

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

(73)

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Romans 1:18-3:20

(Continuation from 08/06/17)

F. God's Case Against All Men, Romans 3:9-20

Romans 3:9-12 (NASB)

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;

¹⁰as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

¹¹THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

¹²ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

The apostle Paul was well aware of man's disposition to deny his sin. Therefore, from creation, from history; from reason and logic, and from conscience, Paul has already presented powerful testimony of man's sinfulness. Now he presents the ultimate testimony, the testimony of Scripture. Beginning with verse 10 and continuing through verse 18, Paul introduces before the court, as it were, the testimony of God's own Word as revealed in the Old Testament.

Verses 9-20 summarize God's divine and perfect view of man and they continue in a trial motif: **the arraignment (v. 9), the indictment (vv. 10-17), the motive (v. 18), and the verdict (vv. 19-20).**

1. **The charge: all men are under sin (v.9).**
2. **The case of a sinful nature (v.10-12).**
3. **The case of a sinful tongue (v.13-14).**
4. **The case of sinful acts (v.15-18).**
5. **The case of the law (v.19-20).**

The Arraignment

Romans 3:9 (NASB)

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.”

The charge begins with two questions. The first is simply **What then?** The idea is, “What is the point of further testimony?” Paul has already condemned the immoral pagan, the moral pagan, and then both the moral and immoral Jew. Anticipating what some of his readers would think, his second question asks rhetorically, **Are we better than they?**

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That is, “Do we have a **better** basic nature than those who have just been shown to be condemned? Are we made from a different mold, cut from a different piece of cloth than they?”

Romans 3:9 (NASB)

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.”

The ones to whom **we** refer is not absolutely clear. Some commentators believe Paul is speaking of his fellow Jews. But he has already dealt in [verses 1-8](#) with the question most Jews would ask, declaring that they do indeed have a spiritual advantage above Gentiles by having been “**entrusted with the oracles of God**,” that is, the Old Testament Scriptures.

He had previously pointed out, however, that their greater advantage also brought greater accountability ([Romans 2:17-25](#)). Nowhere else in the epistle does Paul identify himself with his fellow Jews by the use of **we**.

It seems better to take this **we** to refer to himself and his fellow believers in Rome, both Jew and Gentile. The question would then mean, “Are we Christians, in ourselves, **better than** the other groups of people already shown to be condemned before God? Are we intrinsically superior to those others? Were we saved because our basic human nature was on a higher plane than theirs?”

Immediately answering his own question, Paul unequivocally asserts, **Not at all**. “No, we are not in ourselves any better than others,” he says. He has already pointed out the condemnation of everyone, from the most reprobate, vice-ridden pagan to the most outwardly moral and upright Jew. In other words, the entire human race, with absolutely no exceptions, is arraigned before God’s court of justice: **“For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.”**

Proaitiaomai (**already charged**) was often used as a legal term to designate a person previously indicted for a given offense. *Hupo* (**under**) was a common Greek term that frequently meant not simply to be beneath but to be totally under the power, authority, and control of something or someone. That is obviously the sense Paul has in mind here: Every human being, **“both Jews and Greeks are all under”**, completely subservient and in bondage to, the dominion of **“sin”**.

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 (see [Galatians 3:15](#)).

Galatians 3:15 (NASB)

15 “Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is *only* a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.”

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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?**" ([John 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,

[John 9:33-34 \(NASB\)](#)

³³ "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

³⁴ They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?"
So, they put him out."

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 religiosity. Even Christians are sometimes tempted to think 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 is innately better than anyone else or because he has managed to bring his life up to God's standards or because he zealously observes certain religious practices.

It is only because he has acknowledged his sin and helplessness and prostrated himself in humble faith before the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and cleansing.

Despite great differences in outward behavior and attitudes among people, *every Christ-less person* is sinful in nature and is under the dominion and control of Satan. The entire unredeemed world, John declares, "**lies in the power of the evil one**" ([1 John 5:19](#)) and is therefore arraigned, as it were, before God's bar of justice.

[1 John 5:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹ "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one*."

1. ([Romans 3:9](#)) Sin— Man, Nature: all men are under sin.

[Romans 3:9 \(NASB\)](#)

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."

The words "**under sin**" (*huph' hamartian*) means to be subject to the power of or under the authority of.

A man outside of Jesus Christ is under the power of sin and he is helpless to escape from it (cp. [Galatians 3:10, 25](#); [Galatians 4:2, 21](#); [Galatians 5:18](#); [1 Timothy 6:1](#)).

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Galatians 3:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”

Galatians 3:25 (NASB)

²⁵“But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

Galatians 4:2 (NASB)

²“But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.”

Galatians 4:21 (NASB)

²¹“Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?”

Galatians 5:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”

1 Timothy 6:1 (NASB)

¹“All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against.”

The religionist (Jew) is “**under sin**” just as much as other men are “**under sin.**” The Scripture has just declared that being religious does not make men acceptable to God (cp. [Romans 2:17-28](#)).

Romans 2:17-28 (NASB)

¹⁷“But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God,

¹⁸ and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,

¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,

²¹ you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?

²² You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

²³ You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

²⁴ For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written.

²⁵ For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

²⁶ So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

²⁷ And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter *of the Law* and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.”

Religionists are shocked: “What then! Are we not better—do we not have any advantage over other men?”

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Are we not better if we...

- 1) have the Bible?"
- 2) profess God?"
- 3) know God's will?"
- 4) approve the best things?"
- 5) study the Word of God?"
- 6) guide and teach others?"
- 7) know the truth?"

The answer is a strong exclamation: **“No! Not at all! Not in any way are you better than other people. Both Jews and Gentiles, both religionists and non-religionists—you are all under sin.”**

Now note. This has been the point of all that has been said in Romans...

- 1) God has a case against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ([Romans 1:18-32](#)).
- 2) God has a case against the moralist ([Romans 2:1-16](#)).
- 3) God has a case against the religionist (Jew) ([Romans 2:17-3:8](#)).

Scripture shows that God has a case against all men. All men are **“under sin.”** And the fact is clearly seen by any person who will honestly look at man and his world.

[Romans 3:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

[Romans 5:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹²“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

[Galatians 3:22 \(NASB\)](#)

²²“But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

[1 John 1:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

[1 John 5:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹“We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one.*”

[Genesis 6:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

[1 Kings 8:46 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁶“When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near.”

[Psalm 130:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³“If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”

[Proverbs 20:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹“Who can say, ‘I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin’?”

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Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NASB)

²⁰“Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins.”

Isaiah 53:6 (NASB)

⁶“All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.”

Isaiah 64:6 (NASB)

⁶“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”