


COULD
CHRIST
SIN?

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Could Christ Sin?

An inquiry into the Christ’s wrestle in Gethsemane and its relation to impeccability, and the indivisible will of the incarnate Son

Introduction:

Few doctrines are more essential for believers to think rightly about than the impeccability of the Son of God. To err here is to drift into deep and serious waters. The difference between saying “*Jesus could have sinned but chose not to*” and saying “*Jesus could not have chosen to sin*” is not semantic — it strikes at the very heart of truth about His person. Whom do we worship? The Christ of Scripture? Or an imagined Christ shaped by our assumptions?

This study presents the scriptural case for His absolute impeccability. The reader is encouraged to move slowly, to weigh the passages carefully.

The Backdrop of Gethsemane: Satan has “nothing in Me”

Temptation is not the same as susceptibility. To be tempted, especially in the case of the Son, simply means that enticement was presented; it does *not* imply that He possessed the capacity to yield to it.

When Scripture says Jesus was “tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), it affirms that He submitted to the *process* of external temptation just as we do. But the decisive distinction is found in His own words: “The ruler of this world is

coming, and he has nothing in Me” (John 14:30). Not “nothing *on* Me,” as a criminal might say, but “nothing *in* Me.” Satan possessed no inward leverage — nothing to appeal to, nothing to entice.

James tells us that we are tempted “*when* we are carried away and enticed by our own desires” (Jas. 1:14). To assume Jesus was like us in this respect is to assume far too much. Because He is both God and man, it is not merely that **He did not sin**, but that **He could not**.

Both the wilderness temptation and Gethsemane struggle are framed with the same word: “**if**.”

Yet the “**if**” plays a radically different role in each setting — and it reveals the truth about His impeccability.

The “Wrestle In Gethsemane”

Christ’s agony in Gethsemane was not a battle between competing wills, as I have often heard it framed. Nor was it a moment of wavering obedience. And least of all never the contemplation of sin! The prayer “*If it be possible*, let this cup pass from Me...” was not uncertainty, nor the faintest contemplation of rebellion. To interpret it that way misses the point entirely and approaches blasphemy.

In that holy moment, divine purpose and human anguish met in one sinless resolve: love chose “the cup” of physical suffering.

But there were in truth **two** “cups” before Him:

1. The cup of physical suffering and death – horrific beyond imagination in its own right.
2. The cup of surrendering the Father’s eternal redemptive purpose.

It was the second cup - the thought of the Father’s purpose undone, unrealized; the Father’s word - the Scriptures unfulfilled, the elect unredeemed, that pressed Him into such agony that He literally swat blood. We will gain greater understanding of why this second “cup” was so immense a consideration that it broke Him the way it did.

The Temptation in the Wilderness

The “temptation” in the wilderness is the only place the gospels employ the term “tempted” when applied to Christ. And the Jesus who faced it was radically different in posture than in the Garden.

Satan’s appeal there is for Christ to *deviate* from the will and timing of the Father by either; independent, presumptuous use of His power “turn these stones to bread”, or “throw Yourself down”, to outright rebellion and idolatry “fall down and worship me”. These all introduce the element of sin – from the subtle to overt. Because they had that specific element of sin attached to them, they all had zero effect on the Lord. There is no inward “pull”, no “allure”, zero “enticement” in them. Consequently, He is unphased and with a mere rebuke “Get behind Me Satan!”, it is over.

However, in the garden He is agonizing because something *else other than sin*, is in play. What is the difference? In the wilderness: “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread... If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down” (Matt. 4:3, 6; Luke 4:3, 9). And in Gethsemane: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

The “if” in the wilderness only magnifies the impossibility of sinful enticement. The Son rebukes the mere suggestion instantly. *The “if” in the garden is the possibility of righteous options, not moral deviation: The Son agonizes to the point of sweating blood!*

James insists that God “cannot be tempted by evil” (Jas. 1:13), and the writer of Hebrews affirms that He was “tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin.” Such texts together assert not only sinlessness but impeccability: that the very possibility of sin stood forever excluded by the union of His divine and human natures. Because He is who He is, temptation could appeal to nothing within Him; it could solicit but never succeed. To say that He could have sinned is to imagine a Christ other than the One revealed, A divided Christ, capable of moral disintegration.

