

NOT A SINFUL LIKENESS.

Briefly notice first some of the inconsistencies of this passage as it stands in the common version – "In the likeness of sinful flesh." Looked at one way the term "sinful flesh" would cast a reflection upon the Creator by intimating that humanity is sinful by nature, created so; whereas the Scriptures everywhere hold out the thought that man's nature was good, and that he is now bound by Sin's power or dominion, and that when man is set free from Sin and Death – *restored* to original perfection – he will again be "very good," as at first pronounced.

But suppose it were claimed that this passage refers to flesh (humanity) that had gotten into a state of sin, and suppose for argument's sake we admitted this to be its significance [which we really cannot admit except for the argument], still it *would not prove* what the no-ransom advocates want to have proved. Because for our Lord to take the likeness *of flesh which has become sinful* would still leave it an open question whether the likeness *before* it had become sinful was meant, or the likeness *after* it had become sinful. Surely none will deny that the likeness of mankind to-day is the *human likeness*, nor that Adam had the *same*, – human likeness. If the depraved race wanted to point out its likeness to-day, the finest, least depraved and least degraded specimen would be selected as a sample of human nature, as a sample of the nature which sinners are of. And, if the *best* living sample of our race would be selected to represent it, why should not the race (now sinful) look back to its first parent, Adam, who before sinning was perfect, and claim his likeness as *its real likeness*, which had since been marred by sin and death? In thinking of the real likeness of human nature, to which nature human sinners belong, we should think of a likeness to properly represent our nature, no matter how degraded and fallen from that model, many, yea all of the race have now become. Thus indeed our Lord was made in the likeness [nature] of sinful flesh – the nature which the sinful race is of – human nature.

He partook of that nature perfectly which in the sinners had become contaminated, imperfect, sinful.

Those who urge that our Lord was only like the race *after* it was sinful, and chiefly like it in respect to the imperfections, should consider that Adam's form and flesh did not undergo so great a change in the *moment* of disobedience, that the original likeness before sin, could be disclaimed for him. Hence, when first Adam became a sinner by disobedience, before sentence was pronounced upon him, and before he began in the slightest degree to be imperfect, there was one example of *flesh* under control of the great enemy Sin, which was perfect flesh and the *best* example of humanity, whose likeness our Lord took: in fact the only example and true representative of manhood.

But note another absurdity the false theory would involve: Though the flesh or nature is all one, and has one standard of perfection, or one likeness, the sinfulness varies in degree; some of the race being more degraded and depraved by sin than others. Now will those who want this passage to read that our Lord was made in a *sinful likeness* of flesh, please tell us just how sinful, how imperfect he was, seeing that if we are looking at the *sinful* likeness of flesh [of humanity] there is such an infinite variety of gradation?

Bold as many seem to be on this subject, few probably would have the temerity to say that our Redeemer was like the *most sinful*, like the most debased and degraded in mind and body; and yet this they *must* claim, else their theory falls. Because any argument or theory that would require that our Lord should be a sinner at all, would require that he be as depraved and degraded as the *most* sin-polluted. For, denying his ransom work, and therefore ignoring the necessity for him to be as sinless as the one for whom he became the substitute was before sin entered, and ignoring the fact that he is a pattern and example, not to sinners, but to justified believers, and that it is not like unto sinners, but "like unto his *brethren*" that he was tempted: ignoring

all this, we say, they must claim that our Lord had an experience like that of *every* fallen wretch in *every* particular, and that the only work he did while here was to get *that kind* of experience; hence as shown in July and August TOWERS they are forced to claim that our Lord underwent all the depraved feelings and thoughts of all libertines, drunkards, thieves and thugs, or else their theory falls. How preposterous, absurd and almost blasphemous is such a view.

And how inconsistent to claim that one who "knew no sin," and who, even before he was anointed, from earliest childhood showed no sign of evil, and who was miraculously born so as to be separate from the race of sinners, and who was referred to before his birth as "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35), how unreasonable to claim that this being had the worst and most depraved disposition of any member of the human race ever born into the world.

