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B1039 – September 26, 2010 – Doctrine Of Impeccability

In the Birth of the King we talked about the hypostatic union. We said that the hypostatic union gives the basis for all the rest of the Christology of the NT. Failure to get a clear understanding of that hypostatic union is going to lead to all kinds of crooked theology. The hypostatic union doctrine states that Jesus Christ is undiminished deity united with true humanity in one person without confusion forever. Where getting this wrong starts to have impact is in the Life of the King when we look at kenosis. To understand kenosis we have to know the hypostatic union. In Phil 2:5-8, a very central passage of the NT, Paul believed it was necessary under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to reveal this truth, so we might have a model for sanctification in the Life of Christ. We stated the doctrine of kenosis and we said it does not refer to Christ giving up His divine attributes. What He did was give up the independent use of His divine attributes. Only when the Father okayed it did the Son utilize His attributes on earth. But there was no diminishing of His attributes. On the human side He did take to Himself all the human attributes at the incarnation. There's an addition in that He was not forever humanity, He took to Himself true humanity, but that doesn't cause an essential change in God because the Creator-creature distinction remained intact. So He's both Creator and creature. And we showed passages. You can read the NT for this. You can read just to detect His deity and His humanity. You'll read of Jesus being tired, being hungry, etc., and all that points to what? His human weakness of finite energy, finite strength. Then you see Him create fish and bread out of nothing, all that points to what? His infinite strength, His omnipotence. We showed that He sometimes asked for information, what does that point to? Limited human knowledge. But other times He reveals what people are thinking in their heart. They never said anything openly. What does that point to? His omniscience. So what do we make of this. Sometimes He doesn't appear to have omniscience, other times

He does. And there are various theories that have risen to account for that. We said that the true theology is that He was not independently using His omniscience. He only used it when it pleased His Father. We said the same thing is true with all His attributes.

Then we went through the implications of kenosis. We want to be sure we understand those, because today we hit another related doctrine. We said there were three major applications of kenosis. First, the kenosis doctrine implies that the cardinal virtue is humility. Christ is the model of that. He demonstrated the greatest act of humility ever seen in human history and will ever be seen. Please notice that humility is not a characteristic of weakness. This is the omnipotent Son of God who is humble. We've got to get out of our heads that humility before God means weakness. It doesn't at all. It has nothing to do with that. It is, in fact, the strongest position because it's submitting to the omnipotent God of the universe and depending on His strength. We want to remember that in the Christian way of looking at life humility is the cardinal virtue. Not humility before men, it's humility before God. There may be humility before men, but that's not primary, it's humility before God.

Then we said the second implication of kenosis is that it demonstrates that subordination in relationship does not imply inferiority. We see this especially in the divine institutions where you have authoritative relationships. Humility and authority go together. Humility recognizes authority and submits and this brings about order and stability in society. So these are related. In human society, the cardinal virtue of humility is to be learned in the home. This is why the Scripture stresses honor your parents, honor your father and honor your mother. What's the lesson in that? Authority and humility. This is preparatory for the gospel and it's necessary for stability in society. Think what happens when nobody learns authority anymore. What you get is a society full of arrogant people. People who respect no authority and then you have people shooting policemen, kids shooting their classmates, its chaos. In the OT they had a solution for those kinds of kids. The parents would bring them down and testify to the judge that this kid won't submit to authority and learn humility. And then they'd take them out and execute them. That was God's idea. And we don't criticize those laws as being primitive. Those laws are not primitive. Those laws preserved society.

The third implication of kenosis is related to the Creator's knowledge and the creature's knowledge. The incarnation introduces a complexity here in that Christ as Creator has all knowledge but since the Creator's knowledge is not identical to creature knowledge and now that He has taken to Himself the creature He qualifies to be our great high priest and judge. He knows what it is like, from a human standpoint, to walk around on earth like one of us. In John 1:14 it says, "And the Word became flesh," there is no other religion on earth where the Creator takes to Himself the creature. The ones who claim... like Hinduism has kind of a thing like that but it's not a genuine claim because in Hinduism there is no distinction between Creator and creature - God is the rock, God is the bug, or whatever, it doesn't make any difference because there is no difference between the Creator-creature. Even in so-called Biblical faiths of modern Judaism and Islam, they don't have anything like John 1:14, there's nothing in there like that. God doesn't become flesh, God doesn't walk around down here, Allah doesn't have a scar on his body for dying for the people that believe in him. A lot of his believers have scars on them from *jihad*. But the God of the Bible did become flesh and He knows what it's like to walk in the world as one of us.

