

# Romans 3:5-9 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[Romans 3:1](#)  
[Romans 3:2](#)  
[Romans 3:3](#)  
[Romans 3:4](#)  
[Romans 3:5](#)  
[Romans 3:6](#)  
[Romans 3:7](#)  
[Romans 3:8](#)  
[Romans 3:9](#)  
[Romans 3:10](#)  
[Romans 3:11](#)  
[Romans 3:12](#)  
[Romans 3:13](#)  
[Romans 3:14](#)  
[Romans 3:15](#)  
[Romans 3:16](#)  
[Romans 3:17](#)  
[Romans 3:18](#)  
[Romans 3:19](#)  
[Romans 3:20](#)  
[Romans 3:21](#)  
[Romans 3:22](#)  
[Romans 3:23](#)  
[Romans 3:24](#)  
[Romans 3:25](#)  
[Romans 3:26](#)  
[Romans 3:27](#)  
[Romans 3:28](#)  
[Romans 3:29](#)  
[Romans 3:30](#)  
[Romans 3:31](#)

**Romans 3:5** But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God Who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** ei de e adikia hemon theou dikaiosunen sunisthesin (3SPA) ti eroumen (1PFA) me adikos o theos o epipheron (PAPMSN) ten orgen; kata anthropon lego (1SPA)

**Amplified:** But if our unrighteousness thus establishes and exhibits the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust and wrong to inflict His wrath upon us [Jews]? I speak in a [purely] human way. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** But, you say, if our unrighteousness merely provides proof of God's righteousness, what are we to say? Surely you are not going to try to argue that God is unrighteous to unleash the Wrath upon you? (I am using human arguments:) ([Westminster Press](#))

**Gingrich:** "But, Paul, if our [the Jews'] unrighteousness [unfaithfulness] manifests [makes the more conspicuous] the righteousness [faithfulness] of God, then would not God be unrighteous in punishing us?" "Can a righteous God punish us for doing Him a favor [for making His faithfulness known]?" (Gingrich, R. E.

Riverside)

**KJV:** But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

**William Newell:** If God makes use of human sin to set forth His glory (as He will) would it not be unrighteous to punish that sin with wrath? Here Paul enters into the Jewish consciousness: "If our unrighteous Jewish history has commended the righteousness of God, what shall we say? God went right on fulfilling what His oracles said, despite the unfaithfulness of us to whom they had been committed, and, in fact, by means of our sinful Jewish history God's prophecies concerning our disobedience were fulfilled before the whole world, from Moses on." ([Romans](#))

**Phillips:** But if our wickedness advertises the goodness of God, do we feel that God is being unfair to punish us in return? (I'm using a human tit-for-tat argument.) ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** But in view of the fact that our unrighteousness establishes by proof God's righteousness, what shall we say? God is not unrighteous who inflicts wrath, is He? I am using a mode of speech drawn from human affairs.

**Young's Literal:** And, if our unrighteousness God's righteousness doth establish, what shall we say? is God unrighteous who is inflicting the wrath? (after the manner of a man I speak)

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	God's Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " <a href="#">Jensen's Survey of the NT</a> "				

**BUT IF OUR (in context primarily Jewish) UNRIGHTEOUSNESS DEMONSTRATES THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD:  $\epsilon\iota\ \delta\epsilon\ \epsilon\alpha\delta\iota\kappa\iota\alpha\ \eta\epsilon\mu\omicron\upsilon\ \delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma\upsilon\eta\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \sigma\upsilon\eta\iota\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma\iota\varsigma$  (3SPA1):**

- Ro 3:7,25,26; 8:20,21
- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**BEAUTY OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS**

## COMPARED TO MAN'S UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

As you study this somewhat complex section, keep in mind Paul's purpose. From the chart above, notice that Paul is building his case for the deadliness of sin and the absolute need for perfect righteousness. He first deals with the utter depravity of the godless pagan and then he turns to the religious man (especially the pious proud Jew), proving that the entire human race (Gentile and Jew) is guilty before God. He is laying the framework which prepares their heart to hear the only answer that can counter sin and death, the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:1). Whether pagan or pious, both parties must come (cp Isa 55:1, 2, 3) and receive the good news of salvation by grace through faith (Isa 40:9, 10, 11, Isa 41:27, Isa 52:7, 61:1, 2a, Lk 2:10, Acts 8:12, 13:32, Heb 4:2+; He 4:6+).

The **New Living Translation** has a helpful paraphrase rendering Romans 3:5, 6...

"But" some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for Him to punish us?" (This is merely a human point of view.) 6 Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would He be qualified to judge the world? ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

In other words, the imaginary Objector's question is that if people's unrighteousness is an occasion for the righteousness of God to be shown, is it not unfair for God to execute His wrath upon unrighteousness? If our unrighteousness causes the righteousness of God to shine more gloriously, how can God visit us with wrath?

**Denny** explains "Here another attempt is made to invalidate the conclusion of Romans 2, that the Jew is to be judged "according to his works" exactly like the Gentile. If the argument of Ro 3:3ff is correct, the unbelief of the Jews actually serves to set off the faithfulness of God -- it makes it all the more conspicuous; how then can it leave them exposed to judgment? This argument is generalized in Ro 3:5 and answered in Ro 3:6. (Greek New Testament)

**Unrighteousness** (93) (**adikia** from **a** = without + **dike** = what is right) is a condition of not being right, whether with God, according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness, or with man, according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience. In secular Greek **adikia** referred to unjust acts, or to deeds which caused personal injury. Rather than a general concept of injustice, this word was taken, in the writings of Plato, to mean an unjust act which injures a specific person. Such an act was not necessarily a violation of some specific law, but rather an affront against the just order of society. Among the acts which fell into this category were theft, fraud, and sexual crimes. Later this word came to mean a neglect of duty toward the pagan gods. The Septuagint (LXX) used this word to describe social sins, those deeds which violated human relations or the political order of society. Among these injustices were deceit, fraud, and lying.

**William Barclay** writes that "**Adikia** is the precise opposite of *dikaioisune* (righteousness), which means justice; and the Greeks defined justice as giving to God and to men their due. The evil man is the man who robs both man and God of their rights. He has so erected an altar to himself in the centre of things that he worships himself to the exclusion of God and man."

**Larry Richards** writes that *adikia* "means "wrongdoing," "unrighteousness," "injustice." Its focus is on the concept of sin as conscious human action that causes visible harm to other persons in violation of the divine standard. (borrow [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

**Adikia** is used 25 times in the NT - doing wrong, 1; evildoers, 1; iniquities, 1; iniquity, 2; injustice, 1; unrighteous, 2; unrighteousness, 12; wickedness, 4; wrong." Lk. 13:27; 16:8f; 18:6; Jn. 7:18; Acts 1:18; 8:23; Rom. 1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5; 6:13; 9:14; 1 Co. 13:6; 2 Co. 12:13; 2 Thess. 2:10, 12; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 8:12; James. 3:6; 2 Pet. 2:13, 15; 1 Jn. 1:9; 5:17 a

**Demonstrates** (4921) (**sunistemi/sunistao** from **sún** = together with + **hístemi** = set, place, stand) means literally to set together. It was used of setting one person with another by way of introducing or presenting him, hence, "to commend." (commend = recommend as worthy of confidence or notice).

Here in (Romans 3:5) **sunistao** is used in the sense of putting together with a view to showing, proving, or establishing. Human sin is a foil by which God's righteousness is seen all the more clearly. It establishes the fact of God's righteousness, proves it by its very contrast with that sin.

Stated another way, the idea of "**demonstrates**" is that man's unrighteousness presents a dramatic contrast with God's **righteousness** -- it's like a jeweler who displays a diamond (God's righteousness) on black velvet (sin) to make the stone appear even more beautiful. It is true that God's judgment of sin shows His righteousness and brings Him glory, but this does not mean that God is unfair.

The question is whether, considering that human unrighteousness demonstrates God's righteousness, is it right that He should punish man for what makes for His glory? The answer is that God is judge and therefore must punish sin. If this were not the case He could not be God.

What was their "Jewish Righteousness?" William Newell ([Romans 3: Devotional and Expository](#)) has the following suggestions...

1. National disobedience to God's oracles from Sinai onward.
2. Such neglect of these oracles, that at times (as in Josiah's day), a single copy of the Law was a rarity!
3. Pride, however, over their position as the possessors of these oracles, even to the despising of nations that had them not, instead of ministering them to others (as Ps 67 shows was Israel's real business).
4. Appalling ignorance of the spiritual meaning of the Divine oracles, and of the "voices of their prophets, " so they even killed the Righteous One! (Acts 13:27).

In context it is quite likely that this imaginary antagonist is making an appeal to David's unrighteousness that Paul had just used to show that God is righteous when He judges sin. But this valid observation may be twisted and perverted to serve the purpose of the apostolic antagonists. If this is true, the objector says, then our unrighteousness is the means of the commendation of God's righteousness and, if that be true, then what shall we say? Is it not man who thereby makes God's righteousness more conspicuous? Is he not to be commended for this rather than to be judged for sin by the infliction of divine wrath? Should not God be grateful rather than vindictive?

S. Lewis Johnson comments on "the righteousness of God" as not a reference to the righteousness of God that is given in justification to men who believe (cf. Ro 1:17+; Ro 3:21, 22+; Ro 10:3+), but to the divine attribute of righteousness in its comprehensive sense, inclusive of His faithfulness (cf. Ro 3:3+) and truth (cf. Ro 3:4+, Ro 3:7+) . ([Romans 3:5-8](#))

**Righteousness** ([1343](#)) (**dikaiosune** from **dikaos** [[word study](#)] = being proper or right in the sense of being fully justified being or in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense **dikaiosune** conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God. **Dikaiosune** is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. Righteousness of God could be succinctly stated as all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides through Christ (Click here to read Pastor Ray Pritchard's interesting analysis of **righteousness** in the Gospel of Matthew).

Jesus Thy Blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head. ([Play](#))

Here in Ro 3:5 **dikaiosune** is one of God's attributes. By contrast **Eadie** writes that **dikaiosune** as used in Ephesians 4:24+ signifies...

that moral rectitude which guides the **new man** (New Self) in all relationships. It is not bare equity or probity (adherence to the highest principles and ideals), but it leads its possessor to be what he ought to be to every other creature in the universe. The vices reprobated by the apostle in the following verses (Referring to Ep 4:25, 26, 27+, Ep 4:28+, Ep 4:29, 30+, Ep 4:31+), are manifest violations of this righteousness. It follows what is right, and does what is right, in all given circumstances. ([Reference](#))

In Biblical terms **righteousness** is that which is determined not by man or external standards but only by God and as such is that which is acceptable to God and in keeping with what God is in His holy character.

**Righteousness** in general use represents conformity to a standard, Thayer adds that righteousness is "the state of him who is such as he ought to be".

