

## **The Gospel of Christ Jesus A Faultless Saviour, Luke 23:1-5, 13-17**

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Many years ago, my father-in-law gave a book to my grandfather, and the book was 'The Incomparable Christ', by J. Oswald Sanders. I had a look at the book and liked it so much that I got a copy for myself. The book has many stand-alone chapters, each focusing on one aspect of the Lord Jesus, so the book can either be read as a whole, or bit by bit. One comment in the book really struck me, in the chapter about the sinlessness of Christ. The author wrote along the lines that although the Lord taught us to confess our sins and seek forgiveness, He Himself never apologised, nor took back something He had said, nor sought forgiveness. He was, and is, sinless. And that is a striking thought.

The verses in Luke chapter 23 that we are considering today underline this fact about the sinlessness of Christ. Let's read Luke chapter 23 verses 1 – 5, where we see how the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, declared that he could find no fault with the Lord Jesus:

“Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.” Then Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” He answered him and said, “It is as you say.” So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no fault in this Man.” But they were the more fierce, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.””

As we know, this happened shortly before the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. The context of these verses in Luke is that Jesus had been arrested, tried by the Sanhedrin, and then He had been taken to the Roman governor Pilate, in the hope that Pilate would condemn Him. But Pilate could not find anything at fault with which to accuse Him, and for which to condemn Him. The charges brought forward against Jesus were false. It was simply not true to say that Jesus had forbidden the people to pay taxes to Caesar, because when the Pharisees had attempted to trick Him with their question about whether it was lawful to not to pay taxes to Caesar, the Lord had famously replied, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (Luke chapter 20 verse 25).

It was equally untrue to say that He stirred up the people, in the sense of inciting them to rebellion or to any other unwise or uncontrolled reaction. On the contrary, He taught people the truth, and God's love for them, the way of peace, and their need to repent. Indeed, it is striking to read the following verses in Matthew's Gospel chapter 23, verses 1-4:

“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they

tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.””

In these verses we notice that, far from stirring up the people, even against hypocritical religious leaders, the Lord Jesus preached a message of peace, while at the same time warning against hypocrisy. Here in fact was a great example of how the Apostle Paul later exhorted the Christians to speak: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians chapter 4 verse 6). So there was no way that the false charges levelled against the Lord Jesus would stick.

The account in Luke chapter 23 continues with Pilate sending Jesus to King Herod, for him to examine Him also. Let's return to the account and read verses 13 – 17:

“Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, “You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him” (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).”

Once again, the faultlessness of the Lord Jesus was declared, although why Pilate offered to chastise Him after having just declared His innocence was very unrighteous. Let us consider this aspect of the Lord Jesus' character more closely. What does the Bible tell us about His faultlessness?

We can start with a striking declaration that the Lord Jesus made, which is recorded for us in John's gospel chapter 8 and verse 29. Jesus said,

“And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”

The Lord Jesus stated that He always did the things that pleased the Father, and this was true. Even as a youngster He made His Father's affairs His highest priority. In fact, the earliest recorded words of Jesus are from when He was twelve years old, and Mary and Joseph thought that they had lost Him, and were frantically searching for Him in Jerusalem. In Luke chapter 2 verse 49, we read that the Boy Jesus said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” This underlines His supreme priority, that governed all that He did and said. And we have clear evidence from God the Father, who spoke audibly on two occasions, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The two occasions were the baptism of Jesus, and the transfiguration. You can read about these in Matthew's Gospel chapters 3 and 17.

Interestingly, Matthew also quotes a passage from the forty-second chapter of the prophet Isaiah and applies it to the Lord Jesus. In this prophetic passage, we can read further how God the Father delighted in His Son. Matthew chapter 12 verses 18 – 21 read as follows:

“Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,  
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!  
I will put My Spirit upon Him,  
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

He will not quarrel nor cry out,  
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.  
A bruised reed He will not break,  
And smoking flax He will not quench,  
Till He sends forth justice to victory;  
And in His name Gentiles will trust.”

It is so easy to fall into sin, or compromise, because of the two traps of either self-pleasing or of people-pleasing. I can vouch for this being something I need to watch out for, and I am sure many would agree with me! But the Lord Jesus did neither of these; instead, He pleased his Father. Interestingly, the Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter 15 and verse 3, “For even Christ did not please Himself.” When the Pharisees tried to trick Him with the question about paying taxes to Caesar, which I mentioned earlier, they started off by saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances” (Matthew chapter 22 verse 16, reading from the English Standard Version translation). In spite of their hypocritical question that followed, this comment of theirs was absolutely true! So here we have two clear testimonies in the Scriptures, one showing how the Lord Jesus did not please Himself, and one showing how He did not act as a people-pleaser either.

