

# The Impeccability of Christ

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We are living in a world of sin, and the fearful havoc it has wrought is evident on every side. How refreshing, then, to fix our gaze upon One who is immaculately holy, and who passed through this scene unspoilt by its evil. Such was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate. For thirty-three years He was in immediate contact with sin, yet He was never, to the slightest degree, contaminated. He touched the leper, yet was not defiled, even ceremonially. Just as the rays of the sun shine upon a stagnant pool without being sullied thereby, so Christ was unaffected by the iniquity which surrounded Him. **He "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22), "in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5 and contrast 1:8), He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), He was "without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26).**

*But not only was Christ sinless, He was impeccable, that is, incapable of sinning.* No attempt to set forth the doctrine of His wondrous and peerless person would be complete, without considering this blessed perfection. Sad indeed is it to behold the widespread ignorance thereon today, and sadder still to hear and read this precious truth denied. The last Adam differed from the first Adam in His impeccability. Christ was not only able to overcome temptation, but He was unable to be overcome by it. Necessarily so, for He was "the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). True, Christ was man, but He was the God-man, and as such, absolute Master and Lord of all things. Being Master of all things-as His dominion over the winds and waves, diseases and death, clearly demonstrated-it was impossible that anything should master Him.

*The immutability of Christ proves His impeccability, or incapability of sinning: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).* Because He was not susceptible to any change, it was impossible for the incarnate Son of God to sin. Herein we behold again His uniqueness. Sinless angels fell, sinless Adam fell: they were but creatures, and creaturehood and mutability are, really, correlative terms. But was not the manhood of Christ created? Yes, but it was never placed on probation, it

never had a separate existence. From the very first moment of its conception in the Virgin's womb, the humanity of Christ was taken into union with His Deity; and therefore could not sin.

*The omnipotence of Christ proves His impeccability.* That the Lord Jesus, even during the days of His humiliation, was possessed of omnipotence, is clear from many passages of Scripture. "What things so ever He (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise....For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (John 5:19, 21). When we say that Christ possessed omnipotence during His earthly sojourn, we do not mean that He was so endowed by the Holy Spirit, but that He was essentially, inherently, personally, omnipotent. Now to speak of an omnipotent person yielding to sin, is a contradiction in terms. All temptation to sin must proceed from a created being, and hence it is a finite power; but impossible is it for a finite power to overcome omnipotency.

*The constitution of Christ's person proves His impeccability.* In Him were united (in a manner altogether incomprehensible to created intelligence) the Divine and the human natures. Now "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13); "it is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18). And Christ was "God manifest in flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16); "Immanuel"-God with us (Matt. 1:23). Personality centered not in His humanity. Christ was a Divine person, who had been "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). Utterly impossible was it, then, for the God-man to sin. To affirm the contrary, is to be guilty of the most awful blasphemy. It is irreverent speculation to discuss what the human nature of Christ might have done if it had been alone. It never was alone; it never had a separate existence; from the first moment of its being it was united to a Divine person.

It is objected to the truth of Christ's impeccability that it is inconsistent with His temptability. A person who cannot sin, it is argued, cannot be tempted to sin. As well might one reason that because an army cannot be defeated, it cannot be attacked. "Temptability depends upon the constitutional susceptibility, while impeccability depends upon the will. So far as His natural susceptibility, both physical and mental, was concerned, Jesus Christ was open to all forms of human temptation, excepting those that

spring out of lust, or corruption of nature. But His peccability, or the possibility of being overcome by these temptations, would depend upon the amount of voluntary resistance which He was able to bring to bear against them. Those temptations were very strong, but if the self-determination of His holy will was stronger than they, then they could not induce Him to sin, and He would be impeccable. And yet plainly He would be temptable" (W.G. Shedd, 1889).

**Probably there were many reasons why God ordained that His incarnate Son should be tempted by men, by the Devil, by circumstances. One of these was to demonstrate His impeccability. Throw a lighted match into a barrel of gunpowder, and there will be an explosion; throw it into a barrel of water, and the match will be quenched. This, in a very crude way, may be taken to illustrate the difference between Satan's tempting us and his tempting of the God-man. In us, there is that which is susceptible to his "fiery darts"; but the Holy One could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). The Lord Jesus was exposed to a far more severe testing and trying than the first Adam was, in order to make manifest His mighty power of resistance.**

"We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin" (Heb. 4:15). "This text teaches that the temptations of Christ were 'without sin' in their source and nature, and not merely, as the passage is sometimes explained, that they were 'without sin' in their result. The meaning is not, that our Lord was tempted in every respect exactly as fallen man is-by inward lust, as well as by other temptations-only He did not outwardly yield to any temptation; but that He was tempted in every way that man is, excepting by that class of temptations that are sinful, because originating in evil and forbidden desire.

"The fact that Christ was almighty and victorious in His resistance does not unfit Him to be an example for imitation to a weak and sorely-tempted believer. Because our Lord overcame His temptations, it does not follow that His conflict and success was an easy one for Him. His victory cost Him tears

and blood. 'His visage was so marred more than any man' (Isa. 52:14). There was the 'travail of His soul' (Isa. 52:14). In the struggle He cried, 'O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me' (Matt. 26:39). Because an army is victorious, it by no means follows that the victory was a cheap one" (W.G. Shedd).

One other objection may, perhaps, be noted, though we hesitate to defile these pages by even transcribing the filthy exhalations of the carnal mind. If the humanity of Christ was, because of its union to His Divine person, incapable of sinning, then in view of its being Divinely sustained how could it hunger and thirst, suffer and die? and seeing it did, then why was it incapable of yielding to temptation? It is sufficient answer to this impious question to point out that, while the Mediator was commissioned to die (John 10:18), He was not commissioned to sin. The human nature of Christ was permitted to function freely and normally: hence it wearied and wept; but to sin is not a normal act of human nature.

To be the Redeemer of His people, Christ must be "mighty to save, travelling in the greatness of His strength" (Isa. 63:1). He must have power to overcome all temptation when it assails His person, in order that He may be able to "succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). Here then is one of the solid planks in that platform on which the faith of the Christian rests: because the Lord Jesus is Almighty, having absolute power over sin, the feeble and sorely-tried saint may turn to Him in implicit confidence, seeking His efficacious aid. Only He who triumphed over sin, both in life and in death, can save me from my sins.

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