**Righteousness** in simple terms is God's uprightness or standard, without reference to any particular form of its embodiment, to which man is expected to conform.

Practically **righteousness** means to do what is right, in relation to both God and man. Righteousness is attitude and action which conforms to a standard and can be either man's imperfect standard (as exemplified by the self-righteous Pharisees) or God's standard of perfect holiness. Righteous acts initiated and carried out in our own fleshly energy and calculated to impress others, do not impress God! **Righteousness** before men to be noticed by them is **self righteousness**. **Righteousness** that God accepts is His character reproduced in and through us for His good pleasure.

**Hermann Cremer** writes that "**Righteousness** in the biblical sense is a condition of rightness the standard of which is God, which is estimated according to the divine standard, which shows itself in behavior conformable to God, and has to do above all things with

its relation to God, and with the walk before Him. It is, and it is called *dikaiousune theou* (righteousness of God) (Ro 3:21, 1:17), righteousness as it belongs to God, and is of value before Him, Godlike righteousness, see Ep 4:24; with this righteousness thus defined, the gospel (Ro 1:17) comes into the world of nations which had been wont to measure by a different standard. Righteousness in the Scripture sense is a thoroughly religious conception, designating the normal relation of men and their acts, etc., to God. Righteousness in the profane mind is a preponderantly a social virtue, only with a certain religious background. (Online [Biblico-theological lexicon of New Testament Greek page 184](#))

The interested reader is referred to the related resources for a more in depth theological discussion of this important Biblical term.

#### Related Resources:

- Nave Topical Bible [Righteous Righteousness](#)
- Thompson Chain Reference [Righteousness](#)
- The Topic Concordance [Righteousness](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Righteousness of God, the Righteousness Imputed Righteousness](#)
- American Tract Society [Righteousness](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Righteousness](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Righteousness](#) - **Excerpt** - Peter Toon writes "God the Father is righteous (just); Jesus Christ his Son is the Righteous (Just) One; the Father through the Son and in the Spirit gives the gift of righteousness (justice) to repentant sinners for salvation; such believing sinners are declared righteous (just) by the Father through the Son, are made righteous (just) by the Holy Spirit working in them, and will be wholly righteous (just) in the age to come. They are and will be righteous because they are in a covenant relation with the living God, who is the God of all grace and mercy and who will bring to completion what he has begun in them by declaring them righteous for Christ's sake.

The noun righteousness/justice (Gk. *dikaiousune* [ δίκαιοσύνη ]) bears meanings in the New Testament related to two sources. The major one is the Hebrew thought-world of the Old Testament and particularly the *sdq* [ שָׁדָק ] word group, which locates the meaning in the sphere of God's gracious, covenantal relation to his people and the appropriate behavior of the covenant partners (Yahweh and Israel) toward each other. The other is the regular use of the words in everyday Greek as spoken in New Testament times, which fixes the meaning in the sphere of a life in conformity to a known standard or law—thus honesty, legality, and so on. This latter meaning in terms of doing God's will is of course also found in the Old Testament.

When we translate the Greek words based on the stem *dikai-* into English we make use of two sets of words based on the stems, just and right. So we have just, justice, justify and right, righteous, righteousness, rightwise (old English). The use of two sets of English words for the one set of Greek words sometimes causes difficulties for students of the Bible. This is especially so when the verb "to justify, " describing God's word and action, is used with the noun "righteousness, " pointing to the result of that action.

The Gospels . The appropriate background to bear in mind for understanding the teaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ on righteousness/justice are two of the dominant ideas of the Old Testament. First, Yahweh-Elohim, the Lord God, is righteous in that he speaks and Acts in accordance with the purity of his own holy nature; further, what he says and does for Israel is in accordance with his establishment of the covenant with this people (see Psalm 22:31; 40:10; 51:14; 71:15-24; Amos 5:21-24 ). Micah declared the righteousness of God as his faithfulness to keep and act within the covenant and thus to save Israel from her enemies, as well as to vindicate the penitent.

Second, the covenant people of God are called to live righteously, that is, in conformity to the demands of the covenant and according to God's will (see Psalm 1:4-6; 11:7; 72:1; Isaiah 1:16-17 ). Having within the covenantal relation with God the gift of salvation, they are to behave as the people of the holy Lord. Hosea, the prophet of divine love, ties righteousness with mercy, loving kindness, and justice (Hosea 2:19; 10:12).

John the Baptist called for repentance and righteous behavior such as is pleasing to God (Luke 3:7-9 ). Further, it was because of the demands of such righteousness fulfilling the will of God that he actually was willing to baptize Jesus (Matthew 3:15 ). Likewise Jesus presents righteousness as conformity to the will of God expressed in the Mosaic law (Matthew 13:17; 23:29; 27:4,19 , 24 ) and also conformity to his own teachings concerning the requirements of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-20 ). However, conformity to his own teachings presupposes that he is the Messiah, that he fulfills the Law and the Prophets, and that what he declares is the morality of the kingdom of God relating to the totality of life, inward and outward, seen by God. Further, Jesus does allow that conformity to the norms of the scribes and Pharisees is a certain kind of (inferior) righteous living, but he contrasts it with the proper righteousness he exhibits, proclaims, and looks for (Luke 5:30-32; 15:7; 18:9 ) in the disciples of the kingdom. So in a fundamental sense, in the four Gospels righteousness as a quality of living is intimately related to the arrival and membership in the kingdom of God and is only possible because God has come to his people as their Redeemer.

The Gospel of Matthew makes clear that from the beginning Jesus' mission is to fulfill God's righteousness (Mt 3:15). This is brought to realization in his words and ministry so that the kingdom and salvation of God are in him and come through him. Alongside this is the righteousness in the new covenant, which is right thinking, feeling, speaking, and behavior on the part of disciples of the kingdom, who do what God approves and commands. This moral substance is very clear from the detailed contents of the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7), where the will of God is set forth by Jesus and is contrasted with a mere legalism. Yet what Jesus proclaims and outlines is certainly not a self-righteousness, for it is portrayed as the outflowing of a life that is centered on submitting to, worshiping, and seeking after God and confessing Jesus as the Messiah (see especially Mt 5:17-42).

In the Gospel of Luke, we read of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon and Joseph of Arimathea being called righteous (1:6; 2:25; 23:50) because they embody genuine religion according to the norms of the Old Covenant. They trust in and obey God. Further, Jesus himself as the Servant of Yahweh is the righteous or innocent one (23:47), even as the centurion confessed at the cross. The righteousness of the kingdom of God is practical and reverses the standards of the regular social order (3:11,14; 6:20-26). At the last day it will be those who have been genuinely righteous in terms of doing the will of God who will be declared just (14:14).

In the Gospel of John, God is righteous (Jn 17:25) and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, has a specific role with respect to righteousness (Jn 16:8,10). It is the unique work of the Spirit, who comes into the world in the name of Jesus the Messiah, to convince/convict the world of righteousness. The Spirit both vindicates Jesus as the Righteous One, whom the Father has raised from the dead and exalted into heaven, and also makes clear what kind of righteous life is required by, and, in grace, provided by God.

- Charles Buck Dictionary [Righteousness](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Righteousness](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Righteousness](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Righteousness](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Righteousness](#) [Righteous](#), [Righteousness](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Righteousness](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Righteousness](#)

The word “**righteousness**” comes from a root word that means “straightness.” It refers to a state that conforms to an authoritative standard. Righteousness is a moral concept. God's character is the definition and source of all righteousness and this is exactly what Paul is referring to in the context of the present verse.

God is totally righteous because He is totally as He should be. The righteousness of God could be succinctly stated as that which is all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides (through Christ)

In its OT original use **righteousness** meant a right relationship (attained to by faith as in Ge 15:6) with the covenant God that led to loving others as oneself and doing good in order to lead others into the same right relationship with God. Over time, the Jewish interpretation of **righteousness** narrowed into acts of doing good without the vital root of a right relationship with God.

**William Cunningham** described **righteousness** as follows writing that

Under law God required righteousness from man. Under grace, He gives righteousness to man. The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God's righteousness requires Him to require.

**Charles Hodge** says "That **righteousness** of which God is the author which is of avail before Him, which meets and secures His approval.

Someone else has well said that **righteousness** is that which the Father required, the Son became, the Holy Spirit convinces of, and faith secures.

**Dikaioσune** - 92x in 86v - Mt 3:15; Mt 5:6+, Mt 5:10+, Mt 5:20+; Mt 6:1+, Mt 6:33+; Mt 21:32; Luke 1:75; Jn 16:8, 10; Acts 10:35; 13:10; 17:31; 24:25; Ro 1:17+; Ro 3:5<sup>+</sup>, Ro 3:21, 22+, Ro 3:25, 26+; Ro 4:3+, Ro 4:5+, Ro 4:6+, Ro 4:9+, Ro 4:11+, Ro 4:13+, Ro 4:22+; Ro 5:17+, Ro 5:21+; Ro 6:13+, Ro 6:16+, Ro 6:18, 19, 6:20+; Ro 8:10+; Ro 9:30, 31+; Ro 10:3, 4+, Ro 10:5, 6+ Ro 10:10+; Ro 14:17+; 1Co 1:30; 2Co 3:9; 2Co 5:21; 6:7, 14; 9:9, 10; 11:15; Gal 2:21; 3:6, 21; 5:5; Ep 4:24+; Ep 5:9+; Ep 6:14+; Phil 1:11+; Php 3:6+, Php 3:9+; 1Ti 6:11; 2Ti 2:22+; 2Ti 3:16+; 2Ti 4:8+; Titus 3:5+; He 1:9+; He 5:13+; He 7:2+; He 11:7+, He 11:33+; He 12:11+; Jas 1:20+; Jas 2:23+; Jas 3:18; 1Pe 2:24+; 1Pe 3:14+; 2Pe 1:1+; 2Pe 2:5+, 2Pe 2:21+; 2Pe 3:13+; 1Jn 2:29; 3:7, 10; Re 19:11<sup>+</sup>; Re 22:11<sup>+</sup>. **NAS** - right(1), **righteousness(90)**.



Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all **righteousness**." Then he permitted Him.

**Comment:** Note that Matthew's use of **dikaiosune** is different from Paul's intended meaning, for Paul used it primarily to describe a right standing before God, positional righteousness (see Ro 1:17 below). Matthew used **dikaiosune** to describe conformity to God's will or ethical righteousness, which is demonstrated by one's conduct or actions which are "right" (righteous) in God's eyes. To state this another way, **dikaiosune** in Matthew does not refer to the act of justification (past tense salvation) but of responding to God's grace as manifest in one's conduct in keeping with God's standards. Matthew describes a righteous person as one who lives in harmony with the will of God (1:19). This same emphasis on ethical righteousness is a major theme of the OT, and this was a matter of major import to the religious leaders (especially the Pharisees) in Jesus' day. In Mt 3:15 the idea of "fulfill all righteousness" is that Jesus understood that it was God's will for John to baptize Him.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for **righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied.

