is actually outside of the Mosaic Law altogether. So, they were a group of people who never had the Law. It never applied to them, and it never had anything to do with them.

**Perish (Not Extinction)**

These people, living without the Law, but living as unbelievers, and reflecting the degradation of the sin of their society – Paul says, "Shall perish" ("apollumi"). "Apollumi" is a word that does not mean extinction. Understand that. This word is a critical Greek word. It does not mean extinction. When it says, "perish," it doesn't mean, as we often think of "perish" as something that just rots away and goes to nothing. This word connotes, rather, the idea of ruin. It means "something that is ruined," or "the loss of well-being." In this case, it's the condition of your person being ruined.

**Ruined**

We had the same word used, for example (that will illustrate its Greek use), in Luke 5:37. In the New Testament society, wine was a very prevalent drink. They did not have bottles to keep wine in. They kept it rather in wine skins. Luke 5:37 describes a problem, however, that they had with wine skins. Wine skins, when they were new, would be able to take the expansion that was inherent in grape juice fermenting. But if they used an old skin, there was no room for expansion, and the result would be that the skin would burst. It would tear, and thus it would be ruined.

So, Luke 5:37 says, "And no man puts new wine into old wine skins, else the new wine will burst the wine skins, and be spilled, and the wine skins shall perish." Obviously, wine skins aren't going to disappear. They're not going to disintegrate. It just means they are ruined. And that's what this Greek word means. It means that a person will be ruined relative to his own personal well-being. Ruined how?

Well, God designed you and brought you into being in order to spend eternity in fellowship with Him. And you will ruin all that, and spend eternity in the lake of fire if you count on something of your own righteousness instead of the absolute righteousness that has to come from outside of yourself as a gift of God. That will ruin you.

In life, we use that word. We say, oh, "If you do this, man, that'll ruin you." And we can think of all kinds of things in life that will ruin you. But nothing will ruin you like this. This is really ruining you – done for, for good. Very naturally, you might expect the famous John 3:16, which speaks about perishing – this is the word that it uses: "That you would not perish." It's this very word. It's the same one in John 10:28. It's a sense of the loss of your personal wellbeing in the form of being cast out to eternal torment in the lake of fire.

**Unbelieving Gentiles**

Here it is specifically being applied to the condition of gentile unbelievers in eternity. It is, again, as I say, future tense. When will you ultimately experience, as an unbeliever, this ruination? Well, it will be at the great white throne judgment after the millennium – that which is described in Revelation 20:12-15. That is where the records will be checked, and you are faced with the fact that you do not have on your record the divine good necessary to enter heaven, which you can only have by receiving the divine gift that Jesus Christ produced on the cross. It is in the middle voice, which means that the gentiles receive themselves. They participate themselves in the results of their own choice of sin. Here is one that has eternal repercussions. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

The unbelieving gentile, then, in short, Paul says, "Is going to hell." He is going to be ruined relative to what God designed him to be. So, he says, "For as many as have sinned (missed the mark) apart from the Mosaic Law shall also perish (be ruined)." And again, he says, "Apart from the Mosaic Law" and he uses the word "anomos" once more, meaning that, without having the Mosaic Law, their judgment will be based as those who were not under that guidance – who did not have that information. They lacked the Law of Moses. But this will not be an excuse for them against receiving divine judgment.

The Law of Moses was a very valuable thing, because anybody who had it; anybody who ever heard it; and, anybody who ever read it, immediately understood very clearly what God was like. The righteous standard of God was very clear through reading the Mosaic Law, and that was a very valuable thing that the Jew, or the gentile who was acquainted with the Law, would immediately have. He would know what he was up against. But the very fact that the gentile, in general, did not have the law did not excuse him from coming under the judgment of God.

As we've already studied in Romans 1, God says, "There never was a human being that ever lived that did not have a chance to be saved, and that did not have the chance to make the first step toward eternal life. Anybody who is in hell is there because he chose to be. So don't bring up that old hack about: "What about the heathen who never heard about Christ?" The testimony of creation has taken care of God-consciousness. So, there never was a person who ever came to the age of accountability, where he did not become conscious of God through creation, if he did not get it through direct testimony. He was negative toward God-consciousness, and that was the end of the line. But if he was positive toward God-consciousness, then God brought him the specific information of the gospel that he needed to be saved. So, God judges the unbelieving gentile in terms of the revelation that he did possess, which is the revelation basically of creation.

