

Sin and The Gospel, Jesus Christ Our Advocate

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon delves into 1 John chapter 2, emphasizing the importance of the gospel message and the Lord's Supper. It highlights the concept of sin and the believer's relationship with Christ as their advocate and propitiation. The focus is on the continual need to turn to Jesus when we sin, acknowledging Him as our righteous advocate and the one who paid for our sins, extending His grace to the entire world.

Scripture: 1 John 2:1, John 14:16, Revelation 7:9, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Advocacy of Christ", "Grace and Forgiveness"

Description

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Transcript

I would call your attention to 1 John chapter 2 this morning. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to celebrate the gospel in the message and we're going to celebrate it in the Lord's Supper.

Do you think that's a good idea? So, 1 John chapter 2, you know, Michael Durham, Saturday night, addressed us from chapter 1, verses 5-10, and so I just started reading the next chapter, and it just exploded in my heart. It came alive. So, we're going to continue in 1 John this morning, chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. Follow with me in your Bible, 1 John, chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. My little children, now children that are in here, he's not talking about young children.

He's talking about spiritual children. John's addressing all the flock that he's writing to. You know, he was a shepherd of a church before he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos.

So he's writing to his flock. My little children, these things I write unto you that you would sin not. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

And He is the propitiation for our sins. And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Literally that last phrase reads, but also for the entire world.

Our friend Ian Hamilton, who's been in our church before, said about these verses, this is a glorious summary of the biblical gospel, these two verses. It's similar to Romans 3, 25 and 6 right in there, which is a tremendous summary of the gospel. And John is virtually saying the same thing here that Paul said in Romans 3, 25 and following.

John Calvin said about these two verses, here we have the sum of all the gospel. These two verses are as pure and as perfect of a statement about the gospel as could be stated. Our sin and Christ as the righteous one as our advocate.

These two verses contain one of the briefest, best, richest, purest statements to be found in all the Bible. What about when we sin? You ever sin? Our hearts are nodding if our heads aren't. We know we do, right? So what about when we sin? John wants us to think about sin.

You go back to chapter 1 and he speaks of sin in verses 7 through 10 there, every verse. So what about when we sin? Well, we know that the gospel says Christians are free from the penalty and power of sin. It's just true.

We're free from sin's penalty and we've been set free from sin's power. One day we will be set free from the very presence of sin. And that's when we all will become true Pentecostals.

That's shouting time. Free from sin, Stephen. We'll be free from sin in the future.

Christians are forgiven of all sin. Christians are not to sin. Christians at times do sin.

And as we saw Saturday night here in this room, we were reminded that God is light. That is pure holiness. He's holy.

And in chapter 1, 7 through 10, sin is the topic in every verse. Verse 7 of chapter 1, Christ's blood cleanses us from all sin. Verse 8, the denial of present sin, John says, is self-deception.

Verse 9, if we confess our sins, He is what? Faithful and just. So the confession of present sin brings immediately cleansing and the application of God's forgiveness. Our confession of sin doesn't earn forgiveness.

It disappropriates the forgiveness that is ours in Christ. Verse 10 of chapter 1, the denial of ever being a sinner. Well, you know, I'm a good person, really.

I've never murdered anybody. I always pay my taxes and, you know, I don't think I've ever really sinned. A person who says they've never sinned is calling God a liar.

God says, I'm a sinner, and I say, I'm not. Well, I'm calling God a liar. So half of chapter 1 addresses sin in the context of the gospel and of assurance and forgiveness.

Now, John states three times in this first epistle why he wrote this book. Number one, for their joy to increase. Chapter 1, verse 4. He wrote 1 John so our joy would increase.

Second reason, for their assurance to increase. Chapter 5, verse 13. I write these things that you may know that you have eternal life.

And then thirdly, chapter 2, verse 1, our text. My little children, these things I write unto you so that you may not sin. I'm writing so you won't sin.

So you'll believe this, that you will not give in to sin. So how does John begin here about this subject? If any man sins, he begins with loving words for his sheep. See verse 1, the first three words, my little children.

He's calling them his beloved. I love listening to Alistair Begg almost every day on Truth for Life. And he often says to his church, listen, loved ones, listen, loved ones.

It's a pastoral heart. That's what John's doing here. Little children, beloved sheep, dear flock, you loved ones, you that are loved by Christ and by me.

Now I want to apply this to us. As your elders, we hope you know that we have each one of you in our hearts. Individually.

Every one of you, we carry in our minds, in our hearts, in our affection, and in our care. Each of you is important to us individually. And here is our primary desire as elders and pastors for each of you.

Our longing, our goal, our great desire is your spiritual well-being, your spiritual health, your growth in grace, your loving Christ, and your walking with Him every day. Your sanctification and holiness is our longing. Which means we pastor you with the goal and aim that you sin less and less.

