

Jesus Is Sinless (Heb 4.14-16)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. At the heart of the Christian Gospel is the reality that in Christ Jesus God has provided a way for sinful humanity to experience the glory and power of his salvation.
- B. There are many aspects of Christ's person and his work that are instrumental in bringing forth the power of God's saving work. These include both Christ's divinity (he is *fully God*) and his humanity (he is *fully man*).
- C. As we have seen, Jesus' humanity is a true and full humanity in *every way* — meaning, he possess a human body, a human heart/soul, and a human will. Jesus is the Person of the eternal Son who exists as a true and full human being precisely in the fullness of what it means to be human (i.e., human nature, limitations, mutability, ability to suffer and die, etc.). As we look at the life of Jesus, we must understand that this is the Son of God existing within a human life and human nature.
- D. Yet, there is one profound aspect of Jesus' life that stands apart from every other human that has ever lived — namely, his *sinlessness*. The doctrine of Jesus' perfection (called his sinlessness, or conversely, we could talk about Jesus' *obedience*) as a man is an important doctrine related to the gospel and our salvation with far reaching implications for us.
- E. That Jesus Christ was sinless throughout his life means that at every moment of his human life he lived in willing, joyful trust of God the Father in every *thought, word, and deed*. This joyful trust was *demonstrated* in a life of active, perfect obedience to his will at every moment of his life.
- F. Looking at Christ's sinlessness and his obedience should fill our hearts with active love and adoration for who he is.

II. BIBLICAL WITNESS

- A. The Bible portrays for us a comprehensive portrait of Jesus partaking fully of our human nature, yet without sin.
- B. Sin was not a part of God's creational reality according to intention and design. As God set out to create, he did so according to his glorious intention — creating a world that was perfectly in accordance with his desire and his designs.

³And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen 1.31)

- C. Because of this, sin is not *essential* to what it means to be human. Although all men and women born after the Fall are born into sin (save Christ Jesus), sin is a distortion of human nature, not fundamental to it. This means that Jesus can assume a *true* and *full* human nature without sin.
- D. The nature of sin is *willful disobedience* to God's righteous requirements. As the holy and true Creator of all things, God alone has the ability to define what is "good" (i.e., in accordance with his purpose, his designs, and his will). He created mankind to live in trust-filled obedience of his character *expressed* by humble submission to his commands in obedience. To disobey his commands is the *essence* of sin.
- E. The Scriptures demonstrate that Jesus' came under the law (the righteous requirements of living in obedience to God) in order to fulfill them in accordance with all righteousness.

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent for his Son, born of a woman, born under the law (Gal 4.4)

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matt 3.13-15)

¹⁷Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Matt 5.17)

- F. Paul demonstrates that Jesus came in the “likeness” of sinful flesh. This does not mean that he believed Jesus to be something like a human, but not actually a human. Rather, it means is that he was fully human, but did not bear the distortion of sin that mars the nature of all humankind.

³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh (Rom 8.3)

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin (I Cor 5.21)

- G. In Peter’s first letter, he makes several references to Christ’s sinlessness in relation to our redemption.

¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot (I Pet 1.19)

²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth (I Pet 2.22)

- H. The Apostle John declares that Jesus himself was sinless in all things, walking in perfect righteousness in order that he might be the one to take away sin.

¹if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (I John 2.1)

⁵You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin (I John 3.5)

III. THE LAST ADAM

- A. Many Christians do not often think about the importance of the obedience of Jesus as it relates to redemption. We are often quick to glory in the death of Jesus and the effects of his sacrifice in order to purchase salvation. However, we must understand that the glory of Christ’s salvation also *necessitates* his perfect and complete obedience throughout his human life.
- B. To understand the reason for this, we must understand a broad Scriptural principle of how God has determined to deal with humanity. From the beginning of Scripture, it is clear that God has purposed to deal with humans *vicariously* through a representative head.
- C. Paul outlines this doctrine in Romans 5 as he contrasts the significance of the actions of Adam and Christ.

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5.12-21)

D. In this passage we see that God deals with all of humanity through two representative heads.

E. **Adam**

1. Adam was created in the image of God, with the purpose of living in unbroken communion with God (*intimacy*) and expressing God's purposes throughout creation (*dominion*).

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion" (Gen 1.26-28)

2. Humans were then meant to be God's representatives on the earth by bringing the manifestation of God's character, purposes, and designs to bear on all creation.

