

CHAPTER 6

The Sinlessness of Christ

As we learned in the last chapter, the Son of God became a man (John 1:14). He was human just as we are, with one important difference: He was a perfect man whereas we are sinful men! He was perfectly righteous and holy and sinless! He was the one exception to Romans 3:10 (none of us are righteous, but He was!). He was the one exception to Romans 3:12 (none of us are good, but He was!). He was the one exception to Romans 3:23 (none of us are sinless but He was!).

It is very difficult for us to understand a man who was without sin. Have you ever met a sinless person? _____ We eat with sinful people, live with sinful people, go to school with sinful people, and talk with sinful people. It is very difficult to imagine what a sinless man is really like--someone who never has a bad thought, someone who never gets angry in the wrong way, someone who never lies, someone who is never selfish, and someone who never thinks, says or does the wrong thing! We have never seen such a person, and yet, there was a perfect man who once walked on this earth--the man Christ Jesus!

How do we know that Jesus Christ was a sinless man? How do we know that He never committed a single act of sin during His entire life? How do we know that He did no evil, said no evil and thought no evil? How do we know that He was perfect and holy and righteous?

The Testimony of His Friends

Was Jesus really sinless? Let's ask those who knew Him the best.

Consider Peter, one of the twelve disciples. He was with the Lord for several years. He lived with Jesus, talked with Jesus, traveled with Jesus, and ate with Jesus. If anyone knew Jesus, Peter did. Peter had every opportunity to observe the Lord, to watch how He lived, and to listen to the things He said. If Jesus had lost His temper or been in a bad mood when they were together, Peter would have known about it. If Jesus had faults like other men, Peter would have noticed. Our own family members and those who know us the best are the ones who are the most aware of our faults and failures. If anyone knew how Jesus lived, Peter did!

What did Peter say about Jesus? Did he say, "Jesus was a great and godly man, but He had a few minor faults. He was the best man who ever lived, but He was not perfect"?

Peter is the one who wrote the book of 1 Peter. In 1 Peter 2:22 Peter says that Jesus "did no _____, neither was guile found in His _____." What an amazing statement! Peter never saw the Lord commit one sin, and he never heard the Lord say one wrong thing! We can be sure that Peter saw the Lord do many things and he heard the Lord say many things, but Peter was able to say, "HE DID NO SIN!"

In 1 Peter 1:19, Christ is described by Peter as "a Lamb without _____ and without _____." Jesus Christ is the perfect Lamb of God! In Old Testament times when

the children of Israel presented an animal for sacrifice, it had to be WITHOUT BLEMISH (see Leviticus 1:3,10; Exodus 12:5). Flawlessness was important because these animals were picturing the perfect Son of man who would offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 9:14). He was the sinless Saviour who died to save sinful men!

Peter has more to say. In 1 Peter 3:18, we learn that Christ has once suffered for sins, the JUST (that's Jesus) for the UNJUST (that's us), that He (the Just One) might bring us (the unjust ones) to God. The RIGHTEOUS Christ died for UNRIGHTEOUS men. The sinless One died for the sinful ones! Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

In Acts 3:14, Peter is preaching to a group of Jewish people. Notice how he describes Jesus: "But ye denied the _____ One and the Just (One)." According to Peter, Jesus was HOLY (completely set apart and separated from anything sinful) and JUST (RIGHTEOUS)!

Therefore, according to a man who knew the Lord very well, Jesus did no sin. He never sinned with His lips; He was righteous and holy and was the perfect Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot!

John was another of the Lord's disciples. In many ways, he was even closer to the Lord than Peter. He was the disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom (see John 13:23). John certainly knew Jesus very well.

What did John say about Jesus? In 1 John 3:5 we read, "And ye know that He (Jesus) was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is _____." There is NO SIN in Him! In Him there is not any sin! Who said so? A man who knew Jesus very well.

The Testimony of His Enemies

Someone might say, "It's not fair asking the friends of Jesus what kind of a life He lived. They might have said good things about Him to protect His reputation, or maybe they wanted to say things that would make Him appear righteous even though they knew He really was not." Well, to be sure about this, let's ask some people who were not His friends.

Consider Judas, the man who betrayed Jesus. In Matthew 27:4 Judas said, "I have betrayed the _____ blood." Judas knew that he was guilty ("I have sinned"), but that Jesus was innocent (He had never sinned).