**Comment:** **Dikaiosune** here speaks of uprightness in general in one's life, this hunger for righteousness manifest by longing to see honesty, integrity, and justice in society and practical holiness in their life and in the church. Like the people of whom Gamaliel Bradford wrote, they have "a thirst no earthly stream can satisfy, a hunger that must feed on Christ or die."

**Constable:** Matthew always used the term "righteousness" in the sense of personal fidelity to God and His will (Mt 3:15; cf. Ps. 42:2; 63:1; Amos 8:11, 12, 13, 14). He never used it of imputed righteousness, justification. Therefore the righteousness that the blessed hunger and thirst for is not salvation. It is personal holiness and, extending this desire more broadly, the desire that holiness may prevail among all people. When believers bewail their own and society's sinfulness and pray that God will send a revival to clean things up, they demonstrate a hunger and thirst for righteousness. ([Expository Notes](#))

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of **righteousness**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Comment:** **Dikaiosune** here is doing what God requires.

Matthew 5:20 "For I say to you that unless your **righteousness** surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Comment:** **Dikaiosune** here refers to the right behavior that God requires of persons and ultimately is only provided by Him in His gift of Christ's death on our behalf (Christ's provision of His righteousness or **dikaiosune** in 2Cor 5:21, 1Co 1:30). **Dikaiosune** has a similar meaning of right behavior in Acts 10:35, 24:25

Matthew 6:1 Beware of practicing your **righteousness** before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

**Comment:** **Dikaiosune** here refers to acts of religious devotion in general or to observances required by one's religion.

John 16:8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and **righteousness** and judgment;

**Comment:** The Holy Spirit in essence convicts sinners (and sinning saints!) of what's **wrong**, what's **right** (**dikaiosune**) and what **happens** to those who do wrong and do right!

Romans 1:17 For in it the **righteousness** of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

**Comment:** **Dikaiosune** here refers to the divine action by which God puts a person right with Himself (in the act of justification which here equates with imputed righteousness).

The original use of this word group (**dikaiosune**, **dikaos**) was in the law courts where a judge declared an accused person "not guilty" and henceforth "right" before the law (righteousness was thus the opposite of a declaration of "guilty" with subsequent condemnation).

Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS **RIGHTEOUSNESS**."

2Corinthians 3:9 For if the ministry of condemnation (Old Covenant, the Law) has glory (it had purpose = to

show men their need for the righteousness provided in the New Covenant), much more does the ministry of **righteousness** (New Covenant) abound in glory.

**Matthew Arnold** said of God's declaration of **righteousness** (justification) "Christ came to reveal what righteousness really is, for nothing will do except righteousness, and no other conception of righteousness will do except Christ's conception of it—His method and secret.

**Louis Berkhof** said "The ground of justification can be found only in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to the sinner in justification."

**Henry Smith**, a Puritan writer, wrote that "He [Christ] hideth our unrighteousness with His righteousness, He covereth our disobedience with His obedience, He shadoweth our death with His death, that the wrath of God cannot find us."

**Dikaiošune** - 245x in the **Septuagint (LXX)** - Gen 15:6; 18:19; 19:19; 20:5, 13; 21:23; 24:27, 49; 30:33; 32:10; Ex 15:13; 34:7; Lev 19:15; Deut 9:4ff; 33:19, 21; Josh 24:14; Jdg 5:11; 1 Sam 2:10; 12:7; 26:23; 2 Sam 8:15; 22:21, 25; 1 Kgs 3:6, 9; 8:32; 10:9; 1 Chr 18:14; 29:17; 2 Chr 6:23; 9:8; Neh 2:20; Job 8:6; 22:28; 24:13; 27:6; 29:14; 33:26; 35:8; Ps 4:1, 5; 5:8; 7:8, 17; 9:4, 8; 11:7; 15:2; 17:1, 15; 18:20, 24; 22:31; 23:3; 31:1; 35:24, 27f; 36:6, 10; 37:6; 38:20; 40:9f; 45:4, 7; 48:10; 50:6; 51:14, 19; 52:3; 58:1; 65:4; 69:27; 71:2, 15f, 18, 24; 72:1ff, 7; 85:10f, 13; 88:12; 89:14, 16; 94:15; 96:13; 97:2, 6; 98:2, 9; 99:4; 103:17; 106:3, 31; 111:3; 112:3, 9; 118:19; 119:7, 40, 62, 75, 106, 121, 123, 138, 142, 144, 160, 164, 172; 132:9; 143:1, 11; 145:7; Pr 1:3, 22; 2:9, 20; 3:9, 16; 8:8, 15, 18, 20; 10:2; 11:5f, 21, 30; 12:28; 13:2, 6; 14:34; 15:6, 9, 29; 16:4, 7, 11f, 17, 31; 17:14, 23; 20:7, 28; 21:16, 21; 25:5; Eccl 5:8; Isa 1:21, 26; 5:7, 16; 9:7; 10:22; 11:5; 16:5; 26:2, 9f; 32:16f; 33:5f, 15; 38:19; 39:8; 41:2; 42:6; 45:8, 13, 19, 23f; 46:12f; 48:1, 18; 49:13; 51:5f, 8; 54:14; 56:1; 57:12; 58:2, 8; 59:9, 14, 17; 60:17; 61:3, 8, 11; 62:1f; 63:1, 7; 64:6; Jer 4:2; 9:24; 22:3, 13, 15; 23:5; 50:7; Ezek 3:20; 14:14, 20; 18:5, 17, 19ff, 24, 26f; 33:12ff, 16, 18f; 45:9; Da 6:22; 8:12; 9:7, 9, 13, 16, 18, 24; Hos 2:19; 10:12; Joel 2:23; Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12; Mic 6:5; 7:9; Zeph 2:3; Zech 8:8; Mal 2:17; 3:3; 4:2

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#### QUESTION - [What is righteousness?](#) | [GotQuestions.org](#) WATCH VIDEO

**ANSWER** - Dictionaries define *righteousness* as "behavior that is morally justifiable or right." Such behavior is characterized by accepted standards of morality, justice, virtue, or uprightness. The Bible's standard of human righteousness is God's own perfection in every attribute, every attitude, every behavior, and every word. Thus, God's laws, as given in the Bible, both describe His own character and constitute the plumb line by which He measures human righteousness. The Greek New Testament word for "righteousness" primarily describes conduct in relation to others, especially with regards to the rights of others in business, in legal matters, and beginning with relationship to God. It is contrasted with wickedness, the conduct of the one who, out of gross self-centeredness, neither reveres God nor respects man. The Bible describes the righteous person as just or right, holding to God and trusting in Him (Psalm 33:18–22).

The bad news is that true and perfect righteousness is not possible for man to attain on his own; the standard is simply too high. The good news is that true righteousness is possible for mankind, but only through the cleansing of sin by Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We have no ability to achieve righteousness in and of ourselves. But Christians possess the righteousness of Christ, because "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is an amazing truth. On the [cross](#), Jesus exchanged our sin for His perfect righteousness so that we can one day stand before God and He will see not our sin, but the holy righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

This means that we are made righteous in the sight of God; that is, that we are accepted as righteous and treated as righteous by God on account of what the Lord Jesus has done. He was made sin; we are made righteousness. On the cross, Jesus was treated as *if* He were a sinner, though He was perfectly holy and pure, and we are treated as *if* we were righteous, though we are defiled and [depraved](#). On account of what the Lord Jesus has endured on our behalf, we are treated as if we had entirely fulfilled the Law of God and had never become exposed to its penalty. We have received this precious gift of righteousness from the God of all mercy and grace. To Him be the glory!

#### Related Resources:

- [Why does Christ's righteousness need to be imputed to us?](#)
- [What does it mean to pursue righteousness?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about self-righteousness?](#)
- [What does it mean to live for righteousness \(1 Peter 2:24\)?](#)
- [What is the difference between righteousness and holiness?](#)



**WHAT SHALL WE SAY? THE GOD WHO INFLICTS WRATH IS NOT UNRIGHTEOUS, IS HE?: ti eroumen (1PFAI) me adikos o theos o epipheron (PAPMSN) ten orgen:**

- Ro 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:13,14
- Ro 2:5; 3:19; 9:18, 19, 20; 12:19; Dt 32:39, 40, 41, 42, 43; Ps 58:10,11; 94:1,2; Nah 1:2,6, 7, 8; 2Thes 1:6, 7, 8, 9; Rev 15:3; 16:5, 6, 7; 18:20
- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**What shall we say?** - James Denny asks "What inference shall we draw? Surely not that God, He who inflicts the wrath due to unrighteousness at the last day (Ro 1:18+), is Himself unrighteous, to speak as men speak. Away with the thought! If this were so, how should God judge the world? That God does judge the world at last is a fixed point for Paul and those with whom he argues; hence every inference which conflicts with it must be summarily set aside. God could not judge at all if He were unjust; Therefore, since He does judge, He is not unjust, not even in judging men whose unrighteousness may have served as a foil to His righteousness. It is not thus that the conclusions of Romans 2 can be evaded by the Jew. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

This is clearly a rhetorical question, which Paul is asking for effect. The question is accompanied by the Greek negative particle **me**, which expects a negative answer.

Paul anticipates and answers the objection that his teaching actually impugned the very holiness and purity of God's character

The [KJV Bible Commentary](#) (ONLINE) says that "This is a clever but illogical argument. It is twisting Scripture to make what is inherently evil appear to be ultimately good. Paul anticipates someone saying, "If my unfaithfulness causes God's faithfulness to be more apparent, is not my sin by contrast enhancing the world's concept of the absolute holiness and faithfulness of God?"

**Inflicts** ([2018](#)) (**epiphero** from **epí** = upon, to + **phéro** = to bring) is literally to bear upon, and in the present context means to bring upon or to inflict wrath or vengeance. Note the present tense indicating that this is a continual attitude of God.

**Wrath** ([3709](#)) (**orge** from **orgaô** = to teem, to swell) (Click word study of orge) is based on the root idea of a gradual swelling which eventually bursts, and thus describes an anger that proceeds from one's settled nature. It is a deep, inner resentment that seethes and smolders. God's **orge** in short is His constant, controlled and settled indignation and opposition toward sin. God's settled indignation means that His holiness cannot and will not coexist with sin in any form whatsoever. God's wrath is His holy hatred of all that is unholy and everything that is unrighteous. **Orge** is not God's uncontrollable rage, vindictive bitterness or losing of His temper, but the wrath of righteous reason and holy law.

Note that God's **orge** does not refer to sudden, explosive, uncontrollable outbursts of anger and rage to which men are so prone.

