

Doctrine of the Sinlessness of Christ

1. In the year 451 AD the Council Of Chalcedon met and formulated the faith of the Church respecting the person of Christ, and declared Him,

"to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of the natures being in no wise taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons."

2. The great truth enunciated is that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself our humanity, and not that the man Jesus acquired divinity.
3. Fierce controversy has raged around the subject, "Did the Lord's deity render sin impossible, and consequently make His temptations unreal?" The following argument is set forth:
4. If, to Christ, sin was impossible then His temptation by Satan was a meaningless display, and His victory a mere delusion, and His coronation (Phil. 2:6) a shadow.
 - *Philippians 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*
5. One charitable answer to this thorny problem is—"We may say it was impossible Jesus would sin. We dare not say it was impossible He could not sin."
6. While this response would please many, for others it does not due justice to either the Scriptures or to the person of Christ.
7. It is a matter of record that once the concept is embraced that Jesus could sin, the temptation comes to teach and believe that He did sin.
8. Historically, the church has argued that Jesus was free, both from hereditary depravity, and from actual sin. This is shown:
 - by His never offering a sacrifice and by His never praying for forgiveness. Jesus frequently went up to the Temple, but He never offered sacrifice. He prayed, "*Father, forgive them*" (Luke 23:34); but He never prayed: "*Father, forgive me.*"
 - by His teaching that all but He needed the new birth He said: "*Ye must be born anew*" (John 3:7); but the words indicated that He had no such need. Jesus not only yielded to God's will when made known to him, but he sought it: "*I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.*" John 5:30 It was not personal experience of sin, but perfect resistance to it that made Jesus fit to deliver us from it.
 - by His challenging all to convict Him of a single sin.

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

John 8:46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

John 14:30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

There was not the slightest evil inclination upon which His temptations could lay hold.

7. But if in Christ there was no sin, or tendency to sin, how could He be tempted?
8. The answer is that Jesus was tempted in the same way that Adam was tempted which is susceptibility to all the forms of innocent desire. To these desires temptations may appeal. Sin consists, not in these desires, but in the gratification of them out of God's order, and contrary to God's will. So Satan appealed to our Lord's desire for food, for applause, and for power (Matt. 4:1-11).

All temptation must be addressed either to desire or fear; so Christ "*was in all points tempted like as we are*" (Heb. 4:15).

The first temptation, in the wilderness, was addressed to desire; the second, in the garden, was addressed to fear.

Satan, after the first, "*departed from him for a season*" (Luke 4:13); but He returned, in Gethsemane--"*the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me*" (John 4:30)--if possible to deter Jesus from His work, by rousing within Him vast and agonizing fear with which His holy soul was moved, He was "*without sin*" (Heb. 4:15).

9. To press the point of the impeccability of Christ more closely, we ascribe to Christ not only natural, but also moral integrity or moral perfection that is sinlessness.

This means not merely that Christ could avoid sinning, and did actually avoid it, but also that it was impossible for Him to sin because of the essential bond between the human and the divine natures.

10. The sinlessness of Christ is clearly testified to in the following passages:

- *Luke 1:35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*
- *John 8:46. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?*

- *John 14:30. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*
- *2 Cor. 5:21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*
- *Heb. 4:15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*
- *Heb. 9:14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*
- *1 Pet. 2:22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*
- *1 John 3:5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

11. While Christ was made to be sin judicially, yet ethically He was free from both hereditary depravity and actual sin.
12. Part of the problem for those who do not embrace the impeccability of Christ is the tendency to believe that Jesus is but a man; yet there is at the same time they feel the constraint to ascribe to Him the value of a God, or to claim divinity for Him in virtue of the immanence of God in Him, or of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
12. Again, this does not do justice to the truth of the two natures in Christ: He is both Divine and Human in one Person forever.