What does this mean practically? It means several things. First, turn to John 5:22. This is one of many verses; this is one of those passages that show that Jesus Christ is a peer judge as well as an empathetic priest. Because of His genuine humanity, because of His kenosis, because of His successful execution of the Father's plan in His life, in John 5:22 it says "For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son." Now isn't that interesting! We studied the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; there is a difference in the Trinity, and which of the three persons of the Trinity judges the world? It's not the Father, it's not the Spirit, it's the Son. This is the other side of Jesus that the world really doesn't like. What the world would love to have is some little Jewish carpenter boy. But in the NT Jesus is the Son of God who becomes the judge. Why is that? Because He's our peer. The closest thing we have to this is trial by jury, where the jury has to come out of peers. In the military it's the code of military justice. If an officer is being charged the jury has to be officers, and if an enlisted person is charged the jury has to be enlisted. So what does this tell us about Jesus Christ and kenosis? How does this relate to kenosis? It means that in the kenotic state Jesus had to face life exactly the way we have to. That means

Jesus Christ can understand what you're going through, He can sympathize with you, and therefore, He can be a fair judge. There will be no court of appeals beyond Jesus Christ. He is the final court of appeal. You can't go to the Father and appeal the judgment of the Son. What does John 5:22 say? It says the Father is not going to judge anything. He's not involved in a final oversight court in case the Son makes a mistake, and then it gets passed to the Father. That's not what we read here. The judgment is finished, by a peer member of the human race. Put another way, more bluntly, Jesus Christ will rule that people go to hell for eternity. That's a thing about Jesus you don't normally hear. Jesus Christ gives the verdict that send people to hell, that's His job. He's been delegated that job by God the Father. Why does He delegate that to the Son? Because the Son went through all the stuff we went through and nobody is going to pull the wool over His eyes, nobody is going to say you don't understand. Oh yes I do understand, I was there. It's pretty frightening. There's no escape from this judge who perfectly understands, no slick lawyer is going to end run this One. This is the final judgment.

Conversely, besides being the judge He's also a sympathetic high priest. Turn to Heb 4:14. This is something we learned with the Noahic Flood and the Exodus. Remember the doctrine we tied with that, judgment/salvation. They always go together and they go together in the Person of Christ. "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest," watch it because here comes kenosis, here comes the application of kenosis, "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. ¹⁶Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." The first thing we point out is vv 14-15, Christ is our high priest. How can Christ be a high priest? What does it say? It specifically says, in two clauses, verse 14, "because he has passed through the heavens and verse 15, he "has been tempted in all things as we." The first one deals with the fact that Jesus is now the highest authority. When in the kenotic state he was made a little lower than the angels. But the fact of His ascension through the heavens means He has a position superior to the angels. Angels aren't who we pray to, angels don't judge us, and angels didn't die for our sin. Jesus the Son of God did that. And Jesus the Son of God has the high ground. There's no angel truly in a position to compete for His position. Then in verse 15, the second

one deals with the fact that Jesus was tempted in all areas of life as we are. Notice, that's why we come in verse 16 with confidence to the throne of grace. Nobody that comes to the throne of judgment has confidence, but this is the throne of grace. There are two thrones: there's the throne of judgment and there's the throne of grace, and Christ sits on both of them. What's the difference between someone who appears at the throne of judgment vs the throne of grace? Repentance. What is repentance? Conversion from arrogance against God to submission to His authority. That's "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and being saved." So what changes our meeting ground from the throne of judgment to the throne of grace is belief on the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the gospel.

