

# Is It True That "All Have Sinned and Fall Short of the Glory of God"?

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One of the realities of human life that we must all deal with is our sin condition. What may seem obvious to you if you have come to [faith](#) in Christ may not be so clear to those outside the faith. Some may even wonder if it's true that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God? Well, if you are reading this and you are not sure of the answer, it is yes. In the book of Romans, Paul expresses this fact that we must all come to grips with.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” ([Romans 3:23](#)).

This one truth of our sinful condition actually keeps some from coming to Christ, because the first thing you must do to come to Christ is acknowledge you are a sinner. You must also admit you are wrong about who you are and how you have been living. Yet when you make that step you are recognizing that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

## **What Does “All Have Sinned and Fall Short of the Glory of God” Mean?**

When you look at this verse, the first word I want you to focus on is “all.” This means there is no one left out. Right before this verse, Paul states there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. This means that every person ever born on the face of this earth has fallen short of God's requirement, making us all sinners.

In case you are wondering how this is possible, you must understand what God's requirement is. God's requirement is not measured by scales where you balance out the

good and the bad. God's requirement is measured by perfection. You must do everything right according to his law, one hundred percent of the time. Here is what he said.

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” ([James 2:10](#)).

Let me ask you, have you broken at least one of God's laws? (It's okay to say yes because we both know the answer.) Since this is true, then you are guilty, and I am just as guilty as you are. God's requirement is not that we keep *most* of the law but *all of it*. When you break one law, it is the same as if you have broken them all. For this reason, we are all sinners because there is not one of us who has kept the entire law perfectly, except for Jesus.

### **What Is the Context of [Romans 3](#)?**

The book of Romans is one of the best books for defining the doctrines of the Christian faith. If you want to understand clearly what we believe, Romans is a great book to study. In chapter 3 Paul is laying out an argument that no one is justified by keeping the law because no one can keep it. The purpose of the law was to make us aware of our sinful condition and for us to recognize how far away we are from living up to God's standard.

“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” ([Romans 3:20](#)).

When you stop and think about it, the law is designed to point us to grace. When you are made aware of your sinful condition, you have two choices. You can continue to try to obtain righteousness on your own, which no one can accomplish, or you can receive righteousness through faith, which everyone has access to.

God did not just make us aware of our sinful condition, he provided a remedy for us to deal with it. While yes, it is true that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, it is also true we have been given the opportunity for redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

### **How Do We Know That Everyone Is in Need of God's Grace?**

The reason we know that everyone needs God's grace is simply because we are all sinners. If you don't start with the recognition of your sinful condition, you will never acknowledge your need for God's grace. When you know you are a sinner, and you know there is nothing you can do to change it on your own, then that leaves you with no

choice but to depend on God's grace. That's why I said earlier that the law is designed to point us to grace.



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## **Do Good People Still Need God's Grace?**

One of the most difficult categories of people to address are people who think they are good by nature. While people may have good qualities and most have a decent sense of morality, the problem is that the standard isn't good – the standard is perfect. If you think you are a good person and that is enough, then you will miss the truth that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. In fact, here is what the Bible says about good people in that same chapter of Romans.

“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” ([Romans 3:10-12](#)).

The question of thinking you are good is a question of who you are comparing yourself to, and what does good actually mean? If you compare yourself to other people, you can always find someone who looks worse than you. This is very easy to do.

Remember the story of the Pharisee in [Luke 18](#). Here is how he prayed:

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get’” ([Luke 18:9-12](#)).

This Pharisee was standing up and declaring how good a person he was, and he did it by comparing himself to someone else, in this case a tax collector. However, if you read the next few verses, you will discover that although this Pharisee thought he was good, he

did not go home justified. He missed his own sinful condition because he measured himself against a tax collector, and not against a holy God.

Let's not make the mistake of measuring our lives against other people. We must always measure ourselves against God's standard of holiness and perfection, and when that is the standard, you will quickly see how woefully short we all fall.

### **Is God's Grace Enough for *Every* Sinner?**

There is a good side to this situation, and that good side is the grace of God. While it is true that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, we need to be thankful that is not the end of the story. Simply look at the next verse.

“And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” ([Romans 3:24](#)).

There are two words that appear in both verse 23 and 24. That word is *all*. Yes, it is true we have all sinned, but it is also true that we are all justified freely by his grace.

As far as I know all means all, and that has not changed. All includes every Jew and Gentile, which makes this available to everyone on the face of this earth. Regardless of your sinful condition, if you will come to God in repentance and put your faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, you will find grace to forgive and grace to justify you, which means God will see you just as if you had never sinned. You get transferred from being in the place of falling short to the place of measuring up because Christ's righteousness has been applied to your account.

### **How Does This Encourage Us in Our Personal Walk?**

The reality of God's grace means that there is hope for us when we fall short. The truth is that not only have we fallen short of the glory of God in the past, but there will be moments where we will fall short again in the future. In these moments, you can run back to God, repent, and find [forgiveness](#) and grace to cleanse your sins. This is not a license to sin or a get-out-of-jail-free card, because if you see it that way then you don't understand grace at all. This is an acknowledgement that we still fall short, and we are dependent on Christ's righteousness to make up the difference. You will never reach a point where you stand in your own righteousness, (remember what happened to the Pharisee if you are ever tempted to do that), but you will always stand in Christ's righteousness. That means as long as you remain in Christ, you will always be in a place of justification.

The biggest problem we have in this life is our sin problem and the reality that we all fall short of the glory of God. However big that problem is, thankfully God has met it

with a bigger solution. Your sinfulness was met with God's grace, which birthed in you Christ's righteousness. Even though we have all sinned, because of Christ we are now justified. If you didn't have a reason to praise God today, I think I just gave you one.

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