Consider Pilate who was the Judge before whom Jesus stood. What was Pilate's verdict concerning Jesus? Did he decide that Jesus was a guilty person or a just (righteous) person (Matthew 27:24)? _____ As Pilate examined Jesus, did he find any faults in this man (John 19:4)? _____ Pilate's wife also learned something about Jesus from a dream which she had. What kind of a man did she think Jesus was? (Matthew 27:19)

Consider the criminal who died next to Jesus. This man had mocked Jesus and made fun of Him (see Matthew 27:44), but as He watched Jesus dying something happened which made him change his mind. Sometimes you can learn a great deal about a person by watching him die. This criminal observed Jesus in the closing hours of His life. What did this man think of Jesus (Luke 23:41)? He said, "This man hath done _____ amiss." In other words, he was

saying, "I am getting just what I deserve because I'm a sinful criminal who deserves to die, but this man does not deserve to die because He has committed no crime and has done nothing wrong!" There was another man who watched Jesus die. What did he think of Jesus (Matthew 27:54)? _____

Even the demons know what kind of a person Jesus was! In Luke 4:33-34, an unclean, unholy demon cried out and said, "I know thee who thou art; the _____ of God."

The Lord's enemies would have loved to find some sin in His life! They were always trying to find something for which they could blame Him, but they could find nothing. He was blameless! It would be as if someone wanted to hit his enemy over the head with a frying pan, but when he tried to do it, he found that there was no handle to grab! Jesus gave His enemies no handle to grab! There was no sin or fault in His life that they could grasp and use against Him!

One day Jesus gave a mighty challenge to His enemies. He said, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46) "Which of you can find Me guilty of sin?" No one said a word! Compare John 8:7-11. Later when Jesus was arrested and put on trial, His enemies had a very difficult time trying to find people who would witness against Him (see Matthew 26:59-60). No one wanted to tell about the crimes that Jesus had done since He had not done any crimes!

The Testimony of Jesus Himself

Often I can hide my faults from others, but I am not able to hide them from myself. Others may not know that I am thinking the wrong things, but I know that I am. Others may not see what I do in the privacy of my room, but I know all about my sins. Others might think that we are living well and rightly, but we know the truth about ourselves. What did Jesus say about Himself? Did He say, "Everyone thinks that I am sinless, but if they only could know Me better they would realize that I have problems with sin, too?" No, Jesus never said anything like this. In fact He said the very opposite of these things.

In John 8:29, Jesus made an amazing statement. He said, "I do _____ those things that _____ Him (the Father)." How many of us could say this? Perhaps we could say, "I do **sometimes** those things that please Him," but Jesus said "**always**!" There was never a time when Jesus did not please God the Father.

The Testimony of God the Father

Jesus said that He always did those things that pleased His Father. Did the Father agree with this statement? In Matthew 3:17, at the baptism of Jesus, the Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am _____."

Jesus was about 30 years old when these words were spoken (Luke 3:23). God tells us very little in the Bible about those first 30 years. What about the childhood of Jesus? What about His teenage years? What about His early adult life? Very little is said. Jesus faced many temptations growing up in the wicked city of Nazareth. Did He ever sin? He grew up in the company of sinful brothers and sisters. Did He ever argue or quarrel or fight with them? What was the verdict of the holy God after those first 30 years were completed? As the Father looked back over the first 30 years of Jesus' life, He was pleased! As a child, as a teen, as a young man, Jesus always and only did those things that were pleasing to the Father.

The Testimony of God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the true Author of the Bible. He is the One who moved the Bible writers in such a way so that they wrote only what God wanted them to write (see 2 Peter 1:21). Let us see what the Holy Spirit guided the writers of the Bible to say about the sinlessness of Christ:

1. Isaiah 53:9. This verse tells us that Jesus (the Messiah) acted in the right way (no V _____) and spoke in the right way (no D _____)!
2. 2 Corinthians 5:21. Jesus knew N_____ S_____. How different Jesus is from us. We know sin (and have personally experienced it) only too well, but our blessed Lord had no personal relationship with sin whatsoever!
3. Hebrews 4:15. Jesus was W_____ S_____. He was really tempted, but He always overcame every temptation.
4. Hebrews 7:26. Our great High Priest is described as H_____, harmless, undefiled, separate from _____. We are defiled by sin, but our sinless Lord was not! Jesus was with sinners, ate with sinners and was even touched by sinners, but He was completely SEPARATE FROM SINNERS. He was with them, but He was not like them.
5. Luke 1:35. The child which Mary would give birth to is here described by the Holy Spirit as "that _____ thing." Jesus was the only man not born with a sinful nature. The sinful nature is passed down from father to child. Jesus was the one man who did not have a sinful father, and thus He did not inherit Adam's sinful nature. He was the holy One of God!