In verse 16 we see the result of believing. Now that our meeting place has changed "we draw near with confidence to the throne of grace." What does a priest do? A priest goes to God on behalf of the people. A priest makes intercession for the people. So here's a priest who is talking to God. In this case the Son is talking to the Father and when we need help, when we're in need what do we do? We pray and we present our prayers and petitions in the name of the Son. He's our priest and He takes our prayers and argues our case to the Father. You begin to see a connection here with kenosis. Why the Son and not the Spirit? Because the Son is God and man, not the Spirit and He knows by personal experience what we go through. Do you think that makes Him an effective intercessor? Yes, because He understands, He's been here. So, God the Son is our intercessor.

So let's summarize the doctrine of kenosis. Jesus Christ as the Creator God took to Himself the creature giving up the independent use of His divine attributes in order to provide the perfect model of sanctification; modeling the cardinal virtue of humility before God, showing us what true submission to authority is and demonstrating what a walk by the Spirit looks like such that He has become our sympathetic high priest with the Father and judge over all.

Now we move to the Doctrine of Impeccability. This is another doctrine that presumes we know the hypostatic union, because if we don't know the hypostatic union we'll screw it up. Let's look at the vocabulary word first. What does "impeccable" mean? It means perfect. Impeccability speaks of Christ as without sin. Follow me. There are a lot of Bible verses, I'll give

them to you but we won't go into all of them. (It's not that I'm trying to avoid them; it's just in the interest of time we need to go pretty fast). That Christ was without sin is central to the Christian faith and one repeatedly mentioned in the NT. This list of verses is just a few that confirm that point: Luke 1:35; John 8:46; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:14-15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 3:5. Since we've just been in Heb 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." So the point is that a priest had to be what in order to appear before God in the OT? Think of the Temple and the Jewish priest. He had to be cleansed before He went in before God so He could survive the righteousness of God; if he was impure he'd keel over dead on the spot, which is why they tied a rope on his leg so if he did die they could drag him out, because no one else dared go in and drag him out. So Jesus, our high priest had to be sinless.

Nevertheless, many passages seem to show Christ behaving very rudely and impolitely according to today's norms and standards. The Gospel of Matthew particularly notes this behavior. In Matthew "Jesus calls His opponents 'snakes,' 'hypocrites,' 'adulterers,' 'children of hell,' and 'whitewashed gravestones' (Matt 12:34; 15:7; 16:4; 23:15, 27)." Not exactly what you would find in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. In spite of His own teaching not to call people fools in Matt 5:22, Jesus calls His enemies fools in Matt 23:17. In Mark 11:13-14 Jesus curses a defenseless fig tree. In Matt 15:26 He calls a seeking Gentile woman 'a dog.' At least twice He appears abrupt with His own mother (Matt 12:48; John 2:4). In Matt 8:21 Jesus is harsh toward traditional Jewish family loyalties, and in John 2:15 He assaults businessmen, damages their wares, and blocks public access.

Is this a person without sin? He's not going to be considered a person without sin today; not by today's standards. According to today's standards Jesus did not live a perfect life. How do we reconcile this? Let's think about this a minute, because we as Christians have got to learn that this kind of stuff. I'm putting it in here with all its bluntness because it's the kind of stuff that somebody is going to nail you with someday, if it hasn't already happened. Somebody who is slick enough to have read the NT is going to challenge you. It may be in the store, it may be at work, it may be in your own family, so what do you do when somebody points this stuff out? Go into shock, faint, or do what? We've got to think back through something here.

First of all, is this inaccurate? No, this is accurate data from the Bible. So if it's accurate data from the Bible, then since God is rationally consistent, there must be some sort of solution to this. Now we personally may not be aware of it yet, but there's a solution out there. Think about this for a minute and you can understand how people would object to this. You can think of some nice, very ethical, gentle, well-cultured people that are among your personal acquaintances or your family circle that if they saw this, if they read the Bible, they would be genuinely shocked. They would certainly say to themselves, in their own heart, if not to us in our hearing, wow, I'm not so sure that I think so much of Jesus now, not after seeing this. What's happening as this goes on in a person's heart? They're passing these judgments? What does judgment require? A standard. Think about this. If Jesus is the standard and this is what He's doing, and we're condemning Him by another standard, what does this tell us? Let's take this logically one step at a time. It tells us that our standards by which we are judging don't look too good. It ought to start wheels turning in our minds about the standards that we use to judge everyday behavior, are they right? Maybe they aren't right. If those standards turn out to judge Jesus as wrong and He is the standard, then our standards must be wrong.

