



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Christology, Hebrews 2:17-18 & 6:18

“The Impeccability of Christ”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our subject for tonight is “The Impeccability of Christ,” and this is the conclusion of one aspect of our series of studies in Christology. I think it would be good for us, tonight, to read the three verses that I have listed under the title on the transparency as our Scripture reading. And so will you turn to Hebrews chapter 2 and listen as I read verse 17, verse 18 and then chapter 6 and verse 18? The writer of this epistle says in verse 17 of chapter 2,

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted,”

And then over in chapter 6 and verse 18 the author, concluding one section of his argument, writes in verse 18, “In order that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie,” I’d like for you particularly to notice that statement, “It is

impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement we who have fled for refuge and laying hold of the hope set before us.”

William G.T. Shedd, who has written probably as much as the common theologians on the subject of the impeccability of Christ, begins his treatment of the impeccability with this statement, “The doctrine of Christ’s person is not complete without considering the subject of his impeccability.” That, of course, is correct. But we must be sure of our terms as we begin for impeccability has been misunderstood particularly by those who are untheological. Now, I say by those who are untheological, I mean by that those who, while they may have studied the Bible a great deal, have never really considered some of the theological questions that have arisen from the study of the Scriptures.

So what I would like to do is to define sinlessness and then define impeccability so that we have clearly in our minds the difference between sinlessness and impeccability. Sinlessness refers to the fact that Christ was without sin in deed, in word, and in being. Theologically it is represented by the Latin expression *posse non peccare*. Now *posse non peccare* is a combination of two Latin infinitives with a negative in between. “Posse” is the word from which we get possibility, for example, and this means “to be able not to sin,” or “able not to sin.” The second expression which I’ll refer to in a moment by the placing of the negative before the “*posse*,” “*non posse peccare*” means “not able to sin.” There is a difference between “able not to sin” and “not able to sin.” Now when we speak about sinlessness then we are talking about the fact that Christ was without sin in deed, in word, and being. We mean by that, that he was able not to sin. That is, through his experience in life, he went through all the experiences of life, and he demonstrated by the fact that he did not fall into sin, that he was able not to sin.

Now that is one level of attainment. I do not suggest, of course, that that is the highest level of our Lord’s attainment, but nevertheless, he was sinless. That is able not to sin. Now there are passages in the Bible that express this of course, in 1 John chapter 3

in verse 5 the Apostle John says, “In Him, there is no sin.” The Apostle Peter, another one who accompanied with our Lord Jesus Christ and was acquainted with Him, said, “He did no sin.” “In Him, there was no sin.” “He did no sin.” And then the Apostle Paul, who knew our Lord personally, but who had also access to the tradition of the early church and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, said that, “He knew no sin.” 1 John 3:5, 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 22, and 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21 sum up, then, some of the important statements concerning the sinlessness of Christ. “In Him, there was no sin.” “He did no sin.” “He knew no sin.” Sinlessness, that is, Christ was without sin in deed, word, and being. If we were to say that a person was sinless, we would mean that he has never committed sin. That is, he was without sin, or is without sin, in deed, in word, and in being.

Impeccability, however, means something different from sinlessness. Impeccability refers to the fact, in connection with Christ, that Christ cannot sin, not simply that he “did not sin,” but that he “could not and cannot sin.” Now you can see that there is a difference between these two concepts. To be “able not to sin” is not the same as “not able to sin.” A man, who could sin, theoretically, might survive temptations and thus show that he was “able not to sin.” But that’s not the same as “not able to sin.” So, sinlessness refers to the absence of sin. Impeccability refers to the inability to sin, one, the absence of sin, the other, the inability to sin. Theologically, it is known “non posse peccare.”

