

(1 John #8) an Advocate With God

by J. Glyn Owen

We have an advocate with God, Jesus Christ the righteous, who pleads our case and provides us with a sufficient provision for our sins.

Duration: 37:31

Scripture: Matthew 5:28-29, Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:6-10

Topics: "Advocate"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on two main sections: the solemn predicament of a Christian who has fallen into sin and the sufficient provision for forgiveness. The predicament is described as losing composure, hope, and joy due to feeling the absence of God's fatherly care and goodness. The preacher emphasizes the fear of God's judgment and the loss of prayer and fellowship with Him. However, the sufficient provision for forgiveness is found in Jesus Christ, who is described as the propitiation for our sins. The preacher highlights the importance of recognizing the seriousness of sin and the need for repentance, while also emphasizing the power of Christ's sacrifice and intercession on our behalf.

Transcript

Now let us turn prayerfully to the first epistle written by John and to the second chapter, reading verses one and two. Before we read these verses, may I remind you that as we have been meditating upon this very remarkable treatise, we have seen that beginning with verse six in chapter one and proceeding to verse two in chapter two, there would appear to be three subsidiary sections. Each begins with the words, if we say.

If we say, you have it in verse six, if we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness. Then you have it in verse eight, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Then again in verse ten, if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

Now, these three sections are very similar in that John does the same thing in each case. In the first place, he states a claim made by some folk or other that is of no substance. It is false, it is futile.

It is the claim in verse six to have fellowship with God whilst we walk in darkness. That's not possible. In verse eight, it is the claim to have no sin in our nature.

It can't be true, says John. And in verse ten, if we say we have not sinned, we have not committed acts of sin, that again simply cannot be. There is no man who sins not, says the scripture.

Now, having thus presented the faulty approach, John corrects it. He passes judgment and then he proceeds to a correction of that which is false. Now, in this particular little passage before us, beginning with verse ten in chapter one and proceeding to verse two in chapter two, there are three divisions, two of which we've considered.

We've considered the abortive profession concerning acts of sinning, verse ten in chapter one. If we say we have not sinned, then, says John, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. We've dwelt upon that.

Then also, we have dwelt upon the opening words in verse one in chapter two. The avowed intention of the apostle in writing. He says, these things I write unto you, my little children, their chief sin not.

Here, then, is the avowed intention. This is the purpose, this is the goal, this is the reason for his writing. And those two things we have considered.

Now, one thing remains, namely, God's adequate provision for Christian living. And that is what we have in the remainder of verse one and going on into verse two, which I will now read. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not, and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And he is the propitiation for our sins. And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Here, then, is our theme for today.

And we can easily divide what remains in these two verses into two main sections. First of all, we are going to look at the solemn predicament that is here envisaged, and then the sufficient provision that is here assured. The predicament that is envisaged is the predicament of a Christian having fallen into sin.

And I think you will see in a moment why I deliberately choose the word predicament. That is suggested, I believe, by the entire language of the section. But let's take it little by little.

The solemn predicament envisaged, that if any man sin. Once again, we encounter what appears to me to be the wonderful equipoise, the balance of Scripture. We have here, on the one hand, Christian idealism at its very highest and loftiest.

These things I write unto you, that ye sin not. But then, on the other hand, we have what we may speak of as Christian realism. The New Testament writers never bury their heads under the sand.

They never shirk the facts of the case. They look into the eyeball of reality, and they see what is there, and they address themselves to real situations. If any man sin.

Now, Christian idealism, as we have it here, is not to be glossed over. It is enshrined in the faith. It is an essential ingredient.

These things I write unto you, that ye sin not. Such is the provision of divine grace. Such is the glory of our Saviour.

Such is the power of God unto salvation in Christ. That sin is no longer inevitable for any believing man or woman. Now, my friends, I don't know whether we have really pondered over this.

Such is the nature of Christian salvation. Such is the glory of God in Christ. Such is the provision of God through Christ by the Spirit and the Word.

