

# Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God

(70)

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[Romans 1:18-3:20](#)

(Continuation from 07/09/17)

## E. The Arguments of the Religionist (Jew) Against a Heart Religion, [Romans 3:1-8](#)

1. What profit is there in being a religionist—in being circumcised or baptized (v.1-2)?
2. Does unbelief void God's promises—make God a liar (v.3-4)?
3. Is God unjust if He takes vengeance (v.5-8)?

2. [\(Romans 3:3-4\) Unbelief— Religionist— Salvation](#): the question is, “If you say some Jews do not believe and are condemned, doesn't that void God's promises and make God a liar?”

### The Objection That Paul Attacked God's Promises

[Romans 3:3-4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup>“What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?”

<sup>4</sup>May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written, ‘**THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED.**’”

The next objection Paul anticipated and confronted was that his teaching abrogated God's promises to Israel. As any student of the Old Testament knows, God's promises to His chosen people are numerous. How then, could Paul maintain that it was possible for a Jew not to be secure in those promises?

Or to say it another way, “What if some disbelieve and reject God's Word, will their unbelief cause God to void His Word and promises? God promised the Jews a special place and special privileges through Abraham and his seed (see **previously discussed Deeper Study #1—John 4:22**). If some Jews do not believe God's promises and God condemns them, isn't He breaking His promise to Abraham and his seed? Isn't He voiding His Word and Covenant and making Himself a liar? God's Word could not be based on heart religion and on moral character alone. There has to be something else, something outward—a rite (circumcision, baptism, church membership)—that shows we are religious (Jews). If we go through the rite or ritual, then God is bound to accept us. He has promised to so accept us. He is not going to break His Word.”

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The application of this question concerns every religionist. The thinking religionist poses the same objection and question: “If you say some religionists do not believe and are condemned, doesn’t that void God’s Word and make God a liar? God’s Word promises the religious person special privileges and the hope of eternal life. His Word tells us to believe Christ and to possess His Word, be baptized and join the fellowship of the church. If we do that and God still condemns us, is He not voiding His Word and becoming a liar?”

- ⇒ God forbid (*mē genoito*). [Expresses absolute denial].
- ⇒ God will be faithful. His Word and promise of salvation will stand even if *every* man lies about believing and lies about giving his heart to serve Jesus.
- ⇒ God will prove His Word: He will be justified and proven faithful in what He has said. He will still save *any person* who gives his heart to Jesus and obeys Jesus.
- ⇒ In fact, God will overcome; He will prove His Word another way. He will judge all who make a false profession and who judge Him and His Word, who accuse Him of being unfaithful and voiding His Word. David himself said that God would judge the unfaithful or disobedient man ([Psalm 51:4](#)).

[Psalm 51:4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup>“Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.”

David had sinned greatly, not keeping the commandments of God, so God judged David and charged him with sin. David did the right thing: he confessed his sin and repented and began to live righteously. But David did something else: he declared that God’s **charge and judgment against him were just**, that God was perfectly justified. And God was, for God is always just, and He is always justified in what He says and does.

**The point is twofold.**

**1. God is not unfaithful. God never breaks or voids His Word when He rejects the religionist.** The religionist who possesses God’s Word and belongs to a church but does not obey God’s Word is not acceptable to God. It is righteousness God is after, not religion. God is not after an outward religion, but an *inward righteousness*. God wants a heart that will not only possess the Bible, but will keep His commandments.

God is after a spiritual rebirth, a new creation, a man who has been truly born again. God wants a heart and life that are focused upon Christ and that keep the commandments of Christ.

The only man who is acceptable to God is the man who has given his heart and life to Christ and who lives righteously, trusting God to accept His faith in Christ. (Cp. [Romans 2:28-29](#).)

[Romans 2:28-29 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>28</sup>“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

<sup>29</sup>But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

Paul's answer reflected both the explicit and implicit teaching of the Jewish Scriptures themselves. God had never promised that any individual Jew, no matter how pure his physical lineage from Abraham, or from any of the other great saints of the Old Testament, could claim security in God's promises apart from repentance and personal faith in God, resulting in obedience from the heart.

[Isaiah 55:6-7](#) provides a good illustration of an invitation to such obedient faith: **“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”**

As in the passage from [Amos 3:2](#) mentioned above, many of God's greatest promises were accompanied by the severest warnings.

[Amos 3:2 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>2</sup>“You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”**

And most of the promises were conditional, based on His people's faith and obedience. The few unconditional promises He made were to the nation of Israel as a whole, not to individual Jews (see, e.g., [Genesis 12:3](#); [Isaiah 44:1-5](#); [Zechariah 12:10](#)).