ORGE - 36X - Matt. 3:7; Mk. 3:5; Lk. 3:7; 21:23; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4, 5; Eph. 2:3; 4:31; 5:6; Col. 3:6, 8; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; 1 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 3:11; 4:3; Jas. 1:19, 20; Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15

**Unrighteous** ([94](#)) (**adikos**) pertains to not being right or just and thus means unjust, wicked, treacherous, unrighteous, crooked, characterized by lack of integrity. **Adikos** pertains to acting in a way that is contrary to what is right.

Here are the 12 uses of adikos in the NT - Mt. 5:45; Lk. 16:10f; 18:11; Acts 24:15; Ro 3:5; 1Co. 6:1, 9; Heb. 6:10; 1Pet. 3:18; 2Pe 2:9

**I AM SPEAKING IN HUMAN TERMS: kata anthropon lego (1SPA1):**

- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**This same phraseology is used by Paul in** - Ro 6:19; 1Cor 9:8; Gal 3:15

**James Denny** explains that "There is always something apologetic in the use of such expressions. Men forget the difference between God and themselves when they contemplate such a situation as that God should be unrighteous; obviously it is not to be taken seriously. Still, in human language such suppositions are made, and Paul begs that in his lips they may not be taken for more than they really mean. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Human** (444) (**anthropos** from **aner** = man + **ops** = countenance) is a human being, this generic name standing in distinction from gods and the animals.

Paul is simply paraphrasing the weak, unbiblical logic of his opponents which is the product of their natural, unregenerate minds. Again lest his readers conclude that he was expressing his own thinking, Paul immediately adds the parenthetical explanation that he was speaking in human terms, that is, according to the human logic of the natural mind, arguing the way fallen man would argue. He was saying, in effect,

"Don't think for a minute that I believe such perverted nonsense. I am only paraphrasing the charges that are often made against me."

Paul, in even bringing up such a question as God's acting unrighteously in visiting disobedient Israelites with wrath, instantly puts in the reverent parenthesis: "I speak after the manner of men"; as, "putting himself in the place of the generality of men, and using an argument such as they would use."

The [KJV Bible Commentary](#) (ONLINE) adds a helpful note reminding us that "**speaking in human terms**" "should not be understood as an absence of divine inspiration in recording these questions, but rather that Paul is using the form of human reasoning to express this inspired truth about God. Since God's justice is not something that may be called into question, Paul indicates that only foolish human reasoning would attempt to do so.

**Morison** aptly paraphrases,

When I ask a question, 'Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?' I am deeply conscious that I am using language which is intrinsically improper when applied to God. But in condescension to human weakness I transfer to Him language which is customary for men to employ when referring to human relationships."

**S. Lewis Johnson** writes: It is obvious that God's justice cannot be questioned (Ro 2:11, Eph 6:9, Col 3:25). Only human thinking and speaking would attempt that. The last clause of verse five is an implicit insight into Paul's attitude towards human reason. The apostle does not write, "I speak according to the sinful, or ungodly"; it is, "according to man," or simply as a man. The work of human reason, as Calvin points out, is "*ever to bark against the wisdom of God*," always railing against the truth of God, which it does not and cannot understand (cf. 1Co 2:14). Only when we submit our reason to the Spirit of God and the Word of God are we able to understand His mysteries. ([Romans 3:5-8](#))

## Torrey's Topic The Justice of God

Is a part of his character -Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 45:21

### DECLARED TO BE

- Plenteous -Job 37:23
- Incomparable -Job 4:1
- Incorruptible -Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7
- Impartial -2 Chronicles 19:7; Jeremiah 32:19
- Unfailing -Zephaniah 3:5
- Undeviating -Job 8:3; 34:12
- Without respect of persons -Romans 2:11; Colossians 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17
- The habitation of his throne -Ps 89:14
- Not to be sinned against -Jeremiah 50:7
- Denied by the ungodly -Ezekiel 33:17,20

### EXHIBITED IN

- Forgiving sins -1 John 1:9
- Redemption -Romans 3:26
- His government -Psalms 9:4; Jeremiah 9:24
- His judgments -Genesis 18:25; Revelation 19:2
- All his ways -Ezekiel 18:25,29
- The final judgment -Acts 17:31
- Acknowledge -Psalms 51:4; Romans 3:4
- Magnify -Ps 98:9; 99:3,4

**Romans 3:6 May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** me genoito (3SAMO): epei pos krinei (3SFAI) o theos ton kosmon

**Amplified:**By no means! Otherwise, how could God judge the world? ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Phillips:** Not a bit of it! What sort of a person would God be then to judge the world? ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Away with the thought. Otherwise, how will it be possible for God to judge the world?

**Young's Literal:** let it not be! since how shall God judge the world?

**MAY IT NEVER BE: me genoito (3SAMO):**

- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

## GOD FORBID!

**May it never be** (me genoito) is translated in both AV and RV "*God forbid*" but Greek does not contain the name "God" so it should not be so translated. This is the strongest negative Greek expression and usually carried the connotation of impossibility.

Literally it reads "Be it not so!" or "Let it not be conceived of!" It is like saying "Banish the thought!" Paul uses this interjection frequently in Romans to denote an instant, even horrified rejection of a conception. (Here are all the NT uses of **me genoito** - Lk. 1:38; 20:16; Ro 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; 1Co 6:15; Gal 2:17; 3:21; 6:14)

It's as if Paul shouts out in the court of law "**Objection**" ... "Far be such a thought! for then (if God should be unrighteous in visiting a Jew with wrath) how shall God judge the world?"

**FOR OTHERWISE HOW WILL GOD JUDGE THE WORLD: epei pos krinei (3SFAI) o theos ton kosmon:**

- Job 8:3; 34:17, 18, 19; Ps 9:8; 11:5, 6, 7; 50:6; 96:13; 98:9
- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**Newell** comments that "Paul assumes, and so do even these cavilers (**Ed note:** those who might be objecting and arguing), that there will be a day of judgment: "God Who visits with wrath." What the apostle is attacking is the false hopes of men to evade that judgment. Christ has been judged and smitten in our stead. But, alas, how a man hates to come to the cross as one "to whom that stroke was due" (Isa 53:8). But if you manage to escape conviction of sin, and thus miss personal faith in the Crucified One, you will go to hell forever. ([Romans 3: Devotional and Expository](#))

**Abraham** attests to God as Judge of the world just before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah...

"Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Ge 18:25+)

**David** declares that...

He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. (Ps 9:8)

**Spurgeon comments:** Whatever earthly courts may do, heaven's throne ministers judgment in uprightness. Partiality and respect of persons are things unknown in the dealings of the Holy One of Israel. How the prospect of appearing before the impartial tribunal of the Great King should act as a check to us when tempted to sin, and as a comfort when we are slandered or oppressed.

**Paul** alludes to this psalm in Acts declaring that...

He (God the Father) has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man (the Lord Jesus Christ) Whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31 - +)

**For otherwise** ([1893](#)) ([epei](#)) means since, if that were so.

**Judge** ([2919](#)) ([krino](#)) primarily signifies to distinguish, separate or discriminate; then, to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong.

The **Nelson Study Bible** comments that "Paul answers his own question (in Ro 3:5) with another question. If God does not punish unrighteousness, then He is not just and there will be no Day of Judgment. The flaw in logic is evident: God's justice demands that He judge unrighteousness. To claim that God is unjust because He judges is a ludicrous argument. (BORROW [Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**World** ([2889](#)) ([kosmos](#)) refers to this present evil man-centered (humanistic) world-system ruled and directed by Satan and in general living apart from God and opposed to Him. By the use of the world Paul obviously means "all mankind."

Judgment of the world is a major theme of Scripture (Ge 18:25; Ps 50:6; 58:11; 94:2) and here the phrase **'judge the world'** probably refers to the great future day of judgment, the Great White Throne Judgment (see Ro 2:5, Rev 20:11-15).

In Romans 2 **Paul** wrote that

because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (see Ro 2:5+)

**John** describes the final judgment of the world in Revelation recording that...

I saw a **great white throne** and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15+)

Paul's point is that if God condoned sin, He would have no equitable, righteous basis for judgment. He shall judge the world, and in His judgment the ancient question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth judge justly?" (Ge 18:25), shall have a resounding affirmative answer.

**To summarize** - If there were any possibility of God's being unrighteous, then how could He be fit to judge the world? Yet we all admit that He will judge the world.

The **Wycliffe Bible Commentary** adds that "The fact that the divine righteousness shines more brightly against the dark background of man's unrighteousness has nothing to do with the Lord's righteousness in judging and the condemnation that must come. God must judge, condemn, and punish because he is a holy being. As a holy being he must deal with every violation of holiness. Paul asserts here the must without going into the why. (Online [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**Romans 3:7 But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner ?**

**Greek:** ei de e aletheia tou theou en to emo pseusmati eperisseusen (3SAAI) eis ten doxan autou, ti eti kago os hamartolos krinomai (1SPPI):

**Amplified:** But [you say] if through my falsehood God's integrity is magnified and advertised and abounds to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner? ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**CEV:** Since your lies bring great honor to God by showing how truthful he is, you may ask why God still says you are a sinner. ([CEV](#))

**GWT:** If my lie increases the glory that God receives by showing that God is truthful, why am I still judged as a sinner? ([GWT](#))

**Middletown:** "If my lie (my unfaithfulness) magnifies and enhances God's truth, and God is glorified by my lie, then why does God judge me?"

**NCV:** A person might say, "When I lie, it really gives him glory, because my lie shows God's truth. So why am I judged a sinner?" ([NCV](#))

**NIV:** Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?"

**NLT:** "But," some might still argue, "how can God judge and condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights His truthfulness and brings Him more glory?" ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** It is like saying that if my lying throws into sharp relief the truth of God and, so to speak, enhances his reputation, then why should he repay me by judging me a sinner? ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**TEV:** But what if my untruth serves God's glory by making His truth stand out more clearly? Why should I still be condemned as a sinner?

**Wuest:** Moreover, assuming that the truth of God by means of my lie became the more conspicuous, resulting in His glory, why then yet am I also being judged as a sinner?

**Young's Literal:** for if the truth of God in my falsehood did more abound to His glory, why yet am I also as a sinner judged?

#### BUT IF THROUGH MY LIE THE TRUTH OF GOD: ei de e aletheia tou theou en to emo pseusmati

- Ge 37:8,9,20; 44:1-14; 50:18, 19, 20; Ex 3:19; 14:5,30; 1Ki 13:17,18,26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32; 2Ki 8:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15; Mt 26:34,69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75
- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**But** - always pause to ponder this **term of contrast**.

**Lie** ([5582](#)) (**pseúsma** from **pseúdomai** = to lie) is found only in this verse and not in the Septuagint (LXX) and describes the content of a false utterance, a falsehood or an untrue statement.

