

Our Advocate with the Father

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[0:00] I fell in love in 1979. Diane and I were already married. We were living with the boys in Yukon.

We were living with the boys in Yukon, Oklahoma, and I was a new believer in Christ. And a fellow believer and fellow FBI agent with whom I worked bought me several Christian books. And one was on how to study the Bible. And I didn't know the difference between Exodus and Romans. I mean, I was clueless. And the very first thing it said was, read the epistle of 1 John every day for a month.

So I got my Bible and I went to the index and found out where 1 John was at and turned to it and I began doing that. Now, in all honesty, I don't know if I did 30 straight days.

But I will say this, I have been reading that epistle ever since. It contains the marks of the genuine Christian. We can never totally plumb depths in this lifetime.

[1:37] But I have had a love affair with 1 John. And you all were thinking something else. But it's 1 John I'm talking about.

The epistle of 1 John is, among other things, about fellowship. Fellowship with the Lord.

Fellowship within the church with one another. It speaks of our fellowship with the triune God. And it clearly speaks of our fellowship as the church.

Well, this evening I want to focus on 1 John chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. And as you turn there, let me start by saying the Bible never endorses sin.

Never. Nowhere in the Word of God do we find permission to commit sin. Now, we do know from reading the first chapter of 1 John that all men sin.

[2:54] And ladies, you're not off the hook. That's a generic term, male and female. All men sin. We also know that sin is never by divine instigation or divine permission.

There was a theology prevalent back when John wrote this inspired book that basically said, since we are saved by grace, we can sin all we want.

That false theology had a big name called antinomianism, a big word, meaning against the moral law.

It was a belief system that is still around today. It is from the pit of hell. Never are believers granted permission to sin.

And there is a danger if we adopt an attitude that since sin is inevitable, it must be allowable.

[4:00] God never wants His children to sin. But what do we do when we do sin? That is what I want to focus on this evening.

And look at your Bibles at 1 John chapter 2 verse 1 to 2. My little children, John employed that phrase many times.

My little children, these things I write to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins. And not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

True followers of Christ are no longer slaves to sin. In our former self, we were. But that's been broken.

[5:03] That can be a difficult concept given the fact that we live in a sin-filled world. But the truth is, we have been given the spiritual tools necessary to have victory over sin.

Sin, for the believer in our age, is a choice. That is true because we've been given a new nature.

A new creation in Christ Jesus. And no one can ever rise above their nature. Unbelievers still live in their sin nature.

And absent Christ do not have the ability, nor even the desire to escape from it. They're happy in their sin nature.

I sometimes hear men who are still dead in trespasses and sin, and I work around many of them, claiming that they have the freedom to choose whatsoever they desire.

[6:10] Fallen men pretend that they can come to God by a mere exercise of free will. Beloved, fallen men have free will.

They have the freedom to choose what sin they're going to commit. There's a broad range of sin that the unsaved can commit, and they can choose which one they want to commit. But this is not true of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. I want you to hear these inspired words of Paul. I took them out of Romans chapter 6.

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its lusts. And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God, for sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

The law of God is described in Scripture as the taskmaster. It was perfect, it was holy, but it was a taskmaster.

[7:33] It was the schoolmaster. It makes demands on people, but it does not provide the means by which it is to be kept.

That was not written into the law. The law condemns, but was powerless to save. The law of God was never intended to save.

It was intended ultimately to drive us to the Savior that did keep it perfectly. We look at the law, it reflects back on us, it shows us our sinfulness, drives us to Christ.

Now, over and against the demands of the law, we find the grace of God expressed in the life of Christ. Believers are drawn to this grace by the unmerited, unearned, undeserved favor of God. We do not deserve this grace, nor can we earn it. It is a gift of God, and it is based entirely upon His mercy.

[8:46] Entirely upon His mercy. As much as men like to pretend that God did not bestow mercy on any of His creatures, because He saw in us a spark of deserved mercy, and many live that false belief, it just didn't happen that way.

That would be salvation by merit, however slight. God looked down the course of time, He saw this guy, oh, oh boy, look at that, He's praying a prayer, He's going to get saved.

I've got to save Him. That's merit. And the Bible never teaches that salvation is by merit, even a tiny bit. It is by undeserved mercy.

Any salvation by merit is not true salvation. The Scriptures tell us that God will have mercy. Well, who's He going to have mercy on? Upon whom He will have mercy.

There's a paradox in all of this. In 1 John 1, 9, the followers of Christ are given an absolute assurance of forgiveness.

[10:03] That verse, which you should all have memorized, is if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us that sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Through the avenue of confession, God will forgive us and cleanse us from the filth and unrighteousness that permeates our life.

If we know that we're going to be forgiven in advance, why wouldn't we conclude that we enjoy the ability to sin? You know, all I've got to do is sin, confess it.