What do we do every time we see stuff like this in the Scripture? Inwardly there's a tendency to impose a standard that we carry around with us that we've socially learned, we've become culturally conditioned to it, and we're using that as a standard to evaluate Jesus. I say that if our standard condemns Jesus, then our standard is wrong. Now let me extend the logic a little further.

We talk about being Christ-like, being transformed to Christ, but before we talk about that we ought to take a look at what He was actually like. We ought to first explain this apparent discrepancy between Jesus' claim to sinlessness and His reported behavior. Modern observers, so heavily conditioned by present-day psychological models of 'ideal' personality, are upset by this discrepancy. Psychologist Paul Vitz, who later became a Christian and taught psychology for many years at New York University, is right when he notes 'Certainly Jesus Christ never lived nor advocated a life that would qualify by today's standards as 'self-actualized.' The problem, however, doesn't lie with Jesus; it lies with present-day personality theories.

Vitz' notes in his book the anti-biblical assumptions between these modern (and mostly existentialist) theories of morality.

“Describing Jesus’ sinless but disturbing personality, Karl Adam writes: ‘From a purely psychological point of view, this humanity is characterized by an enormously powerful will....Jesus knew what he wanted. He knew it as no one else did. In this entire public ministry we cannot point to a single moment when he pauses to consider, or where he reflects, or where he takes back any word or deed.’ Please notice that, write it down, because there’s another little tidbit about the person of Jesus and these obnoxious unbelievers who always like to talk about the good and gentle Jesus. Well, where did the good and gentle Jesus ever admit He made a mistake? Where’s the good and gentle Jesus ever taking back anything, ever apologizing for anything? See, Jesus is somebody special; you can’t categorize Him with all the rest of the good, nice people. He either is who He claimed to be, or He’s a liar and a lunatic but He’s not just a good guy. He doesn’t let you honestly conclude that.

“Jesus’ personality is disturbing because it is perfectly holy and in active contact with the sinful, unholy world. Being ‘Christlike’ is not necessarily, therefore, being conformed to what modern psychological theory regards as the ideal or healthiest personality. For this reason Christian psychologists ought to develop new standards for the model personality, based not upon man’s speculations or statistical distributions, but upon the objective revelation of Christ. Would Christ, for example, be hired by a modern corporation or mission board which filtered applicants on the basis of what modern psychological theory considers a mentally healthy personality?”

Secular and Christian corporations do this; they use filtering exams, there will be a few different questions for the Christian one’s, but they basically use the same criteria. I know one of them, a very famous national exam, that used to be given 20 years ago by a lot of corporations. And if you were an evangelical Christian and you really let your beliefs hang out while you were answering these questions, you lost points. If you believed that prayer was answered you got points taken off. This is what idiot corporations use. That’s because they’re run by unbelievers, institutional fools. What they do is they write their foolishness into every company policy. And this is a good example of it. Jesus would flunk these personality profiles. He really would. What’s

the problem? It gets back to how we started this series. Light has come into the world, and why is it that men don't come to Jesus Christ? Because men love darkness rather than light and neither come to the light lest their deeds be reprov'd. Why don't the psychologists come to Jesus and submit, and say He is the model personality? Because men love darkness rather than light, lest their deeds be reprov'd. Many of these profiles that I'm talking about weren't made by stupid people. A lot of work went into them, and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of research. The problem is what was the research? The research was statistical, looking at a group of 1000 people and saying who were the people that excelled? What do you mean by excelled? Oh, well, the guy who designed the questionnaire for the statistical study defined it. Where did he get his definition of that? His worldview. Now the worldview gets embedded into the definitions of the questionnaire so now what about the results of the questionnaire? They simply reflect his worldview.