If he did not, then, have the revelation then of Scripture, which is what Paul says, it didn't make any difference. It implies that the severity of judgment is going to be based upon the information you have. The Bible tells us in several places that the more you know, the more you're going to be held responsible for. Luke 12:47-48 indicates that, as well as Matthew 11:22-24. Both these passages tell us that a person who is informed is the person who is going to be held the more responsible, and his judgment will be accordingly. So, it suggests that the unbeliever who has received greater revelation, not only through creation, but through testimony and through instruction in Scripture, and yet has gone negative, is going to find that his place in the lake of fire is going to be a place of more intense punishment than the person who had less enlightenment.

Luke 12:47, therefore, says, "And that servant who knew his lord's will, and did not prepare himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that did not know, and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And to whom men have committed much of him, they will ask for more.

Matthew 11:22-24 conveys the same understanding.

While this is true specifically, here we're applying it in reference to a person who is an unbeliever, and rejecting the gospel information. This also has an application to you and me as believers relative to our response to Bible doctrine. Frankly, I am very, very much relieved when, from time to time, I see somebody in the midst of our fellowship here that is going negative to the Word of God, and is resisting responding to what the Word of God is teaching us – I personally have a great sense of relief when that person decides to fly the coop off to some other church. That is because I know that, sitting here and being instructed in the Word of God and going negative is piling up judgment against you all the more. It is just piling it on and piling it on. That is as well as the fact that you are creating callouses upon the facets of the soul so that you are hardening yourself in your will; in your emotions; and, in your mind against God.

So, it is really personally a relief to me when I see a person decide to just take a powder, because at least I know that he is going to relieve some of the pressures against himself, and he will be able to find himself some nice church situation where he is not being confronted with the Word of God as it specifically applies to him. Therefore, he can sit there and say, "Amen," and he doesn't have to resist. And the result will be a whole lot better for him when he stands at the Judgment Seat of Christ. He will lose out for having been negative, but he will not lose as much as having once been informed and been negative. So, those of you who are inclined to be negative, stay home (but you better not).

**Unbelieving Jews**

That's the unbelieving gentile on the one side. All the while we've been saying this, all of you Jews I know have been sitting out there, and you've been smiling at me, and you've been nodding your head: "Amen, brother. Speak on. It's true that there are no good gentiles. Yes. That's just what they deserve. That's how they are." Well, Paul says, "I have a message for you Jews on the other side. We've taken care of those who have been operating without the Law – outside of the Law. Now let's take a look at all you people (all you fine folks) who have grown up under the Mosaic Law:" "And as many as have signed in the Law shall be judged by the "Law." The Jew, with his possession of the written Law of God readily agreed to all the Paul had to say against the unbelieving gentile.

The unbelieving Jew thinks he has a special in with God simply because he is under the covenant of Abraham, and simply because he has the Law of Moses. But the unbelieving Jew doesn't realize that he's going to be held responsible for the information that he has, and for what his response was to that information. The unbelieving moral Jew, with his Law of Moses, is comparing himself to the immoral, unbelieving gentile. Consequently, the Jew looks very good, and he misjudges his standing before God. This is an old, old game, not only among unbelievers, but among Christians. It is an old, old game to build your righteousness on somebody else's unrighteousness. If you want to make yourself really feel good that you're really going on with the Lord, and you really love Him, just find somebody who's just a terrible Christian, and analyze his life, and compare yourself to that person, and you'll just feel warm and rosy all over, never realizing that all that you have done is matched yourself up against a false human standard which falls short of the will of God. Just because you may achieve that standard better does not mean that you are acceptable to God.

This is like a couple of kids up in Berean Christian Academy who are taking a test. One of the key questions on the test was five times five equals. Well, one kid said, "Five times five equals 15." Another kid said, "Five times five; well, that equals 19." Now the teacher gave them both zero on the test. Now, boy number two, who said, "Five times five equals 19," came storming up to the teacher to complain about the grade which she gave him. The reason, he said, was because he is only six points off from the right answer, whereas this joker was ten points off, and she gave them both the same grade. Obviously, if you only six points off from the right answer, you should get a better grade than somebody who misses it by ten points. Right? Oh, you don't like that? But that's how God views things. God says, "No, you get a zero. Just because you came close, you still missed the mark. That's what counts. Close is not good enough. You have to be on the button."

