

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 8:3-4

Student Notes

- **The Weakness Of The Mosaic Law:**

“The law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh...”

The Mosaic Code could not fulfill its intentions because of the weakness of humans. As a result, “**God did this for us – in His Son.**”

Verses 3-4: Paul gives us five things that God has done in order to satisfy the purposes of the Mosaic Code in us – through His Son.

1. He Sent His Son In The Likeness Of Sinful Flesh: v. 3

God did this by “sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.”

The word “sending” in this verse does not necessarily indicate Jesus’ preexistence by itself: It’s the same term used to describe how God sent the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles.

Paul is expressing how God sent His Son because of His love for us – a sacrificial love. See: Romans 5:8; Romans 5:10; Romans 8:32.

2. He Sent His Son In The Likeness Of Sinful Flesh: v. 3

“In the likeness of sinful flesh” sounds simple in English, but it carries with it some theological meaning that we need to grasp.

Why does Paul say, “in the LIKENESS of sinful flesh”? Paul intends to

avoid two false views of Jesus.

#1. That Jesus was not really made of flesh and blood, but only appeared to be so. That is the error some were already teaching in his era. Paul means Christ was actually flesh and blood as we all understand it.

#2. That Jesus was exactly like all other humans. He wants to avoid this because the other heretical teachers were saying that Jesus had the same “sinful flesh” that every human possesses at birth.

Hebrews 4:15: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” ESV

Paul wants to affirm two things: Jesus’ humanity was real and at the same time sinless.

3. God Sent His Son To Be A Sin Offering:

“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh **to be a sin offering.**”

The Greek expression for “to be a sin offering” -- speaks to sacrificial view of Christ’s death. Greek phrase: “peri hamartias” was the typical phrase used in the Greek Old Testament for “sin offering”. See also, Hebrews 10:6; Hebrews 13:11

In the Greek Old Testament, the phrase “sin offering” is found some fifty times in Leviticus and Numbers. In its original context, a sin offering was accepted by God as an act of grace, rather than the personal punishment of the person who broke the Mosaic Code.

Putting it together: “In the likeness of sinful flesh”, speaks to the Incarnation. “To be a sin offering”, speaks to the atonement.

4. God Condemned Sin In The Flesh:

“And so he condemned sin in the flesh...” God ... condemned sin in sinful man ... literally, “in the flesh”. Paul is saying God condemned sin in the flesh or the humanity of Jesus.

Pointing back: Jesus’ Incarnation was real: He was made of the same flesh and blood that we have, yet – as we have noted, “he was without sin”. See: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Paul’s statement put another way: God judged our sins in the sinless humanity of his Son, who bore them in our place.

Two things combined in one statement: 1. God condemned sin. 2. God carried out the punishment for sin.

Peter’s statement: “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” – 1 Peter 2:24

The fifth statement of our justification is found in verse 4. Paul writes,

5. That The Righteous Requirement Of The Law Might Be Fully Met:

“And so he condemned sin in the flesh, **in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**”

The ultimate purpose of God sending His Son – insofar as the Mosaic Code is concerned -- that the righteous requirement of the Mosaic Code would be fully met.

God’s basic desire -- to produce His righteous law in us. He can’t do that by just giving us the Mosaic Law – because the law exposes our sins and condemns us.

So what does God do? He gives us a Savior who has fully carried out

the purposes and requirements of the Mosaic Code. Then he puts our condemnation on Him.

The last half of Paul's statement: "... In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

The righteous requirements of the Law are fully met in us – NOT, "We meet the requirements of the Law". It is God who has done something from without us – not we who are doing something within us.

God gives us a Savior who pays for our sins, gives us His righteousness, and puts in us His Spirit for the purpose of fulfilling His moral law.