That sin is no longer inevitable. I fear that many of us fall into sin because we have a sneaking suspicion that, well, there is no other way. Everybody sins.

It's through Jesus Christ as the Saviour, but God doesn't expect me to overcome every temptation. And we treat sin as if it were inevitable. Now, we can't have it both ways.

Jesus Christ is a perfect Saviour. He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by Him. Thou shalt call His name Jesus because He shall save His people from some of their sins.

Now, don't throw your shoes at me. I know I misquoted the scripture. That's not what it says.

Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins. Now, some of them. In Him, all the fullness of the Godhead resides bodily.

By Him, the unfailing grace of God is mediated and we may avail ourselves of all that. So that sin is not a necessity in any life. With the temptation, says Paul, there is always a way of escape.

Now, it's very difficult for us to take this in, isn't it? We want to excuse ourselves and we want to say, well, I couldn't do anything else. It's not true, my friends. You cannot have the doctrine of a perfect Saviour and a full salvation and then say, it was necessary for me to sin.

The provision of a Saviour such as Jesus Christ means that sin henceforth is inexcusable. I don't have to sin. Satan is strong.

The world's enticements and allurements are many and equally strong. But I have a Saviour who is stronger. Where sin abounded, grace much more abounds.

He reigns in life and He ever lives to make intercession for us. The fact that the total mastery of temptation, over-temptation, is only being slowly and gradually appreciated by any man and appropriated, does not mean to say that Jesus Christ cannot serve to the uttermost. Now, this Christian idealism is not a false teaching introduced by one apostle more than another.

It is not a false train in the biblical doctrine of grace. What John is doing here is really applying what he's heard from his master. Jesus Christ Himself taught men, for example, and this is purely illustrative of the principle, He taught men that they should not simply abstain from committing adultery, but from looking to lust.

And He went on to say to them that it was better in the cause of righteousness to tear out an offending right eye rather than sin, and to dismember a right hand rather than sin. He treated sin as something terrible, and it is possible for us, if we're prepared to pay the price, to overcome Christian idealism. But nevertheless, and this is the balance of it, you see, oh, that the Lord would make us balanced like this.

This is the summons, this is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and we must never allow anything else to dominate our thinking. Anything that detracts from this. I write unto you that ye sin not, but if any man sin.

Now, that word if, that hypothetical if there, does not imply that John considers that there are only a few who do sin. I'll tell you how I can say that so dogmatically. It's just because of what he says in verse 10.

If we say we have not sinned, and the implication is at any given time, then we make him a liar and his word is not in us. In other words, John is conceding that God's people do sin, all of them sin, and we sin with a measure of regularity. Now, I'll have to qualify that later on.

So that we cannot say at any given time that we have not sinned. But even so, says John, it is not necessary, it is not inevitable that we sin, though it is the general practice among us that we do. Moreover, the imagery of the passage envisages precise exigency that emerges at this point.

Now, what happens when a Christian sins? When a Christian sins. Let's ask another question first of all. What image may we take from the New Testament to describe the relationship between God and His people as His people walk in obedience to Him? I suppose the best picture is the picture of a father in relation to his children, his family, with the perfect relationship coming to fruition more and more.

Father, children. The father enjoying the confidence of his children, delighting in the obedience of his children, and the children correspondingly having confidence in their father, having a respect for him so that they honor his laws and they worship his person and they receive his word and they trust him implicitly. Now, this is one of the images that describes the general and what ought to be the consistent experience of Christian people.

We ought to be enjoying the fatherly countenance of our God and His fatherly care and His fatherly interest in us. This surely is what our Lord has in mind when He teaches His disciples, taught His disciples of old, and teaches us today to pray in the way the Lord's prayer suggests we should pray. We should ask our Father for all our needs, spiritual and material, everything we need, and then we should live a life of dependence upon Him under His fatherly care and His fatherly eye.

But now, what happens when a Christian sins? What happens when a Christian sins is something of this order, and you see it reflected here. The Christian knows better than anyone else what sin is. He knows that sin is a violation of God's law.