Therefore, when you argue that you are better than someone else, all you're saying is that you're not quite as far off the mark as that person is. But if you have missed it at all, as the saying goes: "A miss is as good as a mile," and you are out with God.

So, now, as he comes to the Jew here, a moral, but unbelieving Jew, but who is taking great pride in his Jewish heritage; his possession of the Word of God; and, the fact that, since childhood, he's been sitting in synagogue and listening to the Bible read to him. This man comes under the same condemnation of God, and this is hard for him to swallow.

So, Paul says, "And." And the world "and" in the Greek is "kai." This is to connect with a comparison here. Again, he uses the word "as many as:" "hosos." This time it refers to "as many as unsaved Jews" do this. Before, it was "as many as unsaved gentiles." Again, he uses the same word "hamartano" – the word "to miss the mark." They have sinned. This is the same word as before. It is in the aorist tense. Personal acts of sin have become a way of life. It's active – the Jews' personal choice. It's indicative – a statement of fact. But these now, it says, "Have missed in the Law." And "in the Law" is the Greek word "en," which means "within;" "inside;" or, "under the jurisdiction of," we would say. Then it has the word for Law ("nomos"), which again refers to the Mosaic Law.

So, what he is now viewing is a group of people who are Jews who have the written revelation, and therefore they have more information than what the gentiles simply got from creation. The Jewish moral unbeliever, however, is as guilty with this enlightenment of the Law as the gentile was without the enlightenment of the Law. They have both missed the absolute righteousness of God, and therefore they're both going to hell. One is not going to go partway, and another one all the way. They're both equally condemned to the lake of fire.

So, Paul says, "They shall be judged." And the Greek word "judge" is the word "krino." "Krino" means "to condemn." It refers to divine judgment against sin. In this case, its future, because it's going to take place at the great white throne judgment at the end of 1,000 years of the millennium. It is passive because it's going to be imposed upon Jewish unbelievers. It will just automatically come to them as the result of their negative reaction toward the gospel. It's indicative – a statement of fact.

They will be judged, and then it says, "By the Law." The word "by" is the Greek word "dia," which means "by means of." And again, it says, "The Law" ("nomos") – the Law of Moses. So, the unbelieving moral Jew finds that the Law that he used to take such pride in, and in which he was using to excuse himself, and to see himself as far better than the gentile unbeliever, is the very Law that represents the absolute righteousness of God, which he has missed. God is going to take that same Law and say, "I'm going to tell you why you're standing here at the great white throne. I'm going to tell you why, in just a few moments, I'm going to direct these angels to take you (literally to pick you up physically), and you will be cast into the lake of fire. I'm going to explain to you why that's going to happen to you." And where is God going to go? To the very Law that he was so proud of as a Jewish unbeliever.

With explanation in verse 12, Paul has amplified what he said in verse 11 – that God is more respecter of persons, because he has now shown that I don't care whether, on the one side, you're a fine, intelligent, artistic gentile who is expressing all the degradation of the old sin nature, or if you are a moral, upright, outstanding Jew who is proud of his religious heritage – both of you are unbelievers, and both of you are headed for the lake of fire.

So, the immoral, unbelieving gentile, without the guidance of the Mosaic Law; and, the moral, unbelieving Jew with the Law, are both condemned to hell. Everyone is a sinner, and everyone needs a righteousness from outside of himself (from God). Romans 3:23 indicates we can't make it on our own.

Now possessing the Old Testament Bible is not the same as faith in Christ for salvation. The absolute righteousness of God comes as a gift apart from your spiritual heritage. If you've been reared in a Christian home, well and good – so much the better. But on the other hand, if you reject it, so much the worse for you. The divine judgment for sin considers what access you had to divine viewpoint. But your condemnation to the lake of fire is nevertheless certain.

So, Paul is showing that human good from moral people is evil with God. The Mosaic Law could only reveal the absolute righteousness of God, but the Mosaic Law could never supply that righteousness to its adherents, and that's where the Jew was making his mistake. He thought that by keeping the Law, he could somehow secure that absolute righteousness. At the great white throne judgment, therefore, the primary issue is going to be whether, as a Jew or a gentile, you had faith in Christ. That's what Paul is saying. The primary thing at the great white throne is not going to be your sins. So, forget all that preacher guff about your sins being portrayed for all the world to see, because that is not the way it's going to be. The primary issue at the great white throne is not your sins. The primary issue is: what have you done with Christ? What God is interesting in today is: what think you of His Son? That is the issue.