Jesus Was Everything That Man Should Be

When God made man, what did God intend man to be? God created Adam, but Adam was ruined by sin and never became all that God wanted him to be. Even the greatest and godliest men who have ever lived have fallen short of what God fully intended. Noah got drunk. Moses had his faults. David had his ups and downs and even committed adultery. We can be disappointed by the lives of even the greatest of men.

What is ideal man? The man Christ Jesus was and is everything that a man ought to be! We can learn from Moses and Joshua and Daniel and Peter and Paul, but we can be disappointed by their faults and imperfections. When we look at the man Jesus Christ, we will never be disappointed! He is everything a man should be! He is the perfect example of a man!

As He Walked, So Should We

In 1 John 2:6, we find an amazing statement. The Bible says that the person who abides in Christ ought to walk even as _____ walked! How did Jesus Christ walk? He walked in holiness! He walked in the path of righteousness and not in the paths of sin. We are to walk as He walked! We are to live as He lived! He is our perfect example!

How can a sinful person walk and live like a sinless Christ? This is impossible! No man can do it! As we trust God, however, He is able to make the *impossible possible*! The Lord Jesus wants to *live out* His perfect life *in us*! He has given us the Holy Spirit to make this possible!

When Jesus walked on this earth, He showed us just how a man ought to walk. Jesus always was filled with the Spirit. Jesus always walked in complete dependence upon God. We ought to walk in the same way also. Because Jesus, as a man, could and did conquer every temptation that came His way, so can we. Because Jesus had victory over sin, so can we! Because He was a winner, we can be winners also!

"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye " _____ " (1 John 2:1). Jesus did not sin. God has given us His precious Word so that we might not sin. When we do sin, we know that we have a faithful Saviour in heaven who knows what it is like to be tempted (Hebrews 4:15) and who knows the strong pull of temptation and sin. In the next chapter we will seek to better understand what sin really is.

Guilty, vile and helpless we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full atonement! Can it be?
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!
--Philip P. Bliss--

Supplemental Material For Chapter 6

The Impeccability Of Christ

Definitions:

IMPECCABILITY= unable to sin, incapable of sinning. As applied to Christ, it means that it was impossible for Christ to have sinned.

PECCABILITY = capable of sinning. As applied to Christ, it means that Christ could have sinned (though He did not sin). The possibility of Christ sinning existed.

Key Question: COULD JESUS SIN?

Those who believe in impeccability would say NO. Jesus could not have sinned.

Those who do not believe in impeccability say YES, Jesus could have sinned (even though they strongly acknowledge that Jesus did not sin).

Concerning the doctrine of Christ's sinlessness, both sides would agree. Jesus Christ was absolutely SINLESS (see the material in the first part of this lesson). There is no dispute when it comes to Christ's sinlessness. The Bible clearly teaches this, as we have already seen.

It Was Impossible For Christ to Sin -- He Could Not!

We are fully persuaded that the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy God-Man, *could not sin*. He was absolutely impeccable. Let us try to think through this important issue.

Why do some people believe that Christ could have sinned? Consider Hebrews 4:15. Our sympathizing great High Priest "was in all points TEMPTED like as we are, yet without sin." Was Christ truly tempted? Was His temptation phony or was it real? The Bible makes it very clear in this passage and in others that Christ was really tempted. See also Hebrews 2:18 and Matthew chapter 4:1-11 (the temptation of Christ by the devil).

Those who teach that Christ could have sinned are convinced that the temptation of Christ was real (as the Bible teaches). They believe that as a man Jesus was really tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin. They believe that real temptation implies the real possibility of sin. If it were impossible to sin, they reason, then how could someone really be tempted?

They might use an illustration such as this: If you park a 4,000 pound car in front of your house, remove the keys, and tell a boy not to pick the car up and carry it away, he would never be seriously tempted to do so. He could not do it even if he wanted to! He is facing no real temptation.

Those who believe in impeccability (that Christ could not sin) respond to this with illustrations of their own. Concerning the following:

Can a rowboat conquer a battleship? We would all probably agree that this is impossible. And yet, can a rowboat attack a battleship? YES! It would not make much sense, but it could be done. In other words, Christ can be attacked, and He can truly be tempted even though it is impossible for Him to be overcome.

Suppose there was a stronghold or a fortress that was built and fortified in such a way that it could not be overthrown. Could people still try to attack it? Would it be correct to say that because an army cannot be conquered that it cannot be attacked? When the children of Israel were right with God, they were invincible and could not be overthrown, but they could be attacked. They were attacked even though they always won every battle when they were right with God and trusting in Him.