In fact, the Lord Jesus made another, perhaps even more striking claim. In John chapter 8 and verse 46, He threw out the challenge, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?”

There is no way I would ever issue such a challenge! I am quite well aware of my own sin, and more to the point, other people are aware of my shortcomings too! I can’t think of any sane person who would sincerely and publicly make such a claim. Yet the Lord Jesus did, and it was never shown to be false.

Three of the New Testament apostles and authors confirm the sinlessness of Jesus. Peter writes in his first epistle, chapter 2 and verses 21-22,

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth.””

Paul says that Jesus knew no sin in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21, and John says that in Him there is no sin, in 1 John chapter 3 verse 5.

So we have plenty of evidence and testimony in the Bible that in Jesus, we have a faultless Saviour. Let’s think about why that is important, and how it helps us.

Firstly, it means that He is able to help us when we are tempted to sin. The epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 4 verses 15 – 16, give us encouragement:

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

At the end of the day, sin is our biggest problem and on-going issue. From the outset, the Lord Jesus was the promised Deliverer from our problem of sin. Right at the beginning of His incarnation, the angel said to Joseph, “And she [that is, Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew chapter 1 verse 21). There in a nutshell is the reason for which He came – to save His people from their sins.

What we need, when we are tempted to sin, is someone who can help us who has already proved himself able to overcome, someone who has shown himself to be conqueror of the situation. To give an example, if we were badly struggling with debt, and we were about to go under financially, we would probably not want a debt counsellor who at that very moment was finding it impossible to pay off his or her credit cards! The Lord Jesus is a faultless Saviour, who can truly help us when we are struggling with temptation. He is no stranger to the situation, but He has shown Himself to be a conqueror.

The fact that He is a faultless Saviour also means that He was able to take our sins upon Himself and deal with them fully at the cross. He had no sins of His own that needed dealing with. He was the perfect sacrifice, the perfect substitute. Earlier I quoted from 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 22, where we read about Christ that He “committed no sin.” If we read just two verses further down, that is, verse 24, Peter continues, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.” So Peter brings these two aspects together – the faultless Saviour was the One who was able to, and did, save us from our faults and sins.

If then we have a faultless Saviour, this leads to certain practical consequences. I can suggest three such consequences:

Firstly: we should do what He says.

Secondly: we can trust His word.

Thirdly: we can trust His work for us now.

Let’s consider these one by one. Firstly, we should do what He says. I will be the first to admit that this is not always easy to do! Sometimes I don’t really want to do what He says, if I find it difficult or challenging. But He is a faultless Saviour, and so I, and we all, can trust that what He says will indeed be the right thing to do, leading to an ultimately good and worthwhile result. He is faultless and He is not going to make a mistake. His mother Mary’s advice at the wedding of Cana, shortly before the Lord turned the water into wine, was very good: His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it” (John chapter 2 verse 5).

Secondly, and this is closely connected with our first point, is that we can trust His word. A faultless Saviour would never tell us anything that was untrue. And so when we come to verses of strong encouragement, verses that speak to us about the perfect safety we have in Him, we can be confident. For instance, a favourite verse of mine is John chapter 5 verse 24:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

This is a very encouraging verse. The New King James version starts off “Most assuredly” but I think the English Standard Version’s translation stronger here: “Truly, truly, I say to you.” In the original text it is “Amen, Amen.” The Lord Jesus was stressing the fact that we could have absolute confidence in this marvellous saying of His. A faultless Saviour tells the truth, so I can take the encouragement and security of that verse with confidence. And it pleases the Lord when we put our faith in Him, and in what He says.

A third consequence of having a faultless Saviour is that we can trust His work for us now. The Lord Jesus suffered for our sins on the cross, so that we could receive forgiveness and new life, and that aspect of His work is complete. But His work for us is not over. We learn in the epistle to the Hebrews that Jesus is our great High Priest, and in chapter 7 verse 25, we read:

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

It is a wonderful thought that even now, the Lord Jesus is making intercession for us in heaven. And as He is a faultless Saviour, we can be sure that His intercession is perfect. There is a wonderful old poem called ‘The Great High Priest’, written by Frances Bevan, who lived 1827 – 1909. One of the verses of her poem reads as follows:

He, of old the Man of Sorrows,  
Pleads before the Father's face,  
Knowing all the needed solace,  
Claiming all the needed grace.  
We, so faithless and so weary,  
Serving with impatient will—  
He unwearied in our service,  
Gladly ministering still.

