

THE IMPECCABILITY OF CHRIST

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Was it possible for Christ to sin while in the flesh?

Some would say yes, and use the test of Matthew 4 and the statement of Hebrews 4:15 as evidence that it was possible for Christ to sin. They would hold that it was not really a test unless Christ was capable of sinning; and that He certainly could not be a sympathetic High Priest unless He was capable of sinning. But is this Biblical thought or men's thoughts?

The *impeccability of Christ* means that Christ was **not able to sin!** It does not mean merely that Christ was **able not to sin**. The reality of the testing in Matthew 4 does not lie in the moral nature of the one tested, and the possibility of sympathizing does not depend on one---to ---one correspondence in the problems faced (Hebrew 4:15). The result of the test in Matthew 4 proved the sinlessness of Christ and the testing made Him a sympathizing High Priest. Textually there are other tests that need examination.

The Bible presents all men as sinners. Yet how does it come about that all men, with no exceptions but Jesus Christ, are in fact sinners, able to sin and capable of sin? To answer this we need to look at Paul's instructions in the epistle to the Romans. Paul goes all the way back to the first man Adam to affirm that what he did has affected the whole of mankind, involving everyone in **sin** and **death** (Gen. 3:1-7). Paul pictures sin and death as entering the world through one man, with the result that death permeated the whole of mankind. If Paul had stopped with the observation that death came to all men because all sinned, we would be left with the impression that all sinned and deserved death because they followed the example of Adam.

Subsequent statements in the passage (Rom. 5:12-21) make it clear that the connection between Adam's sin and death and what has befallen the human race is far closer than that. Paul

can state that the many died because of “the trespass of one man” (Rom. 5:15). Clearly the gist of his teaching is that just as mankind has become involved in sin and death through Adam it has the remedy of righteousness and life only in Christ.

There is not even a hint in these passages that Christ in His flesh was able to sin or capable of sinning. For Paul this was not a question. Rather Paul states, “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19).

Scripture testifies to the fact that Christ was obedient in all aspects of the Mosaic Law, and to His Father, He never was disobedient. It is Christ, “who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...”, that Scripture reveals as obedient even unto death. As sin is imputed to man because of Adam, also for those who are regenerated justification is declared by God upon those who have by imputation received the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 5:18-19).

Jesus did not nor was He capable of sin while in the flesh, for He was obedient in all that He did, even in His death (Rom. 5:19). This was the real test, and He did not sway, but at the climax of the test He “crying out with a loud voice, said, Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46). Even prior to this test, Christ prayed to the Father, “Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42).

No human ever suffered or agonized as this Man did, “And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:44). There are other examples in the Scriptures to show that Christ was tested many, many times and He never failed. He was not capable of sin and He never was disobedient!

When one reads Philippians the doctrine of Kenosis is found in Chapter 2. “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. And being found as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” After doing this the Father, “Highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name”.

Kenosis literally is emptying. The true doctrine of Kenosis involves the veiling of His pre-incarnate glory, His condescension in the taking of the likeness of sinful flesh, the incarnation, yet having no sin nature, and no capacity to sin. It was voluntary non-use of Godly attributes during His earthly life, while in the flesh. The test of His humanity is implied by His “being made in the likeness of men”, “..and being found in appearance as a man” and that He “emptied Himself”.

What the text does not say is that He veiled or emptied Himself of any “sin nature” or “any capacity to sin” for this was not an attribute of God, and He was God in the flesh. If one assumes He “emptied” Himself of Godly attributes, then He ceased to be God, and this is not what the text teaches. If this had occurred, in the flesh, then He would have been in the same state as Adam before the fall in His humanity, or He being part of the human race would now have the sin nature and have the capacity to sin.

If He is part of mankind, and He is, was He veiling His Godly attributes, suppressing His glory, and also veiling His capacity to sin? No! For if Jesus had the capacity to sin while veiling His Godly attributes God the Father never would have demanded His sacrifice. For His offering

up of Himself as the propitiation for the sin of the world demanded perfection, no sin, or hint of sin!

The God-Man, Jesus, was not like Adam in the sense that he (Adam) was a created being. Jesus is self-existing, non-created, God who took on flesh. Adam, like other created beings (angels) had the capacity of rebelling against God (the God-head). Scripture reveals that both Adam (Gen. 3) and Satan (Isa. 14:12-20) sinned against God. Both had immortal capabilities given them by God, yet due to their choices their created status was forfeited.

God provided a way of restoration for mankind, through Christ, but not for fallen angels. The latter being a part of His creation that will not be restored to their pristine state. Christ, on the other hand, never exhibited any propensity to rebel against God His Father, but rather, “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped”, but “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross”.

Christ was not a created being, He was God and chose to veil His Godly attributes and was “made in the likeness of men”. In His incarnation (John 1:14; Luke 1:35) the method used for assuring His flesh was not capable of sin is revealed: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you”. The Scripture goes on to explain the miracle of preserving the flesh in this Savior, the God-Man. “And for that reason the Holy offspring shall be called the Son of God”. Technically speaking there is only one Son of God, Jesus! This Living Word, the Incarnate Word, was preserved from all sin by the “power of the Most High” through **overshadowing**. This is near to the way God protected His spoken Word which was written and recorded by sinful men (II Peter 1:20-21), the doctrine of Inspiration of Scripture.

“For we have not a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses...” (Jesus groaned and wept over the death of Lazarus; John 11:33, 35). “But one who has been tempted in all things as we are...” (For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world”, John 2:16), “Yet without sin.” The emphasis is not so much the sympathetic high priest, but rather One that is **without sin!**

Christ could not and did not sin nor was He capable of sin while in His flesh. “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” (II Cor. 5:21). Christ taught that it was not just the action of sin but the mere thought of a sin that polluted one (Matt. 5:27-28). Christ never had a thought of sin, for He was God in the flesh (John 14:9-11) and could not sin. Christ did not sin nor could He have sinned by thought or deed for to suggest this would mean that He was capable of coming “short of the glory of God”, and He never did (John 17).

The Scriptures teach that Christ was impeccable and that He was God in the flesh. Being the “lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” there could be no hint of blemish. Christ in the flesh was incapable of sin in action or thought for He was the God-Man and God can not sin.