

## **Sin Condemned and Righteousness Fulfilled**

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"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, 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." Romans 8:3, 4

What a wondrous change both of views and feelings is produced in the soul when divine light and life first enter it from above! It is indeed a revolution, a mighty revolution, for it is effected by no power short of his who says, "Behold, I create all things new." The Scriptures, therefore, when they make mention of this mighty change, always speak of it as being effected by the power of God. Sometimes, for instance, it is spoken of as an "opening of the eyes," and a turning of sinners "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts 26:18.) Sometimes it is spoken of as a deliverance from the power of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13.) At other times it is compared to a birth, a new birth, as in those words of the Lord, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) At other times to a resurrection from the dead: "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." (Eph. 2:1, 4, 5.) Sometimes to a creation, as in the words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (or, as in the margin, "a new creation;") "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.) All these expressions imply a change by a power not our own.

Now one of the first fruits and effects of this heavenly change, this mighty revolution, is the *different views and feelings* that the regenerated soul entertains concerning the law of God. Before it is quickened into divine life, the law exerts no commanding power, no supreme and domineering authority over it. In word, perhaps, in name, we yield to it an unwilling allegiance; but the law as yet has not asserted its right nor spoken to us as with the voice of God. Thus the apostle speaks of himself—and we cannot find a more vivid or more experimental description of what the soul feels before and after the law has come with power than his relation of his own experience—"I was alive without the law once;" that is, not alive unto God in the best sense of the word; nor alive spiritually by regenerating grace, or by living a life of faith on the Son of God; but alive in this sense, that he had not then been killed by the sentence of the condemning law in his conscience. In this sense the soul is alive before it is dead; for never having felt the killing power of a condemning law, it is at ease in Zion, alive to a round of duties, easily satisfied with a multiplicity of forms from which it is expecting life and salvation, but utterly dead to a knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. But when God, by the operation of his word upon the heart, which is as a hammer to break the rock in pieces (Jer. 23:29), batters down the walls of Pharisaic pride and self-righteousness, then the law enters through the breach with a whole army of terrors. Before the law is made known to the conscience by the power of God, the soul is like such a city as Laish, of which we read that "the people therein dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure." (Judges 18:7.) But when the children of Dan fell upon Laish and made a breach in the walls, then as an invading army they entered through the breach, and smote the citizens with the edge of the sword. (Judges 18:27.) So as long as the soul is alive without the law, like Laish, it is

easy and quiet after the manner of the luxurious Zidonians, who engaged in trade and traffic, and having the sea for their rampart, lived without external war or internal strife. But when the word of God is applied with quickening power to make a breach in the walls of Pharisaism—for in this sense "the rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit," (Prov. 18:11,)—then through this breach enters the law as an invading army; and as an army let loose upon a city, sacks, plunders, massacres, and lays waste in all directions, so does the law attack and slay a guilty conscience. Thus the apostle, speaking of his own experience, Romans 7:9, says, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Sin was quiet before. But when the law came, it stirred sin up; it put new life into it; it revived sin out of its slumber in which it had been lying like a viper under a hedge in winter, or a dog sleeping at night in its kennel. The hot ray of the sun does not give the viper its poison fang; nor does the passing step of the traveller set the strong tooth in the jaw of the mastiff. So the law does not create sin, though it calls it up; is not the author of it, though it revives it. The apostle therefore says, "The motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death;" and again, "But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." (Rom. 7:5, 8.) Thus the law as reviving every secret lust and putting strength into every corruption, is armed as it were with a double power—a power to condemn the transgressor, and a power to stir up the transgression; for such is the hideous nature of sin, that "it works death in us by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Thus Paul says of himself, "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Rom. 7:13, 14.) He thus felt that the law was holy, but he unholy; the law just, but he a criminal; the law good, but he

vile. Taking him, then, as an exemplar of one who felt in no common measure the operation and the condemnation of the law in his conscience, we see how a poor sinner is brought in guilty before God; for the law being opposed to sin, and he being in himself nothing but a mass of sin; the law condemning every sinful thought, and he being full of sinful thoughts; the law condemning every vile imagination, and he prone to indulge in every vile imagination; the law condemning every foolish word, and his tongue ever dropping foolish words; the law condemning every unbecoming look, and he not able to keep his eyes from wandering after evil; the law requiring a perfect obedience, in which no allowance is made for any deviation, and he continually unable to render that obedience; the law thundering in his ears, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," and he not having a grain of that love; the law bidding him love his neighbour as himself, when his heart, by nature is full of enmity against that neighbour;—this ministration of death entering into his conscience, like an invading army through the breach into a besieged town, kills, condemns, and brings them in guilty before God. But, still to pursue Paul's experience, if when he is sunk under this condemning sentence, and is without help, or hope in himself, God is pleased to reveal to his soul salvation through the blood of the Lamb, then we see that the same man who cried out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" when he gets a view by faith of the atoning blood, justifying obedience, and finished work of the Son of God, bursts forth in a moment, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He has found a ransom; a deliverer has come to the rescue; atoning blood is revealed to his conscience; the love of God shed abroad in his heart; and under the sweet influence of God's grace, he can raise a joyful song of praise, that through Jesus Christ his Lord he is

saved from death and hell.

