

## ***We Have An Advocate***

1 John 2:1, 2

There was a knock on the door of our home and when I went to the door, a man was there I did not recognize. I did notice he was parked in front of our house, which was illegal because it was a truck route. I didn't warn him because I assumed he was one of the many bill collectors that plagued my father and mother in those days. I thought, "*If he gets a ticket, it serves him right!*"

It wasn't long, however, until I learned that this stranger was no bill collector. He was an angel, a messenger from God. Actually he was the new preacher for the church where my aunt and uncle were members, and they had asked him to visit my parents. My aunt was my mother's sister, and my uncle was my father's brother. So he had come to meet my folks and try to interest them in the gospel. And somehow, he succeeded, and it wasn't long until he was having regular Bible studies with my family. My mother was baptized, my dad rededicated his life. He had already been baptized as a young man growing up in Oklahoma. My two older brothers soon made the decision to be baptized, and we were all going to worship and Bible study together, for the first time ever in my memory. My little sister was too young at the time for obedience to the gospel, but I was already well into my teenage years, beginning to discover just how pleasurable sin could be.

But as we studied the word of God week after week, an awareness of my being lost before God began to grow in my heart. It wasn't long until I was struggling, knowing what I needed to do, but being afraid to do it. Part of the reason for my fear was that I was beginning to realize that the gospel was offering me a chance to be forgiven of my sins, of being saved. It was offering me the opportunity of going to heaven, of not going to hell. Naturally, I wanted all of that, but at the same time it became a difficult decision for me. It was difficult primarily because I knew that this was a serious commitment on my part. I think I knew somehow intuitively that if I made that commitment and then didn't stay with it, I would be worse off than I already was, that quitters and backsliders probably would probably get the worst punishment of all. So for several weeks the battle raged within me and every service became a battleground as I fearfully resisted the desire to surrender.

Probably others of you can identify with that struggle; that paralyzing fear that we don't want to blow this one chance that we have. We don't want to be a hypocrite, professing one thing but doing another. And I think most of us knew that we wouldn't be able to do it, to live every day without sinning in some way, and so we were afraid to make that decision. I remember thinking that I should put off being baptized until later in life, maybe to when I would be closer to the time when I would die. But then I realized, no one really knows when that time is going to come. And then finally conviction won over and I remember stepping into that aisle, going forward, and telling brother Montgomery that I wanted to be baptized.

Little did I realize, little did I understand what I want to share with you this evening. Had I known then, what I know now, I would not have put off my decision one hour, let alone one

day! Tonight I want to speak to you on the subject, *We Have An Advocate!* Please open your Bibles and read with me from **1 John 2, verses 1 and 2:**

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2) He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

There are so many important lessons for us to learn from these verses and the context surrounding them, but I want to focus in on just three:

- One, that Christians are not supposed to sin,
- and two, that if and when they do sin, they are not supposed to despair,
- and three, when they understand these two lessons, they are not supposed to keep it to themselves.

John writes, *“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.”* Now, when I read that, it immediately tells me several things.

**First of all, it tells me that sin is a choice. If it is possible for Christians to not sin, then it must also be possible for Christians to sin.**

Christians are not supposed to sin, but as far as I can tell, we all do, at least to some degree. But we do have a choice in the matter. It is not simply “I don’t ever sin,” and it is not simply “the devil made me do it!” Nobody, including the devil, puts a gun to my head and makes me sin. Oh no! The person who does that lives right in here (pointing to the heart). The writer James explains how it comes about. In **chapter 1:13-15** we read:

*“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

Sin is the result of us listening to our own desires, and when we give in to those desires far enough, it won’t be long until sin is heading our way!

**Secondly, what John wrote there in verse 1 tells me that sin is serious.**

Sin is so serious, even for the Christian, that it once again requires the Lord to come to my rescue. Last Sunday I talked about sin in greater detail. I said sin is anything that is unlike God, but John wanted to make sure Christians understood what sin was. So, in **1 John 3:4** he gives a very simple definition of sin. He says, *“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”* Sin is going against the will or the law of God that is found in His word. We may do that ignorantly or we may do that arrogantly, defiantly, but either way, sin always involves going against the word of God.