This pattern, this unbroken pattern. Is not the true believer free to sin since he possesses the tools of forgiveness?

That sounds logical, but in practice, it simply does not happen this way. In fact, it is the undeserved forgiveness that we receive that makes us desirous of not sinning against so great and a compassionate God as we have.

[11:10] Why would I want to offend this God, although I do daily? Why would I want to? He's bestowed upon me great grace, great mercy, purchased by the death, burial, and resurrection of his son.

Dr. Rogers used to say this, the sinner leaps into sin and loves it, the Christian lapses into sin and loathes it. I had a man, a visitor to this church, not a member, but he came to me several weeks ago and he said, I'm just worried.

I don't think I'm saved. I still sin. I just, I'm worried sick I'm not saved. I said, look, the unregenerate don't worry about that. Only people that have been or are being regenerated by the blood of Christ

worry about that.

The mere fact you're worried about it tells me that you're on track here. And we went further into that. Dr. Barnhouse told young men in his church who were struggling with past sins, a story that he found very helpful to them.

There was a young man who, while unsaved, fell into deep personal sin. He became involved with prostitutes, with alcohol. After living a life of sin, he was converted in what he described as a miraculous rescue mission on the part of God.

[12:39] He met a woman in the church, fell deeply in love with her. He wanted to marry her, and she him, but he felt it necessary to explain to her his past without Christ.

His great fear was that he would one day be drawn back into that lifestyle. After describing his failures to this beautiful Christian woman, she kissed him and said she understood her Bible, and she understood the workings of Satan.

She knew that her husband was thoroughly converted, but she also knew that he, like all true believers, still had a war within them, an unredeemed flesh, a sin nature with which to battle. She explained that Satan would often attack him at his weakest point. She told her husband to expect temptations to come his way.

She went on to say that the day could come when he would give in to a particular temptation. She prayed that it would not happen, but knew in her heart that it could happen.

[13:59] If that day ever came, Satan would then try and convince him that all was lost and his life was ruined. And this marvelous Christian woman went on to tell him that if he failed, Satan would convince him to hide that fact from her.

But remember, she said, this is your home. This is where you belong. She concluded by saying this, I grant you full pardon and forgiveness in advance for any evil that may come into your life.

Dr. Barnhouse used this example many times in counseling situations. Most would conclude by stating that if anything would keep a man on the straight and narrow, it was having a wife with that level of love and forgiveness.

And I'm confident that my wife would react the same way. Etched on my tomb still would be the words, I forgave him. John says, if we sin, and I'm sure you all noticed that phrase in the aorist subjective, subjunctive, third class conditional tense.

I know Mike jumped right on that as I did. The words literally read, if anyone sins, and it will happen. God has said, we don't have to sin, but we definitely will.

[15:26] It sounds like an oxymoron, but it's not. God understands the power and attractiveness of sin even to those of us who've been given a new nature.

Now the operative word in our verse tonight is advocate. That's what we want to talk about. All that was in the introduction. We want to talk about the advocate. It is a legal term, both in the Greek language and in English.

It means literally one called alongside of or one who speaks in our defense. The actual word advocate only occurs in John's writings.

We often refer to an advocate as a defense lawyer, a defense attorney. That is a good analogy, but it falls short in what the Spirit of God is trying to convey through this epistle.

A lawyer in an American courtroom A lawyer in an American courtroom defends his client based upon the merit of his case. The lawyer tries to convince the jury or the judge that his client is an honest man and can be believed.

[16:48] It has been my experience since 1971 when I joined law enforcement that there are more than a few defense attorneys who don't like to stick to the facts.

The problem is their clients don't have a smidgen of merit. And what they did doesn't have any merit. They try and build merit into a very unmeritous situation.

When looking at our divine advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ, the analogy of a human lawyer falls far short.

Our lawyer, Jesus Christ, defends us before the throne of the Father based not upon our merit. Aren't you glad? We have no merit. The Lord Jesus Christ as our advocate defends us before the great eternal judge based solely upon His merit.

[18:00] Boy, that's major. That is major. Get that down. That is absolutely astonishing. And let me say, and I'm going to add this for free. There will be no charge for this.

That separates us from the world's religions. You know, name anyone you want to name. That separates us. Astonishing. The case presented by our advocate is believed by the divine judge because the judge, and of course you all know I'm speaking of God the Father, is intimately and eternally aware, He's aware of and trusts the merit of the defense attorney who happens to be His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Father trusts the advocate. And let me add something else in there that there's another in the room there advocating against us, Satan, and the Father doesn't trust him.

He trusts the Son. the Father knows that the Son is always motivated by holiness and righteousness.

John tells us that the name of the advocate is Jesus Christ, the righteous, or the righteous one. His advocacy is motivated by His righteous character.

