

SINLESS :
YET TEMPTED

By
F. C. Jennings

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Against the integrity of the holy Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the enemy ever directs his subtlest assaults; well knowing that if but one fleck of evil, even if but in the inmost thought, can be traced directly or indirectly to Him, then the whole divinely wrought out scheme of redemption, with all its manifold and far reaching consequences, is brought to nought. Far from being a Saviour for others, He would Himself stand in need of finding a Saviour for Himself.

It may well be assumed that in this endeavor to fasten evil on Him, the arch enemy will employ every crafty wile at his command. No direct attack on the divinity of His Person exhausts his armory. This may serve to enmesh those who, still in the flesh, are at enmity with God, and who consequently may require little evidence to believe what that hostile nature all too gladly accepts. But far keener, closer, more wise-

ly, must his snares be laid, if he is to entrap those who would turn with scorn and abhorrence from so direct an attack on Him they love and revere; and yet it is *these*, rather than the others over whom he exercises full sway already, that he desires to deceive, entrap, and, if possible, destroy, or at least involve in what shall dishonor their Lord, and cause them loss and shame.

Well may we look then for the very masterpiece of his wisdom in the subtle attacks on the holy Person of the Son of God. And who is able to detect the weakness in these attacks, to expose the fallacy of the arguments of him who long ago was pronounced "*perfect in his ways from the day that he was created till iniquity was found in him*" (Ezek. xxviii:15). No mere human intelligence can compete with his; no effort of man's unaided wisdom can equal the supernatural wisdom of this fallen, but even yet glorious creature. Blessed be God, the babe may successfully resist him, and he may be made to flee before the weakest. All that is needed is conscious helplessness, and confidence in the love and wisdom of Him who is ever his Conqueror, as He is his Creator.

Now there is no more subtle form of this attack than in the use that enemy makes

of that very battlefield in which he received his own first complete defeat at the hands of the Lord Jesus.

I do not purpose now to go into the temptation of the Lord Jesus in detail, precious and profitable as such a theme must ever be, but to examine, as His grace may permit, what has been deduced from that temptation to the dishonor of His holy Person.

“For,” it is said, “surely He went to that conflict as our great Example; hence, as the apostle in writing to the Hebrews, says, *‘Inasmuch as He hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted,’* and again, *‘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, yet without sin.’* Now in order thus to be a perfect Example, he must necessarily have felt all that we feel under temptation. He could not enter with sympathy into the feelings of the tempted soul if He had never had those feelings. Yea, even in these very feelings has He suffered: in these very ‘points,’ as in all others, has He been tempted like as we are daily tempted; the only difference is that He was ever victor, ‘yet without sin,’ but with

us, but too often we are overcome in the struggle, and do sin."

Thus are these Scriptures used to attribute to the spotless One the "feelings" of our fallen and corrupt humanity, and thousands of true saints are to-day found insisting on that which, if they knew it, would rob them of their Saviour, as Him of His glory. But is it not subtle? We know what are meant by these "feelings" under temptation. We "feel" the inward longing to do what conscience and Scripture assure us is *sin*. The poor slave of drink, rescued and delivered, still "feels" the tug of the old Adam as he passes the old haunts, and this he calls his "temptation." The redeemed voluptuary is still sadly conscious of the old evil lusts within, and it is his "temptation." In this commercial and money-making age there are but few of God's saints who do not "feel" the spirit of the times, and ever and anon they find themselves entering into the wild race for riches, and cry to God for mercy and grace to resist this, their "temptation." So, even so, is comfort to be brought to such by saying "He knows what sore temptations mean, for He has felt the same." "He has been just in that way tempted like as we are. He has suffered, being tempted,

hence He can sympathize with your temptation." Does not the instinct of the new nature reject at once, even where there can be no intelligent answer given, such an unholy imputation on the holy One of God? It points to a sadly carnal state where such suggestions, come they however plausibly, clothed in whatever pious phrases, are not instinctively and instantly rejected. Alas, how often are they dallied with, and even thankfully accepted.

