

# ROMANS From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 4

Romans 3:1-20

Answering Jewish Objections (Romans 3:1-15)

**Verse 1-2**

Rom 3:1-2  
 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

**1) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Why did Paul start asking questions and then answering his own questions?**

A. He anticipated the questions of objections from the Jews about the points he made previously <the Jews are feeling very mmdai (tak puas) after hearing Paul’s points>

B. He likes to monologue

**b) Reflection question. Describe or rephrase what the objections and answers are in your own words:**

#1 : Jew no advantage?	#1	How would it sound if you are the person saying it:
Questions / Objection	What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?	<p>“Then what’s the point of being a Jew if there is no advantage? Why I cut my foreskin for?” &lt;they very mm dai/ think it’s not worth it&gt;</p> <p>&lt;internally thinking: What’s the point of me obeying all these while? So hard to follow the laws you know?&gt;</p>
Answer given by Paul	Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.	<p>“Got what, of all the other races, God trusted you (Jews) with God’s law so you have the opportunity to obey and glorify God.”</p>

Verse 3-4

Rom 3:3-4

What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:

"So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

**2) Reflection question. Describe or rephrase what the objections and answers are in your own words:**

#2: God not reliable?	#2	Background information	How would it sound if you are the person saying it:
Questions / Objections	What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness?	<p>They are asking if there are Jews that disobeyed, would God cancel or call off the covenant?</p> <p>Behind this question, they are questioning God's reliability, whether they can trust His covenant promises; they are insinuating the covenant system with God is rigged. They are being a sore loser because Gentiles seem to be a part of the covenant promises without any prior covenants, whereas the Jews obeyed it for so long already.</p>	<p>"So, what about those Jews who didn't obey the covenant?"</p> <p>If they don't follow then they don't get the promised stuff right?"</p> <p>&lt;internally thinking: What's the point of me obeying all this while? So hard to follow the laws you know?&gt;</p>
Answer given by Paul	<p>Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:</p> <p>"So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."</p>	<p>Paul says God is reliable and quotes David's confession of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba (Ps 51:4; 2 Sam 11) to show that God is "in the right" when he punishes his people for their sin.</p> <p>Because in Deuteronomy 27, in the covenant promises, other than God promising to give blessings when they obey, God also promised curses if they disobeyed. Hence, David's punishment from God is just because he disobeyed. It also shows God's justice.</p>	<p>"No, if they don't follow then they get punished as per the covenant lo. Just repent like King David did with Bathsheba, and when God punishes, he is just and it shows that God is correct and righteous when he punishes sinful humans. He is still faithful to the covenant when He judges sin."</p>

		(Even though most Jews were unfaithful and refused to trust and obey God, he remains faithful to them. God will fulfill his covenant promises, particularly his promise to save them. Paul does not mean that every single Jew will be saved, though. He discusses God's faithfulness to the Jews more fully in chapters 9–11)	
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**Quick Verse Reference**

Psalm 51:4

**For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.**

Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.

**Verse 5-8**

Rom 3:5-8

But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" 8 Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!

**3) a) Reflection question. Describe or rephrase what the objections and answers are in your own words:**

#3 Means we sin only to make God look good?	#3.1	Background information	How would it sound if you are the person saying it:
Questions /Objections	But if our unrighteousness brings out God's	Just now Paul quoted Psalms 51:4 where David did evil and said that God is "justified/right	"So when God gets to judge sin, he looks better. Like taking a picture next to an

	righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)	when He judges". So the Jews can use the point of God "being right and just" when he judges to push their point: "Isn't God unfair for judging us for sin if God is made to look just in the process?"	ugly person so you look prettier/better.  So what, for Him to judge us? We make Him look good. It is unfair that He punish us for making Him look good." (this is what other people /humans would say)
Answer given by Paul	Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?	Paul opposes the assertion that God is unfair.	"God can't be unfair! Or else how is He going to fairly judge the world?" <That's paradoxical>

**b) Reflection question. Describe or rephrase what the objections and answers are in your own words:**

#3 Means we sin only to make God look good?	#3.2	Background information	How would it sound if you are the person saying it:
Questions /Objections	Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?"	ESV version: But if through my lie, God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?	Some people will say: "So if I lie more, God looks even more honest and just. I make myself uglier so God looks prettier, then why still punish me? I actively make God look good!"
Answer given by Paul	Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!	"as some slanderously claim." Paul was thrust into the center of controversy, and false rumors about his teaching were evidently circulating in Rome.	"Why do you beat around the bush? Just say it directly: "Let us all do evil things so that we get a good outcome!" The people who say this will be condemned because they see it as a reason to sin more, and the decision is just!