Having thus laid the foundation deep and broad from his own experience, the apostle goes on to tell us in the next chapter, which is but a continuation of the preceding, the happy state of all who are interested in this great salvation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." He could see the eternal security of those who had an interest in the Person and work and blood of the Lamb. He could see that there was no condemnation for them; that let the law utter its loudest thunders and flash before their eyes its most forked lightnings, yet being in Christ they were secure in him; and therefore for them there was no condemnation. But lest any man might mistake the characters to whom these blessings belonged, he adds, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" for if a man be still walking after the flesh, he has no evidence of being in Christ Jesus. He has no testimony that he is manifestly interested in his blood and righteousness, and as such is free from condemnation; for as still walking after the flesh, he lies in all the filth and under all the condemnation of the flesh. He then goes on, in the verse preceding our text, to show how "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," meaning thereby the grace of God in the heart, the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the soul, which was to him a law, had made him free from the law of sin and death under which he had groaned. And then he proceeds, in the words which I have read, and from which I hope to speak this morning, to show how this was effected, by God "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

In opening up our text, I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First*, show what the *law cannot do*, and the reason: because it is "*weak through the flesh*."

II.—*Secondly*, what God *has done* by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, viz., "*condemned sin in the flesh.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, the *fruit and effect* of God sending his own Son, and thus condemning sin in the flesh, "*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.*"

IV.—And *lastly*, the *characters* in whom this righteousness is fulfilled: those "*who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

I.—Now does it not surprise your mind that after the description which the Holy Ghost has given of the strength of the law, the apostle should say that it was weak? How can the law be weak if it can kill, accuse, condemn, and bring the whole world in guilty before God? You must understand, then, that the law is not weak *in itself*: nothing can be more strong except the Gospel. But the law is weak *through the flesh*. This, therefore, with God's blessing, I shall endeavour to explain: and in so doing, shall show, first, how the law is *strong*, and then how the law is *weak*. Nor can I take a better way of illustrating this than by referring to human laws, for by looking at the law of man we may gather up some spiritual idea of the holy law of God.

i. What makes the law, as a human institution, *strong*?

1. *The authority of the law giver*. In our country, law is strong. Why so? Because no law can be passed except by the three estates of the realm met together in Parliament. To that collective authority all bow. Every class in society, with every individual from the peer to the peasant, and in fact all except the lawless outcasts, the mere waifs and strays of society, bow to the law on account of the authority whereby

it is promulgated. But suppose that a number of people were to meet together, say in Edinburgh or Dublin, call themselves a Parliament and make laws: who would feel bound to obey them? It would be a treasonable act and their pretended laws could not be put in execution. But our laws, being passed in Parliament, by an authority which all recognize, are thus made strong.

2. But there is another thing needed, which is, *sufficient force to carry the law into execution*. The legislative power may be strong, but the executive weak. It is so in the United States, and in some measure so in Ireland. But in our country we have a whole array of judges, magistrates, and police, and these backed not only by an army of a hundred thousand men, but by the universal voice of the country to carry the law into execution. In England therefore the law is strong, but not so in other countries. Whether from weakness of the legislative or from weakness of the executive, in many countries the law is weak. In America, a man may whip his slave to death; in Ireland, may shoot at his landlord from behind a hedge, and both escape being hanged, not because each crime is not murder, but because the leniency of the jury in the one country, and the unwillingness of the people to give evidence in the other, favour the escape of the criminal. We see then that in order to be strong, a law must have not only a trumpet voice but an iron hand. Now carry these two ideas into spiritual things, and see whether they do not both meet in the law of God. Look at its *Legislator*. Who gave the law? The great and glorious "I am," the ever-living Jehovah, the Judge of heaven and earth, the Almighty Creator of all things, before whom all the hosts of heaven and all the inhabitants of the earth are less than nothing and vanity. Must not that law be strong which emanated from the great God of heaven and earth? And look at the power which that great and glorious Judge can wield. Is any one beyond

his reach? Can any heart escape his piercing glance? Can any hide himself in secret places where the hand of God cannot find him? Thus whether we look at the authority of the Lawgiver, or the power that he can display in executing his commands, we see how strong the law of God is.