What's more, the Christian knows that when he sins, he sins against the very one who loved him in eternity and who loves him still. So that there is something to a Christian sinning which is distinctive. The sin of the worldling is terrible.

The sin of the unbeliever is gross and serious. But the sin of a Christian is, in a sense, far more so. Because, you see, the Christian does not only sin against the law of God and the God of the law, he sins against love.

He despises the love that has sought him and found him and blessed him and cares for him. And he says, no, no, I will not let that love curb me. I'll leap over it.

Now, what then happens is this. I become less and less aware of the fatherly countenance and the fatherly interest of God in me, and I become more and more conscious of God as judge, of God as standing over against me, of God as being displeased with me, of God as being able justly to condemn me. And if my standing before God depended upon my own righteousness, I would immediately there and then be lost.

And so, you see, when a Christian sins, he loses his peace. He loses his composure. He loses his hope.

He loses his joy because he loses the sense of the fatherly care and goodness of God and he becomes more and more aware of the fact that his father is now the judge, a judge who is holy and righteous and has condemned the very thing that the man of God has done. In other words, the image that emerges now in a man's mind, in a man's thought, in a man's consciousness, is the image more of a court of law than of a home. And I become aware of the accusations against me.

I become aware of the fact that God may judge me and has every right to judge me. And I become afraid of God. Now, this is the exigency.

When a man or woman is afraid of God in this sense, you see, prayer loses its virtue, loses its value. Fellowship with God becomes non-existent. And all the promises of the Bible, they mean next to nothing to me.

Life has become something altogether different from what it was meant to be. Now, I may be speaking to someone who is in that precise condition today. Because you know that you have sinned, you have ceased to have confidence in God, you feel that He is against you rather than for you.

Because of that, you cannot come to the throne of grace with any confidence at all. That's the exigency. That's the predicament I'm talking about.

The predicament that has arisen is this. Because a believer has sinned, a believer who knows God to be holy, a believer who knows sin to be ugly, a believer who sins not only against law but against love at one and the same time, then when he sins, his conscience is aroused and his memory becomes a chamber of horrors and everything accuses him. And it puts him in such a turmoil.

Or it ought to. Now, that is the predicament envisaged here. And my text provides us with what John announces as the sufficient provision for such an exigency.

If any man sin, what then? Must I break my heart? Am I lost forever? Does God the Father condemn me to outer darkness when as a Christian I sin? What then? Listen to my own text. We have an advocate with God. Jesus Christ the righteous.

And He is the propitiation for our sins. And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Which in a nutshell means this.

We have one with the Father who can cope with this situation too. The sufficient provision assured. We have an advocate with the Father.

Now, this morning I simply want to say a word about the advocacy of Jesus Christ. And I want to proceed, God willing, next Sunday morning to say something about its total adequacy. We need nothing more.

The advocacy of Jesus Christ. Over against the fearful situation caused by the believer's transgression of God's law and disregard of His love, the Apostle points the true Christian to the glorious objective fact that there in the presence of God we have what he speaks of as an advocate. However grave the sin, however angered God may be, however enraged our own consciences, however frightened our spirits, however downcast our souls, if you are a true believer and if Jesus Christ is your Saviour, right then, in the presence of God, you have an advocate.

Now, it is illuminating to remember that the word used here for advocate is the same word as Jesus used of the Holy Spirit. When in John chapters 14 to 16 He was introducing the coming Holy Spirit to the disciples. You remember the occasion.

Jesus said that He was going to be with the Father, going to prepare a place for them. And then He said, I'm not going to leave you comfortless, but I will send to you another comforter, paracletos. Now that's exactly the same word that we have here.

Jesus says, I am sending you another paracletos, implying of course that He was one paracletos. John tells us exactly that here. We have a paracletos with the Father, a paraclete in heaven.