Now we read Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 18 in which it is stated, concerning God in which it is impossible, that such a person as God should lie. It states the fact that God is unable to lie not that he has not lied, but that he is unable to lie. God is impeccable. Now, of course, if we can demonstrate that our Lord Jesus is God that would settle the question. Really, but nevertheless we want to consider it in more detail. So, sinlessness then refers to the absence of sin, impeccability to the inability to sin. If Adam had not sinned in the Garden of Eden we could say of him that he was sinless, but we

could never say of a creature that the creature was impeccability, or unable to sin. The fact that Adam did sin is evidence of the fact that in humanity there is the possibility of sin. So it's important that we keep these things before us.

The question of the impeccability of Christ has divided good theologians. One of the best of the theologians was Professor Charles Hodge of the Princeton Theological Seminary. Presbyterian theologian, highly respected, whose volumes are still studied in almost all of the orthodox theological schools. They don't usually follow Mr. Hodge because he was a very strong believer in the sovereignty of God. And that's not good news for Arminians, and of course, the great majority of our theological schools, if they're anything, are Arminian, not all of them, but the great majority. But Charles Hodge is still studied as a text in some of the better theological seminaries.

William G.T. Shedd was also a Presbyterian theologian who taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City for some years. Shedd and Hodge have differed over the question of the impeccability of Christ. Both believe that Christ was sinless, but in the case of Shedd, he has written concerning the impeccability of Christ, accepting that while Charles Hodge has disagreed, contending that the Lord Jesus was peccable, temptable, and peccable.

Now this has been very confusing to some other people too. And the consequence of the confusion is that some, in order to preserve the character of the Lord Jesus, have unfortunately fallen into an emphasis upon the deity of Christ at the expense of his humanity, and consequently, has brought them into a position of what we would call theologically Docetism. That is that the Lord Jesus did not really have a true humanity. They are so anxious to preserve his character as God that they have deemphasized and forgotten certain aspects of his humanity. And on the other hand, there are those of a more liberal bent who have contended that while the Lord Jesus did not sin, he did have a sinful human nature in which he carried out his work.

The status of the fallen angels, incidentally, from the Bible, and the things that are said about them would indicate that they were holy originally, but they fell by their temptation. Jude says in the 6th verse of his epistle, “And the angels which kept not their first estate,” so evidently, those angels that are referred to in Jude 6 that have sinned were holy originally. But they were temptable, and they were peccable by virtue of their creaturehood. And when the testing came, they fell from their position. Adam, I’ve mentioned was created holy, but he was temptable and peccable. And the fact of his fall indicates both.

I received a letter from a Bible teacher. This is just really one. I have received a number of them, and I received one this year. But unfortunately, I didn't have time to dig it out of the files here in Believers Chapel, and I had another one because I get them every now and then touching this very same thing. This is one I’m going to read because you can, I hope, sense that there is a misunderstanding of the meaning of the term impeccability, and he’s accusing me of not believing in it when it’s obvious he doesn't really understand what the term means.

Now, he says, “Dear Brother in the Lord.” This man incidentally is a Bible teacher, and a respected Bible teacher in a country north of the United States. He says, “I am unknown to you but have read your articles in *Bibliotheca Sacra* on Colossians which I found to be profitable and most helpful. I serve the Lord among the assemblies of the Lord’s people gathered to the worthy name alone. I understand that you have such a link. I have a good friend in Dallas,” and he mentions his name, whom many of you would know in the hospital there and also in the Assembly. “I am rather surprised and disturbed regarding your recent article on the “Temptation of Christ.” I sure would like to think that I have misunderstood your implication. Page three hundred and forty-three you state, ‘His impeccability is guaranteed by the union of the divine and human natures in one theanthropic person. Also the human nature of the God-man was both temptable and peccable.’” And he underlines peccable, which I did say. “I strongly disagree with

the idea of the Lord’s humanity being peccable (sinful).” See he doesn't understand what peccable means. I did not say that the Lord’s humanity was sinful, peccable, able to sin, by virtue of constitutional susceptibility.