3. But as an additional proof of the majesty and power of God in his holy law, observe *the accompanying circumstances* which marked its first promulgation. Go to mount Sinai where that law was given and see how it was attended by the ministration of angels, that holy mount being surrounded by legions of bright angelic beings, every one of them swift to execute God's commands, any one able to smite an army like that of Sennacherib with instant death. See also how it was given in lightning and thunder, in darkness and tempest; see how the very mountain quaked, the earth rocked, and so terrible was the sight that Moses himself, that man of God, said, I exceedingly fear and quake.

4. Then, again, look at the *authority* of the law over *men generally*—how it can and will accuse every man and bring him in guilty before God for positive sins, for actual transgressions. See, too, how it condemns every unclean thought and every foolish word. View how it thus seizes the whole human race, brings them before God's tribunal, and condemns them there as guilty before a heart-searching Jehovah. Hear, too, how the law curses all who are disobedient to it with an everlasting curse, declaring as in tones of thunder, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Then see how the law as its last judicial act upon earth, takes every impenitent, unbelieving sinner in death and binds him as with adamant chains, to await the judgment of the great day.

5. Having thus seen its authority over *sinners*, next look at its effect upon the consciences of *saints*. How it slays their self-righteousness, cuts them off from all schemes of pleasing God by any obedience of the flesh, and strips them naked and bare of all creature help or hope. Thus when we look at the law under these five aspects, the authority of the Lawgiver, his power to execute its penalties, the way in which it was revealed from Mount Sinai, its dominion over sinners, and its effect upon saints, can we think it is weak? Must we not rather say, "O how strong!"

ii. Yet the apostle declares that the law was *weak*, and that in consequence of this weakness there was that which it could not do. What, then, could the law not do? There were two things which the law could not do, and yet unless they were done, not a single soul could be saved, and the whole human race must have perished under the wrath of God.

1. One was *to save*. This the law could not do. It can curse, but it cannot bless; it can send to hell, but it cannot take to heaven; it can bring bondage, wrath, guilt, fear and terror into men's consciences, but it cannot communicate to them pardon, deliverance and peace. And why? Because it merely says, "Do this and live." It makes no provision for disobedience; it does not breathe a syllable of mercy for a transgressor; it holds out no pardon to the sinner. If we could keep it we might be justified by it; but not being able to obey, we must fall under its condemnation as disobedient.

2. Nor can the law *sanctify*. There is no provision in it to communicate holiness to the soul—that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. Being a ministration of death it cannot communicate life; not being the ministration of the Spirit, it has no power to make the soul meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is true that many try to

make themselves holy by the law, but there being no provision in it to supply real sanctification, to bestow grace, to communicate a spiritual conformity to the image of God's dear Son, it leaves the heart still carnal; and as those "who are in the flesh cannot please God," they cannot rise into the enjoyment of his eternal presence.

iii. But the apostle says it was "*weak through the flesh*;" here it is that we gather up the real cause of the law being weak. It is not weak in itself, for it is armed with all the strength of God; but the flesh, that is, human nature in its fallen condition, is unable to obey it, and thus the law fails, not from any want of power in God to command, but from want of power in man to obey. Let us seek an illustration of this from human laws.

Suppose that Parliament were to pass a law that not a single drop of beer or wine, or any spirituous drink, should be sold on the Lord's day in London. It might be an excellent provision, and if I am not mistaken it is to a certain extent effected by municipal regulation in Scotland. But could that law be carried out in the metropolis? Say that an attempt were made to carry it out with a view to suppress or check intoxication, would it stop drunkenness in secret? Has it stopped it in Glasgow? would it stop it in London? The law might be good—an excellent law, if men would obey it; but you cannot make drunkards temperate by act of Parliament. Therefore the law might be good, yet it would be weak, because of the weakness of the flesh. So it is with the law of God. The law of God commands men to obey on the penalty of eternal damnation if they obey not. The law bids them love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, but they cannot do it; and therefore as it cannot part with, or lower its demands because man has lost its power to obey, it visits their disobedience with a most

solemn curse. The sinner being unable to render that love, to yield that obedience, the law is weak, for as a human law requires obedience and punishes for disobedience, yet gives no power to obey it, so it is with the law of God. This may seem hard doctrine; but how can it be otherwise? The law cannot give life; as the Apostle says, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." (Gal. 3:21.)

Look, then, at the whole human race, and see what a state they are in. See how they are transgressors, condemned by the law; brought in guilty before God; without any salvation, without any sanctification; without strength to obey what God commands, and yet as disobedient justly amenable to God's eternal justice. O what a state! O what an end!

Now how justly God might have left all mankind to reap the fruit of their disobedience! He left the fallen angels to the consequences of their transgression; he made no provision for their recovery. No Saviour, no Redeemer, interposed between them and eternal wrath. They sinned, and were left to suffer the consequences; they transgressed, and must for ever endure the penalty. It might have been so, and that with the strictest justice, with the whole human race. There was no more call upon God to redeem man than there was to redeem the fallen angels. But he was pleased to do so. In his own sovereign grace; in his infinite compassion and boundless mercy, he was pleased to provide a way whereby sinners could be saved—a way so peculiarly his own, that whilst his justice should sustain no tarnish, his grace might shine forth with everlasting lustre.