Who are you sampling in any questionnaire? Did you sample Adam before the Fall? Was he part of the statistical sample? No. Are we sampling Jesus? No. Now it seems to me we've excluded the two guys: one originally created perfect, the other guy was the God-man Savior, perfectly righteous. You've excluded them from the statistical study, so now what do we have left to put in to make statistic about? Fallen sinners. What's the norm mean in the center of the bell-shaped curve? It's the normal fallen sinner. Then we turn around and build a profile off the bell-shaped curve that really is measuring the statistical normal sinner, and say Jesus doesn't fit the profile. Well, no kidding, guess why? Your sample is contaminated by sin, Jesus wasn't.

Let's state the doctrine of impeccability. There are two expressions you have to examine. Theologians expressed these back in the days when Latin was used as the language of precision, so we're going to look at a little Latin here. "(1) 'not able to sin,'" and you see the Latin expression "*(non posse peccare)*." And "(2) 'able not to sin' (*posse non peccare*)." This is not me; this is in any Systematic Theology you pick up.

Let's stop and look at these two. Let's look at the language very carefully. "Not able to sin," and "able not to sin." What's the difference between these two phrases? An important difference exists. The first one is perfection that can never fall, "not able to sin." The second one leaves you uncertain, a person "able not to sin" but maybe they might. Clearly Adam was statement

(2) at the point of his creation. Statement (2) unquestionably applies to Adam. Does statement (2) also apply to Jesus in so far as it says the truth? Yes. Was Jesus “able not to sin?” Sure He was. But here’s the question: does statement (1) apply to Jesus, and if statement (1) applies to Jesus what does that do to the reality of His temptations? This has created a big debate in Christian circles.

We want to proceed carefully here because I said you can’t understand kenosis and impeccability if you don’t understand the hypostatic union first. Let’s not be led down a wrong path. However we deal with this we’ve got to remember who it is we’re dealing with, the hypostatic union; Jesus is God as well as man. Does statement (1) apply to God? You bet. Does statement (1) apply to man? No. Does statement (2) apply to man? Well, it does to the first man. So which of the two most clearly expresses the God-man? Do you see the problem? Jesus Christ is God and man and that’s why theologians have a problem with this. If Jesus Christ is tempted and He was not able to sin, how could He be genuinely tempted? And yet we have to claim that statement (1) somehow does apply to Jesus because He is God. So as God statement (1) applies to Him, as man statement (2) applies to Him. How do these two go together?

“Good Reformed theologians have taken both sides of this question. Charles Hodge, for example, thought that statement (2) must apply to Christ” and not statement (1) “because he held that it must be possible for one to fall or sin in order to insure that any temptation would be real.” Why do you suppose they’re concerned about the temptations of Jesus being real? Because of kenosis. If He were not genuinely tempted as we are how could He come out as our sympathetic high priest? This is how doctrine is related: it’s complex, it’s a tapestry, it’s all linked, so you’ve got to be careful. One doctrine protects another doctrine. You don’t ever take a doctrine by itself. Ultimately when you deal with one doctrine you’re going to deal with all doctrines.

“William Shedd, however, held that statement (1) applies to Christ because he observed it was impossible for Christ as God-man to sin without fracturing the hypostatic union and the sovereign plan of God.” So the Hodge-Shedd discussion is critical to think this thing through. Let’s work through this a minute, and hopefully we’ll come to some sort of resolution to this.

“Hodge was obviously trying to protect human responsibility” Was he not? The reality of Christ’s temptation, yes. “Shedd was trying to protect divine sovereignty. The problem of resolving these two truths arises again and again in Biblical thought. Later, we deal with the Death of Christ and the question, for whom did Christ die? We will once again get involved in this problem. And to resolve it we’re going to have to come right back to the same problem here. All these problems come right back to this, human responsibility and divine sovereignty. “To clarify matters we must dig a little deeper into the language and logic being used to discuss the question, using our knowledge of the Creator-creature distinction and the Trinity.” It’s all linked.

“The Biblical question,” is a clarification of the language first, before we get to the logic. Be careful about alien ideas that we bring into our conversation because the vocabulary we are using we have learned out there in the world system. We bring it into a discussion and all of a sudden we realize, oops, we brought alien thoughts in through our language to Scripture. So let’s be careful.