Now, he does, I must say to his credit, he puts a little note and writes between the lines and says, “Or liable to sin.” But which confirms the fact that he doesn't understand that there is a difference between sinful and peccable because he has sinful or liability to sin, but those are not the same things. He says, “Being peccable, in the light of the word of God, our Lord did not, as you suggest,” he’s got that underlined. He’s going to teach me a few things too. I hope that I can learn. I think I can. “Our Lord did not, as you suggest, require the divine nature to prevent the human nature from sinning. The humanity of our blessed Lord alone was apart from sin.” Well, I do not deny that at all. I would, of course, say that.

“You say the divine nature may not desert the human nature, permitting it to sin. Such segregation of the person of the Lord Jesus is both dangerous and questionable.” I would like to ask him, do you want to say that that is no such thing as a divine nature and a human nature, and that they cannot be conceived of as two natures? “Hebrews 4:15 makes it clear apart from sin. There was nothing in the nature of our Lord to respond to sin.” Of course, we would agree with that. “He was as to his manhood holy. Of course, Hebrews chapter 7 verse 26, ‘Who needed it not,’ etcetera. Hebrews chapter 7:27, John says, 1 John 3:5.” That’s the one I quoted earlier. “In whom there is no sin.’ ‘In him was no sin,’ 1 Peter 1:19, ‘Without spot or blemish’.” See he’s talking about sinlessness and not realizing that what we are talking about is impeccability and not sinlessness.

“If our Lord was not impeccability, he was not a fit sacrifice. You draw a fine unscriptural line,” I’m not sure of his hand writing here. “Regarding your opening question, ‘Is he sinless?’ This is generally admitted. Is Jesus Christ impeccability? This is to my mind a play on words.” See, he does not understand the difference between sinless and impeccable. He thinks it’s only a play on words. “I appreciate the meaning of

the word ‘not liable to sin or error.’ The sinless nature of the one who knew no sin, did no sin, in him was no sin, demands absolute impeccability without question or doubt being cast upon it independent of the divine nature. He could say regarding the devil and ‘findeth nothing in me.’ Reading your article I like your statement, ‘It must be now non posse peccare, not able to sin.’ However I respectfully submit your other statement that the human nature of our Lord was peccable is contradictory. I trust you will understand this is not the spirit of controversy.” I think he means this is not written in the spirit of controversy. “But I am surprised that such should appear in an excellent and sound periodical like *Bibliotheca Sacra* without being questioned.” Incidentally, I think this appeared a few years back. He received an answer concerning that, and I haven't heard from him since. [Laughter]

But I received a letter recently along the same line which indicates that there is misunderstanding by Bible teachers concerning this point. Now, I want to, tonight, try to handle, as well as we can, the question of the impeccability of Christ. Now if you've been here for our studies in Christology you will know that we have already considered the sinlessness of Christ. And so you could probably tell by that that when we say that Christ is impeccable we are not saying the same thing as saying he was sinless because I wouldn't want to bore you with another lesson on the same topic so soon after the giving of the one on his sinlessness.

Let's now turn to some of the arguments that have been advanced for impeccability. When we consider the question of impeccability we must admit that the arguments are not as clearly based on the word as would be desired. And by that I mean that there are not as many texts in the Bible that answer this specific question, “Was Christ impeccable?” as we would like. Many texts point to his sinlessness, but there are very few that have to do directly with impeccability. So the result is that we must set forth arguments that are largely arguments by way of inference.

Now there immediately some people say, “Ah if their arguments by inference they cannot be relied upon.” Now that is foolish. That’s very foolish. In the first place, if you study the Bible very carefully you will discover that the writers of Scripture used logic under the Holy Spirit and inference even used many of the tools of the logicians. They used certain types of syllogisms, for example, just to give a simple example. When we study the Bible we are to compare Scripture with Scripture. What is not clear or complete in one verse may be clearer or maybe completed in another. We are to infer and induce.

