

The Sinlessness Of Christ

Examining The Ability Of Christ To Be Tempted And To Sin

Jesus of Nazareth is, without doubt, the most controversial figure in history. This is due to the religious claims that Jesus was not only human, but divine as well. Furthermore, the Bible makes the claim that His death on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of the world. These factors have caused much confusion as to the personhood of Jesus. There are natural philosophical and theological questions that arise out of the study of who Jesus was and is.

One of the issues relating to the personhood of Jesus is His ability, or lack thereof, to sin. Furthermore, if He could have sinned, did He? At first, these questions seem to be of little value. The average person in the pew does not concern himself with such details. Christianity is more concerned with “How does this apply to me” than with learning the deeper truths of God. However, this debate over the sinlessness of Christ does, in very practical ways, apply to the eternal standing and daily experience of the Christian.

The view a person takes on Christ’s sinlessness and ability to sin will affect several areas. First, it will affect that person’s view of God. Since Jesus is God, that would mean God can sin. Secondly, it will affect that person’s view of how sin operates. Thirdly, it will affect that person’s view of salvation. The whole point of the Gospel is that human beings are sinful and thus have been separated from God both in this life and the next. However, God chose to send His only begotten Son into the world to die on the cross and take the penalty for sin. However, if Christ had Himself sinned during His earthly life, He would have disqualified Himself from paying the penalty for man. Fourthly, it affects that person’s view of Scripture. The Bible states in Hebrews 4:15, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.”¹ If Christ was not truly tempted to sin, this verse would be mistaken. Therefore, the Bible would be mistaken.

This paper will seek to answer two questions. First, did Jesus Christ commit sin during His life? Second, if Christ did not commit sin, was He able to? This will be accomplished by examining the various

views concerning Christ and His sinlessness and drawing a conclusion from the biblical data with the goal of defending the integrity of Christ, the Gospel, and the glory of God.

A Discussion Of The Various Views Concerning Christ’s Sinlessness

The major views on this topic are that Christ was not able to sin; Christ was able to sin, but did not; Christ had a weakened human nature; and Christ was able to sin, and in fact He did.

Christ Was Not Able To Sin

In this first view of Christ’s sinlessness, Jesus is said to not be able to sin. The obvious implication of this view is that, if He could not sin, He did not sin. This view has become known as the impeccability of Christ (Latin: *non potuit peccare- not able to sin*), which Webster’s defines as “free from fault or blame.”² Typically, though not in all cases, those who have historically held to this position have held to a somewhat orthodox view of Scripture. The essential doctrinal beliefs that the Bible is true and accurate and is what God wants mankind to know is foundational to this view. The idea that Christ was impeccable is found among Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, and many other denominations. Though this view is not specific to any denomination, it is, nonetheless, popular among the theologically conservative.

Among those who hold to this view, Arthur Pink has noted, “The last Adam (Christ) 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.”³ John Walvoord has also noted, “While the Person of Christ could therefore be tempted, there was no possibility of sin entering the life of Him appointed from eternity to be the spotless Lamb of God.”⁴

There are several basic premises to this view. One of the greatest and most important premises is that Jesus Christ is God. Citing verses like John 1:1, which states, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,”

² Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2004).

³ Arthur Pink, *Studies in the Scriptures* (Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2001).

⁴ John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Our Lord* (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1974), 152.

¹ All Scripture Taken From The *NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE*, © Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960,1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, 1995. Used by permission.

those who hold to this view seek to emphasize the divinity of Jesus Christ. Not only was Jesus God when He was tempted, but He was also God before He became human. Thus this view sees the deity of Christ as the base of his Person. The advantage of this premise to the argument lies in the attributes of God. According to this view, God's attributes of holiness, omnipotence, omniscience, and immutability guarantee Christ's immutability. The reasoning goes that if God is, by definition, morally excellent, able to do anything He purposes, all-knowing, and not able to change, there is no reason to believe that He could sin.

A second basic premise of this view is that, though Christ was fully God and could not sin, He was also fully human. As such, His humanity, which most believe is a pre-fall, sinless type of humanity, could be tempted, and even could sin. His human nature was, in a very similar sense, like that of Adam before the fall. Adam did not have a sin nature, but still was tempted and sinned none the less. Similarly, this view of Christ's sinlessness holds that Christ's human nature was able to sin, if left by itself.