Indictment of the Unrighteous (Romans 3:9-18)

Verse 9

Rom 3:9

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.

**4) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Who does 'we' in the passage refer to?**

- A. All Christians in Rome
- B. Jews**
- C. Gentiles
- D. Pagans

**b) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Didn't Paul list an advantage in verse 2? Why did he say there is no advantage now? This is because:**

- A. Paul is confused.
- B. Even though Jews have a certain "advantage" in possessing "the very words of God" (v. 2), they do not have any ultimate advantage over Gentiles when it comes to salvation and damnation.**

Verse 10-18

Rom 3:10-18

As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;  
there is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.

All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one."

"Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

"Their feet are swift to shed blood;  
ruin and misery mark their ways,

and the way of peace they do not know.”  
 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

**5) a) Short answer question. The quotes Paul gives states that no one is righteous, not even one. They are not righteous in 3 ways. Fill the blanks with the answer from the video lecture.**

Verse	The evidence of unrighteousness	In what aspect are they unrighteous?
11-12a	“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless;	Character
13-14	“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”	Conversation
12b, 15-18	there is no one who does good, not even one.”  “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”	Conduct

**Background information**

Most bibles have references to the quoted verses. Check your bible to see if yours has it. If it doesn't you can use the free online BibleGateway app here to see which one is quoted from where: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%203%3A1-20&version=NIV>

**b) Reflection question. Look at the list below and tick the boxes for which items you are seeking for in Christianity?**

God	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Status	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Glory		Family		Power		Tranquility	
Honour (God)		Idealism		Romance		Eating	
Immortality		Independence		Saving		Vengeance	
Curiosity		Order		Social contact		Honour (people)	

**Quick Verse Reference**

Acts 17:27

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

Colossians 1:16

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Romans 2:6-7

God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

**c) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. In verse 9, Paul concluded that:**

- A. Everyone is sinful even the Jews according to the Old Testament scriptures
- B. There is no problem with the system (the law or God’s covenant for the Jews), the problem is with sinful people.
- C. Jews have the advantage over Gentiles for salvation.
- D. Gentiles have the advantage over Jews for salvation.

**d) Discussion question. Verse 18 says: “There is no fear of God before their eyes”, do you think fear of God is important? Refer to Proverb 9:10 to help you answer.**

Yes, because true wisdom comes when you look to the source of all knowledge of wisdom (ie God).

DA Carson Commentary on Proverbs 9:10: Proverb’s basic presupposition as well as the prerequisite for acquiring wisdom. It is a disposition cultivated in relationship with God. It entails the humility to accept the book’s teaching out of the conviction that God upholds it,

rewarding the faithful with life and punishing the unfaithful with death. It also is an attitude that shapes one's world view and serves as the seedbed in which wisdom might be cultivated, suggesting that it provides the reader with a theological perspective on life as well as a means to discover truth about God in the world.

**Quick Verse Reference**

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,  
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

The Law Condemns Not Saves (Romans 3:19-20)

**Verse 19-20**

Rom 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

**6) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Based on v19-20, which of the following item better represents the use of the "law":**

A. A diagnostic tool (eg. an X-ray showing your fatal sickness)

B. A ladder to God

**b) Reflection question. Reflection on the application of today's study, and describe them:**

Application from the study	Description
1. Destroying our pride	We are more sinful than we think.
2. Trust Christ more	Reject trusting self No ability to comply with the laws.
3. Greater confidence	Salvation is not based on law, me keeping performance but me depending on Christ.
4. Perfect Egalitarianism, New Creation	No more judging between people, no racism, no sexism.
5. Greater Love For His Grace	Appreciate God more when you realise how evil and undeserving you are.



6. Greater Impetus For Evangelism

Convicted of the power of Christ, the gospel and sinful people, and will share the gospel more

## Case Studies

### Case 1

Kylie came to faith just 8 months ago and was taught how to witness and share the gospel. She had a lot of Buddhist friends as she was once in the local PJ monastery where she was a nun for 5 years of her life.