The real Christ, Scripture's Christ, is the Lamb without blemish, not merely unfallen in act but unfallable in nature. James insists that God "cannot be tempted by evil" (Jas. 1:13), and the writer of Hebrews affirms that He was "tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin."

If-Then changes everything

The "IF–THEN" premise behind Christ's wrestle in Gethsemane strikes at the very heart of the incarnation and the mystery of the God-Man's obedience. What was the nature of that wrestle, so great that He sweat blood? Was it a conflict between obedience and rebellion, or between two *righteous* possibilities? Was the Son contemplating rebellion as some have suggested? Was that *really* a consideration in His heart? If not, what was the other righteous alternative? The other righteous alternative before Christ was not rebellion but restraint. He had declared earlier, "Do you not think that I could call upon My Father, and He would at once send Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" (Matthew 26:53–54). In that statement lies the essence of His wrestling: He possessed the righteous right and power to summon deliverance, yet He chose not to exercise it.

Thus, His plea was framed as an "IF...THEN" possibility: Avoid the cup without sin, but *only if* redemption could be achieved another way. Thus, the "if–then" of His prayer ("If it be possible, *then* let this cup pass...") reveals that His agony was not over whether to obey. Rather, since "All things are possible with God," whether the Father's redemptive plan could be fulfilled apart from the cross, *via a different* means. IF so, "IF *that* can be done...THEN may this cup (this method) pass from Me. But if not, Your will be done." Once it was manifest that no other way could satisfy divine justice, the Son's actual holy resolve was steadfast as ever: "I have come to do Your will, O God" defined Him from birth to the grave.

Scripture and the great historic Creeds of the Church speak with one voice: in Jesus Christ there was *never* division of will, only the perfect harmony of divine and human nature acting as one. **The Nicene Creed** confesses that the Son is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father." The later **Definition of Chalcedon** affirms that this same Lord

Jesus Christ is “to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably,” and concludes with that vital declaration, “He is not two, but one Christ.” Thus, both Creeds safeguard the mystery of the incarnation from every distortion, thereby preserving against both the mingling of His two real natures and the division of the Person. The one who prayed in Gethsemane was not a conflicted self. Rather, He was the one Lord, who is “very God and very man,” acting through the fullness of both His natures in perfect unity.

There are not two wills – The “will” is the choice made

The will is not an independent faculty deliberating apart from the chooser; it is the act of choosing itself. Therefore, to speak of “two wills,” as some have, is a contradiction in terms, for a will that truly chooses cannot be divided, because the will is the choice itself. There are not two choices made, only one. Many options? Certainly. But only one choice. The heart may consider alternatives, but *what is chosen is the will*. Thus, Christ did not have two wills. The idea is an oxymoron, meaningless double-talk, to say without meaning and imply without substance. There was one choosing subject: the eternal Son. And the object was the choice He made. He willed in and through His true humanity what the Father had purposed from eternity. This is Chalcedon’s creedal thesis lived out: one Christ, two natures, but always and only one holy will expressed through perfect obedience. Thus, the cry “If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me” was not the hesitation of a divided, conflicted self as so many mistakenly assume. It was the holy reasoning of the one Son acting through His true humanity as He contemplated the two righteous options before Him:

- Call for the armies of heaven to deliver Him.
- Seek whether the end might be achieved by another way.
- If not 1 or 2, then ...and *only then* - “Thy will be done.”