If our Lord did no sin, he certainly lacked that *sinful likeness* common to sinners, but he could be without sin and have in its perfection that human likeness or nature which all sinners share, though in a degraded state. Could one be said to be *like* sinners, who never sinned? No, our Lord was unlike sinners in respect to sin, imperfection, etc., but like them in the sense of having their same *nature* or flesh, he having it in its perfection, they in various degrees of imperfection through sin.

In the following article we will show that whatever support was thought to be given by this mistranslated text, to the idea that our Lord was imperfect, a sinner, is removed by a proper translation of the passage.

"IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH."

ROMANS 8:3.

We note with regret that the above text as it stands is favorable to the "no ransom views," and is being used to prove that our Lord, when he became a man, had a body full of sinful weakness and imperfections,

or as they hold it to mean, *just like* sinful, fallen, depraved humanity. This suits the ideas of the no-ransom theorists exactly; for if he were imperfect, he could not be a ransom or corresponding price for the first perfect man [R998 : page 1] who sinned, and was condemned, and we in him. But those who thus claim that our Lord was imperfect, *i.e.*, had *sinful flesh*, overlook the fact that if their claim were true, our Lord could not keep the Law, under which he was born, and by which he was proved perfect and worthy of the high exaltation to the divine nature. They seem to forget that the Law was the full measure of a *perfect* man's ability, and that if he had been in the least degree imperfect, our Lord could not have kept it, *could not* have been justified to life under and by it. Hence if our Lord had *sinful flesh*, his coming into the world was useless; for under such circumstances he could neither have set a perfect example, nor could he have redeemed the condemned sinners.

But the no-ransom theorists would perhaps claim that he did not need to be free from sin, nor to give a ransom (a corresponding price) for the first perfect man who had sinned; and that his *example was perfect*, they cannot deny. When we ask them, How could *sinful flesh* obey the perfect Law of God fully and set an example to others, they would perhaps answer: Oh! he had divine help; he had the indwelling of the holy spirit to *help him*, and to enable him to overcome his sinful flesh.

But we reply, that takes away all the virtue or honor of our Lord as an overcomer. If his flesh was sinful and sin-disposed as that of other men, and he overcame the world by outside help merely, then he has no honor whatever; and justice would suggest that he should not have been highly exalted and honored above angels, for what he did not do, but for what was merely done in him by God's overmastering power. Indeed, if this theory be true, we see neither *merit* on the part of our Lord Jesus to be rewarded, nor any necessity for his coming into the world at all. For surely if God merely took possession of the *sinful flesh* and worked out results totally different from what *sinful*

flesh itself was capable of, there was no need of specially bringing *that* sinful flesh into the world where there was too much of that sort already. [R998 : page 2] And it would have been far more like the divine economy to have used and acted upon *some other* sinful flesh as a pattern and example. Indeed, if this were God's object and plan, we cannot question that the *example* of some man who had lived for a time in sin, and thus proved that he had sinful flesh, would have been far more powerful as an illustration of how God could *change* and force a man to do his will. So, then, if another sinful flesh could have done as well or better, where was the necessity for our Lord's coming in the flesh at all?

But further, while we do not claim that God could not so force any man, but merely that he does not and never has so forced any – and challenge proof to the contrary – yet we ask, If it is a question only of an indwelling divine power, forcing sinful flesh into harmony with the divine will, where was the necessity for specially making an *example* of it, either in our Lord Jesus, or in any other *one*? Why not rather let the holy power *force* ALL sinful flesh at once?

But further examination of these errors on this line we trust is unnecessary. We now proceed to show that opposers of the Bible doctrine that our Lord was holy and free from sin, and *separate* from sinners, and gave his holy, perfect manhood a sacrificial ransom (*corresponding* price) for the *perfect* Adam (whose sin involves his race), are mistaken when they use this text ("In the likeness of sinful flesh") for the support of their theory.

We are surprised that some whose knowledge of the Greek should protect them from falling into such an error, have not more carefully and *critically* noted this passage. A failure to note the fact that the apostle throughout this entire discourse treats of sin as a *personality*, [This we showed at length in May '87 TOWER, article, "The body of sin to be destroyed."] is the cause of this error, but this cannot excuse critical students of the Greek text, which is most explicit.