When asked to share the gospel she was reluctant because she looked at the life of her friends who were mostly monks and nuns who lead very austere and frugal lives. She asked "How can we call them sinners as each of them are very holy and religious and do many good works? In fact they do more good work than Christians."

7) a) Discussion question. How would you explain to Kylie, the need to share the gospel with her friends?

Point #1: SIN EXTENDS AND POLLUTES OUR BEST DEEDS

Even the "good deeds" are filled with sinful and selfish intentions. More on this in the Background info box below.

Point #2: Other religions seek self, not seeking God

The well known atheist Christopher Hitchens once wrote in his book "God is not great" that the trouble with religion is that it elevates man to be in the center of universe that everything exists to cater for him and in the same vein God is there to care for and love and mother over this precious human creature above all other creation.

He is absolutely right in his criticism of religion as a whole which places the concerns of man right in the center of the universe. Hence religion would find its place in understanding how God caters to and cares for mankind.

The truth is, it is God in the center of the universe. Paul writes:

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or*

*authorities—all things were created through him and for him (Colossians 1:16 ESV)*

The truth is that God is in the center of the universe which was created by Him and for Him. In the light of that cosmic reality, the place of man as his created being is to seek for God and worship Him, enjoy Him and be in a relationship with Him.

Yet for all their good works the friends of Kylie are not righteous even though they have good works and fasting and prayer and live austere lives simply because they are depending on their own morality to earn a right standing before God. Even if they were perfect enough to be successful in this regard, the motive for their efforts would already have been a sin as the attitude is one of relying on self instead of God.

People “seek” God for many things in life for blessing, for peace, for prosperity for experience, God is always secondary to a more personal selfish reason. Someone will say: “Ever since I have “found” God, I have experienced so much peace and my life has been so much more meaningful and simpler.” One should then ask: “Is God a means to a more peaceful life, a derivative of the person’s real goal which is focused on himself?”

But Paul is saying — that no one, in his or her natural self and ability wants to find God. They might have an intellectual interest in the possibility of God or a philosophical conviction that there is a God. That is not a real passion to meet God face to face — that is not seeking! In fact, intellectual interest can be a way of avoiding meeting the real God. Example #2. They might have a problem in their lives, and realize they need forgiveness (to deal with their guilt) or spiritual peace (to deal with their anxiety) or power/wisdom (to deal with a particular problem) or even mystical experience (to deal with their inner emptiness). But that is not the same thing as truly seeking to come face to face with the holy, living, sovereign God — it is seeking for what God can give us, but not for him. Paul is saying that sin and its self-centeredness so controls all spiritual searching for meaning and experience, that we will try to simply get blessings without prostrating ourselves before the living God. So the “spiritual seeking” is still a way to actually get away from God.

There are those that do not at all care for God and of those... who imagine themselves to seek after God. They do not seek after God as He desires to be sought and found... The inward desire or seeking after God is true love of God.

Point #3: Sin is a wrong standing with God, it’s a merit and demerit programme where you can

balance out the sin with good works.

To be under sin is the same as being unrighteous. Righteousness is right standing before God and in that legal sense there is not a single person who has the right standing before God.

It is a qualitative property of a person, like it is whether you are Chinese or not.

Paul says Jews and Greeks or Gentiles are alike in this regard all not in the right legal standing with God and so are her Buddhist monk friends

“But they do so much good work” Kylie will protest ! Right standing does not assume the same degree of sinfulness.

#### Analogy 1:

Imagine if two men were killed, one by pneumonia and the other by an airplane crash. One has a slow agonizing death and the other a quick but horribly disfiguring death. Are there degrees of death? They are both dead, not one deader than the next. So is it with righteousness either one is righteous or not.

Analogy 2: Imagine three people trying to swim from Hawaii to Japan. One man can't swim and drowns after floundering 30 feet. Another is an average swimmer and drowns after 5 miles. Another is a championship swimmer and dies after 30 miles. But they all drowned because, though one was 5,000 times stronger than the other, none of them could come a fraction of the way to Japan. Is one more “drowned” than the others?