“The Biblical question doesn’t involve abstract categories such as ‘free will’ and ‘determinism’.” Free will being you can do what you want to; determinism is that you’re a robot, that sort of thing. “To phrase the question as though free will and determinism are locked in mortal combat implies that both categories are universal and apply to all existence, including the Creator and the creature, in the same way. Saying that, however, puts the speaker solidly in the pagan camp believing in the Continuity of Being.” You can’t have a category that’s identically applied to God and man because that violates the Creator-creature distinction.¹ Respecting the Creator-creature distinction the question is how does the Creator’s quality of sovereignty, and the creature’s quality of responsible choice coexist?

“To avoid drifting into the logical contradiction of free will versus determinism, it is better to use the terms ‘divine sovereignty’ and ‘human responsibility.’ The adjectives ‘divine’ and ‘human’ remind us of the fundamental Creator-creature distinction that underlies all our experience.” Watch this because we want to apply this to Christ. “As undiminished deity Jesus possesses divine sovereignty, but as true humanity He also possessed human responsibility.” Remember, one of the truths we’ve learned is that our categories have to come from Christ’s hypostatic union. Paul said take every

thought captive to Christ. That's what we're doing here and by doing that we've got to get rid of the abstract categories of free will and determinism, that's pagan thought seeping into the discussion, that's how the pagan world poses the problem. So let's look at this statement carefully. For the sake of argument we're going to say these two did apply to Jesus. "Not able to sin" reflects God's immutable holiness, God is not able to be tempted, God is not able to sin and Jesus Christ was God. So if statement one applies to Jesus Christ in His divine sovereignty, what happens to this little vocabulary word [able], used in statement (1)? Does it mean the same thing as the vocabulary word in statement (2)? This is where you can get really screwed up because you don't notice things happening and we don't consciously bring into our language and our logic the Creator-creature distinction. So watch what we're saying.

"In the first statement above, 'not able to sin' refers to the uncreated divine nature. The verb 'able' here takes on meaning from the Creator's sovereignty." God is not able. "The second statement 'able not to sin' while analogous is not identical to 'able' in the first statement, the second takes on meaning from creaturely responsibility. So the verb 'able' has different meanings in the two statements. No logical contradiction exists. Other Scripture supports this truth that Jesus was constrained (John 5:19) and free at the same time (John 8:35-36). In John 5 "I can only do what I see My Father doing. Jesus is also free (John 8:35-36) at the same time." In John 8 He says "I make you free and if you are free you are free indeed." Jesus is at once constrained and free. So why there appears to be a contradiction is because we've loaded the verb able in each statement with identical meaning. We're using Aristotelian categories in our thinking, and we said "able" means the same thing in statement (1) as it means in statement (2). That can't be. Why can't it be? If it refers to Jesus' deity, it means that God's nature can never sin. We know this from statements repeatedly in Scripture. But "able" in this case is a description of what? The essence of God, the essence of the Creator, it describes His incomprehensible being. But when the verb refers to Jesus' humanity, it means in His human nature, in his limited creaturely choice. So since the word "able" does not have the same meaning in statement (1) and (2) you can't show that there's a contradiction between them. You cannot understand the specific differences and if we could understand it then statement (1) would no longer be incomprehensible. And if statement (1) were

comprehensible, then it would say that we, in our finite mind, have totally comprehended our God and that's a denial of the faith.

So if this leaves you feeling uneasy, do you know what you're feeling? The incomprehensibility of God right at that point. And this is where things like the problem of evil will always come up; why is this happening in my life. You can't get a handle on it, this is what Job felt, and you can't get around the problem and you're uncomfortable, but it's not logically incoherent. The unbeliever loves to say this is a logical contradiction. That's not true. That is not a correct statement. Because in order to show a contradiction between these you've got to show the language applies in the same way to God and man. You haven't done that and you're not able to do it. So you can't demonstrate there's a contradiction but on the other hand in God's mind the two statements and how they go together are fully understood. So let's go on.