II. This brings us to our second point, *the mission of God's dear Son*, that he might do what the law was unable to do; according to the words of our text: "*God sending his own Son*

*in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.*

i. God knew what man would be, and that in consequence of the fall, he could not do what his holy law required. But he could not lower the demands of his law to meet the sinner upon sinful ground; he could not lessen its claims upon the obedience of his creatures, because those creatures had, by their own sin, brought upon themselves an incapacity to obey. That would be to infringe his own justice, to sacrifice his own holiness. Do human laws accommodate themselves to the crimes of our criminal population? Because some men steal and others murder, must the law be softened down to accommodate thieves and to give license to murderers? Such a law, if law it could be called, would but multiply crime and break to pieces the very bonds of society. If a drunkard by habitual drunkenness render himself incapable of sobriety, is his intoxication less a sin? But though God could not lower the claims of the law, yet in order to save a guilty race, he devised a plan in his own eternal mind to save and sanctify fallen, polluted sinners, which will be the admiration of the saints of God throughout all eternity; to taste which in a measure is the only real happiness upon earth, and to enjoy which in full, will be the only true bliss in heaven. *He sent his own Son.* Now as I have written and spoken so much about the eternal Sonship of Christ, I shall not dwell much upon that point this morning. You know well what my views are, and I hope they have an echo in your own bosom from your having had some personal revelation of the Son of God to your own soul, for that indeed is the only way whereby he can be effectually known as the Son of the Father in truth and love. But do admire with me for a few moments the wondrous mercy and love of God in sending *his own Son.*

Who could be so fit to come as God's only begotten Son?

Where could be found so meet a representative? When our Queen lately would send to Canada a fitting representative of herself, whom did she select for that purpose? Not the Prime Minister: he had not dignity enough. She sent her eldest son, not her son in name or office; not her son as becoming so by being sent upon that mission; but her own true and proper son, the legitimate heir of her crown and dignity. When, then, the Prince of Wales went from place to place in that important colony, he was received with honour as being the Queen's own son, with such honours as could have been accorded to no one else except her Majesty herself. So it is in grace. Who can be so fit a representative of the majesty, power, and glory; who can be so fit a witness of the love, mercy, and grace of God, as his own Son? It is true that we cannot comprehend the mystery how the Lord Jesus Christ can be the eternal Son of God. It is hidden from mortal eyes and from the comprehension of finite understandings, for the Lord himself declared that "no one knoweth the Son but the Father." (Matt. 11:27.) But we receive it as a most blessed truth on the authority of God's own testimony in the word; and as our eyes are enlightened by divine teaching, and our heart touched by divine power, we not only believe it, but see in it inexpressible blessedness and feel in it indescribable beauty, grace, and glory. As revealed to our soul by the power of God, we see in Jesus, as God's own Son, the very glory of God himself; for he is "the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his Person." By him God has revealed himself to the sons of men; he has come out of that light which no man can approach unto, and made himself known in the person and work of his dear Son. The apostle therefore says, "God; who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now when we see by faith the only begotten Son of God coming forth from the bosom of his Father, we see not only

Deity shining forth conspicuously in him as God the Son, but we see all the love, mercy, grace and truth of God reflected in his glorious Person, for "we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (John 1:14.)

ii. But God sent him "*in the likeness of sinful flesh.*" He did not come, as he will one day come, arrayed in all his eternal glory. He did not appear in all the open majesty of the Godhead, nor in all the manifested brightness of the image of God. But he came "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Carefully observe these words, for they contain in them deep and important truth. He did not come in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of it. Our Lord's flesh was sinless flesh. He did not take a fallen, but an unfallen nature. Though born of a sinful woman, yet the nature he took in her womb was not polluted by her sins, either original or actual; for his pure, holy, and immortal humanity was formed in a miraculous manner, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and therefore "a holy thing," which was united in the moment of conception to the glorious Person of the Son of God. Yet it was "*in the likeness of sinful flesh.*" He had a body like our own, in which dwelt a holy and immortal soul, so that his pure humanity was not a visionary phantasm, a shadowy appearance, but a true human nature in all points like ours, with the exception of sin. Thus, though in his human nature incapable of sin or sickness, he appeared amongst the sons of men as one like unto them; yet was "separate from sinners," as having a human nature absolutely sinless. Here, then, is a heavenly mystery. There could have been no redemption of man had the Redeemer not become man; yet, unless a sinless man, he could not have been a Saviour of sinful men. This body God prepared for him. He took it thereby to fulfil God's will, as he says of himself, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7.)