The Other “Cup”

The wrestling came from the agony of *that* contemplation. He could have called for deliverance. The Father *would* have answered. That fact alone settles, for all time, the question of whether the request for deliverance would have been “sinful.” Of course not. The Father would never acquiesce to a sinful plea from the Son. Had the Son so chosen, He would still have been “My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This is what so many miss. And in the missing of it, grave errors and falsehoods concerning the sinless, spotless, impeccable Son have been propagated. Think of it: still the beloved Son, received back into glory, worshiped by the heavenly host. What would the cost be? Not the physical horrors He would escape, but the *other* cost:

- The Father’s eternal purpose would not have been realized.
- The elect of God, whom He foreknew and chose “in Christ” from the foundation of the world, would never have been redeemed.
- The Scripture, the revealed will of the Father, would not have been fulfilled.

That was the other “cup.” And in the end, that proved to be more terrible to contemplate than the cup of physical suffering and death He would excruciatingly endure. Thus, “Yet not as I will, but as You will.” In that single “if–then” premise, the harmony of His natures is revealed. His divine understanding knew there was no other way, and His human sensibility rightly recoiled at the unspeakable cost in terms of unimaginable physical suffering. The one person with two natures, in contemplation of the ever more terrible “cup”, which so compelled His heart, resolutely surrendered and moved with one will toward the same holy end.

It was for this hour that I came

At His last supper, He openly contemplated the choice that lay before Him and whether or not He would ask for deliverance. He affirmed it was for this very hour that He had come (John 12:27). The heart that came for “this hour” is the same heart

that submits to “this cup.” The cup was not forced upon Him; He *chose it because the Father’s glory and the sinner’s salvation was His nature and His joy.* The Gethsemane or “winepress” for Christ was not the weakness of a divided, conflicted will but the triumph of undivided love. Thus the “ifs” of the Gospel narratives are not cracks in His perfection but mirrors reflecting His perfection. Each scenario - whether from Satan’s lips or from His own, serves to reveal that there was *never* any genuine enticement to sin.

✚ **Temptation and anguish did not test whether He might fail; they displayed why He could not. The “if” of Gethsemane was not contemplation of rebellion, but the deeply considered surrender of the Son of God.**

Appendix: Scriptural Evidence of Impeccability

The following passages stand as explicit witness to the moral perfection and unchangeable holiness of Christ's person - affirming not only that He did not sin, but that He could not sin, being the incarnate Son of God.

- **John 5:19** "Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.'

Christ's will was never independent of the Father's. Moral autonomy, the ability to act contrary to the Father, is here *explicitly denied*: "The Son *can* do nothing...", not "does do nothing...", nor "should not do anything..."

- **John 8:29** "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

"Always" leaves no moral gap, no possibility of deviation; His pleasing of the Father is constant, unbroken, and absolute.

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The text does not say "who sinned not," but "who *knew* no sin." Sin was a foreign element to His nature. It was known only objectively, never experientially.

- **Hebrews 4:15** "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." Tempted like we are, but not as we are within. The testing was real; the susceptibility was not.

- **James 1:13** "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." The divine nature cannot be drawn toward sin; therefore, the Person of Christ, being truly God was in His very nature, impeccable.

- **1 Peter 1:19** "But with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." "Unblemished" speaks of intrinsic purity; "spotless" denotes the absence of any outward defilement. Both are absolute.

- 1 John 3:5 — “You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.”

His sinlessness is not merely historical but ontological , meaning essentially His very nature: “*in Him is no sin,*” present tense and perpetual.

Together these verses proclaim that Christ’s moral perfection was not a posture He maintained, *but the very essence of who He is*. To speak of the possibility of sin in Him is to divide His person and deny the integrity of the Incarnation.

Logical Implications

If the Son could sin, then we *must* conclude the Father could also fall, for the Son can do nothing apart from the Father and the Son is “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His (the Father’s) nature.” (Heb 1:3).

If moral failure were possible in Christ, the unity of the Godhead would be ruptured, and redemption itself rendered impossible. But because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, immutable in nature and holy in essence. *His impeccability secures not only His own sinlessness but the eternal safety of all who are in Him. He could not sin, for He is God of God, Light of Light, the very radiance of the Father’s glory and the exact representation of His nature.*