

Third Class Conditional Sentence

A **Third Class Conditional Sentence** in Greek grammar expresses a **probable or potential condition**. It reflects a situation that may or may not happen, depending on circumstances or choices. These sentences are particularly common in the New Testament and often deal with actions or events that are possible but not certain. Third class conditional sentences present **potential conditions** with real-life implications. They often invite believers to reflect on their choices, actions, and attitudes in light of God's truth. Third class conditionals often challenge us as believers to trust in God's promises and take steps of faith (remembering that faith is linked with Spirit enabled obedience). The apodoses (main clauses) often reassure believers of God's faithfulness when they meet the condition.

Structure of a Third Class Conditional Sentence

A third class conditional sentence typically consists of two parts:

1. **The Protasis (Conditional Clause):** This is the "if" part of the sentence, introduced by **ἄν (ean)** + a verb in the **subjunctive mood**.
 - **ἄν** = "if" or "whenever." In Jn 14:15⁺ the protasis is "*If you love Me...*"
 - The subjunctive mood indicates potentiality or uncertainty.
 - Protasis is the "if" part of the sentence that sets up the condition.
2. **The Apodosis (Main Clause or Result Clause):** This is the "then" part of the sentence, which provides the result or consequence if the condition is fulfilled. Stated another way apodosis expresses the outcome or conclusion that depends on the condition stated in the **protasis** (the "if" clause). In Jn 14:15⁺ the apodosis is "...*you will keep My commandments.*"
 - Apodosis is derived from apo = back or away + didomi = to give. And so in grammar, apodosis reflects the idea of a result or conclusion given in response to the condition.
 - Understanding the apodosis helps in interpreting Scripture, particularly in passages with conditional promises, warnings, or instructions. It clarifies the relationship between what God requires (protasis) and what He promises or warns (apodosis).
 - Apodosis is dependent on the Protasis: The apodosis only applies if the condition in the protasis is met.
 - Apodosis is used in varied Moods: The apodosis can include verbs in the indicative (stating fact), imperative (giving command), or other moods, depending on the sentence's purpose.
 - Apodosis expresses Outcome: It highlights the result or consequence of fulfilling the condition.

Key Characteristics of Third Class Conditional Sentences

1. **Potential Fulfillment:** The condition is presented as a real possibility, though it is not certain whether it will occur.
 - Example: "*If you are willing...*"—The condition depends on the subject's choice or circumstance.
2. **Subjunctive Mood in the Protasis:** The use of the subjunctive mood in the conditional clause emphasizes that the action is contingent and not guaranteed.
3. **Flexible Outcomes:** The apodosis may describe what will happen, what should happen, or what might happen if the condition is met.

Examples of Third Class Conditional Sentences in the New Testament

1. John 14:15⁺

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

- Greek: *ν γὰρ τὲ με, τς ντολς μου τηρήσετε.*
- **Analysis:**
 - Protasis: *ν γὰρ τὲ με* ("If you love Me")—conditional clause with the subjunctive verb *γὰρ τὲ* (you love).
 - Apodosis: *τς ντολς μου τηρήσετε* ("you will keep My commandments")—indicative mood indicating the result.

2. Matthew 17:20⁺

"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move."

- Greek: *ν χητε πίστιν ζ κόκκον σινάπεως, ρε τε τ ρει τούτ ...*
- **Analysis:**
 - Protasis: *ν χητε πίστιν* ("If you have faith")—subjunctive verb *χητε* (you have).
 - Apodosis: *ρε τε τ ρει τούτ* ("you will say to this mountain")—indicative mood describing what will happen.

3. 1 John 1:9+

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- Greek: *ν μολογ μεν τ ζ μαρτίας μ ν, πιστός σιν κα δίκαιος.*
- **Analysis:**
 - Protasis: *ν μολογ μεν τ ζ μαρτίας μ ν* ("If we confess our sins")—subjunctive verb *μολογ μεν* (we confess).
 - Apodosis: *πιστός σιν κα δίκαιος* ("He is faithful and just")—indicative mood indicating the result.