The Greek word here rendered *sinful* is *hamartia*. It occurs 174 times in the New Testament, yet is only this once improperly translated by our English *adjective* sinful. The Greek word *hamartia* should always be translated as a *substantive*, SIN, not as an *adjective*, SINFUL; and it is so treated by the translators in every instance of its 174 occurrences, except this one text.

The Greek has another word to represent our adjective sinful, namely, *hamartolos* and every other occurrence of the word *sinful* in the New Testament except the one above noted (Rom. 8:3), which is a mistranslation, comes from the word *hamartolos*.

As instances of *hamartolos* properly translated by the adjective *sinful*, see Mark 8:38, Luke 5:8; 24:7 and Rom. 7:13. The last instance shows conclusively that the apostle knew what he was about when using those two words, and did not misuse the one for the other; and be it noted that in the one verse he there uses *hamartia* three times as a substantive SIN, and *hamartolos* once as an adjective, SINFUL. We quote – "But sin [*hamartia*] that it might be shown to be sin [*hamartia*,] by working death to me by that which is good; – that through the commandment, sin [*hamartia*] might become exceeding sinful [*hamartolos*"]. (Rom. 7:13.) Surely this illustration makes the subject clear to even an ordinary English student, and should convince all that the translation of *hamartia* by the adjective sinful in Rom. 8:3 is wholly wrong and inexcusable; it should be there as elsewhere translated as a substantive, *sin*.

So, then, though the translators erred grievously in this case, and have furnished the only (apparent) prop to the theory that Christ was a sinner, yet, God duly provides the needed helps, so that no member of the true body need stumble, showing us clearly the error of the translators as above. The Lord promises that none shall be tempted above that they are able to bear, and that if the test of faith were too weighty for us, he would provide a way of escape. And surely those

who have misrepresented this text, owe a duty to God, to the truth, and to any whom they have mistaught, concerning the text in question.

But some unfamiliar with the rules of grammar may not see the importance of the change from *sinful* to *sin* in the above text. To such the changed phraseology may imply little, and they may read, "In the likeness of flesh of sin," the proper translation,* and think of it as meaning the same as "In the likeness of sinful flesh." Let us therefore help them to distinguish. The common and erroneous translation, "sinful flesh," implies that human nature [flesh] is a sinful nature, which is not true; for human nature [flesh] as God created it was perfect, and was pronounced by the Creator "very good;" and over it sin had no control. Human nature [flesh] came under the influence, control, or dominion of sin, which Paul in this and the three preceding chapters personifies as a tyrant, reigning over, and ruling in all flesh. He speaks of this tyrant Sin's law and the captivity in which he (the tyrant Sin) *now* holds all flesh as slaves: he tells of how we who were once the slaves of this great tyrant, have been made *free* from his control, and from respect to his law, penalty, etc., and have enlisted as slaves or bond-servants under God's Son, our Redeemer and new Captain, and are now voluntarily under his law and pledged to fight against and lay down even life itself in this conflict against our former enslaver and tyrant, Sin. In Rom. 7:23 to 8:3 the Apostle is telling how our deliverance from this tyrant, Sin, was accomplished. The Law given to Israel failed to deliver them, and could no more deliver us, from this tyrant who had gotten such a hold upon us that the flesh [human nature] was *too weak* to resist it. Hence when the Law Covenant pointed out to Israel a road back to harmony with God and to the service of righteousness, they found themselves so *weak* as to be unable to resist the "law of Sin," their captor, so that the best they could do was to mentally acknowledge God's dominion, and show the loyalty of their wills toward God by resisting as much as possible, which was but little, the law of the tyrant, Sin.

*See *Diaglott* also, which all of our readers should surely have for critical study of the Word. Also see marginal reading of Revised version.

Then the Apostle thanks God that though not accomplished by the Law, given at Sinai, yet our release is otherwise and effectually accomplished through Jesus Christ our Lord. What the Law was powerless to accomplish for us, because our flesh was too weak to withstand the tyranny of Sin, God accomplished for us, by sending his Son in the likeness of the flesh of Sin [*i.e.*, in the likeness of humanity, which the tyrant Sin possessed control of] and because of Sin [sin's power over us]. [Thus God] condemned Sin [our tyrant, not humanity] through [or in] the flesh [Christ's flesh, given as our ransom].

But how, in what sense, did God through Christ's flesh condemn the tyrant Sin?