Let me give you an example. If the Bible says that David was the King of Israel, and it also teaches that Solomon was the son of David, as we all know that it does, we can legitimately infer that Solomon was the son of a King of Israel. Can we not? Now it would take only a beginner in any kind of logical thought to agree. So when we talk about logic, we’re not talking about something that is contrary to the Bible. The writers of Scripture use logical processes of reasoning under the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul supports his arguments by citing Scripture. He infers from the verses that he cites certain truths. So that’s perfectly alright. The Westminster Confession of Faith says, and I think says correctly, “The whole council of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” We don’t put reason above the word of God. We keep reason as a faculty God has given us under the word of God and under the Holy Spirit. But we are to use our reasoning processed under the Holy Spirit. Study the Bible that way. You’ll find you get a lot more out of it.

Now impeccability, we grant, does not have the biblical support, that is the number of texts that have to do with it, that exists for some other doctrines of the word of God. But nevertheless, I think we can make a case for the impeccability of Christ in such a way that you will be convinced.

First of all, capital “A”, “Holiness and Immutability.” Now, we do not have any question of, I suppose, about the immutability of the Lord God. For example, we read in Malachi chapter 3, “I am the Lord. I change not.” So immutability is one of the qualities, one of the properties of the divine being. Holiness and Immutability.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is called holy. Will you turn over to Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 26 and listen as I read these verses? “For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens.” He is the holy Son of God and high priest of the people of God. But over in chapter 13 and verse 8 of this same epistle we read this concerning Jesus Christ, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today (yes) and forever.”

Now if in one text it says that he is holy, and in the other text it says that he is the same yesterday, today and forever, are we not being Scriptural to infer that therefore he is always holy and cannot fall into sin? So his immutability linked with his holiness argues against any other position than impeccability. His holiness and his immutability argue against a mutable holiness. So if he’s holy and immutability, you cannot have a mutable holiness. If he’s unchangeably holy, you cannot have a change in holiness.

Holiness and Omnipotence, capital “B.” The same kind of reasoning is also supportive of the doctrine of the impeccability of Christ. A mutable holiness is incompatible with his omnipotence. For how can a finite power overcome an infinite one? If he is omnipotently holy, how can a finite power overcome the omnipotent holy one? All temptation to sin proceeds from a created being, either an angel or a human being. In other words, if it comes from a being, it comes from a created being because the Bible says it does not come from God. God does not tempt anyone. James says that in chapter 1 and verse 13. But in Christ’s case the finite temptation is met by infinite power of resistance because of his omnipotence. It is also incompatible with his omniscience as well. He cannot be deceived. Therefore he cannot be anything other than impeccable. Incidentally, if this may comfort you a little bit, this was the position of

Athenaeus. It was the position of Augustine. It was the position of Anselm, some of the great theologians of the past.

Let's move on now to Roman 2, “The Relationship of Impeccability to Christ's Person.” And here we come to the heart of the argument which I want you to be sure to get tonight if you get nothing else. Capital “A,” first of all, “The Threefold Teaching Concerning the Person of Christ.” Let me summarize. All I want to do under this heading is simply summarize what we have been studying. Remember we have said, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, first, that he is truly man. We have argued that in some detail. He is truly man. He possesses a true humanity. That's what my friend fails to realize, the one who wrote me the letter. He fails to realize that our Lord has a true human nature. Because you see if he had the kind of human nature that he thinks he had, he wouldn't have a nature like Adam's in the Garden of Eden. He would not be a man, a person possessed of a true human nature. Our Lord was truly man.

Second, he is truly God. He possesses a divine nature. We have argued the deity of Christ. There's no need for me to argue it further. And then we made the third point, that he is one person, not two persons, one person. And we said also that this one person is the God-man, not the Man-God. We have said that he is a divine person who took to himself an additional nature, a human nature. We said he was a divine person because he existed long before he ever took the human nature to himself. He is one person who possesses two natures. He is the God-man.

Now it is important for you to remember now that he is a divine person, but he possesses both a divine nature and a human nature. Do you remember what they said concerning the Lord Jesus? One of them said to him in the 8th chapter of John. “Thou art not yet fifty years old.” They looked at him, and they saw that he was a man just as they are, and they could even actually evaluate his age by the way his countenance looked to them. That indicates a very interesting thing too, does it not, just as an aside? It indicates that evidently the trials of our Lord had left a little heavy a mark in his countenance then

they may have left in others because unless the person needed glasses surely you wouldn't say of someone who was only thirty-three, say, that he was not yet fifty. You might say he's not yet forty, but fifty would indicate that there were the signs of the trials of life upon our Lord.