[19 : 35] It's His merit. unlike human lawyers, the righteous Christ does not have to lie, nor does He have to mislead the judge.

And trust me, I'm in a world where defense attorneys do that all the time. They do it all the time. He presents His case faithfully and with perfection based on who He is and what He has accomplished at the cross.

that is the basis of His advocacy. When we sin, our advocate can go to the Father and say, Father, that sin, it occurred.

It happened. But it was covered by my blood. And the Father, and we'll get to this, will say, I'm satisfied.

God. And that's where we learn another word here, a big one, propitiation. That is a word used in the King James. The NIV calls the Lord our atoning sacrifice.

[20 : 46] King James, our propitiation. Propitiation was originally used in pagan literature to describe the appeasing of angry gods.

us. Well, our God does not direct His anger toward His blood-bought children. Toward us, He is a loving and gracious God.

The actual concept of propitiation is a critical Bible doctrine essential to the Christian faith. And yet, we don't use it much anymore or plummet deaths.

In theological terms, it means an appeasement, God is appeased, or a satisfaction. God is satisfied. What was satisfied? Well, there's only one possible answer to that. God's wrath was satisfied. He had a righteous wrath toward all sin.

[21 : 43] In the case of a believer, where that sin has been atoned for, he is satisfied with the atonement. He is satisfied with the finished work of Christ on the cross.

How do we know that the father was satisfied? The resurrection. He put his stamp of approval when he rolled the stone away. And by the way, he didn't roll the stone away to let Jesus out, he rolled the stone away to let the world in, to see that the tomb was empty.

God's wrath was satisfied. It comes from a Greek word referring to the sacrifice of atonement required to placate God's wrath.

As followers of Christ living in an age of grace, we don't often think of God's wrath. In fact, I've long maintained we have never had an accurate picture of the depth of depravity in which men fell in original sin back in the garden.

Sin was introduced into the human race by our original parents in the garden of Eden. Sin already existed because of Lucifer and fallen angels that came before the garden, but its introduction into the human race came in the garden.

[23 : 01] When that occurred, enmity was introduced between God and man. What is that? A war broke out. It raged, it rages to our day.

Fallen man continues to sin and a holy God continues to have wrath toward us. Now, toward sin and sinners. Let me just say to you that God is long suffering, he's patient even with the unbelievers, he's not willing that any should perish, but that day is going to come to an end. That day is going to come to an end. God, when enmity war broke out, God designed, he'd already designed, a way of peace for fallen mankind.

It was the cross of Christ on which the Savior died. In fact, in Genesis 3.15, you read the first messianic promise. I'd suggest you go do that this evening.

Think of the cross as a peace treaty, as a peace treaty. All who signed that treaty by faith and the finished work of Christ are at peace with God.

[24 : 18] His wrath is appeased and God is now satisfied. There were many types and symbols of this in the Old Testament.

The prophets spoke of the mercy seat, which was the propitiation system in the days of old. And all of that was looking to Christ who would come.

Don't get bored with the penitent. Don't get bored with Leviticus and Numbers. That's Christ. They're talking about Christ. They're pictures of Christ.

The mercy seat was the actual lid or covering on the Ark of the Covenant. It existed between the Shekinah cloud that was above the Ark and the tablets of law that were inside the Ark.

The high priest would sprinkle blood from the sacrifices on it and by that act appropriate forgiveness, temporary, forgiveness for the sins of the people.

[25 : 21] It was all a picture of Christ. And sadly, many of us only know about the Ark of the Covenant by watching Raiders of the Lost Ark. And you're not going to get a whole lot of theology on watching Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Propitiation or appeasement was necessary because of sin. Sin offends God. Atonement had to be made.

In fact, the Bible in the Old Testament is very clear, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. There's no atonement for sin. Christ offered perfect blood of an eternal atonement that was provided.

So interesting in the Old Testament in the temple, and it existed a few years into the New Testament, you know, there was always activity, but there were no seats. Priests never sat down. Why? Work wasn't done. There was always another sin to atone for. Bring in another lamb, we got more sin. Sacrifice it. No seats. Hebrews says when Christ atoned, he sat down at the right hand of the Father.

[26 : 33] It was a completed work. It was completed. There are no other sacrifices necessary, and no other sacrifices possible.

Sin is horribly egregious to God. It must be atoned for, and there's only two ways that can happen. Only two ways. Either the sinner must spend eternity in hell, never able, but always trying to make payment for that unforgiven sin.

He or she can never get out of there because it's not enough to atone. Or two, the sinner must repent, receive the merit of Christ that satisfies, there's that word, propitiation, satisfies for all time God the Father.

There is not a third method of paying the sin debt. It doesn't exist. Christ alone is worthy of being received by the Father.

Those cloaked in Him may enter in through the blood covenant He established. Note also the verse says that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

[27 : 53] That phrase has been subject to great debate over the centuries. Whole denominations have risen as a result of how one chooses to interpret that message.