For those "feelings" that we have been looking at, what are they? and whence do they come? No other than God's own Word shall answer, and stop all controversy. These are desires after the old evil things. The former slave of drink finds old desires reviving; the unclean one finds old lusts stirring; the covetous is conscious of old longings, eager for the world's mammon; they are "desires," "lusts." Now says the Spirit of God, through the pen of the apostle, who was also, when in the flesh, conscious of these same "feelings," "*I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet'*" (Rom. vii:7): that is, "lust" is itself "sin." Not: if it be hearkened to. Not: if it be allowed; but the very coveting, the

very desiring, is in itself *sin*. And whence comes it? The whole argument of that 7th Romans is to trace that sin to its source. "*It dwelleth in me,*" says the writer. I find indeed another nature that hates it; but sin is in me, and is my master as far as any help I get from the law. It does what it will with me. I am bound to it, nay *am* it, this "*body of death.*" Who shall deliver me from *myself*.

Now throw the light of this Word on these Scriptures in Hebrews: "*In that He hath suffered, being tempted,*" etc., and "*tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart;*" dare you, dear reader, say He had "coveting," "longing," that is, in itself, SIN, and has its source from the old evil nature within every child of Adam? If you are His, your spirit instinctively shrinks from such a blasphemy, and you say, "No, indeed, that were not only impossible, but the suggestion is Satanic." *That is exactly what it is.*

But then was not Jesus tempted? Was He not tempted in all points as we are? Yes, to both questions, with one all important qualification to the last, "sin apart." The translators of the A. V. have unconsciously lent themselves to the purpose of the enemy in inserting a word not written by the Spirit

of God, "yet"; thus translating "*yet without sin,*" two words that should only be rendered "*sin apart,*" and the revisors have followed the same error. There is a distinction, which at first sight might appear "fine," but infinitely important, between the two. "*Yet without sin*" may have the bearing that He did not give way to the inward desires that He, with us, felt; but "*sin apart*" means that you must leave the matter of *sin in the desire* entirely out of the question, for *He had not those desires at all*. Here, in this, He necessarily parts company with us in virtue of who and what He was.

Jesus was never tempted in the sense in which James uses the word in the verse, "*Let no one say being tempted, I am tempted from God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.*" As surely as God Himself in this sense cannot be tempted, neither tempteth, so surely could Jesus never be tempted of "*lust*": for He has none, nor did He ever tempt any. The thought is replete with blasphemy.

"But," may some objector urge, "does not this same inspired Apostle, James, draw a line between "*lust*" and "*sin,*" for he says:

'Then when lust has conceived it bringeth forth sin'; so *lust* is not necessarily *sin*." Here we find the need of interpreting according to the purpose of the writer. James, who is pre-eminently practical, looks not into the heart, but on the outward act. He does not, like Paul, search within for the motives, but only when the sin comes *out* in deed or word does he take note of it. But the very mother of the sin is of the same nature as the child she produces. James says nothing as to her; he looks at her child and calls it "sin." Paul looks at the mother and calls *her* too "*sin*." The Lord Jesus Christ was never so tempted by inward lust—never.

Thus, to Him, the word tempt must have only its primary meaning, "to test," "to try," "to prove." As in John vi, "*This He said to 'prove' him.*" He did not tempt Philip in the evil sense which has so significantly become almost the only meaning the word has. God *thus* tempts no man; but He tempted Abraham, for is it not written, "*Abraham when he was 'tempted',*" *i.e.*, simply tried, tested, proved.

Now we have cleared away in a few words many false thoughts. Jesus was led up to be tested, tried by the devil. He is to be *proved*. The most insidious assaults; most

subtle, fair sounding wiles are to be employed, and the trial shall prove Him to be indeed the Victor: unalloyed gold.

“But,” says a further objector, “did He thus ‘*suffer* being tempted’?” As I understand it, I suffer because I *want to do a thing*, but am forbidden by Scripture and conscience. I should not *suffer* if I did it, or if I did not *want* to do it. I suffer because I do not do what I desire. You say this was impossible for the Lord Jesus. In what way, then, could He “suffer being tempted ”

In answering this we tread, indeed, on holy ground, and it must be with unshodden feet, reverent spirits, and, above all, tender and lively affections. We must not coldly analyze the sufferings of our blessed Lord; but yet may we, if His grace permit some little affection, seek to find an answer to all such difficulties.

Two points are sure and certain: He did not *want* to do what Scripture forbids; yet, He suffered. Both must be maintained.

Can you not understand that the more holy one is, the more the very contemplation of sin is a suffering? Cast a swine into mud—will it suffer? Nay, it *enjoys* it. Cast a sheep into the same place, and its bleatings

will tell its sufferings—its surroundings are contrary to its nature.