[Genesis 12:3 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>3</sup>“And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”**

[Isaiah 44:1-5 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>1</sup>“But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen:**

**<sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.**

**<sup>3</sup>'For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants;**

**<sup>4</sup>And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.'**

**<sup>5</sup>This one will say, 'I am the LORD'S'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write *on* his hand, 'Belonging to the LORD,' And will name Israel's name with honor.”**

[Zechariah 12:10 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>10</sup>“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”**

The apostle therefore agreed in part with his accusers, saying, **What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?** His opponents were

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perfectly right in defending the Lord's integrity. No matter how men respond to His promises, He is absolutely faithful to keep His word.

Later in the epistle Paul strongly affirms that God has not rejected His people Israel ([Romans 11:1](#)).

**Romans 11:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”**

A few verses later he declares,

**Romans 11:25-29 (NASB)**

**<sup>25</sup>“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;**

**<sup>26</sup>and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."**

**<sup>27</sup>"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."**

**<sup>28</sup>From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God's* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;**

**<sup>29</sup>for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”**

The national salvation of Israel is as inevitable as God's promises are irrevocable. But that future certainty gives *individual* Jews no more present guarantee of being saved than the most pagan Gentile.

**2. God never voids His Word or promises; He never has and never will be a liar.** God has promised salvation and eternal life to men. Even if there should never be a single person who believed God's promise, His promise would still stand. He would still save any person who did what He said.

The problem is in doing what God says, in coming to God as He dictates. God demands that men give their hearts and lives to His Son, Jesus Christ. God demands that men live for Christ, worship and obey Him. But this is too hard for men. They want an *easier* salvation. They want to be able to do something, get it over with, and then be free to live as they wish, giving God some attention here and there. Therefore, men prefer to be saved by being religious: being baptized, joining a church, buying a Bible, and then being free to go about their own lives.

But this is *not enough* for God; it is *not doing everything* that God says; it is not giving one's heart and life to live for Jesus Christ by obeying, worshipping, and serving Him.

Therefore, God...

- a) ⇒ charges the religionist with sin.
- b) ⇒ judges and condemns the religionist.

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Now note another fact. God fulfills His Word by judging the religionists. God has told men how to live and what would happen if they failed. Therefore, He is **“justified in His sayings”** by following through and by judging the religionists.

- a) ⇒ God will not void and break His Word. He will fulfill it all.
- b) ⇒ God is justified in fulfilling His Word by doing exactly what He said, that is, in accepting men *only* as He said and in judging men if they do not come to Him as He commands.

Though certainly not intentionally, the idea in covenant theology that the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan of redemption assumes God’s faithlessness in keeping His unconditional promises to Israel. Because of Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ as her Messiah, God has postponed the fulfillment of His promise to redeem and restore Israel as a nation. But He has not (and because of His holy nature He *could not*) reneged on that promise.

His prediction, for example, that He will one day **“pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced”** ([Zechariah 12:10](#)) could not possibly apply to the church.

[Zechariah 12:10 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>10</sup>**“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”**

And because such a renewal has never happened in the history of Israel, either the prediction is false or it is yet to be fulfilled.

The mistake of Paul’s accusers was in believing that God’s unconditional promises to Israel applied to all individual Jews at all times. But as Paul shows earlier in [Romans 9:6-7](#), when he writes: **“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: ‘through Isaac your descendants will be named.’”**

The accusers were right in contending that God cannot break His word. If the blessings of a promise failed to materialize it was because His *people* **did not believe** and obey the conditions of the promise. But their unbelief could not prevent the salvation which God would ultimately bring to the promised nation.

But an even deeper truth was that, contrary to the thinking of most Jews, salvation was *never* offered by God on the basis of the heritage, ceremony, good works, or any basis other than that of faith. Paul therefore asks rhetorically, **“The fact that Jews who *did not believe* forfeited their personal right to God’s promised blessings and barred themselves from the inheritance of God’s kingdom *will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?*”** His salvation will come to Israel some day when all Israel will be saved.

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Answering his own question, he exclaims, **May it never be!** The phrase *me genoito* (**may it never be**) was the strongest negative Greek expression and usually carried the connotation of impossibility. **“Of course, God cannot be unfaithful in His promises or in any other way,”** Paul was saying.

**Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.** If every human being who ever lived declared that God is faithless, **God would be found true** and **every man** who testified against Him would **be found a liar**.

Summoning Scripture as he regularly did, Paul quotes from the great penitential psalm of David, Israel’s most illustrious and beloved king, from whose throne the Messiah Himself would someday reign. **As it is written, “So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.”** (see [Psalm 51:4](#)). Because God is perfect and is Himself the measure of goodness and truth, His Word is its own verification and His judgment its own justification. It is utter folly to suppose that the Lord of heaven and earth might not **prevail** against the sinful, perverted judgment that either man or Satan could make against Him.