

## What the Law Can and Cannot Do (vv. 19-20)

**VERSE 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are**

**under the Law** (Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ [*pf.act.ind.1p. oida know + conj de + conj hoti + adj.acc.nt.p. hosos whatever + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. nomos + pres.act.ind.3s. lego + d.a.dat.m.p. “to those” + prep en + d.a.w/noun loc.m.s. nomos + pres.act.ind.3s. laleo speak*], **so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may**

**become accountable to God** [ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῆ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ [*conj hina so that + adj.nom.nt.s. pas every + noun nom.nt.s. stoma + aor.pass.subj.3s. phrasso be shut + conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. hupodikos be accountable; 1x + aor.dep.ind.3s. ginomai + adj.nom.m.s. pas all + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. kosmos + d.a.w/noun dat.m.s. theos*]);

**VERSE 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight;**

**for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin** (διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας [*conj. diotis because + prep ek + noun abl.nt.p. ergon work + noun gen.m.s nomos + neg ou + fut.pass.ind.3s. dikaiioo be justified + adj.nom.f.s. pas + noun nom.f.s. sarz flesh + pe enopion before + noun gen.m.s. autos Him + prep dia + conj gar + noun gen.m.s. nomos + noun nom.f.s. epignosis knowledge + noun gen.f.s. hamartia*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 19-20

1. Having established universal depravity, Paul now brings God’s Law into the forefront of the issue he is moving towards.
2. The Law code of Israel epitomized in the Ten Commandments says something about human behavior and misbehavior.
3. The Law “speaks to those who are under the Law” which in the context of Romans chapters one and two refers to all mankind—Jews and Gentiles.
4. While the Law was given to Israel its moral code is for Gentiles as well.
5. It does not matter whether people are familiar with its contents; the Law in written form has a message for all humans.
6. And that message is that all humanity falls short of God’s perfect righteousness (+R) and is subject to divine wrath.

7. Paul does not limit this living witness to God's righteousness to the past; he writes of what was true in his day, and in ours.
8. The Law speaks to those who are "in the Law" (literal).
9. It is apparent that Paul is not limiting the indictment to just the Jews, but that the requirement of the Law to produce +R is for "all the world."
10. Paul has already demonstrated that while the Gentiles did not have the Law in the sense of the OT, the Gentiles are here regarded as "in the law" based on the universal conscience.
11. The basis for why "every mouth may be closed and the entire world may become accountable/guilty before God" is explained in v. 20 (e.g., the conjunction διότι because).
12. The reason is that there are no perfect doers of the Law to merit justification (i.e., eternal salvation).
13. The "works of the Law" here refers to the moral requirements laid down in the Law which define sinful and non sinful behavior.
14. This reflects what was noted in 3:10 "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE."
15. And here in verse 20b Paul states the function of the Law is to convince all that they are sinners and fall way short of the glory (+R) of God.
16. The verb "will be justified" (or treat as good as God, declare righteous) refers to mortal flesh achieving a status of moral perfection.
17. Conclusion: justification through Law is non-existent.