It is true that human sin does provide God the opportunity to show the truth about His character, specifically His great mercy and lovingkindness (cp Lk 18:13, He 2:17+). Indeed, in response to man's sin, God does not obliterate mankind but provides the way of salvation and reveals more about His own righteousness. Sinners (and this imaginary objector in Paul's illustration) argue therefore that mankind's sin serves a good purpose! Ridiculous! Such fallacious reasoning says we should go on sinning so God can go on proving how true and faithful He is. Sin is evil and is never justified and those who think this receive just condemnation. Sin is against God, not for Him. God does good because of who He is, not because of our evil.

**S. Lewis Johnson** - "With a different emphasis Paul, offering arguments an objector might pose to his doctrine of God's determination to fulfill His promises even in the face of human sin and disobedience, continues the discussion. Putting words in the sinner's mouth he asks, "If God's truth is increased and God's glory advanced by means of my lying, then why am I brought to

judgment, Why may I not just do evil that good may come?" The apostle has inserted a parenthesis in the last question, asserting that this is the very charge brought against him and his followers, namely, that they practiced this very doctrine, "Let us do evil that good may come." ([Romans 3:5-8](#))

**ABOUNDED TO HIS GLORY WHY AM I ALSO STILL BEING JUDGED AS A SINNER: eperisseusen (3SAAI) eis ten doxan autou ti eti kago os hamartolos krinomai (1SPPI):**

- Ro 9:19,20; Isa 10:6,7; Acts 2:23; 13:27, 29
- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

#### Amplified...

But [you say] if through my falsehood God's integrity is magnified and advertised and abounds to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner?

**James Denny** - These verses are extremely difficult, and are interpreted variously according to the force assigned to the "*ti eti kago os*" (why am I also) of verse 7. Who or what supplies the contrast to this emphatic "I also"?... it seems preferable to take the kago (also, even) as referring strictly to himself. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Abounded** ([4052](#)) (**perisseuo** from **perissós** = abundant from **peri** = in sense of beyond) means to cause to superabound, to be superfluous, to overflow, to be in affluence, to excel or to be in abundance with the implication of being considerably more than what would be expected.

**Perisseuo** carries the idea of exceeding the requirements, of overflowing or overdoing. It means to exceed a fixed number of measure, to be left over and above a certain number or measure. It means to have or to be more than enough, to be extremely rich or abundant. To exceed or remain over (as used in loaves left over after feeding the 5000 [Mt 14:20]! When Jesus supplies there is more than enough so that some is even left over! How quick we are to forget this basic principle!) The idea is to overflow like a river out of its banks!

**Godet** comments that "Paul here denotes the surplus of glory which God's moral perfection extracts from human wickedness in each case.

**Moulton and Milligan** give a secular Greek usage quoting extracts as follows - "more than enough has been written; if you find any purchasers of the surplus donkeys". Of the noun M&M say; "superfluity." The verb **perisseuo** means to exist in superfluity, to super-abound"

**Perisseuo** and its cognates (like **perisseuma** [4051](#) = a surplus, **hyperperisseuo** [5248](#) = to abound exceedingly) suggest being present in a way that the given space is unable to contain.

**NIDNTT** notes that "perisseuo is used intransitively from the time of Hesiod in the sense of to be over and above, go beyond, outflank, be more than enough, remain over, abound. The adj. perissos means beyond the regular number or size, out of the common, extraordinary, strange, more than sufficient, superfluous, excessive, extravagant. The adv. perissos means extraordinarily, exceedingly... In the Gospels **perisseuo** and its cognates are found with the primary meaning to have abundance, to have many goods. Mk. 12:44 tells of the widow who gave all that she possessed, whereas others gave of their abundance. Lk. 12:15 warns of misplaced trust in the abundance of possessions. The proverbial utterance in Matt 12:34 declares: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." The more Jesus commanded men not to tell of his healing work, the more (mallon perissoteron) they proclaimed it (Mk. 7:36). (Online - [New International Dictionary of NT Theology](#).)

**Sinner** ([268](#)) (**hamartolos** from **hamartano** = deviate, miss the mark, sin) means erring from the way or mark. **Sinner** was an awful insult in Jewish circles. It was the term Jews used to describe people who had no respect for Mosaic law or rabbinic traditions and were therefore the most vile and worthless of people. It was also a term used by the Pharisees to describe those they considered to be inferior because they had no interest in scribal tradition.

For Paul to call a Jew ( he speaks of himself "I... **asinner**") a sinner would have shocked his readers ears! He is building his case of why Jesus came, Matthew for example recording...

But go and learn what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' (Animal sacrifices,



which were prescribed by the Law and thus appropriate were meaningless unless accompanied by true obedience that came from genuine repentance and faith in the gospel) for I did not come to call the righteous, but **sinners**. (Mt 9:13)

In his first letter to Timothy **Paul** wrote...

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners**, among whom I am foremost of all. (1Ti 1:15)

**Comment:** This is a fascinating declaration for it is near the end of Paul's life. It is a maxim that the more a man matures in Christ, and the closer he approaches the radiance of God's Holiness, the more he sees his sinful inadequacies in His infinite, perfect light. And so we see this progression in Paul's self-assessment over time...

1Co 15:9 (**55AD**) For I am **the least of the apostles**, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Ep 3:8 (**61AD**) To me, **the very least of all saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

1Ti 1:15 (**63-66AD**) It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners**, among whom **I am foremost of all**.

**Middletown Bible** writes that...

It is true that God can use sin and the wickedness and wrath of man to bring glory to His Name (Psalm 76:10). Even a wicked, hard-hearted Pharaoh can bring glory to God (see Ro 9:17,18,21,22,23see note). Pharaoh, following the same perverted logic, could say,

"Lord, what right do You have to judge me? I've done You a service! I have helped bring glory to Your Name! I have let everyone see how long suffering you were to me and how Your power was made known. If I had not resisted You then You would not have been able to perform all of those mighty signs and wonders upon the land of Egypt!"

Man's sin can bring glory to God but this certainly does not exempt man from judgment. [Romans 3](#)

**Moule** says, "The mighty paradox of justification (without works) lent itself easily to the distortions, as well as to the contradictions, of sinners. 'Let us do evil that good may come' no doubt represented the report which prejudice and bigotry would regularly carry away and spread after every discourse and every argument about free forgiveness. It is so still: If this is true, we may live as we like; If this is true, then the vilest sinner makes the best saint.' ([The Epistle to the Romans](#)).

**William Newell** applies this passage warning that

if we, professing Christians, consign this whole passage to the Jew, we fall directly into the same terrible trap. Whole multitudes today in Christendom, sheltered in their imagination by the fact that they have "joined" some church, resent the very doctrines that Paul here insists on. Thousands of so-called "church-members" not only have never been brought under real conviction of sin and guilt and personal danger, but rise in anger like the Jews of Paul's day when one preaches their danger directly to them! Now if God paid no attention whatever to the claim of the Jew to be exempt from judgment because he was a Jew, neither will He pay any attention to the claim of the "Baptist" or "Presbyterian," "Episcopalian" or "Methodist,"—as such. For all men are alike guilty, common sinners! What avails before a holy God the special religious names sinners may call themselves? This book of Romans will do you and me no good if we apply it to Jews or Mormons only! ([Romans 3: Devotional and Expository](#))

**Romans 3:8** And why not say (as we are [slanderosly reported](#) and as [some claim](#) that we [say](#)), "Let us [do evil](#) that [good may come](#) "? Their [condemnation](#) is [just](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** kai me kathos blasphemoumetha (1PPPI) kai kathos phasin (3PPAI) tines hemas legein (PAN) hoti poiesomen (1PAAS) ta kaka, hina elthe (3SAAS) ta agatha; on to krima endikon estin (3SPAI)

**Amplified:** And why should we not do evil that good may come?—as some slanderously charge us with teaching. Such [false teaching] is justly condemned by them. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

**Phillips:** Similarly, why not do evil that good may be, by contrast all the the more conspicuous and valuable? (As a matter of fact, I am reported as urging this very thing, by some slanderously and others quite seriously! But, of course, such an argument is quite properly condemned.) ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**TLB:** If you follow through with that idea you come to this: the worse we are, the better God likes it! But the damnation of those who say such things is just. Yet some claim that this is what I preach!

**Wuest:** And not, as we were slanderously reported and even as certain are saying that we are saying, Let us do the evil things in order that there might come the good things; whose judgment is just.

**Young's Literal:** and not, as we are evil spoken of, and as certain affirm us to say -- 'We may do the evil things, that the good ones may come?' whose judgment is righteous.

### And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come

- Mt 5:11; 1Pet 3:16,17
- Ro 5:20; 6:1,15; 7:7; Jude 1:4
- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**And why not say** - Godet says "the apostle pushes his refutation to the utmost (Ro 3:8). Why even not go further? Why, after annihilating the judgment, not say further, to be thoroughly consequent: "And even let us furnish God, by sinning more freely, with richer opportunities of doing good! Will not every sin be a material which He will transform into the pure gold of His glory?"

Paul was being unjustly slandered being falsely accused of teaching that salvation by grace encouraged people to sin even more (do evil).

**Slanderously reported** ([987](#)) (blasphemeo from blápto = to hurt, injure, harm + phéme from phemí = to speak) means literally to speak to harm and in general therefore means to bring into ill repute and so to slander.

Tragically, the apostle's gospel message of salvation by grace through faith alone had been perverted by his opponents who argued it provided not only a license to sin, but outright encouragement to do so (Ro 5:20+; Ro 6:1,2+).

**Affirm** (claim) ([5346](#)) (phemi) means to make known one's thoughts, to bring to light by speech, to say, affirm or assert.

**Let us do evil that good may come** - Middletown Bible writes "this is the wicked and unbiblical philosophy that the end justifies the means. Paul utterly condemns this philosophy: "whose damnation (judgment) is just (right, deserved)." This philosophy is very popular in our day... IT IS NEVER RIGHT TO DO WRONG TO DO RIGHT! Our attitude should be this: "Lord, I'm going to do right no matter how hard it is and I'm going to leave the results with You. You'll have to work it out. DO RIGHT AND TRUST GOD FOR THE OUTCOME!"

**Evil** ([2556](#)) ([kakos](#)) is a word which basically, denotes a lack of something and can mean that which is injurious or harmful—harm caused by evil intent. Kakos means bad, destructive, damaging, unjust. It describes something as it ought not to be.

**Good** ([18](#)) ([agathos](#)) means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent (marked by or disposed to doing good).

**S. Lewis Johnson** - The logically absurd conclusion of his opponents, that sin enhances the glory of God and, therefore, precludes judgment, is not only inconsistent with the future judgment, but also destructive of all morality. Such reasoning leads to the impious conclusion, "Let us do evil that good may come," a sentiment slanderously attributed to the apostle and his followers. Paul in one cutting stroke, as short as the question is long, rejects the thought and those who propound it. ([Romans 3:5-8](#))

Paul's (God's) adversaries were in fact accusing him of this heretical teaching. The antinomians (saved by grace but live lawless) would have loved it if this teaching were true.