The same person of whom it was said, “Thou art not yet fifty years of age,” is the one of whom the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “And, Thou Lord in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands.” So on the one hand, we have his true humanity. On the other hand, we have his full deity. But he is one divine person, divine person.

Now, capital “B,” “The Human Nature.” We do not then doubt that our Lord had a human nature. Now if he had a human nature, like Adam's. In Adam's sinless state, if he had a human nature, was not his human nature temptable? Why, of course, by the very fact of his human nature, he has a temptable nature because it is human. If it is not temptable, it is not true humanity. Well now let me advance another step. If it is truly a nature like Adam's nature, then it must also be peccable, that is, “able to sin,” not sinful, “able to sin” because if it were not he would not have the kind of nature that Adam had. Adam had temptable and peccable human nature because he was tempted and he did sin, proof that his nature was peccable and temptable. And if our Lord was truly man, he is called man. His human nature must be temptable and peccable. That's important. If we deny this we fall into the laps of the Docetics, one of the early heretical groups, and incidentally who have great followers in some forms of fundamentalism today, Docetics.

Capital “C,” “The Divine Nature.” Now, the divine nature, by the very fact that Scripture states that God cannot be tempted, nor does he test man, and further, he cannot lie, he cannot sin, the divine nature is therefore untemptable and impeccable. Let me just read the passage. I've quoted it already, but let me read it to you. James chapter 1 verse 13 says, “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.” And then we read

the passage in Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 18 in which it is stated that it is impossible for God to lie. In Titus Paul repeats the same thing about the God who cannot lie. He cannot sin. He cannot lie. So the divine nature then is untemptable and impeccable.

Capital “D,” “The One Person.” What shall we say about the one person now, one person who possesses these two natures? Well we must first of all notice that the divine nature is the base of his person. As I’ve said, he’s not a man-God. It’s not his humanity that’s the base of his person. It’s his deity that’s the base of his person to which has been added his human nature. He is not a human man who has deified. But he is the divine person who took to himself an additional nature. Therefore, the divine controls the human, not the human the divine, so that his deity is the base of his personality. Therefore, Jesus Christ is as mighty to overcome Satan and sin as his mightiest nature is. Let me repeat it. Jesus Christ, therefore, is as mighty to overcome Satan and sin as his mightiest nature is. So since he has the divine nature, he is, by virtue of his divine power, able to overcome sin and therefore is a person who cannot sin because he possesses divine nature.

Now let me illustrate it with an illustration that Shedd has used very effectively, and all students of theology have come to know it. And your students of theology and so you must come to know it too. Professor Shedd illustrates by taking for his illustration an iron wire and then an iron bar. And he says, in effect, something like this; I’m going to elaborate a little bit. Let’s suppose I were to hold up in front of you an iron wire, and I were to say to you, “Can you come forward here, take this iron wire, and break it?” Well, the chances are that everyone in this room could. You would raise your hand, and you would say, “Yes, I can do it.” And you would come up and you would take it and sure enough soon you would break it.

But now if I were in my other hand to have an iron bar, or perhaps a steel beam, and I were to take that iron wire and wrap it around the steel beam, and then I were to say to you, “How many of you think you can now break the iron wire?” Well, of course,

probably most of you wouldn't even try because you would realize that in order to have to break the iron wire you would also have to break the steel beam because the strength of the steel beam is now the strength of the iron wire.

Now it is something like that. No illustrations in divine things are ever perfect. It is something like that in the case of our Lord Jesus. He has human nature like the iron wire, but he also has a divine nature and is a divine person, like the steel beam. And the strength of the divine personality is the strength of his power to overcome sin. And since that is divine strength or deity and God cannot sin, Jesus Christ, the person of Jesus Christ, is therefore impeccable.