Now, in rabbinical literature, the corresponding word has reference to a friend of an accused or of a prisoner who comes alongside of him into a court scene to speak on his behalf. In other words, the whole imagery now is one of a court of law. Someone is accused of something.

Into the court there comes someone who knows the individual that is accused, who can say something on his behalf and perhaps who can plead for leniency or something of that kind. Stott puts it in his IVF commentary, it was particularly used in the law courts of a barrister, whose responsibility it was, as counsel for the defense, to plead the cause of the person on trial. It can stand for anybody that says anything in favor of the person in the dock, but very especially of the barrister for the defense.

Dare I rephrase my text then? If any man sin, we have a barrister for the defense. We have one who is able to plead our case and our cause, not before men, but before God. There are therefore two advocates in Scripture.

And though it is not my purpose this morning to speak at any length about the two, will you notice this, we really need to appreciate this, if we are to be encouraged by the Scriptures as we ought to be and need to be encouraged. There are two advocates that function in the salvation of men. Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father.

He pleads our case before God. The Holy Spirit is Christ's advocate in the hearts of His people. The Holy Spirit has come into our hearts to plead the case of Jesus Christ, to plead His merits and deserts when we would tend to rebel, to remind us of His claims and of His lordship and of His resources, to bring into our minds and into our memories all we need to remember about Him so that we may honor Him and have faith in Him and obey Him and respect Him.

If you forget either of these two advocates, my friend, you'll be the poorer because of it. But now we have an advocate with the Father, whilst aiming, as John has been saying in this context, whilst aiming at not sinning, we nevertheless sin. At that very moment, says John, don't be over downcast because at that very moment there is standing before God one who is able to deal with your case.

We have an advocate with God. As usual, some of the hymn writers have said this very well. I've been browsing this week, for example, on C.O. Bancroft's lovely hymn and Charles Wesley's, and there are others too.

Can I just refer to one or two? Do you remember these words? Before the throne of God above, says Bancroft, I have a strong, a perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me. My name is graven on his hands.

My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart. When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look, see the eye of faith.

Here's the man of faith. Upward I look and see him there, who made an end of all my sin. I'll take Charles Wesley.

Arise, my soul, arise, shake off thy guilty fears. The bleeding sacrifice in thy behalf appears. Before the throne my surety stands.

My name is written on his hands. He ever lives above for me to intercede, his all-redeeming love, his precious blood to plead, his blood atoned for every race, and sprinkles now the throne of grace. And the last verse, the most significant of all.

Five bleeding wounds he bears, received on Calvary. They poor effectual prayers, they strongly plead for me. Forgive him.

Oh, forgive, they cry, nor let the ransomed sinner die. We have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ the righteous, and he's the propitiation for our sins.

Here then is a truth of the profoundest import and of the most far-reaching significance. Jesus Christ does not simply forgive the totality of a person's sin at the moment of his conversion. He does that.

But he stands with us, and he is able to meet the exigency that arises when at any moment in my life I as a believer sin and sense the frown of the heavenly Father upon me. At that very moment when I fear and when I dread and when I cannot look into my Father's face, we have an advocate with God. Now, I just want to say a word in application of this, and then we're through for this morning.

Here, my friends, is something that we simply cannot gloss over. I believe this morning that it is not going too far to say that according to the measure that we appreciate this cardinal truth, do we learn to know not only peace with God but the peace of God in the midst of the world's turmoil and temptation and evil. Now, here is a confidence that we should all enjoy.

John has been describing and announcing a genuine comfort given to God's people and given us to enjoy. He told us in the first chapter, I'm writing these things, he says, that your joy might be full. God is concerned about your joy and mine.

And it is only insofar as our joy is full and our peace is like a river, the river of God, that we can be a testimony to the world. Now then, if our joy is to be full, here is a confidence to enjoy. Christ has died to save men from the totality of the sin that was ours when we turned to him.

We know that, don't we? This is the gospel. Whenever there is a man who is prepared to repent of his sin and to believe in Christ, we can say to him, Christ died for all your sins. He will cast them all behind his back.