The question is if we follow that kind of thinking that says that the more we sin, the better it is because living a lie actually enhances

God's truthfulness.

**MacArthur** writes that "Paul's enemies obviously had repeatedly charged that his gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone not only undermined God's law but granted license to sin with impunity. In effect, they accused him of saying that, in God's eyes, sin is as acceptable as righteousness, if not more so. (See [Romans Commentary - Page 174](#))

**Newell** - "Slander" against the gospel of grace is still going on, and will go on until the Lord comes in righteousness. Moule well says, "The mighty paradox of justification (without works) lent itself easily to the distortions, as well as to the contradictions, of sinners. 'Let us do evil that good may come' no doubt represented the report which prejudice and bigotry would regularly carry away and spread after every discourse and every argument about free forgiveness. It is so still: If this is true, we may live as we like; If this is true, then the vilest sinner makes the best saint.

**Denny** - If judgment could be evaded by sinning to the glory of God, so Paul argues, he and other Christians like him might naturally act on the principle which slander imputed to them--that of doing evil that good might come. No doubt the slander was of Jewish origin. The doctrine that righteousness is a gift of God, not to be won by works of law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, can always be misrepresented as immoral" "sin the more, it will only the more magnify grace". Paul does not stoop to discuss it. The judgment that comes on those who by such perversions of reason and conscience seek to evade all judgment is just. This is all he has to say. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

#### THEIR CONDEMNATION IS JUST: on to krima endikon estin (3SPA1):

- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

Paul does not even deign to answer the false accusation, for it answers itself for it is evident both to the hearer and to the asker of such a question that doing evil that good may come, does not change the character of the evil, nor take away its guilt from him who commits it. So the one who reasons this way is getting what he deserves.

**Condemnation** (2917) (**krima** form kríno = to judge, the suffix -ma indicating the result of the judging, ie, that is, the result of making a decision) describes a judicial sentence from a magistrate (his pronouncement). It describes one deciding a question of legal right or wrong, and thus determining the innocence or guilt of the accused and assigning appropriate punishment.

The closely related word krisis refers to the process or act of judging (instead of the result of the judging). Vine adds that...

Krima is usually the decision which results from an investigation, just as krisis is the process of investigation; sometimes the two are interchanged, as in 1Pe 4:17, krima, where the process of judgment rather than the resulting decision seems to be intended. Hence krima is used of the estimate one man forms of another, Mt 7:2+, and of the decision of human tribunals, Lk 23:40, of the decisions of God, in general, Ro 11:33, and in particular concerning the devil, 1 Timothy 3:6, and man, Mark 12:40 and Gal 5:10.

Krima - 27 uses - condemnation(8), judgment(15), judgments(1), lawsuits(1), sentence(1), sentence of condemnation(1), way(1). Mt 7:2+; Mk 12:40; Lk 20:47; 23:40; 24:20; Jn 9:39; Acts 24:25; Ro 2:2+, Ro 2:3+; Ro 3:8+; Ro 5:16+; Ro 11:33+; Ro 13:2+; 1Co 6:7; 1Co 11:29, 34; Gal 5:10; 1Ti 3:6; 5:12; He 6:2+; Jas 3:1; 1Pe 4:17+; 2Pe 2:3+; Jude 1:4; Re 17:1+; Re 18:20+; Re 20:4+.

Note that the use of krima in 1Co 11:29 conveys the idea of chastisement (because believers are in Christ and no longer under God's condemnation Ro 8:1) which makes the KJV rendering of damnation very misleading (1Co 11:29KJV).

**Krima** refers to (1) The decree in the form of a judgment, decision, verdict or sentence (Lk 24:20). It refers to a judicial process that renders a decision on someone's sin. Most often as in the present context krima signifies an unfavorable judgment (condemnation including where the condemnation implies also the punishment for the condemnation) - 2Pe 2:3, Jude 1:4, Ro 2:2, 3:8, Re 17:1, 1Co 11:34, Mt 23:13, Mk 12:40, Lk 20:47, Ro 13:2, Jas 3:1, etc, of the judgments of God - Mt 7:1, Ro 5:16, 11:33; Lxx - Ps 119:7) (Vine - "the sentence pronounced, a verdict, a condemnation, the decision resulting from an investigation") Krima is used especially for divine judgment (cf. Ro 2:5; Ro 5:16; Ro 11:33, ) (2) The function of a judge which speaks of their authority to judge (Rev 20:4) (3) A legal action taken against another (a lawsuit as in 1Co 6:7, cp Ex 18:22). Vincent adds "In classical Greek it has also the meaning of the matter of judgment, the question in litigation. So

Aeschylus: "The matter (krima) is not easy to judge. Choose me not as judge" ("Suppliants," 391). In 1Co 6:7 the meaning is legal proceedings, lawsuits. So in Septuagint, Job 31:13; Ex. 23:6.

Krima is a neutral noun which can be either positive or negative, but as noted in the NT it is most often used negatively as a warning (eg, see Jas 3:1)

**Krima** - commonly denotes the result of an action: the judge's verdict. However, it can also take on the meanings of krisis: the action of judging, dividing, or accusing. It is used once in the OT sense of dominion (Rev 20:4), once (plural) in the sense of legal dispute (1Co 6:7), and once in the sense of God's acts of judgment in history (Ro 11:33). ([Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans](#))

**TDNT** adds that krima "means the "decision" of the judge,

- a. as an action, (a judgment carried out) Jn. 9:39; Ac 24:25; Ro 11:33; 1Co 11:29, 34; He 6:2; 1 Pt. 4:17; 2 Pt. 2:3; Rev. 20:4,
- b. as the result of the action, the sentence, as in most of the other NT passages apart from 1Co 6:7; Rev. 18:20. Usually the decision is unfavorable, and it thus bears the sense of condemnation. It may be used of human as well as divine judgment. ([Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

**Richards** notes that "The NIV and the NASB read "condemn" for a large family of Greek words. The basic word is krino, "to judge" or "to decide." There are a number of related words. The noun krima, "judgment," is usually rendered "condemnation" in the NASB. Katakrino means "to give judgment against," and thus "to condemn." Kataginosko means "to make a negative moral assessment," and thus "to blame," and katadikazo means "to pass judgment on." Originally krino and its cognates indicated simply an assessment. A person examined a matter and then came to a conclusion about it. By NT times these words had become part of the legal terminology used to speak of bringing charges, of judging, and of passing judgment (of bringing to trial, condemning, and punishing). When used of God, krima ("judgment") is understood as "condemnation," for one judged by God is already condemned. (borrow [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

Krima - 194 uses in Septuagint (LXX) - Ex 18:22; 23:6; Lev 18:4f; 20:22; 26:15, 43, 46; Num 35:24, 29; 36:13; Deut 4:1, 8, 45; 5:1, 31; 6:1, 4, 20; 7:11; 8:11; 21:22; 26:16f; 32:41; 1 Sam 2:10; 2 Sam 8:15; 22:23; 1 Kgs 2:3; 3:11, 28; 10:9; 2 Kgs 11:14; 17:26f, 33f, 37, 40; 1 Chr 15:13; 16:12, 14; 18:14; 22:13; 28:7; 2 Chr 4:7, 20; 6:39; 7:17; 9:8; 19:10; 24:24; 30:16; 33:8; Ezra 7:10, 26; Neh 1:7; 8:18; 9:13, 29; 10:29; Job 9:15, 19; 13:18; 14:3; 19:7; 23:4, 7; 29:14; 31:13; 32:9; 34:5f; 36:6, 15, 17; 40:8; Ps 9:16; 10:5; 17:2; 18:22; 19:9; 36:6; 37:6; 48:11; 72:1; 81:4; 89:14, 30; 97:2, 8; 103:6; 105:5, 7; 119:7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 102, 106, 108, 120f, 132, 149, 156, 160, 164, 175; 146:7; 147:19f; 149:9; Prov 1:3; 2:9; 12:5; 21:15; 28:5; Eccl 5:8; Isa 1:27; 5:16; 9:7; 10:2; 16:5; 28:26; 32:16; Jer 4:12; 5:1; 8:7; 9:24; 12:1; 21:12; 22:13, 15; 23:5; 30:18; 32:7f; 46:28; 51:9f; Ezek 5:8, 10, 15; 7:27; 11:9; 18:5, 8, 27; 22:29; 23:24; 28:22, 26; 30:19; 33:14, 16, 19; 34:16; 36:27; 37:24; 44:24; 45:9; Dan 5:16; 7:22; 9:5, 26; Hos 2:19; 5:1, 11; 6:5; 10:4; 12:6; Amos 5:7, 15, 24; 6:12; Mic 3:1, 8f; 6:8; 7:9; Hab 1:4, 7, 12; Zeph 2:3; 3:5, 8; Zech 7:9; 8:16

**Just** (1738) ([endikos](#) from **en** = in + **dike** = right) means literally "in the right" and thus describes that which is equitable, fair or which conforms to right.

Those who have drawn these antinomian (against the Law, a teaching advocating licentiousness) inferences are justly condemned. Any such teaching that would distort God's Word for the sake of expediency, even for the ostensibly good purpose of winning converts, would be anathema to Paul. This is a sober warning of judgment against compromising the Scriptures, especially the truth of the Gospel and the way of salvation.

There is a fine irony in the final statement -- Paul concludes his charges against those who object to judgment as sinners by saying, "whose judgment is just." This final word is directed to the Jews particularly, as the context indicates. They thought they were excused from divine judgment and free to judge the Gentiles, but they overlooked the justice of God. Thus, Paul has very skillfully returned to the charge with which he began the section on the sin of the Jews (Ro 2:11+).

**Moule** writes of the phrase "Whose doom is just" - What a witness is this to the inalienable truthfulness of the Gospel! This brief stern utterance absolutely repudiates all apology for means by end; all seeking of even the good of men by the way of saying the thing that is not. Deep and strong, almost from the first, has been the temptation to the Christian man to think otherwise, until we find whole systems of casuistry developed whose aim seems to be to go as near the edge of untruthfulness as possible, if not beyond it, in religion. But the New Testament sweeps the entire idea of the pious fraud away, with this short thunder-peal, "Their doom is just." It will hear of no holiness that leaves out truthfulness; no word, no deed, no habit, that even with the purest purpose belies the God of reality and veracity. ([The Epistle to the Romans](#)).