Now, we have some problems, of course, and we want to deal with these problems. And the first of our problems is the problem of the communication of the attributes. Now, let me read you what Professor Hodge says. Now, I love Professor Hodge. He's a great man. He now knows the truth of the impeccability of Christ because he's been in heaven now for a considerable period of time. I hope I'm right because there's going to be a lot of people waiting for me in heaven to straighten me out if I'm not right. [Laughter] But anyway, Professor Hodge has written in his theology, this excellent theology which I recommend everybody read, he says, “If from the constitution of his person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then his temptation was unreal.” Have you ever thought that? Why, of course you have. Every one of us has. I remember when I first studied the impeccability of Christ in theological seminary that was the first thing that I said. Why then what about the temptation? How can you have a real temptation if there is no possibility of sinning and failing? Ah, we don't think deeply enough in divine things. That's our problem, but we all have to go through these states. He says then, “His temptation was unreal and without effect, and,” second, “And He cannot sympathize with His people.” How can Jesus Christ sympathize with me when I am temptable and peccable if He is temptable, but impeccable? How can He sympathize with me? Well that's a question we all have had.

Well now let's consider these two things. We will consider them in just a moment with “B” and “C,” but first we've been talking about a very interesting fact about our Lord's person. We have been saying because he is one person who possesses two natures, and then the qualities of both natures pertain to the person. Didn't we say that? We said that in our studies. We said that the qualities of the divine nature attach to the person, and the qualities of the human nature attach to the person. And the person may be said to be what either one of the natures is. Well then if the human nature is temptable and peccable, why do we not then say that the divine person is temptable and peccable? So then both peccability and temptability, but wait a minute, we also said of both natures didn't we? Now he had a divine nature and the divine nature is impeccable. So what would we be saying? We would be saying concerning this one person that he was temptable, peccable, and impeccable, peccable from the fact that he possesses human nature, impeccable from the fact that he possesses divine nature. That would be difficult to handle wouldn't it? Well we know from the laws of identity that such is impossible. Something cannot both be and not be at the same time. He cannot be peccable and impeccable at the same time. Something has got to give.

Now we say that he is both finite and infinite. We say he is both impotent and omnipotent, impotent in his human nature because he possesses the human nature, omnipotent because of the divine. We say he does not know some things, like the time of the Second Advent, and that he is omniscient from his divine nature, then both peccable and impeccable. But the question that solves our problem I think is that when we talk about this matter, we're talking about sin. We're not talking about weakness. We're talking about sin. And in the case of sin, the divine nature cannot desert the human nature when sin is at stake. The God-man was commissioned to suffer but he was not commissioned to sin. All innocent limitations may be attributed to Jesus Christ; all innocent limitations coming from the human nature may be attributed to the person, but not the culpable defects, not the limitations that are sinful. And again, Shedd helps, I

think, when he says, “It deserts the humanity so that it may suffer for the atonement of sin, but it, the divine nature, never deserts the humanity so that it may fall into sin itself.”

Now I think that effectively handles that question, but what about the question of temptability and sympathy? Did our Lord really go through a temptation if he was impeccable? Now what is the source of temptability? The source of temptability is human nature. The constitutional susceptibility of the human nature is that it be temptable. In other words, if a person has human nature then he must be able to be tempted. Since our Lord possesses human nature, he is temptable.

Let me illustrate. Let's presume that we have an invincible army. May an invincible army be attacked? Why yes, an invincible army may be attacked. The Pittsburgh Steelers may be played in a game, but they look almost invincible. I say that in spite of the fact, you Cowboy fans in the audience, I'm a Cowboy fan too, but they look almost invincible. [Laughter] But we'll play them. They may be attacked, but things don't look too good. An invincible army may be attacked. You may if you like attack Gibraltar with a pop gun, and we know the outcome, but you can attack Gibraltar. So the fact that our Lord is impeccable does not mean that he cannot be tempted. I wish I had time to talk about what really takes place when someone as sensitive as our Lord is tempted.