A third basic premise of impeccability is the unification of Christ's natures in one Person. Though Christ possessed true divine and human natures, these natures could not act independently of each other. Christ's human nature was attached, or welded, to His divine nature so that one could not act without the other. Thus, His human nature always acted in submission to His divine nature. As Charles Ryrie notes,

Those who support impeccability (which he does) point out that it relates to the union of the divine and human natures in the one Person so that even though the human nature was peccable, the Person was impeccable. It could not be otherwise with a Person who has all power and a divine will.⁵

A fourth major premise of this view is that being tempted is not a sin. As Christ was tempted in the desert by Satan, as well as the many other temptations He faced throughout His life, advocates of impeccability assert that He remained without sin. In response to the text of Hebrews, which asserts that Christ was tempted in all points as we are, this view of Christ teaches that, first, it is not a sin to be tempted. Because an individual has a need or desire he or she would like filled does not translate into having a sinful desire when that need or desire is placed in correct priority under the will of God.

⁵ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1999), 304.

Secondly, temptation can lie in the intent of the one doing the tempting.

A fifth basic premise of this view is that Christ had to be completely sinless to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice for sinners. In order to be the second Adam that Romans five claims He is, Christ had to be perfectly sinless. As David Dunlap has written,

The sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ is an absolute necessity for the efficacy of His penal substitutionary death and is a decisive proof of His deity. Any moral failure on the part of Christ would compromise His deity and nullify His finished work on the cross.⁶

Christ Was Able To Sin, But Did Not

The second major view is that Christ was able to sin, yet He remained sinless. This view has become known as the peccability of Christ (Latin: *potuit non peccare- able not to sin*). As already stated, Webster's defines impeccability as "free from fault or blame." Thus peccability is the ability to have fault or blame.

Much like the advocates of the impeccability view of Christ's sinlessness, those who hold to the peccability of Christ come from a large base. Unlike impeccability, those holding to peccability come from a base that is not necessarily theologically conservative. Though many believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, this is not necessarily a staple of their position.

Of those holding to the peccability of Christ, Charles Hodge has stated,

If He was a true man, He must have been capable of sinning. That He did not sin under the greatest provocations; that when He was reviled He blessed; when He suffered He threatened not; that He was dumb as a sheep before its shearers, is held up to us as an example. Temptation implies the possibility of sin. If from the constitution of his Person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then his temptation was unreal and without effect and He cannot sympathize with his people.⁷

One of the major premises of those who hold to the peccability of Christ is that Christ's humanity must have been one that could sin. This is not saying that He had a sinful nature, but that His humanity was able to sin. As one researcher has written, "If Jesus

⁶ David Dunlap, "The Impeccability of Christ," *Bible & Life: Bible Teaching Newsletter* 16, 1 (2009).

⁷ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 457.

was not peccable then just how “human” was he? Could he have been “true man” if he were not able to sin like the rest of mankind?”⁸ Those who hold this view seek to emphasize the humanity of Christ in and throughout His temptations. True, Christ was divine, but to the peccabilist, this fact does not guarantee Christ’s sinlessness.

A second major premise of those who hold to the peccability of Christ is that temptation cannot be real if there is no possibility of yielding to it. As one writer has reasoned,

It is totally illogical to speak of the possibility of Christ being tempted but, at the same time, the impossibility of his sinning. If it were impossible for a person to sin then temptation would be totally meaningless for temptation is, by its very nature, a strong urge to do that which one ought not to do or an equally strong urge to leave undone that which one ought to do. It is no temptation at all to be urged to do that which it is impossible to do.⁹

In the mind of those holding to Christ’s peccability, temptation implies being able to give in. In what way can temptation be real, one would argue, if there was no desire or ability to yield in the person being tempted? Furthermore, Christ could not truly know what it feels like to be tempted if He was not able to give in to temptation.

A third major premise is that in order for Christ to be mankind’s example, He had to be able to sin. In reference to Hebrews 4:15, F.F. Bruce has written,

It also makes clear that Jesus experienced temptations in just the same manner as we do and that this sinlessness was the result of ‘conscious decision’ on His part in the midst of intense struggle. One must never suppose that His victory over temptation was the mere formal consequences of His divine nature.¹⁰

Those who hold this view believe that Christ’s victory over temptation is a testimony that Christians can have victory over sin as well.