Apply the simple illustration to the believer; he may hear the Name of the Lord Jesus taken in impious blasphemy; in proportion as his heart is true, his spirit sensitive to His glory, will its strings quiver under the offending stroke—he *suffers*. Can we not understand then, how far above all our understanding must have been the sufferings of the "Holy, holy, holy" One in a scene like this. Yea, not only in desert, or on mountain top, or pinnacle of temple, but all along His lonely path through this evil world, did His temptations continue and did He suffer. "Ye are they," He says to His disciples, "who have continued with Me through My temptations" (Luke xxii:28).

Then, again, we must carefully and persistently hold to the prime meaning of the word "*peirasmos*"—"trial." Everything here tried Him. Hear His suffering groan, "Oh faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" and again listen to Him, "sighing deeply in His Spirit" (Mark viii:12). He was living in the very atmosphere of mistrust and unbelief, and every breath of it, so to speak, caused Him infinitely more suffering than

to one of His poor saints even in a hotbed of wickedness. Could even we hear the one dearest to us on earth dishonored without suffering? Then should we be much to be pitied as callous and insensible. Thus the devil suggesting to Him to take Himself out of His Father's Hand, was not without its resultant suffering; not because He had the faintest desire so to do; but because of His infinitely true affections to His God and Father, and the dishonor to Him in the suggestion itself. Thus His sufferings were due to His infinite *holiness*, not to the presence of the slightest fleck of evil within.

Thus was He tried—tempted by man and his unbelief. Weary, indeed, was He with His journey; but not weary feet and limbs alone were His as He sat on Sychar's well; but weary was His heart, as He, the living incarnate "Love," found no response amid all the dry and selfish scene. What more acute suffering to the soul than affections refused—love rejected? He suffered thus, and a blessed little rill to His hungry and thirsty Heart was given Him in the poor sinful Samaritan's faith. His perfect affections made Him to suffer here.

Was He, too, utterly insensible, think you, to physical sufferings? Did He not

feel hunger and thirst? Indeed He did. These are infirmities and He felt them; true but sinless Man as He was. Nor could He—the infinitely delicate One—having the truest refinement, such as is unknown to the purest among the sons of fallen men, be insensible to the coarse mockery of the Roman soldiery. Does He not complain amid those sighs of the twenty-second Psalm: “They look and stare upon Me.” Mark, too, how His heart suffered in view of the lack of sympathy from His own. It was a grievous “trial” when He “looked for some to take pity but there was none” (Psalm lxi).

Thus was He “in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart.” In *all* points, for man is made of body, soul and spirit; and see how, in that first temptation, in all three points He is attacked. First, His bodily needs are made the basis for assault. Secondly, will He look upon the fruit pleasant to the eye, and His *soul* lose its hold on God? Thirdly, from the pinnacle of the temple will His *spirit* exalt itself, and will He tempt the Lord His God? In *all* points, the body, soul and spirit, is He tempted; and can any of us be more? But ever “sin apart.” He had nothing in Him that failed

under the trial, or gave a spurious sound as of counterfeit metal.

I have before me a vessel filled with coins; all claiming to be of pure gold. I try or "tempt" each by ringing it on a solid metal disc. Each answers with a false, flat note, save one, and that one rings clear and true. I try or "tempt" each with chemicals, and each one reveals the base alloy, save one, which answers to the test with nothing but gold. I try or "tempt" with scales, each one proves light in weight, *save one*. I have tempted that one "in all points" like as I have the others, and the test has only brought out the glory and intrinsic perfections of this one coin. So exactly has He been tested in all points, and having suffered being tried, He is able to succor them that are tried. In every spiritual suffering of His saints He can share, for He has so suffered too—sin apart. In every sorrow that wrings their heart or floods their eye, He can sympathize—sin apart. In every pain that racks the body or tortures the nerves, He can share—sin apart.

But it has been urged as a further difficulty: Our first parents surely did not have this sinful nature when created in the likeness and image of God. But then could it

not equally have been said of them, as far as evil longings are concerned (since these come from a fallen, depraved nature which as yet they had not), that they, too, were tempted "*sin apart.*" The answer here lies simply in the difference between Adam un-fallen and the Lord Jesus Christ. Many see no difference, and this lays them open to the next attack. Of Adam it was never said "*that holy thing*" (Luke i:35). Adam was innocent, not knowing good and evil. Jesus was in His own essential Person "holy"; that is, knowing good and evil; but identifying Himself ever with the good and hating ever the evil. Thus Adam was as a fair white page, empty and unsoiled; it is innocence. The devil comes and disfigures that page with his foul handiwork. Jesus is as a page already filled with God's own glorious marks of sin-hating and good-loving; it is holiness; nor can the devil change the character, or add one foul stroke to that writing.