- When God's Word says, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder," and someone pursues divorce, that's sin.
- When God's Word says, "do not lie," and someone plays fast and loose with the truth, that's sin.
- When God says, "Bring up your children in the instruction of the Lord," and someone ignores that and makes little or no effort to teach your children, that's sin.
- When God says forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, and you forsake those assemblies, that's sin!

Sin is serious anytime, but when Christians sin knowingly and willfully it makes a mockery of the sacrifice of Christ and insults the Spirit of Grace. That's what [Hebrews 10:26-29](#) says, isn't it? When Christians sin willfully, it is as if they are saying, "I know you suffered and went to the cross for my sins, and I know you don't want me to do this, but I'm going to do it anyway.

The deliberate and ongoing practice of any sin is serious because it shows that the devil is our spiritual father, and not God. Look at [3:8 & 9](#):

*Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9) No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.*

Sin is serious because when a Christian tolerates the practice of any sin in their life—commission or omission—they are sinning a sin that is unto death. I am afraid that too many people today do not take sin seriously. If it isn't one of the "biggies" too many do not have any real concern. After all, God is a loving, merciful, and gracious God. It is as if people seem to think that if the sin they are committing doesn't bother them that much, that it shouldn't bother God either.

There needs to be a whole lot of sober consideration given to these things. Listen to the words of the apostle Peter, in [2 Peter 2, verses 19-21](#). Peter writes:

*For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. 20) For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21) For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.*

Look at [1 John 5:16-18](#). John says:

*If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life--to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. 17) All wrongdoing is sin,*

*but there is sin that does not lead to death. 18) We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

People have wondered and debated for many years what the sin that leads to death, but I believe John makes that very clear for us. If you will go back over to chapter 3, and read what John wrote there. Almost the whole chapter is given over to a discussion of an ongoing practice of sin. Look at **verse 4**: *“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”*

**Verses 6 - 8**: *“No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 7) Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 8) Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.*

**Verse 9**: *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.*

**Verse 10**) *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

Now drop down to **verse 14**: *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*

The sin that leads to death is what you have when a person is unwilling to repent and cease the practice of any sin. Obviously, that would include even sins of omission when one knows to do good and does not do it. Anytime a Christian stubbornly refuses to do what he or she knows is God's will, clearly they are not longer walking in the light. When they harden their hearts to do right, and they are unwilling to repent and begin to obey God, they put themselves beyond the place where the blood of Christ cleanses them. And that is a very dangerous place to get to!

In 1:9, forgiveness is offered to any Christian who will confess their sin. But what about a person Christian who refuses to stop a sinful practice? Can he or she confess that sin? Or what about a Christian who refuses to do what they know God wants them to do. Can they confess that sin, knowing they are not going to change? Think about that! That's where we see the deceitfulness of sin in all of its ugliness. In some cases, a Christian can get themselves into a position where they no longer see or feel their sin. They lose their sense of guilt. They refuse to repent. Their prayers do them no good. John says, even the prayers of faithful brethren may not do them any good. Isn't that tragic!

So that's the first lesson I take from this passage. You see in 1:3, John said that the reason why he was writing was so they could have eternal life, have fellowship with them, as they had fellowship with the Father and the Son. That's what he wants for them, longs for them, but he

knows, there is no hope for any of that if they become enslaved to sin once again. So John writes to remind them, Christians are not supposed to sin. They are not to take sin lightly.

**The second lesson I take (don't worry) from this passage is that when and if a Christian does sin—and who doesn't?—they are not supposed to despair.** If they do sin, they don't have to despair as if now all hope is lost forever. John assures them, if that happens they have an advocate with the Father, and that advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous one.

Now that brings a couple of questions to my mind immediately.

- First of all, why did John say that? He has just told them that he was writing because he didn't want them to sin, that they are not supposed to sin and then he turns around and gives them an out if they do!
- The second question that comes my mind is why do we still need an advocate when as I preaches this morning, Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins already, a once-and-for-all sacrifice?

Let's look at both of those very quickly and then we will wrap up.