A fourth major premise of this view is that, though Christ could have sinned, for He was truly

⁸ Unknown, “An Examination of the Question of the Impeccability of Jesus Christ,” n.d., <http://www.planetpapers.com/Assets/Print/2052.php>.

⁹ Unknown, “Unknown. Could Christ Have Sinned,” <http://www.eaglewing.org.uk/theology/creed/sinless.html>.

¹⁰ F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary* (Carmel, NY: Guideposts, 1986), 1513.

tempted, He remained without sin. Those who hold to Christ’s peccability in the broadest sense also hold that He remained a sinless Savior, that He won victory over sin, that He stood firm against temptation. This is a point in common with impeccability. Both views recognize, with Hebrews 4:15, that though Christ was tempted, He did not sin.

Christ Had A Weakened Human Nature

A third major view is that Christ took on a weakened (even sinful) human nature. This is the view held by the majority of Seventh Day Adventists. Though they too arrive at the conclusion of peccability, there are subtle differences between the view of the large majority of peccabilistists and the Seventh Day Adventists.

One publication of the Seventh Day Adventists has said,

In His humanity, Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature. If not, then He was not ‘made like unto His brethren,’ was not ‘in all points tempted like as we are,’ did not overcome as we have to overcome and is not, therefore, the complete and perfect Saviour man needs and must have to be saved. . . And this was done to place mankind on vantage ground, and to demonstrate that in the same way every one who is ‘born of the Spirit’ may gain like victories over sin in his own sinful flesh.¹¹

The first basic premise of this view is that Christ took on a weakened (even sinful) human nature. Quoting Romans 8:3, which states, “God did sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” Seventh Day Adventist’s teach that Christ, to accomplish His purpose on earth, had to take on the same humanity as those whom He came to save.

The second basic premise of this view is that Christ served as mankind’s example in keeping the Law. To fully understand the view espoused by the Seventh Day Adventists, one must first see the temptation of Christ, especially in the example with the Devil in the desert in Matthew 4:1-11, in a very broad way. In the tradition of the Seventh Day Adventists, it is believed that the Christian is to seek to keep the Law in his or her life. The Law is regarded as the code of conduct for the believer. Thus when Christ faced temptation, He proved that, even with the sinful nature, which the Seventh Day Adventists claim He had, or at best, a weakened nature,

¹¹ *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* (Mountain View, CA: The Pacific Press Association, 1916., 1916), 173.

one could keep the Law. Thus, the temptation of Christ by Satan was a sort of cosmic showdown. As Ellen G. White, the prophetess of Seventh Day Adventism, has written, “(God) permitted (Jesus) to meet life’s peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss.”¹²

Christ Was Able To Sin, And Did

This fourth view of Christ’s sinlessness is that Christ was completely human, and only human. Out of the four major views discussed in this paper, this view is held by the largest base. Atheists, many Liberals, and members of non-Christian denominations all see Christ as being nothing more than a man.

The major premise of this view is that there either exists no divine Person, or Deity does indeed exist, but Jesus Christ is not that Deity. Jesus may have been a very moral man or even a prophet at best, or at worst, He was a liar, a blasphemer, or madman. As such, He was capable of falling into the same sin as the rest of mankind.

Critiques Of The Major Views Concerning Christ’s Sinlessness

In this section, the previous views will be examined, several key Scripture passages will be explicated, and some concluding thoughts will be given.

In the peccability view, the view that Christ was able to sin, but did not, there exist several areas to be commended. Most who espouse this view do agree that Christ remained without sinful actions throughout His life. They agree that His death paid for the sin of mankind. In that respect, there can be agreement between the view of impeccability (which will be examined later) and peccability.

However, there are several of the premises of peccability that must be addressed. First, in the premise of Christ’s humanity, it is believed in this view that if Jesus was completely human, He would have been able to sin. In truth, this is not necessarily a false statement. The humanity of Christ was a humanity that was not incapable of sin. The problem lies in the fact that this humanity was not the only nature Christ possessed. The person of Christ was made up of a true divine nature and a true human nature. Christ’s human nature, though it could have sinned by itself, was not by itself. Because the two natures of Christ were united in one Person, one could not act without the other. Christ’s divine nature was, out of necessity, a nature that could not be

changed or impacted by the other. However Christ’s human nature could be controlled by the divine.