iii. "*And for sin,*" or, as it reads in the margin (and I adopt

that meaning), "by a sacrifice of sin." A sacrifice was needed, an expiation demanded, an atonement required, in order that sin might be pardoned: for "without shedding of blood is no remission." Thus, we find in the Levitical ritual a constant offering of sacrifice; not only on such solemn and stated occasions as the day of atonement, but every morning and evening; for at these periods a lamb was duly offered. This daily sacrifice, we know, was typical of "the Lamb of God who beareth the sins of the world;" and he is, therefore, said to have been "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 5:6.) Our blessed Lord offered himself "for sin;" that is, that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. We therefore read, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24); and we are said by the same apostle to have "been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:19.) It was absolutely necessary either that the sinner should suffer in his own person, or in that of a substitute. Jesus became this substitute; he stood virtually in the sinner's place, and endured in his holy body and soul the punishment due to him; for he "was numbered with the transgressors." He thus, by the shedding of his most precious blood, opened in his sacred body a fountain for all sin and all uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1.) The cross was the place on which this sacrifice was offered; for as the blood of the slain lamb was poured out at the foot of the altar, sprinkled upon its horns, and burned in its ever enduring fire, so our blessed Lord shed his blood upon the cross. He there endured the wrath of God to the uttermost; he there put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; he there offered his holy soul and body, the whole of his pure and sacred humanity, in union with his eternal Deity, as an expiation for the sins of his people. Thus all their sin was atoned for, expiated, put away, blotted out, and will never more be imputed to them. This is the grand mystery of redeeming love and atoning blood. Here the cross

shines forth in all its splendour; here God and man meet at the sacrifice of the God-Man; and here, amidst the sufferings and sorrows, the groans and tears, the blood and obedience of God's dear Son in our nature, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

iv. Thus we see that God, by sending his own Son, did what the law could not do: he "*condemned sin in the flesh.*" But you will say, "Does not the law condemn sin?" It does, for it is "the ministration of condemnation," as the apostle tells us. (2 Cor. 3:9.) But the law does not condemn sin in the same way that God condemned it when he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by this wondrous act of love and mercy made him a sacrifice for sin. I will show you how.

1. God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ *when he laid our sins upon him*, and by taking vengeance of our transgressions in the Person of his own dear Son virtually condemned, and by condemning put them away. We read of our most gracious Lord that "God made him sin for us who knew no sin." (2 Cor. 5:21.) Thus he not only bore sin as our sin-bearer, but was viewed and treated by divine Justice as though he himself were all sin. He so took the sins of his people upon himself, that it was as if the whole mass of their sins met in him. Justice, therefore, viewing him as made sin for us, fell upon him as a creditor falls upon his debtor; and as God's justice goes hand in hand with God's wrath, for wrath is but offended justice, the whole wrath of God fell upon the head of Jesus as bearing sin. When justice therefore combined with wrath fell upon the sacred head and discharged all their contents into the bosom of Jesus, God thereby condemned sin in the flesh, for he condemned it in the flesh of Jesus Christ by their wreaking his vengeance upon it, and visiting with righteous condemnation the sins which Jesus was bearing by imputation in his body on the

tree. Thus it was upon the cross that God judged sin, condemned it, passed sentence upon it, and executed it, by the sufferings and death of his only begotten Son. The sins therefore of God's people being judged, condemned, and executed in the sufferings, blood-shedding and death of the incarnate Son of God, can no longer be visited with punishment. God having once condemned sin in the person of Jesus Christ; having accepted the sacrifice thus offered, and ever viewing him as the Surety and Representative of his people, cannot condemn sin again in their persons. It would be to punish sin twice over—to punish it first in the Representative, and then in the represented; to exact the penalty first from the Surety and then from the original debtor. Here, then, is the great blessedness of such a sacrifice, that God having once condemned sin in the person of Jesus Christ, it was expiated, atoned for, blotted out as a cloud from the sky, and will never be brought against the family of God any more. The law could not do this. It could condemn sin, but could not put it away. The law condemns sin in individuals. It says "Thou, O man, art guilty; thou, O woman, art a transgressor, and as such ye are both doomed to die." But it did not and could not take the aggregate of sin, the whole mass of transgression, lay it upon the head of God's Son, and by condemning it in his Person, remove it all away. It takes individuals one by one, curses each and all, and leaves them under the weight and personal guilt of their own transgressions, affording them no means of escape, opening to them no door of hope. But God took another way: he took all the sins of millions of redeemed sinners, laid them in all their burning mass upon the head of his dear Son, judged, condemned, and punished them, and when they were thus condemned and punished, he cast them all behind his back, and drowned them in the depths of the sea. Here then we learn the strictness of justice, the severity of the law, and the impossibility that God can "clear the guilty" in

any other way than through the bloodshedding and sacrifice of his own dear Son. Thus at the foot of the cross, we see justice and mercy equally triumphant. What other place of refuge, then, is there for poor guilty sinners, who feel the weight and burden of sin? Here and here only is mercy revealed and pardon manifested, and hence will arise an eternal tribute of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as all alike engaged in contriving, executing, and applying so great, so glorious, so free, and so everlasting a salvation.