**John Piper** asks "Who are they whose condemnation is just? Those who play games with the Word of God. More specifically in this case: those who see two true things in the Word of God that they can't reconcile and deny that this can be. For them it was, on the one hand, God is faithful and God is righteous and God is true to His glory, and, on the other hand, God judges His very own chosen people and condemns them along with the Gentile world. Two truths, for them irreconcilable. What advantage then would the Jew have? So they try to reject one of these truths. And the result is sophistry - tricky reasoning, word games. Today we might call it spinning. And to this Paul says, "Their condemnation is just." So my closing exhortation is: DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH THE BIBLE. BE AS CAREFUL AS YOU CAN IN HANDLING THE WORD OF GOD. And when you can't reconcile one true thing with another. Wait and pray and study and seek the Lord. In due time, they will be reconciled. (Read full sermon text [Let God Be True Though Every Man a Liar](#))

**S. Lewis Johnson** has an excellent summary writing that...

The term antinomianism is often traced to a controversy that Martin Luther had with an old friend, John Agricola. Agricola had argued that Christians have been freed from the Law of Moses by the cross of Christ, and that, therefore, they are no longer required to preach and keep the Ten Commandments. He feared that, if the Law were preached, justification by faith alone might be confused with justification by works. Repentance, he taught, is produced not by the Law, but by the gospel. Now, while Luther's earlier position is a matter for debate, it can hardly be denied that he urged the preaching of the Law, and for several reasons.

First, it is to be preached to the unbelievers to awaken in them a sense of sin which might prepare them for the reception of the gospel. And, second, the Law is suitable for inciting the justified to good works.

Luther also urged the preaching of the Law for the outward disciplining of the ungodly. It was these positions, held by both Melancthon and Luther, that Agricola attacked, and from the attack and Luther's response came the Antinomian Controversy. This controversy has long been forgotten, but the term antinomianism is still with us and has come to represent that particular perversion of the gospel that implies that, since believers are saved by the free grace of God, they are not responsible to live according to the moral law of God, or, to speak more generally, to live in holiness... And it is a live one today, as any preacher of the gospel of grace can testify. Indeed, there is in this fact a good test of one's gospel. If it does not, when proclaimed, provoke accusations and charges of this kind, it may not be Paul's gospel that is being preached.

Paul's full answer to the question is not given here in chapter 3. He reserves it for chapter six, verses one through twenty-three. As Barrett quite correctly says,

"It cannot be given here, because it rests upon the truths of the doctrine of justification by faith which have not yet been established."

Furthermore, the principal aim of the present passage is to shut the door to any Jewish claim to exemption from divine judgment due to perversion and abuse of the faithfulness of God to His promises. The refutation of the slander, then, is only incidental here.

As we have said in previous studies, after charging the Gentiles with sin and guilt in chapter one (Ro 1:18-32), Paul went to work on the Jew. In the larger division of Romans 1:8-3:8 the guilt of the sons of Jacob is set forth. The apostle's method is, first, to elucidate the principles of divine judgment (Ro 2:1-16), and following this, second, application is made to the Jews (Ro 2:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24) and their covenant status (Ro 2:25, 26, 27, 28, 29).

Finally, in Ro 3:1-8 Paul answers Jewish counterclaims. The first one is simply this: The Pauline teaching, which on the surface has brought the Jew down to the level of the Gentiles, implies that the God-originated distinction between the Jew and Gentile has been obliterated (cf. Ro 3:1).

The apostolic answer is that the Old Testament promises to Israel are still valid (Ro 3:2).

And to an imagined objector's expostulation, "But, Paul, Israel has fallen into disobedience and rejection of the promises" (Ro 3:3), the plain and simple apostolic reply is: God will keep His word. The fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises rests upon the veracity of the Godhead (Ro 3:4), as the Old Testament suggests (cf. Ps 51:4). It is this scriptural citation that is the occasion of the final counter claim of the section. David wrote,

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight, in order that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

The conjunction (AV, "that"), which expresses purpose, indicates that David's sin established God's righteousness. With conscience awakened he, David, sees the hideous character of his sin as rebellion

against God and His holiness, and that it serves to demonstrate the truth that God alone is righteous. But this valid observation may be twisted and perverted to serve the purpose of the apostolic antagonists.

If this is true, the objector says, then our unrighteousness is the means of the commendation of God's righteousness and, if that be true, then what shall we say? Is it not man who thereby makes God's righteousness more conspicuous? Is he not to be commended for this rather than to be judged for sin by the infliction of divine wrath? Should not God be grateful rather than vindictive?

It is a clever riposte, but not at all beyond the type of individuals with whom the apostle often had to contend... The apostle's method is, at least at this point, to reject the thought of his opponents as impious. At a later time he will deal with the principle in greater detail, giving it full treatment (cf. Ro 6:1-23), and we must content ourselves with waiting for the answer until that section is studied. Paul might, however, have pointed out this simple fact:

That man's sin may be the instrument of divine glorification is no credit to man. It is God who brings this to pass. The fact that He makes the wrath of men to praise Him is no cause for man to boast in the matter; only God alone deserves the glory. (From article in the 1973 issue of [Bibliotheca Sacra - Dallas Theological Seminary](#)- this journal is highly recommended for its careful analysis of Scripture. Also available for your computer = [Theological Journal Library](#))

**Romans 3:9** [What then?](#) Are we [better](#) than they? Not at [all](#); for we have [already charged](#) that [both Jews](#) and [Greeks](#) are [all under sin](#); ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** Ti oun; proechometha (1PPMI) ou pantos: proetiasametha (1PAMI) gar loudaios te kai Hellenas pantas hupe hamartian einai (PAN)

**Amplified:** Well then, are we [Jews] superior and better off than they? No, not at all. We have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles), are under sin [held down by and subject to its power and control]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Phillips:** Are we Jews then a march ahead of other men? By no means. For I have shown above that all men from Jews to Greeks are under the condemnation of sin. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** What then? Are we better? Not in any way, for we previously brought a charge against both Jews and Gentiles that all are under sin

#### WHAT THEN? ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY: Ti ounproechometha (1PPMI):

- Ro 3:5; 6:15; 11:7; 1Co10:19; 14:15; Phil 1:18
- Ro 3:22,23; Isa 65:5; Lk 7:39; 18:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; 1Cor 4:7
- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**Middletown Bible** has the following outline of this next section:

Romans 3:9 -THE CHARGE -- All are under sin.

Romans 3:10-18 -THE INDICTMENT. An indictment is a formal written statement framed by a prosecuting authority (in this case, GOD HIMSELF) charging a person with an offense.

Romans 3:19 - THE VERDICT - GUILTY!

**What then?** - Paul's frequent introductory question (*What then* is used in- Ro 3:3, 4:1, 6:15, 8:31, 11:7, 1Co 3:5, 9:18, Phil 1:18), in this case tracking back to Romans 3:1,2. Does the great advantage of the Jew (Ro 3:2) make him better than the Gentiles? No!

Are we better ([4284](#)) (proechomai/proecho from pró = forth, forward + écho = have, be) literally means to have before oneself as holding before oneself for protection (can include idea of making excuses). Paul uses the figurative meaning of to excel, to have preference or preeminence, or to be superior or better. To be in a prominent position.



The ones to whom we refers is not absolutely clear. Some commentators believe Paul is speaking of his fellow Jews. Does he mean “we Jews”? This is the most common understanding, and is based on the probability that the whole previous section (Ro 2:1-3:8) refers particularly to the Jews.

Several interpreters believe Paul means “we Christians”.

**Moule** favors this interpretation, but recognizes the difficulty asking...

Who are the “we,” and with whom are “we” compared? The drift of the argument admits of two replies to this question. “We” may be “we Jews”; as if Paul placed himself in instinctive sympathy, by the side of the compatriot whose cavils he has just combated, and gathered up here into a final assertion all he has said before of the (at least) equal guilt of the Jew beside the Greek.

Or “we” may be “we Christians,” taken for the moment as men apart from Christ; it may be a repudiation of the thought that he has been speaking from a pedestal, or from a tribunal. As if he said, “Do not think that I, or my friends in Christ, would say to the world, Jewish or Gentile, that we are holier than you. No; we speak not from the bench, but from the bar. Apart from Him who is our peace and life, we are ‘in the same condemnation.’ It is exactly because we are in it that we turn and say to you, ‘Do not ye fear God?’ ”

On the whole, this latter reference seems the truer to the thought and spirit of the whole context. ([The Epistle to the Romans](#)).

**Cranfield** says it means “we human beings in general”.

**People's NT Commentary** writes that “If (“we”) Jews shall be judged as well as Gentiles, are not we Jews, having the oracles of God, better than they, and hence likely to be justified? The Jew is still supposed to be speaking. To this Paul replies, In no wise, for he had already shown (chapters 1 and 2) that both Jews and Gentiles were sinners before God.”

#### NOT AT ALL: ou pantas:

- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**Not** is [ou](#) which signifies absolute negation - absolutely we are not better than they!

People who are very religious tend to think of themselves as being inherently better than others and favored by God because of their goodness and religious fervor (works). Christians are not immune to the temptation to consider that God saved them because they were somehow more deserving of salvation than others. But if a person ever becomes right before God it is never because he or she is innately better than anyone else or because he or she has managed to bring his life up to God’s standards or because he or she zealously observes certain religious practices. It is only because he or she has acknowledged their sin and helplessness and prostrated themselves in humble faith before the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and cleansing.

**FOR WE HAVE ALREADY CHARGED (accused beforehand) THAT BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS ARE ALL UNDER SIN: proetiasametha (1PAMI) gar loudaios te kai Hellenas pantas hupe hamartian einai (PAN):**

- Romans 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 3:1-8: Objections Answered](#) - Steven Cole
- [Romans 3:5-8 The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Romans 3:9-12 The Guilt of All Men, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

**HOW MANY ARE SINNERS?**

ALL (Romans 3:9,12,19,23)

**HOW MANY ARE RIGHTEOUS?**

**For (gar)** - Notice the little preposition "for" (there are over 7000 "for's" in Scripture) and if the context indicates, as it does in this passage, that the "for" is a term of explanation, pause and ask yourself what is the Spirit seeking to explain?

**Criswell** - This passage records climactically, at the end of the first major section (Ro 1:18-3:20), the universal ravages of sin. In Ro 3:10-18, Paul strings together a number of O.T. quotes to demonstrate and verify his thesis of the universality of sin. "All" are "under sin" (Ro 3:9). "There is none righteous" (Ro 3:10). "There is none who does good" (Ro 3:12). "All have sinned" (Ro 3: 23). Man is immersed in the misery of sin, and he is guilty of contentment in sin. No one even seeks after God. Humanity as a whole is under the power and condemnation of sin.

**Henry Morris** on "all under sin" - The important passage from Ro 3:9-23 should make it clear that there is no one who is righteous enough before a holy God to earn his own salvation. If anyone wishes ever to be saved and receive eternal life, he must first of all recognize himself as a guilty sinner before God--in fact, dead spiritually, in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).