Let us now consider two of the arguments commonly used to support Christ's impeccability:

1) Argument #1--JESUS WAS GOD AND GOD CANNOT SIN, THEREFORE JESUS COULD NOT SIN.

To say that God, the One who is the HOLIEST OF ALL, could sin is unthinkable. If God were to sin, He would cease to be holy (and holiness is His fundamental attribute); yea, He would cease to be God. To say that God could sin is as blasphemous as saying that God could lie or that God could break His promise or that God could deny Himself or that God could be unfaithful or that God could fail. Perish the thought!

Those who argue that it was impossible for Christ to sin might use this line of reasoning: *Jesus was God and God cannot sin; therefore, Jesus could not sin.*

But consider the following: Jesus was God, and God neither slumbers or sleeps (Psalm 121:4); therefore, Jesus could not slumber or sleep. Is this true? As a man He did sleep!

Jesus was God, and God is never weary (Isaiah 40:28); therefore, Jesus could never be weary. But, Jesus was weary (John 4:6).

Jesus was God, and God cannot be tempted (James 1:13); therefore, Jesus could not be tempted. But, the Bible says that the Man Christ Jesus was tempted (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus was God, and God cannot die (He is the immortal, ever living One); therefore, Jesus could not die. But, Jesus did die (John 19:33).

IT IS A FACT THAT JESUS, BY BECOMING A MAN, DID CERTAIN THINGS THAT GOD CANNOT DO.

However, it should be observed that sleeping or being weary is quite different from sinning (transgressing the commands of God). It's true that the incarnation made it possible for God to die to provide salvation for our sinful race, but it did not make it possible for Him to sin. It's true that there were some things that the God-Man could do (stemming from His human nature) which God cannot do, but sinning is not one of them.

2) Argument #2--JESUS DID NOT HAVE A SIN NATURE, AND THEREFORE HE COULD NOT SIN.

Those who teach that Christ could have sinned might point out that Adam did not have a sin nature, but Adam could and did sin. This teaching reflects a failure to understand that Adam's humanity was not *holy* humanity, like our Lord's, but simply *innocent* humanity. Adam did not, like God the Son, take holy humanity into union with His divine Person. Innocent Adam was in danger of sinning and in process of time did sin, but the holy Son of God was never in danger of sinning. There is a huge difference between Adam and Christ.

Those who deny the impeccability of Christ may also point to Satan and the temptation of Christ (see Matthew 4:1-11). Satan did not waste his time trying to tempt God the Father or God the Holy Spirit, but when God became a man the devil did tempt Him. Satan tried to make Christ sin. If Christ had done what Satan wanted Him to do, He would have sinned. For example, if Christ had bowed down and worshipped the devil (perish the thought!), that would have been sin. If Christ had done what Satan wanted Him to do in the other two temptations, that would have been sin also. So, in some sense at least, it seems as though Satan believed in the peccability of Christ--at least he hoped Christ could sin, wanted Him to sin, and did everything he could to make Him sin. If Christ had followed Satan's suggestions, He would have sinned.

Whether or not Satan believed in the impeccability of Christ is not the issue. The pride of Satan's heart deceived him (compare Obadiah 3) and our theology ought not to be based on the beclouded thinking of this fallen being. As James Ventilato has pointed out, "Many of Satan's deceivers, antichrists, dupes (2 John 7-11) are blinded into espousing such fundamentally vile doctrine concerning the Person of Christ. As for the old serpent, the devil himself, does it really matter what he actually believed in this regard---whether he so mistaken believed the Holy One of God to be peccable, or whether he was simply driven to attempt the impossible?"

It is difficult for us to understand the temptation of Christ. When we are tempted to sin, we not only are tempted from without (by Satan, by the world), but we are also tempted from within due to our corrupt, vile, rotten, sin nature inherited from Adam. There is that part of us that delights in doing evil and that rejoices in acting independently from God. The believing heart longs for

that future day, the day of our final redemption, when we will be free from the inner corruption of indwelling sin. See our study on [The Two Natures of the Believer](#).

How different was the experience of Christ! William Kelly wrote, "As there was in Christ the total absence of self-will inwardly, as He in every respect hated and rejected evil, there was nothing but thorough suffering. The effect of temptation on fallen humanity is not suffering, but rather pleasure, if we can call that pleasure which is the gratification of our evil nature. Christ knew nothing of this in either His Person or His experience. Of motions in the flesh, inward solicitations to sin, He had none: He "knew no sin.'" (*Christ Tempted and Sympathizing* by William Kelly).

Conclusion:

Christ did no sin (1 Peter 2:22).
 Christ knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21).
 Christ was totally without sin (Hebrews 4:15).
And the holy Son of God could not sin.
The possibility did not exist.