We answer, man, as originally created, was a free agent, and voluntarily rendered himself Sin's servant, and was soon enslaved to Sin. God had arranged before the fall that man might serve either of two masters, Righteousness or Sin, and that he should surely receive the wages of whichever one he served. So long as he did serve Righteousness the pay was *life*, which would have continued, had he continued in its service. But when, in disobedience, he became the servant of Sin, its wages, death, were also sure. And though he did not like the wages, and would have fled to the former master, Righteousness, Sin held him, and had *power* to hold him until the *wages* (death) should be fully paid. And since the wages [R999 : page 2] cost man his life, he was hopelessly bound both for time and eternity.

This slavery to Sin and his servant Death, was the wretched condition of all humanity when God sentenced or condemned to overthrow, the tyrant Sin, as having no longer legal right to reign over the redeemed flesh – mankind, which is officially declared to be emancipated, freed from his dominion.

But in what way did God do this? And why did he for thousands of years permit Sin and Death to rule and ruin the race, if he could justly condemn and remove them from dominion over mankind? If they had a recognized *right* to hold and oppress man (their voluntary slave) for four thousand years, how can God *justly* set aside their authority now?

Ah yes! Sin and Death did reign from Adam to Moses, when the Law came apparently to help mankind. And as it helped none, Sin and Death still reigned as high handed as ever, *until* God sent his Son in the likeness of the flesh (humanity) which Sin had captivated; in the likeness of Adam, the very *one* who voluntarily became Sin's servant and involved his posterity as those born in slavery. And it was through this one who himself "*knew* no sin," but who by willingly receiving the penalty or wages of sin on behalf of the enslaved and sentenced race, as their *ransom*, proclaimed liberty to the captives and sentenced the dominion of Sin and death to an overthrow. The wages being paid, Sin and Death no longer have authority over the redeemed, ransomed race.

Let go the prisoner from the pit, [the tomb] for I have found a *ransom*, is the sentence or condemnation of God against the rule of this personified power, Sin. The word "*condemned*" in Rom. 8:3 is *katakrino*, and is the same used in Heb. 11:7 with reference to the overthrow of the world of Antediluvians; and it is the same word that Peter uses (2 Pet. 2:6) when speaking of Sodom, "*Condemned* with an overthrow." So Sin and Death were condemned or *sentenced* to overthrow, by reason of the *ransom* given for the slaves over whom they reign.

God's due time for condemning Sin by redeeming its captives, was nearly two thousand years ago; and the due time for putting the sentence into *execution*, dethroning this tyrant, and breaking up his prison house, is now just at hand – the Millennial age. Right speedily he who redeemed all, and whose right it consequently is to release all,

will take his great power and reign, enforcing the liberation of all captives, and granting to all a new opportunity to become again the servants of Righteousness, and receive its reward of life.

Though Sin still reigns over and holds in slavery our race, those who believe in Christ's ransom know that it no longer has a right to reign, that its *authority* is cancelled now, that it is CONDEMNED and is now only a usurper without real authority; that its slaves have been officially emancipated and soon will be actually released by the great Deliverer. The Apostle urges that we no longer recognize this tyrant from whose dominion God through Christ hath set us free. *Let* not Sin therefore have dominion over you, but as you once obeyed it now obey Christ, your new Ruler, who promises to fully deliver you back to your original master Righteousness whose wages is life.

So, then, our Lord who was made flesh when he partook of the flesh nature – human nature – partook not of imperfect flesh, partook not of fallen flesh, but was holy and separate from sinners, yet took the likeness of the flesh lorded over and enslaved by sin (humanity), and was not like any of the imperfect or depraved specimens of that race, but like the original and only proper perfect specimen of it – Adam, as *he was* when he first became Sin's slave. To have been *less* than that first perfect slave through whom Sin first gained control of all, would have prevented our Redeemer from *redeeming* "those captives, by giving the ransom [*corresponding* price] for all." (1 Tim. 2:4-6). By the way, the no-ransom teachers have never attempted to *analyze* nor to disprove or twist this or the other texts which tell of our ransom: Nor can it be shown that any other than a *perfect man* could be a *corresponding* price for Adam, through whom came condemnation and death.