The second premise to be challenged is that Christ had to be able to give in to temptation in order for it to be real. The false assumption is that temptation lies primarily in the mind of the one being tempted. This is not necessarily the case. Temptation can lie in the intent of the tempter, whether or not the tempter wants that person to fail. It can legitimately be said that Christ was tempted if someone tried to make Him fail at something, which obviously happened. Furthermore, Jesus did indeed have desires that were being enticed (as James 1:14 points out). But in light of His divine nature, Jesus could do nothing but surrender those desires to His divine will.

The third premise to be challenged is that in order for Him to be mankind’s example, He had to be able to sin. However, this misses the point of redemption in Christ’s ministry. The hope of the universe is not that Christ beat temptation and so can believers. The hope of the universe is that Christ beat temptation and was thus a holy sacrifice for sin without blemish, demonstrated by his defeat of temptation in our place. A Gospel that says we are to overcome because Jesus did roots salvation and sanctification in an unattainable standard.

The essential issue with the view of peccability is not that the premises are completely wrong, but that they are distorted, unbalanced, or incomplete.

In the view of the Seventh Day’ Adventists, many of the same critiques should be applied that were applied to the view that Christ was peccable because the consequences of the view are similar. However, certain issues need to be commented on further.

The first view of the Seventh Day Adventists that needs to be addressed is their view that Christ took on a weakened human nature. Based on their understanding of the phrase from Romans 8:3, “sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,” this premise fails in its interpretation of “in the likeness.” This passage is not teaching that everything that sinful humans are, Christ was. The author of Hebrews 2:14 gives further clarity when he wrote, “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Christ took on a human body for the purpose of dying. It was not necessary that it be weakened or sinful. In fact, to be the perfect sacrifice, it had to be free from the sin nature, for which believers are also held accountable.

¹² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Pacific Press, 2005), 49.

Secondly, the premise that Christ served as mankind's example in keeping the Law needs to be addressed. As already explained, Christ was the example for the believer of what God is like, and the believer should imitate His character, but the Bible does not present Christ as a Person who overcame temptation to serve as our example. Simply stated: Christ was completely divine, the believer is not. Furthermore, in light of God's sovereignty, it is against His character to leave His entire program of Christ's redemptive work to chance. The divine will of God was completely in control each and every time the Person of Christ was tempted.

In addition, Romans 3:20 teaches, "Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin." The law of the Old Testament was not meant to be a permanent staple of life or the experience of the New Testament believer. The Law was not meant to save.

In the more liberal view that Christ was able to sin, and in fact did, one, to be true to Scripture, must reply with Scripture. The overwhelming testimony of the Bible is that Jesus Christ was a sinless individual. In 1 Peter 2:22, the Apostle Paul wrote of Jesus, "Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth." Furthermore, Christ's sinlessness was not a result of His being committed to His cause, but because His actions and morality were a consequence of His holy divinity. In Titus 2:13, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Paul drew a direct connection and parallel between God and Savior. Both of these adjectives describe Jesus Christ. The Bible testifies to the fact that, though Christ was fully human, He was also fully God. As such, He remained sinless and took mankind's penalty for sin upon Himself.

Exegesis Of Various Scriptures Relating To Christ's Sinlessness

At this time, several key passages of Scripture relating to Christ's nature, temptation, and sinlessness will be examined and expounded upon in attempt to come to a sound, biblical, and theological understanding of Christ's sinlessness.

The verse at the forefront of the debate concerning Christ and His sinlessness is Hebrews 4:15, which states, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet without sin.*" Throughout the temptations Christ faced while on earth, which will be examined in the paragraphs to follow, He was faced with opportunities to disregard the divine plan of redemption and to satisfy His human desires. The

question that is raised, however, is "How could Christ have been tempted if He was not able to sin?"