2. But there is another meaning of the words which I think is well worth our consideration, for it casts a great light upon our text, throwing its beams, as it were, in two directions, upon that which precedes and upon that which follows the expression, "condemned sin in the flesh." God was determined to show to men and angels his holy abhorrence of evil, his righteous condemnation of sin in a new, unlooked for, and yet most convincing way. To cast the sinning angels out of heaven; to banish Adam from Paradise; to destroy the old world by a flood; to burn with fire from heaven Sodom and Gomorrah—these examples of God's displeasure against sin were not sufficient to express his condemnation of it. He would therefore take another way of making it manifest. And what was this? By sending his own Son out of his bosom in the likeness of sinful flesh, and offering him as a sacrifice for sin upon the tree at Calvary, he would not only whilst time endures, but throughout all eternity, *make it manifest how he abhorred sin*, and how his righteous character must for ever condemn it. It is almost as though he would say, "The law condemns sin, but the law cannot show before men and angels its true and hideous character. It cannot sufficiently reveal any holy indignation against it, my eternal abhorrence of it, and the necessity that lies upon me to punish it. This I will now show by sending my own Son, and punishing him in the sinner's place, and thus it shall be manifested before men

and angels that I will not spare it, even though I have to wreak my vengeance against it in the Person of the Son of my love." Look then at these two things, the love of God to poor guilty man in not sparing his own Son, and yet the hatred of God against sin in condemning it in the flesh of Jesus. The Apostle tells us that he and his brother Apostles were made a spectacle to angels (1. Cor. 4:9); and we read that a part of "the mystery of godliness is Jesus seen of angels." (1. Tim. 3:16.) We may well, therefore, conceive what a spectacle to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," was the suffering Son of God upon the cross. It is almost as if God said to them by it, "If you want to see what sin really is, you cannot see it in the fall of your brother angels; you cannot see it in the myriads of human beings cursed and condemned by the law; you cannot see it even in the depths of hell. I will show you sin in blacker colours still: you shall see it in the sufferings of my dear Son; in his agonies of body and soul, and in what he as a holy, innocent Lamb endured under my wrath, when he consented to take the sinner's place." What wondrous wisdom, what depths of love, what treasures of mercy, what heights of grace were thus revealed and brought to light in the unsparing condemnation of sin, and yet in the full and free pardon of the sinner!

3. But there is a third sense, by which it is brought to bear still more closely upon the heart of the saint of God; I mean *the experience of this condemnation of sin in the conscience of a believer*. The law condemns you; and you may have felt its curse and its guilt as a most awful reality. Night and day you may have felt its condemnation in your conscience, and have truly cried with anguish of spirit, "Guilty, guilty before thee, O God." But with all this anguish of spirit there was no real repentance, nor godly sorrow, nor sight of sin in its hideous blackness; for the law not being the ministration of

the Spirit cannot communicate repentance unto life nor melt the heart into real contrition. But if you have ever had a view by faith of the suffering Son of God in the garden and upon the cross; if you have ever seen the wrath of God due to you falling upon the head of the God-Man; and viewed a bleeding, agonising Immanuel, then you have seen and felt in the depths of your conscience what a dreadful thing sin is. It is in this way that God condemns sin in your flesh. He condemned it on the cross in the flesh of Immanuel. In his suffering humanity was God's open display of his condemnation of sin. But when he brings a sinner to the foot of the cross and there reveals to him the Son of his love in his sufferings and death, then by this sight he condemns sin in the flesh of the believer. Then the broken-hearted child of God looks unto him whom he has pierced and mourns for him as one mourneth for his only son, and is in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zech. 12:10.) Under this sight he feels what a dreadful thing sin is. "Oh," he says, "did God afflict his dear Son? Did Jesus, the darling of God, endure all these sufferings and sorrows to save my soul from the bottomless pit? O, can I ever hate sin enough? Can I ever grieve and mourn over it enough? Can my stony heart ever be dissolved into contrition enough, when by faith I see the agonies and hear the groans of the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God?" Thus, God condemns sin in the flesh in the feeling experience of his people. They hate their sins; they hate themselves; they hate that sinful, that dreadfully sinful flesh of theirs which has so often, which has so continually, betrayed them into sin; and thus they join with God in passing condemnation upon the whole of their flesh; upon all its actings and workings; upon all its thoughts and words and deeds, and hate it as the fruitful parent of that sin which crucified Christ and torments and plagues them.