But, it is said, "If Jesus could not sin, then would there have been no merit in His overcoming in temptation." Indeed! is not the *merit* of the coin proved by the way it answers to the test? Would it show *merit* in a coin to hide successfully the spurious

element in it? *Can* pure gold show alloy? Sooner is it possible for the fine gold of Ophir to prove base; for the sun's ray to prove cloudy, than for the Holy One to sin.

Further, *our* deliverance from the dominance of the old nature within is not by fighting it, and having His sympathy in that hopeless conflict, depicted in Rom. vii, but by knowing that we, as having life from Adam, have been condemned with unmitigated, unpitying, unsparing judgment in the Beloved and Holy One of God, and thus reckoning ourselves "dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God *in* our Lord Jesus Christ." The "law of the Spirit" is that our only true Life is no longer "in Adam," but "in Christ Jesus," and that life (which is always dependent on the risen Lord) *lived*, is deliverance from that old nature called here "the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii). This is His glory, His unique "*merit*," capable of none but Himself in heaven, or earth, or under the earth. It is as far removed from a sympathy due to a like nature, as light from darkness, truth from error, heaven from hell.

So when we feel every form of horrible evil within us ever ready to lift its serpent-head, then let us remember that He has done

infinitely more than--what would be impossible for Him--sympathize with it. *He has been made that* in the sight of God infinitely holy, and therefore infinitely abhorrent and repellent of it. This Holy One, who knew nothing of it experimentally, was, during those last three hours on the Cross, made *that*--just exactly *that* vileness that so shames and distresses us--(let us ponder it well; it is worth much meditation--that darkness from twelve to three o'clock is, for us, the "night much to be observed unto the Lord"--Exodus xii:42) and as so made, the awful crashing storm of divine judgment on "*that*," broke upon Him left there alone--absolutely alone! The terrible Fire of God, ever consuming sin, consumed Him who was "made *sin*." As we grasp this in simple faith, as we reckon ourselves to be there too and to have died there, to have been condemned, consumed in Him, so shall we seek another life in that same beloved and holy One, now risen from the dead; and lo, Egypt is gone, the Red Sea is past, the Sun is risen upon us for evermore. Our taskmasters, the Egyptians (our sin or evil nature in its varying forms) lie dead upon the shore, and *we are free*. Sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously!

Is not this, again I ask, infinitely better than that He should sympathize with, by sharing our evil? Every Christian heart will say, Here is *merit* indeed.

Ponder *His* Path; "Consider Him!" Does He go willingly to such a lot? Oh, see the precious contention of opposing beauties and moral glories in Him. As *holy*—infinitely, perfectly holy—He shrinks from it with an agony that forces sweat "as it were great drops of blood" to fall from His Brow. Aye, but while you wonder, respond to it, *love Him* for it, for it was that very "fear" that secured God's answer to those "strong cries and tears." An answer given in saving Him not "*from*" but *out of* death in resurrection (Heb. v:7). But then as loving with infinite tenderness such vile things as you and I are, He still goes on and takes and drains our cup to the most bitter dregs. Is it not far better? Has He less "merit" in your eyes for that? Will you praise Him—will you *love* Him less for such love?

Let us be very watchful, beloved, against the slightest breath of imputation on the spotless inherent perfection of His holy Person, for this is the touch-stone of truth and error (1 John iv:1-3), the Foundation-Stone of all God's glory and all our hope (1 Pet.

ii), and it is *this* that is everywhere being attacked to-day; and, when put before the Lord's true people who would be startled by an undisguised slur, it is in the most subtle and specious way, as if the intention was even to *add* to that glory which it is ever the enemy's purpose to destroy.

F. C. J.

COULD OUR LORD SIN?

There appeared a few years ago in different periodicals for Bible Study the following paragraph, which was also highly commended and endorsed by a number of Bible leaders.

COULD CHRIST, THE GODMAN, SIN?

Theologically—No!

Omnipotence is the power to do all possible things. There are physical and moral impossibilities with God. He can not make a thing to be and not to be at the same time. He can not make a shorter distance between two given points than a straight line. He can not create two mountains without a valley between them. He can not lie and He can not die.

Psychologically—Yes!