Before the question is fully answered, sufficient background must be given. John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In this passage, the Apostle John describes the Word, which he later reveals to be Jesus Christ, as being in the beginning. Before creation, the Word was. John then described the relationship the Word has with God. He first teaches that the Word was with God. The word used for with, *προς*, can mean "to, towards, or with." This is more than being in the presence of something, but indicates relationship by showing interaction. The Word, Jesus Christ, was in relationship to God in the beginning. Furthermore, John wrote, "and the Word was God." The original language words the sentence as "God was the Word." In other words, the essence of what God was, the Word was. Jesus Christ is God and shares the same essence as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He is completely, one hundred percent God. The Bible is clear that God is all powerful (Job 42:2), all knowing (Acts 1:24), unchanging (Malachi 3:6), and holy (Leviticus 11:44-45). 1 John 1:5 states, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." God is morally right and is wrathfully opposed to all that does not match His character. As God, the Word possesses all the attributes and characteristics of God. Jesus' deity was all powerful (Matthew 28:18), all knowing (John 6:61), unchanging (Hebrews 13:8), and holy (Mark 1:24). Christ's divine nature was capable of doing everything and anything that God can do, because it was the nature of God. This divine nature included a divine will and a divine perspective.

In John 1:14, the Apostle continues to develop the doctrine of Christ by writing, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The Word, who was God, took on human flesh, He took on humanity. A truth worth noting about this is that the Word was God, and became the God-man. His deity was the original base of His Person. The humanity of Christ was added on to His deity. Further, this humanity was true humanity. It was complete humanity. That Christ's humanity was true humanity is testified to by the fact that He grew physically and mentally (Luke 2:42,52; 3:23), He needed nourishment (Matthew 4:2), He needed rest (Mark 4:38), He experienced injury and pain (John 19:34), He had a human spirit (John 19:30), He experienced death (1 Corinthians 15:3), and He could be tempted (Hebrews 4:15). Christ's human nature included a human will and human

perspective and was capable of everything mankind is capable of, including being able to fall. If it was not, it would not be true humanity.

In Genesis three, the Word of God provides the account of Adam and Eve's (and consequently, mankind's) fall into sin. In chapters 1-2 of Genesis, God created the universe, the world, the plants, the animals, and man. Sin was not in existence at this time. God, after creating Adam and Eve, placed them in the Garden of Eden to live and to care for it. They could do anything they liked, except eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve did not have a sin nature at this time. However, their humanity was not in confirmed holiness either. The text tells us that a serpent came into the Garden and tempted Eve to take of the fruit. The serpent appealed to Eve's desires. Genesis 3:6 recalls, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." When Eve was tempted by the serpent in the Garden to eat the fruit, she did, and Adam did as well. They didn't have to have a sin nature to fall into sin. The same is true of Christ's humanity. It was not inherently sinful or weakened, as mankind's is today, yet it must have been capable of sinning to be true humanity.

The Apostle Paul gives further clarity to the issue of this incarnation in Philippians 2:5-9 when He wrote, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." Christ, Who has always been God, took on human flesh. He never at any time stopped being Who He was, but added full humanity to His Person. John MacArthur writes, "This was a self-renunciation, not an emptying Himself of deity nor an exchange of deity for humanity. Jesus did, however, renounce or set aside His privileges."¹³ Though He gave up the right to independently use His divine characteristics, when Jesus took on His humanity, He never ceased to be God, but rather, became complete God and complete man, united in one person. Romans 1:3 states that Jesus Christ was God's "Son, who was born of a

descendant of David according to the flesh." Christ's human nature was welded to His divine nature and the two moved as one.

Having sufficiently described the divine and human natures and Person of Christ, several passages relating to temptation need to be expounded upon. A prime example of Christ's temptation is Matthew 4:1-11. After His public declaration as the Son of God during His baptism, Jesus went out to the desert "to be tempted by the Devil." He spent forty days and nights fasting in preparation. The Bible is very clear at that point to note, "He became hungry." Jesus' humanity was liable to hunger and after forty days of not eating, He was hungry. It was at that point that the Devil came to tempt Him. During this time, Jesus experienced three key temptations. First, the Devil tempted Jesus to turn the rocks around Him into bread. Secondly, the Devil tempted Jesus to jump off the top of the temple so everyone would see Him and give Him glory and praise. Thirdly, the Devil tempted Jesus to bow down and worship Him and He would give Christ the world. In all these cases, the Devil was tempting Christ to act independently of the will of God and to give him worship that only God deserves. A key issue to note in this passage is that the Devil is honestly attempting to bring Christ down into sin. This is a key issue relating to defining temptation. Temptation can properly be rooted in the eye of the tempter. A person soliciting another to sin is tempting that person, whether or not that person wants what the tempter has to offer.