III.—But we now come to our third point, which we shall find very closely connected with the sacred subject of the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ, which I have been endeavouring to set forth,—*"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."* God was determined that his righteous law should be fulfilled; for if not, how it would seem to mock and hurl defiance at the authority of the Lawgiver! If his authority could be set at nought and disobeyed, how it would reflect disgrace even in the courts of heaven! The law required obedience, or it would have been given in vain. God, therefore, was determined that this righteousness should be fulfilled. And we shall see that according to God's purpose it was to be fulfilled in two different ways; 1, first, *for us* by the obedience of Christ, and 2, secondly, *in us* by the work of the Spirit. Let us look at these two things in their order.

1. The law demanded two things: perfect love to God, and perfect love to man. In consequence of our crippled, ruined state by the fall, we can render neither. We cannot love God perfectly or even imperfectly, for the carnal mind is enmity against him; and we cannot love our neighbour as ourselves, for we are full of pride and selfishness. And yet this righteousness of the law must be fulfilled either by us or for us, for God's authority must not be set at nought. It was fulfilled then for us by the blessed Jesus, who in our nature rendered to God a perfect obedience—obeying God's law from the heart; loving him with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and loving his neighbour not only as himself, but better than himself, because he laid down his life for his neighbour, the church, to whom he was allied, not only by eternal espousal, but by taking upon him the flesh and blood of the children. In this sense, therefore, when God sent his own Son, this righteousness that we never could fulfil was fulfilled *for us* by the perfect obedience of the Lord

Jesus.

2. But I observed that there is another meaning of the expression; for if you look closely at the language of the text, it does not say that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled *for* us but *in* us. A minister of truth once named this text to me, as creating in his mind a difficulty, and asked me whether *in* here did not mean *for*." My answer was, "Certainly not; for so to interpret it would spoil the whole meaning of the passage." I have told you that there is a righteousness fulfilled *for* us; but the apostle here is not speaking so much of the fulfilment of this righteousness for us by the obedience and suffering of Christ, as of a fulfilment of it *in* us by the Spirit and grace of God. For God was determined not only that the law should be fulfilled outwardly and perfectly by the obedience of Christ; but inwardly and experimentally in the hearts of his people by the grace of his Spirit. How, then, is this? What is the righteousness of the law? Love to God and love to our neighbour; for "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:40.) Now these two commandments have to be fulfilled not only *for* us but *in* us. They were fulfilled *for* us by the perfect obedience of the Son of God; they are fulfilled *in* us when sin is condemned in our flesh, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart; for "love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. 13:10.) If then you love God, and if you love your brother, you have the righteousness which the law required fulfilled, not only *for* you by the perfect work of Christ, but fulfilled *in* you by the grace of God. But there is this essential difference between the righteousness of the law required as a command, and the righteousness of the law fulfilled as a grace, that the former at its very highest point is but carnal, whilst the latter at its very lowest is spiritual. Were we legally and naturally as holy as the law required, we should still only "serve in the oldness of the letter," but by regenerating grace

we serve "in newness of spirit." The highest obedience of Adam was but natural; the lowest obedience wrought in the heart of to child of God by grace is spiritual.

But let me show you how the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in a believer through the Spirit and grace of God.

1. First, in the fulfilment of the *first* great commandment—*love to God*. The Lord is pleased, in greater or less measure, to shed abroad his love in your heart. He brings near his righteousness, reveals Christ, gives a testimony of interest in his blood and obedience, and with this communicates love to his most precious name. Now you are fulfilling the law, because under this heavenly influence you are loving the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, mind and strength. Is not the righteousness of the law now fulfilled, not only *for* you, by Christ's obedience as your justifying robe, but fulfilled *in* you by the Spirit's inward teaching and testimony? Love is of God, for "God is love;" and it is the communication of his presence and power that kindles love to him in the believer's heart. You may have often tried to love God, but you could not. But when he is pleased to shed this love abroad in the heart, then he is loved with a pure heart fervently; and this love is the fulfilling of the law.

2. But see how in the same way there is a fulfilling of the *second* great commandment, *love to your neighbour*. This flows immediately from the former, for when the love of God is felt in the soul, it casts out selfishness, and fills the heart with love and affection to God's people, who are not only our neighbours, but our nearest neighbours, as being of the same family. John therefore gives it as a mark of divine life, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." This love is pure, unselfish, and spiritual. To love the Lord's people, to be willing to spend and be spent

for them, because they belong to the Lord; to serve them to the utmost of our power and to do them all the good we can, because we feel a pure love for them, is a fulfilling of the righteousness of the law. This the law could not do, "in that it was weak through the flesh." But God has done it by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Before we can obey, we want two things, motive and power. The law gives neither; the gospel gives both; and thus the gospel secures an obedience which the law commanded but could not produce: and grace works an inward righteousness which fulfils the law, not in the letter but in the spirit.