Well, let me not tell you what I don't know, let me tell you what I know. This I know. Whomever Christ has died for will be with Him in glory forever.

I know that. And if Christ has died for your sins, atoned, and you are now spotless before the Father, you will be there with Him.

Of that I'm absolutely certain. And as I've already stated, there is no other sacrifice for sins available or necessary. His sacrifice is sufficient.

The sacrifice of Christ alone is able to bring a sinner spotless before God. The sinner himself is not spotless from human sin or effort.

[28 : 53] He or she has been made spotless by Christ who has granted them salvation through His work on the cross. I love 2 Corinthians 5 21. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Christ was never a sinner. Please understand that. He was never a sinner. He committed no sin but He did not become a sinner.

He became sin. He took all our sins and nailed them to the cross through His body. Someone has put it this way and I think it's beautiful.

Christ imputed His righteousness to our account and we imputed our sins to His account.

The passage that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world should never be interpreted as a statement on universalism. That is a false belief system that teaches everybody is going to heaven.

[30:01] It doesn't matter who you are, atheist, agnostic, Hindu, it doesn't matter. I can name a hundred. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what you believe, it doesn't matter what you've done, you're going to heaven.

We have a universalist church in this town and they're quite interesting. the scriptures teach that some people are already in hell and others are going so that theology is not going to hold up under divine scrutiny.

There is another belief system on this passage and millions have inculcated it into their denominational system. It teaches that atonement made salvation possible for everyone but did not actually save anyone.

just made it theoretically possible that it is now up to the individual to get himself saved by making a right choice. That sounds neat and clean until you read Romans chapter 3 where it says there's none who choose God, there's none who understand, there's none who seeks God.

It sounds really neat and clean but it's fraught with problems. First it makes salvation man centered and not God centered. It conjures up for me an image of the father and son sitting in heaven hoping that someone gets himself or herself saved today.

[31:25] I mean can you picture the father and the son sitting there wringing their hands and the father says son no one got saved and he said I know father but maybe tomorrow they'll get saved. That's not God.

I sometimes use this with my Arminian friends on that passage in Revelation where it says Jesus stands at the door and knocks doors like like he has no way to get through that.

Folks he can kick that door off the hinge. I mean he's the almighty God. He's the almighty God.

Don't misinterpret that passage. Second Christ is not inert.

Jesus is not sitting around wringing his hands hoping that someone will accept him. He is active in the salvation of his people.

when Christ died people were actually saved. You know who got saved when he died on the cross? We did.

[32:25] So I would have been alive or you were in his mind. He saved he actually saved people. All that the father gives Christ will come to him and Christ will cast no one out that comes to him.

When Christ died he had real individual people on his mind. I've been working for years on a song I'm going to write. When he was on the cross I was on his mind.

I'm going to give up and get Jonathan or Dorlene to help me write that thing. When he was on the cross we were on his mind. The sacrifice of Christ was sufficient for all people but efficient for only those who are being saved.

So we have an actual atonement for people who believe. And we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous one.

And I want to close by mentioning the position of our advocate. He stands before the Father making intercession for us.

[33:36] That is very interesting. you may recall in your studies there came a time when Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin and please understand what that is.

In ancient Israel that was the President, the Congress, the Senate, the House, and the Supreme Court all in one. Jesus stood there and was judged by them.

Can you imagine? The judge of the universe? Judged by them, by the high priest. And the high priest got just a little frustrated, so he placed Christ under an oath.

And he said, tell us if you are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus looked at him and he said, I am.

And if that doesn't put chills down your spine, you need to go back and do some more study. He used the same identification that he used when he spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

[35:02] Moses said, who do I tell him sending me? He said, I am. Tell them I am that I am. Tell them I am has sent you. He went on to say to the high priest that one day that priest, that high priest, would see Jesus returning to this earth on the clouds of heaven and that he would see him seated at the right hand of the father.

It was at that point the high priest tore his robe and said, what further need do we have? He is already blasphemed here. Let's go get the Romans to kill him. Sitting at the right hand of the father was a position of the prosecutor or of the judge.

Now, remember Stephen. we call him the first church martyr. Stephen's being stoned to death. Saul, who was later, Paul's over there holding the coats. Here, let me hold your coats. You can throw the rocks harder. And Stephen gazes into heaven and he says, I see the Son of God standing before the Father. Christ was not seated at the right hand of the Father when Stephen was being ushered into heaven. The position of standing is the one taken by our attorney, by our advocate. [36 : 43] Right now, Christ is standing before the Father, defending his children based solely on his merit. He ever lives to make intercession for us. And aren't we glad? I'm so happy that his defense of me is not based on my merit. I don't have any to break to you. Mighty God, we serve.