Another issue relating to the temptation of Christ is found in the book of James. James, who was the son of Mary and Joseph and thus the half-brother of Jesus, gives light on the subject of temptation when he wrote in James 1:13-15,

Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

In verse thirteen, the reader of the epistle learns that, not only does God not tempt, He cannot be tempted. Though at first, this passage seems to fly in the face of those who argue for Christ's impeccability, when dealt with honestly and openly, it does not. Rather, it gives a clear understanding of it. James clarified the issue when he wrote, "every man is tempted when his is drawn away of his own lust." The reason God cannot be tempted is, if one is to be true to theology, God has no desires that need fulfilling. God is infinite, which means, as Myron

¹³ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2005), 1716.

Houghton has written, “That attribute which extends to God’s whole personality and essence so that He lacks nothing and is complete, having no bounds or limitations.”¹⁴ Jesus’ divine nature, which included His divine will, had no desires that could be led astray. However his human nature did. As already discussed, His human nature grew hungry, tired, and weary. His human nature did not want to endure pain. Further, the truth of the matter is, these are not sinful desires. James used the word “lust,” which is translated from ἐπιθυμία, which is a noun meaning “desires.” It is not a sin to have a need or desire. The sin comes when the individual seeks to satisfy that desire in opposition to the will of God. James 4:1 states, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?” Finishing the original passage in James, verse fifteen clarifies the progression of sin. Lust brings sin, sin brings death. Lust is not sin or death. Desires, when properly placed in submission to the will of God can be good and not necessarily sinful, as is the case with Christ. In His temptation by the Devil, Jesus had real desires, such as hunger, that He wanted met. However, He could not do anything but yield those desires to the divine will.

In Luke 22:42, the Bible gives an example of Christ’s human will and desires submitting to His divine will and purpose. Just before His death on the cross, Jesus took time to pray in the garden of Gethsemane. As He was about to go through excruciating pain and torture, Jesus prayed, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” Any human, as Christ truly was, would desire not to go through the kind of torture Christ knew He would go through, not to mention death. However, this human desire of Christ was placed in submission to the divine plan of God.

Conclusion

In attempting to come to a conclusion as to Christ’s sinlessness, one must remember several truths. First, if the Bible says two thoughts are true, then they both are true. The Bible asserts that Jesus was both God (John 1:1) and man (John 1:14). It asserts that He truly was tempted in all points as humans are (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15). It also asserts that Jesus did not sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5). These ideas are all stated as factual by the Word of God. Thus, to say one and deny another is not valid. The quest of the theologian is not to decide if Christ was tempted, or if He sinned. These are both

given to us explicitly in the text. The question the theologian must answer is how these ideas are fleshed out.

A second truth that one must keep in mind is that, though it may seem like semantics, an important distinction must be made between the human nature and the divine nature of Christ. To jump to the conclusion that the Person of Christ could not sin without making the distinction between His natures opens the door for dangerous views concerning His Person.

In light of the views given and the texts examined, the view that Christ was impeccable, that He was not able to give into temptation, fits the Biblical data best. The person of Christ, though His human nature must have been susceptible to sin, as God, could not have sinned. The human nature of Christ was and always will be in perfect subjection to the divine nature of Christ. Furthermore, the nature of temptation can lie as much with the one doing the tempting as it can with the one being tempted.

Because of Christ’s impeccability, the Christian today can rest assured that He was the perfect sacrifice for sin. The Christian can also rejoice in his or her progressive walk with Christ, knowing that, as Hebrews 4:15 reminds its readers, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.” Christ, who became human on behalf of mankind, knows the struggles mankind faces. He is the ultimate High Priest, the ultimate Mediator between God and man. Praise the Lord that sin, the Devil, and the grave could not lay hold of Him! Praise the Lord for His impeccability!

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