**Disciple's Study Bible** - Ro 3:9-18 HUMANITY, Spiritual Nature--Scripture, as well as human experience, point to the universality of sin. All people of all cultures turn away from God, toward selfishness, and against fellow humans. See center column for Paul's Scripture sources. No evidence points to the goodness and growing perfection of human beings. All evidence points to our sinful nature. Guilt plagues us all. We know we are accountable to our Creator. Ro 3:9-23 SIN, Universal Nature--With or without God's written revelation, Jew or non-Jew--we all sin and stand condemned under God's wrath. No one can claim innocence from experience or by logic. Only Jesus, of all people who have ever or will ever live, was sinless.

**We have already charged** - Where? Ro 1:28-32, Ro 2:1-16.

**Charged (4256)** (proaitiaomai from pró = before, + aitiáomai = to blame, accuse from aítía = an accusation or cause) is literally to accuse beforehand or to make a prior accusation. It was used as a legal term to designate a person previously indicted for a given offense.

Both Jews and Greeks - In the first two chapters of Romans Paul has brought the charge against the pagan Gentiles and then against the pious Jews (and all pious people outside of Christ) (see Ro 1:28-32; 2:1-16). They are all under the power, authority and control of Sin because of Adam's original sin.

**All (pas)** means every person. There are absolutely no exception clauses. Why? Paul explains...

Therefore, just as through one man (Adam) Sin entered into the world (like a deadly, highly contagious virus), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- (See note Romans 5:12)

**Under sin** - Gal 3:10,22

**Under (5259)** (hupo) was a common Greek term that frequently meant not simply to be beneath but to be totally under the power, authority, or control of something or someone. So here Paul says all men are completely subservient and in bondage to, the dominion of Sin, picturing Sin almost as if it were a cruel dictator or harsh taskmaster (see discussion of "the Sin" -- the Sin principle or propensity inherited from Adam). Paul uses hupo to describe a literal slave...

Let all who are under (hupo) the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against. (1Ti 6:1+)

**All under sin** - The picture is that of figurative (but very real) enslavement to Sin. **Under** the power, authority and control of Sin. In Romans 6 Paul elaborates on the saved sinner's former master and new master. Romans 6:6+ is our "emancipation proclamation" (this is worth committing to memory beloved!) Paul declaring that "we should no longer be slaves to sin." Hallelujah!

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under (hupo) law (cp similar use of hupo in 1Co 9:20, Ga 4:5, 21, 5:18), but under (hupo - under the power of) grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under (hupo - under the power and authority of) law but under (hupo) grace? May it never be! (Ro 6:14, 15+)

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of **Sin**, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Ro 6:17, 18+)

In Galatians Paul arrived at a similar conclusion (note his use of the preposition hupo which he also uses here in Romans 3:9) writing that...

as many as are of the works of the Law are under (hupo - totally under the condemnation brought by) a curse (pronounced by God in His righteous judgment upon any and all who would attempt to seek to be justified by

obeying the Law); for it is written (perfect tense = stands written, speaks of permanence), "CURSED (cp Ga 3:13) IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS (How many? Here of course is the problem - see Jas 2:10) WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM (quoting the Septuagint translation of Dt 27:26)."... 22 But the Scripture (graphe = OT at the time of the writing of the NT) has shut up (verb used to catch by hemming in with a net - pix of a school of fish caught in a fisherman's net -- in a sense God is the Fisher of men who "catches" all men in the net of sin) all men under (hupo - under the power of) sin (we are all born enslaved to and prisoners of sin), that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody (military term = for soldiers standing on guard duty) under (hupo = under the power of) the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under (hupo) a tutor. (Gal 3:10, 22, 23, 24, 25)

**Sin** (266) (**hamartia**) originally from the idea of missing the mark as when hunting with a bow and arrow and then missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. Thus when we commit sins we are missing the true ultimate purpose God has for us. In this verse (see next note) sin signifies the moral principle or force which is an integral part of every man's nature and which is evil in character and causes man to commit specific unrighteous acts or sins.

*Sin is the mother and nurse of all evil, the egg of all mischief,  
the fountain of all bitterness, the root of misery.*

--C H Spurgeon

**Jerry Bridges** asks "What is sin?"

It is often described as "missing the mark"—that is, failure to live up to the rigorous standard of God's holy law. But the Bible makes it clear that it is much more than that. In Leviticus 16:21, sin is described as transgression; literally, as rebellion against authority. In the prophet Nathan's confrontation of David over his sins of adultery and murder, Nathan describes sin as a despising of both God's Word and God himself (2Sa 12:9–10). And in Nu 15:30–31, Moses characterizes sinners as acting "with a high hand," meaning defiantly.

Therefore, we can conclude that sin is a rebellion against God's sovereign authority, a despising of his Word and his person, and even a defiance of God himself.

It is no wonder Paul wrote that because of our sin, we were by nature objects of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3). We would like to think that, as believers, such descriptions of sin no longer apply to us. We look at the gross and obvious sins of society around us, and we tend to define sin in terms of those actions. We fail to see that our anxiety, our discontentment, our ingratitude toward God, our pride and selfishness, our critical and judgmental attitudes toward others, our gossip, our unkind words to or about others, our preoccupation with the things of this life, and a whole host of other subtle sins are an expression of rebellion against God and a despising of his Word and person. The truth is that even the most mature believers continue to sin in thought, word, deed, and especially in motive. We continually experience the inward spiritual guerilla warfare Paul describes when he states, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do" (Gal. 5:17). That is why it was necessary for the apostle Peter to exhort us to "abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul" (1 Pet. 2:11+). This, then, is the doctrine of sin. Because of Adam's sin as representative of the entire human race (Ed: Discussed fully in Ro 5:12-21+), we are born with a sinful nature and as objects of God's wrath. We then aggravate our condition before God with our personal sins, whether they be the gross, obvious sins, or the subtle sins we too often tolerate in ourselves and in our Christian circles. And it is in view of this truth of the doctrine of sin that we should understand Paul's words, "Christ died for (Ed: In our place, on our behalf, as our representative, as our substitute for) our sins." (1Cor 15:3+) It is with this understanding of the nature and reality of sin that we should understand the words of the angel to Joseph, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21+ - Ed note - Hebrew is Yehoshua, contracted to Joshua = Yeshua = Yehowshuwa = he will save = Yahweh or Jehovah -I Am + yasha = saves = "Jehovah saves." The Name also may be contracted simply to Yeshua, which is the Hebrew word for "salvation," frequently used in the Old Testament. It is also equivalent to "Joshua." Appropriately, Mt 1:21 is the first use of "save" in the NT.). Christ died for our sins. This phrase suggests two ideas—substitution and sacrifice. Christ died in our place as our substitute and representative. Just as God appointed Adam to act as representative of all humanity, so he appointed Jesus Christ to act on behalf of all who trust in him. ([The Great Exchange- My Sin for His Righteousness- Jerry Bridges, Bob Bevington - this book is worth reading - it is heavy but needed in our day of a softening of the "Gospel Message."](#))

*Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience,  
the slight of His power and the contempt of His love.*

-- John Bunyan

**The Preacher's Commentary** makes an excellent point emphasizing that "There is a major difference between "sin" and "sins," so we must be careful not to confuse "doing things that are not right" with the fact that we are dominated by a fundamentally evil dynamic. The difference is not unlike that which exists between the symptoms of a disease and the disease itself. When this is understood it becomes obvious that the human predicament is not so much that we have done things wrongly but that we are "in the Christless state under the command, under the authority, under the control of sin and helpless to escape from it." Accordingly, any solution to the human problem that fails to deal with the root cause of "sin" is no more a solution than cold compresses on a fevered brow are a cure for the infection causing the fever. (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 29: Romans](#)) (Bolding added)

**Augustine** in the *The Confessions* of Saint Augustine wrote that "Sin comes when we take a perfectly natural desire or longing or ambition and try desperately to fulfill it without God. Not only is it sin, it is a perverse distortion of the image of the Creator in us. All these good things, and all our security, are rightly found only and completely in Him."

Nothing seems to expose the sin nature more than two boys tugging on opposite ends of a toy fire truck, each one screaming, "Mine! Mine!!" If you doubt we are all born sinners, try taking something from a baby that they are enjoying!

Sin is like a crushing weight under which the sinner lies, a power from whose grasp he cannot escape in his own strength. Paul is building toward the presentation of the "good news", which is God's provision to escape such a horrible fate.

#### **Related Resource:**

- Deceitfulness of Sin

[William Barclay](#) writes that "The Greek phrase that he uses for under sin is very suggestive, *hupo hamartion*. In this sense *hupo* means in the power of, under the authority of. In Matthew the centurion "answered (Jesus) and said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under (*hupo* - literal meaning) my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 "For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under (*hupo* - figurative meaning) me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." (Mt 8:8, 9+, cp Lk 7:8+) That is, I have soldiers under my command. A schoolboy is *hupo paidagogen*, under the direction of the slave who is in control of him (Gal 3:25 -*But now that faith has come, we are no longer under* [*hupo*] *a tutor*). A slave [**Ed**: or even an ox] is *hupo zugon*, under the yoke of his master. In the Christ--less state a man is under the control of sin, and helpless to escape from it."

Such an idea was preposterous to most Jews. In his rebuke of Peter for succumbing to the Judaizers, Paul referred to the common belief of Jews that they were righteous before God simply by virtue of being Jewish, members of His chosen race. On the other hand, Jews believed just as strongly that Gentiles--commonly called Greeks because of the prevalence of Greek culture and language even under Roman rule--were naturally sinful simply by virtue of being non-Jewish (Gal 3:15). If a Jew was poverty stricken, handicapped, or otherwise seriously afflicted, it was assumed that either he or his parents had committed some unusually heinous sin, for which, for a generation or so, they forfeited their normally high standing before God. That belief is reflected in the story of the blind man whom Jesus and the disciples passed just outside the Temple one day. Noticing the man's condition, the disciples asked the Lord,

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (Jn 9:2).

After Jesus corrected the disciples' wrong assumption, He restored the man's sight. When the man was talking with the Pharisees a short while later, they vehemently voiced the same wrong assumption the Twelve had expressed. When the man said to them of Jesus,

"If this man were not from God, He could do nothing," the Pharisees were greatly offended and replied, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" (Jn 9:33,34).

**J Vernon McGee** has an excellent summary of this verse writing that "it's very important to understand what it means to be "under sin." Man is a sinner four different ways. God is giving man four strikes (in baseball you get only three). (1) Man is a sinner by act. (2) Man is a sinner by nature. Sinning does not make a sinner; we sin because we are sinners. (3) Man is a sinner by imputation. We'll see that later in this epistle. (4) The estate of man is under sin. We all are under sin—the entire human family. (Borrow [Romans](#))