Christ has died for our sins, and unlimited atonement has covered everybody's sins. So, that's no longer an issue with God. The only thing that's an issue with God is your lack of faith in Christ as Savior, and that is the issue at the great white throne. So, God will not be swayed from exercising his holy wrath against you, no matter what your spiritual heritage may have been, or not have been. Morality, whether practiced, or whether you merely subscribe to it in theory, is not the ground for salvation.

For that reason, Titus 3:5 tells us: "Not by works of righteousness (things that pour out of the old sin nature) which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:9 says, "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

So, the law system of Moses, while representing what we needed in righteousness, could never get the Jew into heaven. He counted on it, and the result was that he lost his soul.

Well, having said this, the apostle Paul, in Romans 2, having explained verse 11, stops. And as you see in your Bible, in verses 13-15, you have a set of parentheses (brackets) around each end. That is rightly so, because verses 13-15 are an amplification and an explanation of verse 12. Paul says, "Now, let me tell you what I mean by this." It is hard for us to appreciate this because we are not Jews, and we don't quite have the sense of pride that the Jew had in his Mosaic Law system. And now, he has just gotten through telling them that whether he is a no-good, immoral gentile, or a nice, moral Jew, they're both going to the same place. So, verse 13-15 form a parenthetical explanation of verse 12.

Actually, you begin verse 12 as a sentence, but the sentence doesn't end until verse 16. The way you should read it is like this: "For as many as have sinned without Law (or outside of the Law) shall also perish without Law. And as many as have sinned in the Law shall be judged by the Law in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." That's the whole sentence as it is in the Greek Bible. But he interrupts himself with verses 13-15 to amplify what he said in verse 12.

So, we're going to look at that for just a little bit. The explanation is necessary because it was very hard for a moral, unbelieving Jew, who compares himself favorably with an immoral, unbelieving gentile, to be told that he does not compare favorably with God's righteousness. That was a hard thing for a Jew to accept.

So, verse 13 begins with the word "for." Again, it's the word "gar," which is again a signal for an explanation. "For not the hearers of the Law." The word "not" is the Greek word "ou," which is the strongest Greek negative. It points out a wrong assumption by the unbelieving, moral Jews. He says that the hearers of the Word are not the people that count. "Hearers" is the Greek word "akroates." The reason he doesn't say, "Not the readers of the Word," like we would say, is because the Jews generally didn't have access to read the Word of God. But what they did was come to the synagogue where there was a master copy of the Scriptures, and they would listen while the rabbi would read to them. So, he uses this word as "hearers" because that's what they were. They received instruction in the Word of God by listening to it.

So, the Jew sat there, Saturday after Saturday, listening to the reading of the Word of God. And it was the easiest thing in the world for him to assume that: "Because I have attended (as we would say) 'church', I have some kind of a contact with God. Because I have learned so much Scripture, I know something about God."

**Justification**

So, Paul is saying, "You've been a hearer of the Word indeed. But I want to tell you that you have equated hearing the Word of God with justification." Do you know what the word justification means? Justification means having the absolute righteousness of God imputed to your account. There are two parts to salvation. One is forgiveness of sins. That's negative. That's God taking away your guilt. The other part is imputing to the absolute righteousness of Christ. That's justification.

I'm amazed how often in gospel tracts I see a big thing made of forgiveness of sins, but not a word said about justification. You'll find this in the four spiritual laws, if you haven't noticed it – that one of the things that it says is what's happened to you now that you're a Christian. It says forgiveness of sins, but not a whisper of the fact that you have received the absolute righteousness of God, and that's the critical thing. Forgiveness is negative. When you have your sins forgiven, that part is removed, but all you are then is a grease spot. Until God gives you His absolute righteousness, you just aren't anything. That's when you become something in the family of God.

So, justification is the critical thing. This book, therefore, zeros in on that particular factor. Yes, you and I need forgiveness of sins, but that's not enough. That'll never get you to heaven. What you have to have is the righteousness of Christ. You have to be as perfect as Jesus Christ to go to heaven, and this is the way we achieve that.

So, the Jews made a very grave mistake when they equated the fact that they were hearers with the fact that they were justified. Knowledge of the Law actually made them spiritual snobs, but it didn't make them born-again believers. There are a lot of religious people who are spiritual snobs because they know something about the Bible, but they're not born-again. People reared in a Christian home and attending church all their lives are very tempted by this.