⁴What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet (Ps 8.4-6)

3. Adam was given care and authority over the Garden of God. There was only one commandment given to Adam in the pre-Fallen world.

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen 2.15-17)

4. Adam and Eve were tested (tempted) in their trust in God's goodness, his provision, and his ability to make good on his word.

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3.1-5)

5. In sinning, Adam brought upon himself and the created order the reality of death (separation from God, his life, and his purposes). As Paul shows in Romans 5, this reality defines all of humanity after Adam.
6. The reality of sin touches mankind's relationship with God (separation), with one another (alienation and strife), and even with creation itself (subjected to a curse).

F. **Christ**

1. Similarly, the actions of Jesus are essential for the purposes of God and for those who will be found *in* him. Just as Adam's disobedience effects all those who are born *in him* (every person who has been born save Christ himself), Christ's *obedience* effects any and all who are *in him* through faith.
2. This obedience speaks of the complete and perfect submission of Christ to the will of God throughout the *entirety* of his life.
3. Jesus came into the world to accomplish and fulfill the will of the Father.

⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me... ⁷Behold, I have come to do your will, O God (Heb 10.5, 7)

³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me (John 6.38)

4. Jesus was tested (tempted) in the same manner as Adam (and Israel) and did not succumb to disobedience.

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil... ³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" (Matt 4.1-10)

5. Jesus Christ submitted himself fully and perfectly to the Father's will, even to the point of suffering and death.

³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." ³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Matt 26.38-39)

⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil 2.7-8)

⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. (Heb 5.7-8)

6. Through his obedience, Jesus is qualified to offer himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of all those who are in him. His obedience consists of his perfect submission to the will of the Father from the time of his conception to the point of his suffering and death.

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE

A. *Qualified as the Perfect Sacrifice*

1. One of the remarkable implications of Christ's perfect obedience to the Father is that he is *qualified* to be the sinless sacrifice that brings salvation for sins.
2. In the Old Testament, the Passover lamb whose blood was offered as a covering for the sins of the people must be without spot or blemish. This is a type of the *perfection* that would be required for the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish (Exod 12.5)

3. Jesus' sinless obedience to the Father is necessary for him to offer his blood as the perfect Lamb!

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1.29)

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb 9.11-14)

B. *The Great Exchange*

1. The writers of the New Testament demonstrate for us that Christ's righteous obedience to the Father is given to those who are in him in exchange for the washing away of their sins.

²For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5.21)

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit (1 Pet 3.18)

2. For those who are in Christ Jesus, not only are our sins forgiven, but the righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to us as a gift through faith. Now, because of the work of Christ Jesus in his *obedience* to God's righteous law, the righteous requirements of the law can be fulfilled in us.

³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 8.3-4)

C. *The Joy of Holiness*

1. Jesus is the most blessed man who has ever lived — not in spite of walking in obedience to God's will, but precisely *because* of his perfect and complete obedience to it. He not only gives us a perfect portrait of what God is like — but also gives us a perfect portrait of what humans are meant to be.

⁷you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions (Ps 45.7-8)

2. Because of this, we can understand that pursuing obedience to God in faith is the precise way in which we will experience the fullest, most complete joy and satisfaction through all eternity.

D. *A Sympathetic High Priest*

1. One of the most powerful implications that the writer of Hebrews draws from Christ's active and perfect obedience is the reality that he is now a *sympathetic* high priest on our behalf.
2. This means that Jesus understands what it means to be tempted and tested in real ways — yet, he also did not succumb to such temptation in unbelief and disobedience.
3. For Jesus to be a sympathetic high priest does not mean that he validates our experience, or more importantly, that he validates our interpretation of our experience. What it means is that he understands what it means to live in a world that is broken and fallen. He knows what it means to be confronted with the temptation to doubt God's word, his goodness, and his purposes. It even means that he understands what it means to be tempted to draw back in the face of those realities.
4. Yet, he never one time did harden his heart in unbelief. Rather, he fully and perfectly submitted himself in faith to the God who is, and who is a rewarder of those who seek him (cf. Heb 11.6).
5. This means that we can come to him in our time of need and trouble. Not looking for him to validate our experiences or our interpretations — but rather to receive grace (*sustaining power*) and mercy (*God's abundant and tender care*) in our time of temptation and need.

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4.15-16)