

## The Doers of the Law

*For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. Romans 2:13.*

Let's say that I'm charged before a magistrate for over-speeding and reckless driving. My defence lawyer argues that I had passed my driving test, I possess a valid driving licence, and I am fully conversant with the traffic code, including the speed limit. Moreover, I do not always drive recklessly, and there are other drivers who are much worse than me.

Would that get me off the hook? Hardly!

On the contrary, since I know the law so well, I am even more accountable and, having ignored the traffic regulations, I am all the more guilty of breaking the law.

We all know the law of God. The moral precepts of the law are written in our conscience. We know that it is wrong to steal because we don't want anyone to take our possessions. We know it's wrong to lie because we want others to tell us the truth. Moreover many of us who were brought up in a Christian family have been taught from our childhood the Ten Commandments and the moral teaching of the Bible.

We are responsible to obey the law of God because he made us moral beings, able to discern good from evil. We are indebted to God, our Maker and Master, for creating and sustaining our life, and therefore we should gladly submit to his authority and rule.

But we must squarely face the question whether or not we have actually obeyed him perfectly as we ought to. Am I righteous before God?

It would be foolish for me to argue that I'm righteous because I know what is good and what is bad. The knowledge of the law makes me accountable but it does not make me righteous. If I had always obeyed God's law perfectly, then yes, I will be declared righteous by God. The doers of the law will be justified. That is justice pure and simple.

However I delude myself if I hope that God will ultimately justify me on account of my performance. Can the Judge of the universe pronounce me righteous since I have so often broken his law?

I have no valid defence. I know what is good and evil, but I have often failed to do what I should have done, and I have often done what I should have avoided. It is no use comparing myself with people who are worse than me. I am still a law-breaker. Nor can I appeal to my good deeds; they don't wipe out my misdeeds.

Justice is not good news for us. It would have been if we were perfect. But we must admit before God that we are law-breakers and guilty, and that he is just to condemn and punish us. At this point we can only appeal for mercy ... and then the door will be opened to the abounding grace of God in Christ Jesus his Son.