“Genuine temptation, therefore, does not require the ‘possibility of failure’,” here's where I tried to get into the meaning of these words a little bit. So follow with me word by word; it's my attempt to try to state something here. “Genuine temptation does not require the possibility of failure if by ‘possibility of failure’ we mean that history is indeterminate, that its final outcome is ultimately the result of creature choices, atomic motions, and a plethora of other ‘causes.’ If instead we mean by ‘possibility of failure’ *an unknown piece of the overall plan of the Creator* from the creature's perspective, then temptation is adequately pictured.” In other words, you can walk into a situation; let's take Jesus in Gethsemane for a clear picture of this. He goes into Gethsemane, He knows what's going to happen, the cross is right there. Jesus has a choice; right up to the last minute of the cross He has a choice, doesn't He. And you know that it's a choice, because what is He praying about? The disciples are all sacked out, but what is He praying about? “Let this cup pass from me.” Do you get the impression it bothers Jesus? Yeah! Is He thrilled about this? I wouldn't say so. He's bringing it to prayer, as a human being in His humanity. He's able not to sin; He's able to choose to go with the Father's plan for Him.

You're an outside observer and you're watching Jesus praying in the Garden, and you're saying is He going to make it or not? But let's suppose there are two of you. One of you is a Biblical observer and the other one is a non-biblical observer, a pagan. The pagan looks at Jesus and says, gee, history is

really uncertain, it's a roll of the dice, nobody know what's finally going to come about because after all, the future is open to human choice. So the pagan sits there all this time thinking of history as a roll of the dice. So what can he do? He can only estimate, based on Jesus' past character how he's going to choose, but not really sure how he's going to choose. He's furthermore saying no one else knows how he'll choose, including Jesus. See the hidden presupposition? There is no total knowledge, it's just a roll of the dice. He thinks that's how he's guaranteeing freedom of choice. He thinks the only way to guarantee freedom of choice is to have total uncertainty of future history. So he sits there wondering which way the dice are going to go. That's indeterminate history.

On the other hand we have a Biblical observer. He looks at this, and he doesn't have any more information than the pagan. He doesn't know what's going to happen, but what's the difference? The difference is he knows the One who does know what's going to happen. He knows that his God is the Creator of the universe, who's planned this from all eternity. And while *he* doesn't know what Jesus is going to do, he knows that God knows. He knows there's a perfect plan here, and as a Biblical observer becomes more and more informed; he realizes there's going to be no failure here. So he knows the outcome is guaranteed. It's not a roll of the dice.

You see you can come to the same thing, it gets back to presuppositions again. Both these observers are looking at exactly the same data, and they're coming to wildly different, exaggeratedly different conclusions. That's why, when we discuss the temptation issue and the reality of temptation, the doctrine of impeccability, we've got to discipline ourselves to approach this thing out of a Biblical categories in *every* area. We've got to watch out for Aristotelian logic that is embedded in our thinking, that we're so accustomed to using. And all of a sudden it's failing us here. We want to be careful, this is heavy stuff.

However we put this together in the case of Jesus Christ, we must on one hand understand he was 'able not to sin' in His humanity lest we cut off the genuineness of the temptations and by implication his ability to be a sympathetic high priest. And on the other hand He was "not able to sin' in His deity lest we impinge upon His immutable character. Yet at the same time we're looking at a total Person here, not two people, not the Nestorian

divided Christ, the Hypostatic union Christ. B. F. Westcott, who lived in the nineteenth century along with Hodge and Shedd, gives us insight into what this means for a sinless being to be genuinely tempted. ‘Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity.’” As resistance to temptation continues the ‘temptation pressure’ increases. If resistance stops and one gives in to sin the pressure is released. Since the sinless Person of Christ never gave in under the sovereign plan of God He experienced temptation pressure never paralleled by a fallen creature like one of us.

“The doctrine of impeccability, therefore, states that Jesus Christ, though genuinely tempted beyond anything any other creature ever experienced, could not sin. As the One having true humanity and undiminished deity coexisting in one Person forever, Christ would always be victorious, even though kenotic during His life on earth.”

ⁱ Scholars such as Gordon Clark, who is otherwise a good theologian in many areas, insist that all language must mean the same thing when applied to God and man or else all meaning is lost. This kind of thinking is termed “univocal” (one voice) and stands in opposition to Cornelius Van Til who claimed that all language when applied to God and man is related by analogy yet does preserve meaning. This kind of thinking is termed “analogical”.

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