IV.—But let us now look at our last point, the *character* of the persons in whom this is fulfilled: "*Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

Men widely differ from each other in rank, station, abilities, and a thousand other instances; and even on the broad grounds of moral and religious conduct a vast difference may be observed between individuals; but, viewed in the light of God's word, there are really but two classes—those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the Spirit. The apostle here and elsewhere draws a broad line of distinction between these two classes. Let us see if we can gather up this distinction. By "the flesh," we are to understand human nature in its present fallen condition. It matters not how high or how low, how gross or how refined, this flesh may be, nor what guise or form it may wear. To "walk," then, "after the flesh," is to live, speak, and act according to its movements and dictates. Now the apostle tells us that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." He tells us also that "they that are after the flesh do mind or savour of the things of the flesh;" and also declares that "to be carnally minded," that is, to follow the will of the flesh, "is death." (Rom. 8:5, 8.) It follows from this that those who "walk after the flesh" are

dead before God. They are at enmity against him by wicked works, and therefore their obedience, such as it is, cannot please him as being the unwilling servitude of a slave, the forced obedience of an enemy. But those on the other hand, "who walk after the Spirit" are alive by his quickening grace. But observe the expression: "walking after the flesh." A person may be "in the flesh," as indeed we all are, and yet not "walk after it." To walk after it implies, a setting it up as a pattern, and walking in accordance with it. But a person may be dragged after another, as we see sometimes a child is dragged unwillingly along by its mother, who does not willingly walk with her. The child is not walking after its mother, nor hand in hand with her, nor side by side; but is compelled against its will to go a road which it hates, as to go to school when it fain would go to play. So in a sense it often is with the child of grace: he is often dragged on by the flesh. He does not go after it willingly; he does not sin wilfully, but is entangled by the strength of the flesh, dragged on contrary to his best wishes, and sometimes in spite of his earnest cries, tears, groans, and desires. He does not walk after it as in Alpine countries tourists walk through the snow after a guide, setting his feet deliberately in every step which the flesh has made before him. The saint of God, therefore, though he is in the flesh, does not walk after the flesh; for if he so walked he could not fulfil the law of love, and therefore the righteousness of the law could not be fulfilled in him. But, as enabled by grace, he does from time to time walk after the Spirit, for as the Spirit leads he follows; as the Spirit prompts, he obeys; and as the Spirit works, he performs. Nay, he is never so happy as when he can walk after the Spirit. When the Spirit reveals Jesus, he loves him with a pure heart fervently; when the Spirit applies a promise he believes it: and when he makes known the truth of God to his soul, he feeds upon and delights in it. As, then, the Spirit imprints the way before him by leading him

into the footsteps of the flock, he puts his feet into those footsteps, and he is never so happy or blessed as when he can walk under the teaching, leading, and influence of this blessed Guide. As, then, under these divine influences he walks after the Spirit, he is fulfilling the righteousness required by the law, for this blessed Spirit, breathing into his heart love to God and love to man, fulfils in him this righteousness, and that not only inwardly and experimentally, but outwardly and openly before God and man, by leading him into the ways of righteousness, and making him obedient to the precepts of the gospel, and fruitful in every good word and work. Thus as he walks after the Spirit, he does the will of God from the heart. He does not walk after the flesh to gratify every foolish desire; for if he walk after the flesh, he dies in his soul as to any felt divine influence. (Rom. 8:13.)

See, then, what a wondrous way God has taken to save the sinner and yet glorify himself. First he sends the law, and therein reveals his righteousness; but the law is weak. It cannot save, it cannot sanctify; it therefore leaves the whole human race under wrath and condemnation. But he will not leave all so; he will interpose; all shall not perish under his righteous wrath. As he saved Noah from the waters of the deluge; as he saved Lot from the conflagration of Sodom; so will he save those whom he has loved and chosen in his dear Son. And how does he save them? The law could not save them, for they could not keep it. What then shall he do? He sends his own Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin." Atonement is made, sin is blotted out. The law is gloriously fulfilled; and now that it may be fulfilled also in the heart of his saints, he sends forth his Spirit to reveal Christ to their souls, to take of his blood and obedience, to shed abroad his love, and by this means to fulfil in them that righteousness which they could not perform themselves, and thus make it

manifest, before men and angels, that he has a people upon the earth who do obey his word, and that by walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

What a way of salvation does this open to a poor guilty sinner who is ready to perish! What a way of sanctification to a child of God, who would fain be holy but cannot! As received by faith, is it not enough to make the poor sinner's heart leap for joy that there is such a way of being saved, and of a saint's being sanctified?

The Lord give us grace to believe these divine mysteries more and more firmly, from a sweet experience of their blessed reality, so that we may be enabled day by day to walk after the Spirit, and, in doing so, to be ever finding it the path of life and peace.