

"CONDEMNED SIN."

"For what was impossible for the Law in that it was weak through the flesh, God having sent his own Son in a form of the flesh of sin – even by an offering for sin – condemned sin in the flesh; so that the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled by us who are walking, not according to flesh, but according to spirit." – ROM. 8:3 – Diaglott.

The common version of this text is frequently misconstrued by some. It reads: "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," etc. Some, who have a theory to support, would have us understand this – God sent his Son in the sinful likeness of flesh – and have us draw the inference that he took a sinful nature and was with us under the same condemnation. That this is not the teaching of the Apostle should be obvious to every intelligent and candid reader. The imperfections of mind and body, now so common to our race, are the direct traces and marks of either personal or inherited sin; while we know that Jesus had neither. In him was no sin, hence no evidence or marks of it.

The likeness (or form) of sinful flesh simply means not angelic or divine, but the human form. Among the imperfect representatives of human likeness to-day there is much variety; there are many degrees of imperfection; the perfect human being is the standard; yet all are said to have the same likeness as Adam, who was perfect before sin. Adam had the human likeness – the same likeness that sinful flesh yet has: hence Jesus, also, as a perfect man, had the same likeness or form as sinful flesh – the human.

Jesus experienced the woes and sufferings of humanity without sharing in the imperfections and sins. He suffered for and with those around him, and made use of his own vitality in healing

their diseases. Doubtless, on many an occasion, it might have been recorded, as in Mark 5:30; Luke 6:19 and 8:46, that the power or virtue which healed the sick "went out of him." Thus, he "himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." (Matt. 8:17.) It is the most refined and perfect organisms which can suffer most.

To appreciate the drift and force of the Apostle's teaching in this passage, we must remember that he is explaining the value and use of the Law given to Israel, through Moses, and its relation to Christians. He handles it fully, for he writes to those who know the Law. (Chap. 7:1.)

Glancing back we find his argument to be that the slightest command of God is a Law, and the smallest violation of Law is sin; and the wages of the smallest sin is death – the extinction of existence. (Ch. 6:23.) Thus, it will be seen, that to be imperfect in the smallest degree meant inability to keep God's Law, which meant sin and its punishment. Hence only one man was tried, and that on only one point of Law. When he disobeyed in a very small thing – his was not a flagrant crime – he was a violator of Law – a sinner – under condemnation of death. All his offspring would, of course, partake of his imperfection, sin and death. (Ch. 5:18.)

This fact of inherited sin and imperfection, and the necessity of an atoning sacrifice to God on account of it, and as a clearing from its condemnation and punishment, is recognized in every sacrifice offered by the Patriarchs.

But mankind did not really recognize the depth of degradation into which they had been plunged by sin working in their nature; and lest any should say, Would that Jehovah would clear me from the guilt of Adam's sin, for then would I show myself approved unto God worthy of life; therefore God gave an exhibition of the perfection of His Law, and showed before angels and men that it is impossible for any imperfect being to keep a perfect Law. He gave

Israel a typical "Day of Atonement," and a typical justification from Adamic sin, by typical sacrifices for sin, which could never (really) take away sin; and then, at the hands of Moses, he delivered to them the Law at Sinai, declaring that "whosoever doeth these things shall live" – by reason of their obedience would never die. (Chap. 10:5; Gal. 3:12; Lev. 18:5.) Israel was jubilant, and eagerly promised – "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." (Exod. 19:7,8.)

But, alas, for poor humanity's self-confidence; that which they thought would be a means of gaining life, was found to emphatically condemn all under it to death, as transgressors unworthy of life. (Chap. 7:10-13.) As throughout that Jewish age, hundreds and thousands attempted to keep the "Law ordained unto life," but were unable, it proved either one of two things: either that the man was as God claimed, unable to help himself back to **[R455 : page 4]** perfection, even if justified from Adam's sin, or else that the Law given was too severe.

Paul's argument is to show that the Law was not too severe. He claims that the Law is holy – the commandments of the Lord holy, and just, and good for man: that the trouble is that man is imperfect – depraved – sold under (into slavery to) sin by his forefather's transgression. (Ch. 7:12-18.) The question was, then, Would God modify his just, holy and good Law, so as to excuse a certain amount of sin, and let those live who were imperfect? We answer, No; this would have been a violation by God of his own Law – such a Law would have been imperfect – such a course would have been to justify sin instead of justifying the sinner from the sin. And thus Paul argues, "If a Law could have been given which would have given life" back to man, then undoubtedly God would have provided man with that Law, and not have sent his Son to be our ransom and the propitiation for our sins. (See Gal. 3:21.) But God is the author of only right and perfect Laws. He cannot look upon sin

with any degree of allowance; hence the Law still remains, and will to all eternity – "The soul (being) that sinneth it shall die" – be cut off from life.

But, seeing how many had tried to justify themselves before God, by attempting to keep His Law, and, realizing that some of these were indeed excellent men, it would not be surprising if men should feel that their natural depravity was not so very great, and surely the Law must be too severe. To give man unquestionable proof of the justness of his Law, and the possibility of a perfect man's keeping it, was a part of Jehovah's plan in connection with the redemption of sinners.

Hence, when Jesus came to redeem men, he was tempted (tested) in all points – by the world, the flesh and the devil. He was born under the same Law which had been condemning others for over 1,800 years. And the fact that he as a man – a perfect man – did keep the perfect Law, is a part of the proof Jehovah offers us that the Law was not too severe, but the fault had been that all were under the curse – imperfect – and therefore could not keep it.

This is exactly Paul's argument where our text is found. Jesus' life, instead of proving that the Law is imperfect, and that, therefore, God should cast it aside, proved the very contrary – it set the seal or mark of approval and righteousness to the Law, and of condemnation to the race of sinners. But notice, Jesus not only sanctioned the Law and met its requirements by his own obedience to it; but more, he met its requirements upon the condemned race by giving himself (as a spotless human being) a ransom for them. Thus he purchased the Law's claims upon the entire race. And it is elsewhere declared to be his plan – in due time to assume control of his "purchased possession," and to subdue and restore whosoever will of the race to the original perfection, where they shall be able to keep God's perfect Law perfectly, and have a right to life as a

result. When he shall have done this, he shall deliver up the kingdom (dominion) to God, even the Father.

Now, note the fullness and power of our text. What was impossible for the Law [to do for us, viz., give us a right to life] in that it was [powerless, owing to the weakness and imperfection of our sin-stricken flesh,] God accomplished in another way – not by giving another, an imperfect Law, but, on the contrary, proving the Law given to be just and holy – by sending his Son in a human form – the same form as that of the sinners who had been condemned – a second MAN. He not only proved the Law to be just and good, but then, by an offering FOR our sins, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in us [who accept of his sacrifice for our sins,] who walk not after [in pursuit of] the flesh, but after [in pursuit of] the spirit [meaning or intent] of the Law.