But Christ lives who died. And the Christ who died lives to deal with individual sins as they arise. In the presence of God we have an advocate who can deal with the exigency arising from every single act of sin.

A confidence to enjoy. Have you got that confidence this morning? Do you see that Jesus Christ is not a paper Savior, but a proper Savior? Not an ideal in the mind, but a real Savior to save. Now, not only do we

have there the confidence that we ought to enjoy, but I want to remind you again in these closing moments of the context in which the whole thing is explained.

If you take this out of its context, you can make anything of it. The context involves these two things. Firstly, the advocacy of Jesus Christ is not to be understood as if he were in any wise to minimize the gravity of our sin over against a God who frowns upon sin.

Jesus Christ does not minimize the gravity of sin. He does not plead with an unwilling God to forgive us. That's not the point.

Jesus Christ, our advocate, is Jesus Christ the righteous. He is as righteous as the Father. He is holy as the Father.

So he takes exactly the same view of our sin as the Father does. We must not, therefore, for one moment think of Jesus Christ as pleading with the Father to do something that the Father is unwilling to do. That's not the message.

Secondly, the advocacy of Jesus Christ is not promised to men and women who trifle with sin. Please mark this. This comfort is not for everybody.

It's only for the Christian man. It's for the Christian man whose goal in life is that we sin not. Who has received a new nature.

The very nature of the Lord Jesus himself. The Holy Spirit into the heart. A new life.

And who, therefore, wants to avoid evil. Or, put positively, who wants to please his God. Who wants to please the Father.

Now, this is a basic feature of every regenerate man and regenerate woman. A man who is born again of the Spirit of God will want to please his Father. He will want to do what is right.

John goes on in this epistle to say that we must be righteous. That's what he means. Basic to all righteousness is the desire to please God.

The desire to obey Him. And every Christian man is necessarily a man who desires to do what is right. Very well.

It's only to such people that this promise avails. In other words, if you're still not wrenched from evil. If the backbone of sin has not been broken.

If your bondage with sin has not been broken. If Christ has not come into the prison cell and made you free. Then this promise is not for you.

Until you receive Him as your Savior. And let Him tear you loose from the Adamic stock. Incorporate you into His own body.

Breathe His Spirit into you. Make you a new creature and a new creation. That must be my last word.

Is Jesus Christ your Savior this morning? Do your arms of faith move around Him? Do you speak of Him honestly in your heart as your own Lord Jesus Christ? Has He wrought a work of grace in your heart? I'm not asking whether it's complete. I'm not asking whether it's mature. I'm not asking whether it's finished.

That's irrelevant. The question is this. Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Has He begun a good work of redemption and transformation? Then as sure as He has.

Oh, take this. Spirit of God, write it upon our every heart. As sure as that is so.

Then if any man sin. He, she has an advocate with the Father. At the moment of transgression.

Despite the gravity of it. And the one who stands in the presence of God is able to make all grace abound toward us. To forgive the sin.

To cleanse the unrighteousness. To renew the fellowship. And to build us up in our most holy faith.

My friend, let's go out from this service this morning in the knowledge that Jesus Christ has not simply taken away the sins of our past lives. Blessed and glorious truth that that is to every penitent sinner and believing man or woman. But let us go out in the knowledge that as sin emerges.

He is competent to deal with it now. So that the Father's frown against sin does not transform Him into a judge. He still is my Father and receives me in His Son.

Let us pray. Blessed God our Father. Thou knowest our need this morning of this word from the scriptures.

Sometimes we are unaware of the measure of our own need. But Thou knowest us. We believe that Thou hast ordained that we should be meditating upon this theme today.

Arm us now we pray Thee. Not only with the knowledge of the facts. But with a confidence in Thyself.

And in Thy Son. In Thy Spirit and in Thy Word. And grant that as we go back into the world.

With all its alluring temptations and voices and influences. That being armed we shall make war against evil. And be found always in worship Thou Lord.

Hear us in. Amen.

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