

THE NATURE OF CHRIST

The text in (Romans 8:3), must be studied in its background context of Romans 7:14-25. Here the apostle states that even as a converted man he still felt the flesh indwelling him and exerting its influence upon him (v.14). (Where as in verses 7-19, all the verbs are predominately in the past tense,-- Paul's preconverted state--, in verses 14-25, all the verbs are predominately in the present tense, --Paul's present ongoing experience--.) The result of this indwelling sin in the flesh was the same for Paul as it is for all of us. Nothing we do is perfect, if judged by strict demands of infinite justice. All that we do is tainted and defiled, falling short of His glory (v's 14-25). For, "ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). "Verily," said the Psalmist, "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5). The expression, "likeness of sinful flesh," is just another way of saying 'likeness of flesh full of sin' (**Rom.** 7:17-18, 20). Could these things have been said of Christ? We think not.

Romans 8:3 must be studied in these two following aspects: (1) The law's inability to justify man. (2) The law's inability to condemn sin.

(1) "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh--it *could not justify man*, because in his sinful nature he could not keep the law--'God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh*; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" PP.373.

Here it is plainly stated that it was impossible for the law to justify humanity in its sinful condition. Man, every man, believer or unbeliever, with or without the Holy Spirit, cannot keep the law to the satisfying of infinite justice, for either our justification, sanctification or redemption, now or at any subsequent time. Christ alone has been made all those blessing unto us (Eph. 1:3; Isa. 53:11; 45:24-45; Rom. 5:18; Heb. 10:10; 1 Cor. 1:30). Christ's life shows that there was nothing wrong with the law, it is "holy, just and good." The problem is man. In our sinfulness we do not have the capacity for its perfection to be manifested.

But what the law could not do through us, it did through Christ. He was perfected and justified in the Spirit by the keeping of the law in precept throughout His life, and satisfying it in penalty by His death, by His active and passive obedience thereby saving us *justly* (Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 3:26; 1 John 1:9; 1 SM. 396). It is by His "being made perfect through suffering unto obedience" that "He sanctified and perfected forever" those who believe (Heb. 10:10,14).

All this would have been impossible for Christ to have accomplished for us, if He had possessed "sinful flesh" in common with the fallen race, for the law would have found the same weaknesses and incapacity in Him that it finds in us, and would have been inhibited from working in Him as it is in us. Believers do not have perfection before the law by their obedience, for they are said to be "presented perfect in Him." (Col. 1:28). God does not bring us to glory by making us the perfection that the law requires, but by making the

Captain of our salvation the perfection that the law requires (Heb. 2:10). *Only One who has the capacity for perfection, can be perfected through the law, and only One who has such a capacity can be perfectly revealed through the law's perfection.*

(2) And why couldn't the law justify man? Because it could not "condemn sin in the flesh." (Although it did condemn the sinner). The law only strengthens sin and perpetuates sin by condemning man who had chosen to sin, to the slavery and prison house of sin, and under sin's dominion, until the demands of justice had been satisfied (Rom. 7:1-6, 8-11; 1 Cor. 15:56; Rom. 3:20; 4:15).

But "what the law could not do," God did. God's condemnation of sin is set forth in that Christ, His own Son sent by Him to partake of human nature (sin apart), took our sins by imputation, and died as a sin offering under the judgment due to our sin. By this one awesome act He condemned sin in the flesh and released us from its condemnation and slavery. Free now in Him from the law's dominion, and sin's guilt and power (Rom. 6:14), the "righteousness of the law" is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:4).

Christ broke the chain of sinful heredity common to all, for it is written: "A body hast Thou prepared Me." (Heb. 10:5). It was in this body through the Eternal Spirit, that He offered Himself "without spot to God." (Heb. 9:14) Our Firm Foundation believes that sinfulness of nature could not have been separated from Mary's biological nature. True, man could not do it, but God did as (Hebrews 10:5), teaches in its context. Through His conception by the Holy Ghost, in a "body prepared for Him," Christ, and Christ alone, did the will of God, and establishing sanctification and perfection, broke the chain of our sinful heredity. There was no hope for the race unless Someone come, break that line and establish a new inheritance of sinlessness. Those who teach the depravity of Christ's human nature want to see the chain of sinful inheritance maintained. They appear to be so swallowed up with their idea of being saved by Christ's example and the hope of duplication His life, that they think that salvation depends on making Him a sharer in our depravity. If this were so, then the words of Christ would not be true: "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." (John. 14:39).

Jesus was "*justified in the Spirit.*" (1 Tim 3:16). This means that He stood justified before God's law on the basis of the Spirit's work in Him, on the basis of what He did, and how He lived. He needed, and indeed had, no substitute surety, mediator, intercessor or imputed righteousness. By His obedience in the Spirit He fulfilled and satisfied an infinite law in precept and in penalty. Thus He fulfilled infinite holiness and justice, providing infinite perfection for all who believe in him (Heb.5:5-9; 10:14; T6. 60). This, nothing less than this, nothing more than this and nothing besides this, is the Biblical "*righteousness by faith,*" or "*the righteousness which is of God by faith.*" This would have been impossible had Christ a "*sinful nature.*"

Christ was so filled with the Spirit, even with all the "fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). that He was righteous before God in reality in His own Person. In Him was all the fullness of divine perfection, an infinite life that measured with the broadest claims of an infinite law. God could look directly at Him and say, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Jesus was righteous, acceptable and pleasing to God in His own Person. This can never be said of us in this life. We are "accepted in the Beloved." (Eph.1:6). We may be pleasing because Another is pleasing. We live under the covenant of grace. Christ lived under the old covenant of obey and live (Gal. 5:4-5).