How It Differs from Other Conditional Sentences

1. First Class Conditional:

- Assumes the condition is true for the sake of argument.
- Example: *"If you are the Son of God..."* (assuming it's true). (Mt 4:3+)

2. Second Class Conditional:

- Assumes the condition is contrary to fact.
- Example: *"If I were hungry, I would not tell you."* (Ps 50:12)

3. Third Class Conditional:

- Deals with a probable or possible condition that may or may not happen.
- Example: *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* (Jn 14:15+)

Practical Application

Third class conditional sentences challenge readers to consider their responsibility and response. They often present **conditions for blessings, responsibilities of discipleship, or truths about faith**. For example:

- **"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"** (Jn 14:15+) (See [note above](#)) encourages obedience as a demonstration of [agape](#) love, which calls on us to be continually filled with the Spirit Who Alone can enable and energize God-like love (Eph 5:18+). We need to understand that obedience is not about earning God's favor but expressing love and gratitude to Him, walking in a manner which is pleasing to Him (frequently pray Col 1:9-10+ for yourself and other believers). This conditional sentence is an opportunity not to say "I love you Lord," but to show that this statement is from the heart and is authentic as shown by our willingness to obey Him. In short, it is important to **show** you love Jesus on Monday through Saturday, then just to **say** you love Jesus on Sunday! This underscores that obedience flows naturally (actually supernaturally) from our love for Christ. In other words, our obedience is based on love for our Lord, not legalistic adherence to the Law!
- **"If we confess** (present tense - continually, as a lifestyle) **our sins"** (1John 1:9+) reminds believers of the importance of repentance (cf Pr 28:13+). Confessing our sins is an act of humility and faith. The **condition** invites us to reflect on whether we are honest with God about our struggles. The apodosis assures us of God's faithfulness and forgiveness (Neh 9:17, Da 9:9, 19+), encouraging us to draw near to Him with confidence (Heb 4:16+).
- **If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move"** (Matthew 17:20+) calls you to reflect on whether your faith in God and His Word is active and trusting, even if small. The condition challenges us to exercise our faith, trusting God's power to work in seemingly impossible situations. It is a call to face challenges with prayer and boldness, relying on God's strength rather than your own abilities.
- **If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.** (John 15:7+) For this potential condition to be realized our responsibility is to abide in Christ by daily seeking to maintain a close, intimate relationship with Him through prayer, Scripture, and obedience (and confession and repentance as needed!) The apodosis (main clause = answered prayer) depends on aligning our desires with God's will through abiding in Him (cf the same principle

in 1Jn 5:14-15+). To aid continual abiding dedicate portions of your day to prayer and memorize (See [Memory Verses by Topic](#)) and meditate on His Word, always having His holy, life giving Word (Dt 32:47+) available for use (Joshua 1:8+, Pr 25:11, Pr 15:28, Pr 16:23, 24, Mt 12:34, 35+).

- *"For **IF** you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But **if** you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matthew 6:14-15+) calls on us to reflect on whether we are holding grudges or harboring bitterness that prevents forgiveness. The **condition** highlights the spiritual connection between our willingness to forgive and experiencing God's forgiveness (in the sense of filial forgiveness or familial relationship, not judicial because in Christ ALL our sins have been judged and paid in full - Jn 19:30+). This conditional sentence should serve to motivate and encourage us to be proactive and take intentional steps toward forgiving others, understanding that this reflects God's grace in our life.
- *"**IF** anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny** himself, and **take up** his cross daily and **follow** Me."* (Luke 9:23+) This **condition** challenges each of us to live sacrificially, reflecting Jesus' example, [Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#) Practically, under grace not law, guided by His Spirit not flesh, we should seek to make specific choices daily to put Christ first, regarding how we spend our time, how we handle relationships, or how we make decisions (what we do, what we read, what we watch, etc).
- *"And **IF** your right eye makes you stumble, **tear it out**, and **throw it from** you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."* (Matthew 5:29+, cf Mt 18:9+) is a warning against ignoring sin and a call (command from Jesus) to take sin in your life seriously! The condition (*If your right eye...*) calls for radical action to avoid sin as well as temptation (cf Ro 13:14b+).