A Practical Matter

How did Christ defeat Satan? Did He win the victory by His divine supernatural powers as the Son of God? Did He rely upon His divine omnipotence to put the devil to flight? This is *not* what the Bible teaches. The Lord faced Satan as a *Man*. The temptation of Christ was a wonderful demonstration that *man*, walking in the Spirit, and using and relying upon the Word of God, is more than a match for Satan! This demonstration brings great comfort to our hearts as we study and meditate on the methods our Lord used to defeat Satan's attacks.

Consider again the arguments that were discussed earlier:

1. ***CHRIST WAS GOD, AND THEREFORE HE COULD NOT HAVE SINNED.***

"But if His being God was the reason He was victorious over sin, then how does this help me? I am certainly not God!"

2. ***CHRIST DID NOT HAVE A SIN NATURE, AND THUS HE COULD NOT SIN.***

"But I do have a rotten, vile sin nature. If He were victorious because He did not have a sin nature, then what hope is there for me? Does this mean that I am destined to defeat because I am plagued with indwelling sin?"

If Christ, as perfect Man, could win the victory, then this ought to encourage every believer. We too can be victorious as we follow His example.

C. H. Mackintosh wrote about the manner in which Christ overcame temptations:

Yes, blessed be His name, and there for man,— there to show man how to meet the enemy in all his varied temptations, there to show man how to live. We must not suppose for a moment that our adorable Lord met the adversary as God over all. True, He was God, but if it were only as such that He stood in the conflict, it could not afford any example for us. Besides, it would be needless to tell us that God was able to vanquish and put to flight a creature which His own hand had formed. But to see One who was, in every respect, a man, and in all the circumstances of humanity, sin excepted,—to see Him there in weakness, in hunger, standing amid the consequences of man's fall, and to find Him triumphing completely over the terrible foe, it is this which is so full of comfort, consolation, strength, and encouragement for us.

And how did He triumph? This is the grand and all-important question for us,—a question demanding the most profound attention of every member of the Church of God—a question the magnitude and importance of which it would be utterly impossible to overstate. How, then, did the Man Christ Jesus vanquish Satan in the wilderness? Simply by the Word of God. He overcame not as the almighty God, but as the humble, dependent, self-emptying, and obedient Man. We have before us the magnificent spectacle of a Man standing in the presence of the devil and utterly confounding him with no other weapon whatsoever save the Word of God. It was not by the display of divine power, for that could be no model for us; it was simply with the Word of God, in His heart and in His mouth, that the Second Man confounded the terrible enemy of God and man.

And let us carefully note that our blessed Lord does not reason with Satan. He does not appeal to any facts connected with Himself—facts with which the enemy was well acquainted. He does not say, I know I am the Son of God; the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the Father's voice, have all borne witness to the fact of My being the Son of God. No; this would not do; it would not and could not be an example for us. The one special point for us to seize and learn from is, that our great Exemplar, when meeting all the temptations of the enemy, used only the weapon which we have in our possession, namely, the simple, precious, written, Word of God.

Notes on Deuteronomy, his discussion under Deuteronomy chapter 8.

Forgetting for the moment considerations that relate to Christ's deity and divine nature, it is helpful to ponder the fact that *even as a man Christ could not sin!* Why not? What was the secret of His invincibility?

1. As a Man, Christ was always filled with the Spirit (see Luke 4:1). He always walked in complete dependence upon His heavenly Father. The Bible teaches that when a man walks in the Spirit he will *never [Greek double negative]* fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). The Spirit-filled Christ could not sin! The Spirit-filled believer is invincible also.

2. As a Man, Christ always stood firmly upon the Word of God. "IT IS WRITTEN" was His constant plea! The devil must flee from those who stand firmly on the Word. If the "last Adam" had been in the place of "the first Adam," we can almost predict how He would have responded when Eve offered Him the fruit: "Get thee behind me Satan! It is written...." Those who constantly and rightly apply the Word of God to each trying situation are invincible!
3. As a Man, Christ always had His full armour on (see Ephesians 6:10-18)! There was no way the enemy could get to Him! This same armour is available to us!
4. As a Man, Christ always was alert to temptations. He always put Mark 14:38 into practice (though the holy Son of God had no weakness of the flesh as we do). He always "submitted" and "resisted" (see James 4:7). Satan desired to have Him, but the Lord *never* gave him any occasion or opportunity. It is our joyous privilege to submit and resist in the same way.
5. If Israel, when right with God, could never lose a battle, how much more invincible was Christ who was always right with God! In Christ we have full provision for victory in every battle that we face. "Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14).