There is a lot of encouragement in this poem! It's wonderful to think of the Lord Jesus knowing all the needed solace – with ‘solace’ being a rather old-fashioned word for help and comfort. Not only does He know all the needed solace, but as the poem says, He claims all the needed grace. He knows what we need, and He prays for us in heaven, making intercession for us, as the verse epistle to the Hebrews that we read tells us. Andrew Murray, in his classic book ‘Abide in Christ’, writes that, “All that Jesus is in heaven, He is for us: He has no interest there separate from ours; as our representative He stands before the Father.” When I read that, I feel that this is an amazing thought! The Lord Jesus is constantly interested in me and my affairs! And yet that is what the epistle to the Hebrews teaches: He always lives to make intercession for [us]. It's a challenge too – what interests do I have? There are, of course, many legitimate interests that take up our time, but what priority do I place on His interests? Is He often in my thoughts?

Well, we have covered a lot of ground already as we have considered together the subject of the Lord Jesus being a faultless Saviour. Let's remind ourselves of some of the main points. We saw how both Pilate and King Herod could not find any fault in Him, and testified to His innocence. The Bible itself is very clear about the fact of the Lord Jesus's sinlessness and faultlessness. Jesus Himself declared that He always did the things that pleased His Father, and we have His Father's own testimony to that truth recorded for us on two occasions, once at His baptism and again at His transfiguration. The Lord Jesus threw out the challenge, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?”, and this has never been answered! The three apostles Peter, John and Paul all testify to the sinlessness of Christ.

We then considered that Christ being a faultless Saviour means that He can really help us when we are tempted. Not only that, but He was the perfect sacrifice for our sins, and we can be sure that His work is complete, so that our forgiveness is a sure and settled matter.

We also thought about three practical consequences of the Lord Jesus's faultlessness. Firstly, that we should do what He says, since He will not make a mistake. Secondly, we can trust His word and His encouragements, because He will always tell us the truth. And thirdly, we can trust His work for us now. His work for us now is a work of intercession, as we read in the epistle to the Hebrews, and we can be sure that He carries out this work faultlessly.

There is still another important aspect of the Lord Jesus's faultlessness that we should consider. Let's do a simple thought experiment. Imagine that we had been invited to a dinner party, and the host was telling us about one of the guests who would be there. If they said something like, ‘She is amazing, she never puts a foot wrong, always says exactly the right thing’, or, ‘I've never known

him to make a mistake, he seems to have the perfect behaviour for every situation', how might we feel about meeting this wonderful guest? I think I would probably feel slightly nervous and ill at ease. I would probably feel like I needed to watch my conversation and behave in a different way to usual. I'm not sure I would be greatly looking forward to meeting them, as I would wonder if they would show me up!

How different it is with the Lord Jesus! He is faultless, and yet we are happy in His presence, even though we know that He knows all about us. He said of Himself, "I am gentle and lowly in heart", and this is true. His faultlessness is an integral part of His character, together with His love, His sympathy, His kindness, and many other wonderful things. And so His faultlessness should be attractive, not something that keeps us away, or keeps us at a distance. This brings me to an amazing truth. He uses His faultlessness for our benefit, putting it to our service, as we have thought about today, in terms of His help in temptation, and in bearing our sins, and in interceding for us now in heaven. How gracious and unselfish! How wonderful to have such a Person as our Saviour! Indeed, the title of this talk says it all – 'A Faultless Saviour.' Faultless, yes, but not as an unattainable example that we will always feel bad about when we compare ourselves with Him. He is not a Faultless Example but a Faultless Saviour. We can rejoice that we know Him and that He knows us, and that we can rely on Him one hundred percent!

Now here is an interesting fact: if you put in the word 'faultless' and do a search in the New King James Version of the Bible, for example on some Bible software or in a concordance, you get two hits for where that English word is used – one in a verse speaking about the old covenant in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and one in these verses in Jude's epistle, verses 24 - 25:

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
To God our Saviour,  
Who alone is wise,  
Be glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever.  
Amen."

So now we are not thinking about a faultless Saviour, but rather that God is going to present us faultless before the presence of His glory! Is that possible? It seems hard to believe, but it is true, because it is in God's word, and it is there for our encouragement. Our faultless Saviour is at work in us, day by day, gradually transforming us into His likeness.

We realise of course that while we are on earth, we are subject to the body of sin, as the Bible tells us, and we know that we all are far from faultless, all the days of our life. We will not achieve sinless perfection down here. John tells us in his first epistle, chapter 1 and verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

But God is at work, transforming us. The apostle Paul says in his second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3 and verse 18,

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,  
just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

It's interesting, isn't it, that it is by looking at Jesus, by considering Him, that we are transformed to become more like Him.

Going back to John's first epistle then, we can take John's words to heart, in chapter 3, verses 2 – 3:

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

So the thought of the Lord Jesus being a faultless Saviour is both encouraging and practical. Not only does His faultlessness qualify Him perfectly for being our Saviour, but we see that God's work in us is to transform us so that we become more like Him.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today message on 'A Faultless Saviour', talk number T1288. I hope it has encouraged you!

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