The statement in (1 Tim. 3:16), "*Justified in the Spirit*," can never be said of us for the very reason that we have a "sinful nature." We are sanctified in the Spirit for sure, but never "justified in the Spirit," for it is clearly stated we are "justified by grace," and we "are justified by faith." "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." (Rom. 3:24.28, 4:16). For in this life we only have the "first-fruits" or "down payment" of God's Spirit. (Rom.8:23; Eph. 1:14).

The reason we cannot stand "justified in the Spirit" is because we, unlike Christ have a "fallen sinful nature." For this cause we cannot do as Jesus did, stand before God's infinite law on the basis of what we do and how we live. Because of "sin that dwelleth in us," we are only "acceptable in the Beloved."(Eph. 1:6). If therefore our personages are acceptable only through the righteous merits and life of Another, then it is certainly true that even our "Sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience," must be cleansed by the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:2). Indeed, all our "spiritual sacrifices," prayers, praise and "fruits of righteousness," are acceptable to God only by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5; Heb. 13:15; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 1:11). Nevertheless, the work of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for justification as the work of Christ, but not for the same reasons. nor effectual to the same end.

Although Christ did not take our "sinful flesh," He was "born according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3; 1 John 4:2). Biologically Christ did possess our fallen nature (Heb. 2:14-18). He took our physical, mental and moral powers (DA. 117. ISM. 268). He took the essential substance and essence of Mary's nature with all the common properties, infirmities and weaknesses as it had been affected by the fall, but He did not take our sinfulness. The Scripture makes this very clear. His conception was by the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35). Therefore it is written: This the Holy thing....shall be called the Son of God." As it is written again: "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). See BC.

7. 933, where this text is applied to Christ's life on earth. And again: "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). And again it is written: "A body hast Thou prepared Me" (Heb. 10:5).

The consequences of Christ's being conceived by the Holy Ghost in a body specially prepared, is the basis for the following statements:

"He was born without a taint of sin, but came into the world in like manner as the human family." BC. 7. 925.

"Christ who knew *not the least taint of sin or defilement*, took our nature in its deteriorated condition. "BC. 7. 925.

"We should have no misgivings in regard to the *perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ*.....This Holy Substitute is able to save to the uttermost." 1 **SM**. 256.

"It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery." BC. 5. 1128-9 (Heb. 4:15).

Two paradoxical truths are mysteriously blended in Christ: (1) He was tempted in all points like as we are, (2) Yet He was without sin - (note sin, not sins; that is to say, He was without a sinful nature.) He was born in, but not of the flesh. Every other person is born in and of the flesh (John 3:6).

In attributing to Christ our "sinful flesh," we destroy His Representative and Substitutionary capacity. In order to be our Representative (that is to stand in Adam's place), Christ's human nature had to be as sinless as Adam's.

"Christ is called the second Adam. *In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God, He began where the first Adam began.*" Y I. 6-2-1898.

"Christ came to this earth, taking humanity and standing as man's representative to show in the controversy with Satan *that man, as God created him, connected with the Father and the Son*, could obey every divine requirement."

"Christ came to give to the world an example *of what perfect humanity might be when united with divinity.*" 1 **SM**. 260.

He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature *but not the sinfulness of man.*" ST. 5-29-1901.

As touching the essential properties of human nature, Christ's human nature was like ours "in every respect" (Heb. 2:17). But the matter cannot be left there without saying something else. Inspiration tells us something else, and to have half the picture is to have a false picture. Christ's human nature was on the other hand, most unlike ours. We are conceived in sin; we are born of the flesh; we are estranged from God and are by nature children of wrath, in harmony and not at variance with Satan (Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Jh. 3:3; Eph. 2:1-3; GC. 505). We come into the world unclean, unwashed, filthy, polluted (Eze. 16:1-6). We need to be born again. Even believers are not altogether free from sin (1 Jh. 1:8). They must lament indwelling sin (Rom. 7:14-2.15, COL. 161) and thus ever confess the sinfulness

of their natures (AA. 561. COL. 160) Can these things that are said of us be said of Christ?
We think not.

Many are quite right when they keep insisting that Christ was a "true" man, "real" man, etc. That is just the point. None of us are true men. Our condition, because of sin, is preternatural (TS 291). This means sin has robbed us of our true manhood. We are all less than true men because we are sinners. There have only been two specimens of true manhood in the history of the race; Adam and Jesus. Sin is not an essential property of human nature. We have something that constitutes us less than truly human. Christ had no indwelling sin such as does everyone who is born of man. That is to say, Christ took the substance of human nature as it was *affected by sin*, but His human nature was not *infected by sin*.