Christ had a perfect human body and a perfect soul. He had an intellect, sensibility and will. He thought, He felt, He chose. The will has the power of choice. Virtue must be voluntary. Holiness implies the possibility of its opposite. The first man might have maintained his original righteousness had he chosen to obey God. Was the temptation of the second man in the wilderness a sham fight? Did he incur no danger? If his will did not have the power of contrary choice, he was not a man but an automaton. Holiness is confirmed innocence, and can only come through the moral freedom of responsible beings.

We are thankful to believe that both the writer and these brethren desire, equally with

ourselves, to maintain His divine glory; but is there not an initial mistake in the above in the attempt to analyze His inscrutable Person? The very Word of God, "sharper than any two-edged sword" though it be, and capable of "dividing asunder" even the "soul and spirit" of man, does not thus divide asunder His God-head and His manhood.

But we may recognize that in our Lord, as in God His Father, there was, is, and ever will be freedom of choice, yet a freedom, paradoxical as it may sound (and there will ever be paradoxes in these infinitely holy mysteries that we can never compass with our finite mathematics), that it was impossible that He would exercise in an evil way; for that was forbidden by the law of His very Being.

But does that render "the temptation of the second Man in the wilderness a sham fight"? What was needed to make it a real fight? The *possibility*, or "danger" of His defeat? But would not such a possibility necessarily predicate a weakness quite inconsistent with perfection? Was the issue in doubt for a moment? If He could will, or choose, sinfully (God forgive even the writing it) then surely it *was* in doubt—

would the writer be content to admit that it was?

But is it not possible for a city to be besieged although it may be impregnable? Must it be only a *sham* siege in that case? We can imagine an invincible army; but may it not be attacked? Or would that only be a "*sham fight*"? Was Satan's attack a *sham* attack? If it were not, the temptation in the wilderness could never be a "*sham fight*."

In the mints gold coins are tested, or tempted, by ringing upon a metal disc, and by weighing. Every single coin is thus "*tempted*." Is it a *sham* test of those that have no alloy, and therefore no possibility of failing to ring true under the test? Is it a *sham* test of those of perfect weight, and so no possibility of showing any deficiency—or, to use the writer's words, who "*incur no danger*" at all in these testings or temptations? Or is the temptation itself equally real, quite irrespective of the possibility, or impossibility, or the danger of failure under it?

Again, is holiness only "*confirmed innocence*"? How much confirmation does innocence require to become holiness? If

Adam had resisted successfully the attack of the serpent would that have made him what our Lord Jesus was by birth "that holy thing"? Surely these questions answer themselves and show that holiness is not "confirmed innocence" at all; but different in *essence*, not simply in degree; as Jesus was not a *repetition* of the first man, as were all his race; nor a better man, but the *Second Man*, for there had been no other like Him, in that He was "holy" in the absolute sense of the word.

Holiness, far from implying "the possibility of its opposite," does imply indeed "the knowledge of good and evil," which innocence does not; but only to repel, reject, loathe, aye, and as in Gethsemane, fear its opposite evil. Adam, innocent, knew not good and evil. He fell, and gained that knowledge, but only as having lost the good, and having come under the power of the evil. But Jesus, from the first moment of His being begotten by the Holy Spirit, and *as so* begotten, repelled every taint of His human mother of whom He was conceived; and, when born, was, as Adam never was, nor any other human infant, still "that holy thing"—the Son of God; and again, as so begotten, He was not able to sin, as is in-

deed predicated of all who are, and as, and only as, thus begotten (1 John iii:9).

The precious truth that our Lord came so close to us in His grace, as to partake of every *sinless* infirmity of humanity, as weariness, hunger, thirst, sorrow, etc., is not in question at all; but afforded, and ever will afford, a ground for the heart-felt and profound adoration of all His people.

We are not concerned with mere metaphysical distinctions or academic hair-splitting, nor would we make anyone "an offender for a word"; but we are all greatly concerned—none more so than the writer of the above answer—to maintain in clearness and simplicity the absolute holiness and therefore *sinless* perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ in these days of attacks, both open and covert, upon His Person. Nor can we but be aware that these may and, when intended for certain hearers, will come in the first place, in a guise that may deceive even those who may unconsciously advance them, and who would abhor utterly such a thought. It is the thin edge of the wedge; and *that* wedge will surely have a very thin—almost imperceptible—edge, when made by the Lord's enemy to attack Him.

“The higher mysteries of Thy fame
The creature’s grasp transcend;
The Father only Thy blest Name
Of Son can comprehend.
Worthy, O Lamb of God art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.”

F. C. J.