So, he says, "For not the hearers of the Law (that is, the Law of Moses) are (the word 'are' is not in the Greek, but it's understood) just before God," and the word "just" is the Greek word "dikaios." "Dikaios" means absolute righteousness, or we would say "justified." "Before God" is the Greek word "para," and that means "in the very presence of God." Now, that's scary and hairy to think about a human being face-to-face with the living God. That's exactly what you're going to be. I don't know that you and I in eternity will see the Father or the Holy Spirit, but we will see God the Son, and you will be face-to-face with the absolute, holy, perfect, living God. This is what he is referring to – to be justified before God. This is not before your friends, and not before the people that like you, and all those that you can con – but to be really justified before God. (To be justified before man) does not count.

Rather, here's the other side. And I want you to notice something in the Greek. It begins with the word "ou" ("not"), that strongest negative. Then he goes down the line, and the second "but" is a different Greek word: "alla." This combination in the Greek indicates that this second "but" is not saying that the first negative is not absolutely true, or not absolutely necessary. This is a very exact selection of words by God the Holy Spirit, because we are not deriding the hearing of the Word of God. Every time we gather in a church service, we gather to hear the Word of God; to hear it taught; and, to hear doctrine explained. It is necessary to hear the Word of God. But the point is that you have to go beyond hearing. So, He uses a different word, and this combination shows that he is not telling you, "Forget about hearing the Word of God. Just do this other thing – the doing part." On the one hand, you hear; but then it is a matter of doing.

The doer's are the "poietes;" that is, the keepers of the Mosaic Law. This neither saves nor justifies a person before God. Romans 3:20; Romans 3:28; and, Galatians 3:11-12 all make it clear that, no matter how much you keep the Mosaic Law, it'll never get you to heaven. It'll never make you a mature Christian. Did you get the second part? No matter how much you keep the 613 rules of the Mosaic Law, it will never make you a mature Christian.

Most fundamentalist churches are very clear that you can't get saved with the Law, but they're not quite so clear on the fact that you can't make progress in spiritual maturity by keeping the Law. They kind of hedge on that. They think you can make some progress by keeping these rules. Never. No one performs the works of the Mosaic Law perfectly. So, everyone is guilty of breaking the whole Law. James 2:10 and Galatians 3:10 tell you that if you break just one part of the Law, it's all gone. It's a whole. Therefore, if you break one piece of it, the whole thing is gone.

It's like having given your wife or your mother a beautiful China dish. And while you're washing it, you drop it, and you chip it just a little bit. What difference does it make? It's just a little chip here. But the whole thing is ruined. It's no longer perfect. That's how the Law is.

So, anybody who knows anything knows that he does not keep the Law perfectly. So, how can you be a doer of the Law when you can't even keep it? Faith in Christ is the answer. By faith in Christ, we thereby perform the Law perfectly. For this reason, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, we read that very tremendous fact, where Paul says, "For He has made Him who knew no sin (God the Father made God the Son who knew no sin) to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The Son of God has taken our sins; borne it on the tree; and, exchanged for that His perfect righteousness.

In Romans 8:4 Paul says, "That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. That is for those of us who are born-again. That's how you fulfill the Law. You will never fulfill the Law by walking in the capacity of the old sin nature.

So, the moral Jew, who turned to Christ by faith as Savior, was the one who was the doer of the Law. But the Jew who did not turn by faith to Christ as Savior was a very moral man, but he was an unbeliever. He was lost, and he was in the same boat as the immoral, perverted gentile who was headed for the lake of fire.

So, Paul says, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified" ("dikaioo"). "Dikaioo" is future. That refers to any point in the future when you believe in Christ. You become a doer by trusting Christ. It is passive. It's a gift of God. You receive it; but you don't earn it. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact. This refers to the person's standing. It does not refer to his character. Obviously, when we have the absolute righteousness of Christ, its perfect expression of that awaits our arrival in heaven. Right now, the more doctrine you take into your human spirit, the more capacity you will have for expressing the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the more capable you will be of being "dikaioo" in your experience (justified in your practice) as you are now justified in your standing before God.

We sum it up (this principle of verse 13 that Paul is using to explain verse 12) with Galatians 2:16, where the apostle Paul says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law (that's being a hearer), but by the faith of Jesus Christ (that's being a doer). Even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law. For by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)