First of all, why did John say to them, after saying to them, *"I write these things to you so that you may not sin," "but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ?"*

The obvious answer, at least to me, is that John went on to say that because he completely understood *"there are none righteous, no not one,"* which is what Paul taught in Romans 3:10. In **Psalm 14:2 & 3**, the scripture says,

*"The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. 3) All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

We may want to, and we may try, and we may pray, and pray, and pray about it, but the fact is, we continue to fall short of the glory of God. Solomon wrote in **Ecclesiastes 7:20**, *"Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins."* And so, our goal, is to not sin, and to sin less and less. At the same time, in actual practice, we never attain that goal. Sinlessness, or moral and spiritual perfection eludes us and that is true for a variety of reasons.

But John wants Christians to know that doesn't mean that our spiritual situation is hopeless once again. It is not like you get one shot at this! And the reason why that is true is not only because of what Christ did for us, in dying on the cross, but what He continues to do for us at the right hand of God as our intercessor. And that is the reason that all sin is not unto death.

John says in verse 2, that *"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world."* In Romans 3:25, the apostle Paul makes it clear that Jesus became our propitiation by dying and shedding His blood on the cross. The word propitiation refers to an act which brings about a forgiveness, a cancelling of a debt, a removal of any wrath or

penalty. It is used with reference to the mercy seat, which was the lid for the ark of the covenant, which is where the annual atonement was made for the Jews under the Law of Moses.

Thus Christ's death on the cross atoned for, or made peace with God for us. In the language of Romans 5, we were reconciled to God. He made a once-and-for-all sacrifice that forever made it possible for all men to be forgiven, but that did not end Christ's work. No, no! In **Hebrews 9:24**, with reference to Jesus, the writer there says, "*But he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*"

You can read almost the same words in **Hebrews 7:24-25**, the writer there speaks about the heavenly priesthood of Christ. He said:

*"but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25) Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

**Romans 8:33-34**, which says:

*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34) Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died (past tense)--more than that, who was raised (past tense)--who is (present tense) at the right hand of God, who indeed is (present tense) interceding for us.*

Christ is at the right hand of God, doing what? He is interceding for us. Now that is not the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit, in taking our prayers for all kinds of things, praise and petitions and for things we really don't know how to ask for. That's a different kind of work. Jesus is interceding for us in the sense that when we sin, we are humbled or humiliated by our failure, and we confess those sins, asking God's forgiveness. That's the intercession Christ is doing for us.

But you might wonder, why does He have to do that? I thought by His dying on the cross it was a done deal. The grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all men (Titus 2:11). All of that is true, but as we know, that didn't mean that all men from that moment on were saved. It simply meant that the offer, or opportunity for salvation was for every man. Until people heard, believed, repented, and were baptized, people were still dying in their sins. And in the same way, Christians do not get a pass on their sins. No, no! It is not as if Christians get a pass, that their sins do not really count. Those very sins, unrepented and unconfessed will lead to their eternal destruction. But, when one repents of those sins, and confesses those sins, John tells us God is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all sin. Every time we sin, and we acknowledge that sin, Jesus goes before the Father yet again with His blood to wash us yet again from those sins.

Jesus made propitiation for our sins but one time, but the advocacy or intercession he makes for us on the basis of that propitiation he does again and again.

Someone has said, “Christ is our attorney and his propitiation is his portfolio. He stands before His Father in heaven, and every time we sin, he doesn’t make a new propitiation. He doesn’t die again and again. . Instead he opens his portfolio and lays the exhibits of Good Friday on the bench before the Judge. Photographs of the crown of thorns, the lashing, the mocking soldiers, the agonies of the cross and the final cry are offered once again.

This dual work of the propitiation of Christ and his advocacy for us in heaven are part of one saving work, and together they make it possible for the Christian to keep from falling into despair over his sin. We cannot say that we have become sinless, and we dare not say, our sins do not matter. But with Christ pleading for us, we know the outcome is sure. Our case is not based upon our perfection, but upon His propitiation! Do you see that? Are you thankful for that?

Well, there is a third thing that I see in these verses—1 John 2:1, 2, and I’ve held you long, so I won’t belabor the point. I just want to drive home one simple point. John says, “*He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*”

Who needs to know about that? And whose responsibility is it that they have a chance to know it?