Well I think if you think about that, you will see that Christ can be tempted even though he's impeccable, but how can he possibly have sympathy with us if he is impeccable? Now we turn back to Hebrews chapter 2, verse 17, and let me read this verse and I'm going to put a little diagram which I hope maybe you can see. Now notice what our text says here in verse 17 and 18. Let's just read verse 18 first, “Since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered; He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” Is it possible that our Lord Jesus can really have sympathy with us when he is impeccable? That does not seem possible, does it, at first? But let me try to illustrate.

Let's just think about trials like this, and let's say that this line here marks increasing intensity of trial. Five percent, ten percent, twenty percent, it's like a person turning up a rheostat, and the test. And every one of us begins walking down the path of intensity of trial, well when the temptation gets to be about five percent in intensity, some of the weaker brethren and sisters fall out. Ten percent, there's Mr. Prier. [Laughter] Fifteen percent, twenty percent, there's Bob Nixon, and so on down the line. And sooner or later every single human being falls as the intensity of the trial increases. Seventy percent practically no one is left. But our Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the fact that he is the divine Son of God walks right down the pathway of temptation to the pathway to infinity of degree.

Now he knows exactly how the man felt at five percent when he fell. He knows exactly the strength of temptation at ten, at twenty, at seventy, and so on down the line. By virtue of the fact that he has endured, he is able to appreciate the intensity of trial to which everyone comes. But someone might say, “Well wait a minute, his temptations all came from without. Mine come from within.” That is true. No temptations of our Lord came from the possession of an evil nature. He did not have an evil nature. His temptations were from the world and from the devil. They were not from his flesh in which there was no principle of sin. But the testing is identical in its nature because all testing, regardless of the source from which it comes, is a temptation to turn aside from the will of God. That's the essence of testing and temptation, to turn aside from the will of God. So whether it comes from within or without the essence of the test is the same, and our Lord has borne it and borne it all. Therefore, he is able to know exactly how every person who has ever been tested feels because he has been at that precise intensity of trial. But, in addition, he has overcome, and because he has overcome, at that point he is able to succor those who are being tested. That's the kind of high priest he is. So that the work of being tested is designed to make him the kind of high priest that we need, one who fully understands all of the tests that we have ever had, and has overcome.

There are people who often say concerning men, and often in the context of witnessing they will say, “Well now here is a person who is an alcoholic. What we need to do is to put someone with them who has also been an alcoholic because they can understand. No, no. No, no. There may be something to that. I don't rule it all out, but as a matter of fact, it's the holy man who understands testing better than the unholy man. Our Lord never had any sympathy with unholy temptations and sins. He died for them. His sympathy arises out of the strength of the trial, not out of the experience of failure. So his sympathy comes from the fact that he has experienced the intensity of trial that everyone has experienced and more, and therefore he understands. It's the holy man who best understands the unholy, not another unholy man. Never forget that.

So then we say that our Lord Jesus is temptable so far as his human nature is concerned but impeccable so far as his divine personality is concerned. His temptability arises out of the constitutional susceptibility of his human nature in which he was temptable and peccable. But by virtue of the divine nature, he is the impeccable Son of God. He not only was and is sinless, but he cannot sin at this very moment, and consequently we are safe throughout all eternity because if it were possible that he could sin what is to keep him from sinning in the future? And if so, then of course, all of program of God which is bound up in our own personal salvation would fall to the ground. That's a wonderful thing to possess then an impeccable savior. Only an impeccable can save sinful men such as we are.

Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the truths that are contained in the word of God concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that he was not only sinless, he not only over came, he not only was able not to sin, but by virtue of who he is, he could not and he cannot sin. And we thank Thee that having accomplished our work of salvation, this impeccable savior ever lives to see that the work reaches its

fruition in the salvation of all of the people of God and the bringing of each one of them into the presence of our great triune God for eternity. And we thank Thee that he has demonstrated that he understands by virtue of his successful accomplishment of all the tests and trials, and we praise Thee that we have someone who understands the exact heat of...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]