#### **Background information**

George Whitefield:

*“Before [you can be sure you are at peace with God] you must not only be troubled for the sins... of your nature, but likewise for the sins of your best duties and performances. When a poor soul is somewhat awakened by the terrors of the Lord, then the poor creature, being born under the covenant of works, flies directly to a covenant of words again. And as Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden, and sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, so the poor sinner, when awakened, flies to his duties and to his performances, to hide himself from God, and goes to patch up a righteousness of his own. Says he, “I will be mighty good now— I will reform — I will do all I can; and then certainly Jesus Christ will have mercy on me. But before you can [know you are at peace with God] you must be brought to see that God may damn you for the best prayer you ever put up; you must be brought to see that all your duties — all your righteousness — as the prophet elegantly expresses it—put them all together, are so far from recommending you to God, are so far from being any motive and inducement to God to have mercy on your poor soul, that he will see them to be filthy rags, a menstrous cloth — that God hates them, and cannot but away with*

*them, if you bring them to him in order to recommend you to his favor. My dear friends, what is there in our performances to recommend us to God?*

*I can say that I cannot pray without sin — I cannot preach without sin — I can do nothing without sin; and as one expresses it: my repentance needs to be repented of, and my very tears to be washed in the precious blood of my dear Redeemer. Our best duties are as so many splendid sins. Before you can know you are at peace with God, you must not only be made sick of your original and actual sin, but you must be sick of your righteousness, of all your duties and performances. There must be a deep conviction before you can be brought out of your self-righteousness; it is the last idol taken out of your heart. The pride of our heart will not let us submit to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But if you never felt that you had no righteousness of your own, if you never felt the deficiency of your own righteousness, you cannot come to Jesus Christ. There are a great many now who may say, “well we believe all this,” but there is a great difference between talking and feeling. Did you ever feel the need of a dear Redeemer? Did you ever feel the want of Jesus Christ, upon the account of the deficiency of your own righteousness? And can you now say from your heart, “Lord, thou mayst justly damn me for the best duties that ever I did perform?” **If you are not thus brought out of yourself, you may say to your heart “Peace! Peace!” but there is no peace.”***

**Note: With furious logic, Whitefield shows that, if you think your good deeds have any intrinsic merit in them, you will use Jesus to help you save yourself, but you will not treat him as a saviour.**

John Gerstner

*“...the way to God is wide open. There is nothing standing between the sinner and his God. He has immediate and unimpeded access to the Savior. There is nothing to hinder. No sin can hold [you] back, because God offers justification to the ungodly. Nothing now stands between the sinner and God but the sinner’s “good works.” Nothing can keep him from Christ but his delusion... that he has good works of his own that can satisfy God... All they need is need. All they need is nothing... But alas, sinners cannot part with their “virtues.” They have none that are not imaginary, but they are real to them. So grace becomes unreal. The real grace of God they spurn in order to hold on to the illusory virtues of their own. Their eyes fixed on a mirage, they will not drink real water. They die of thirst with water all about them.”*

Gerstner again shows that what keeps people from Christ is not their sins, but the imagined value of their “virtues” and good works. It is not so much refusal to repent of their sins that damns them, but the refusal to repent of their “righteousness.” Only when they repent of both sin and righteousness can they be said to have had their “mouths stopped.”

Summary:

Legalism	Christianity	Liberalism
Repents of sins	Repents of sins AND of righteousness	neither

**b) Discussion question. Compare “self-seeking” and “seeking glory, honor, and immortality”. Are they both not selfish?**

Self-seeking	Seeking glory, honor, and immortality	Seek God’s kingdom
<p>“Self-seeking” is the tell-tale sign. It means to have a spirit of self-will, or self glorification.</p> <p>This is something that can be pursued either through being irreligious and licentious, or through being moral and religious and upright</p>	<p>“Seek glory, honor, and immortality” means that these are qualities that come from life with God. The person who is right with God does not do good deeds for their own sake. He or she wants to become a particular kind of person — one like God.</p>	<p>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33</p>

If God is a baker, and the earthly desirable things are the cake. It is wrong to steal or do evil to get the cake. Equally, even if you can pay for the cake, it is misguided of you to just want the cake when the baker offers to bake better cakes for you free forever if you accept his offer of friendship. But you will have to focus on the relationship with the baker, not just using the baker as a means to get the cake. The offer is free and unlimited by the way, so you can share with others.

Why is it not selfish to want the baker AND the cake?

God being our designer, knows our instruction manual and if we just focus on the one cake, we

will die. It's not selfish to want good things, God just happens to be the best thing you can have.