That you would not sin. And our desire every day, all day, is that. Because when sin hurts you, we hurt.

When sin defeats you as your pastors, we grieve in our hearts. When sin burdens you, we are burdened. When sin breaks upon you and you're broken temporarily, it breaks our hearts.

Our entire ministry among you boils down to this one goal. You loving Christ and not sinning. That's our goal.

So we're lined up with John the Apostle here. Little children, if any man sins. So our goal in your continued journey is that your faith, and your hope, and your love, and your godliness will increase.

And sin in all our lives would stop. Do not sin. That's John's heart here.

Now, these two verses contain these unique phrases. If anyone sins. Why would John say it that way? If anyone sins.

Then the word advocate. Then the phrase Jesus Christ the righteous one. And then the word propitiation.

Which is only found four times in the New Testament. First John 2.2. First John 2.29. First John 4.10. And it's in Romans 3.25 and Hebrews 2.17. So my math was bad there. That's more than four, but you get it.

Homeschoolers, don't ask me to tutor your children in math. I'll just teach them the Bible. But these phrases, these are John's words.

So that you may not sin. If anyone sins. Advocate.

Jesus Christ the righteous one. Propitiation. Not for our sins only.

But for the entire world. Unique words and terms these are. True words with accurate meaning.

And better, for us, accurate, wonderful application. So John begins here with the purpose of his writing First John. By stating that he's writing these things so we would not sin.

So first point. Let's just think about the believer's potential sin. And let's clarify.

Is he saying that believers are going to walk in a habitual lifestyle of sinning all the time? Yea or nay? No, we know he's not saying that. He's not talking about habitual continual practice of a sinful lifestyle. That's the lost man.

That's the unconverted person. This is the true believer here. Little children.

I'm writing this so that you will not sin. So let's just state this as a principle. God's purpose and revealed will is that every Christian does not sin.

It is not His will for us to ever sin. There is no excuse. Temptation is not an excuse.

Yet remaining sin within us that surfaces in temptation through the body of this flesh. That is no excuse to sin. Every sin is a transgression of God's law.

Is rebellion against available grace to resist the sin. Sin's choice is unbelief. In that Christ died for all our sin.

Yet we sin against the Savior who defeated sin and conquered it by His death. So if He died for all sin, why would we choose to sin against Him ever? Any sin is a departure from Christ. Any sin is a rebellion against light and truth.

Sin is sin toward God and our Savior. And God's will for you and I is that we never sin. God's ultimate purpose is to remove sin completely from our lives progressively.

Your King and your Savior's aim is conformity to His likeness. Who Peter says, remember this, He has left us an example to follow in His steps who committed no sin nor was deceit found in His mouth, 1 Peter 2. So we're following a Savior who as a man, as one of us, committed no sin and He's called us to follow in His path of walking in the light. And He resisted all sin.

We're to put it off progressively and sin less and less and less and have a goal of not sinning against our Savior. It's the mark of every Christian that they increasingly hate sin and that they increasingly stop sinning. The God-fearing one believes more and more, I am not to sin.

The true Christian doesn't want to sin. The true Christian seeks to resist sin and put it off as Romans 6 tells us to do. The Christian hates the sin he ever commits.

And his heart turns to his Savior with a heart of repentance and he confesses that sin so as to walk in the light. He or she loves righteousness and longs to be more like Christ. So brethren, John's saying in our face, brethren, I write these things so that you do not sin.

Now will we excuse that or will we change it up to give us a little wiggle room to potentially sin? There's no wiggle room. John shuts us up to this mandate, this gospel plea. I'm saying these things to you so you won't sin.

So we're not to sin brethren, but guess what? You're thinking my thoughts right now. At times we sin, don't we? Yeah, so that's why John says if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. A campus preacher years ago, Baker Hughes remember him, Tom Sadowski remembers him, Jed Smock, he came to Denton.

He traveled the country preaching on campus and he believed at that time it was like 15 years. The last 15 years he hadn't sinned. He believed in sinless perfection.

And so some of us dialogued with him about this. He didn't listen. So we know John is not preaching here sinless perfection because we will be sinlessly perfect when, right? So that's why John says if we presently say we have no sin, then we're self-deceived.

We do sin at times, not as a willful lifestyle of habitual sin. But we do sin. So what does John say to any Christian who at any time sins? It's verse one.

Let's look at it again. If any man sin, if anyone sins, and then he gives the right answer, the only answer, the right response, the only truth that applies at the time that you give into a sin, anger, lust, pride, fill in the blank. When you sin, there's only one answer in that moment.

And it's not in here. It's not about you doing anything. No, the answer is not in here.

It's in the text. If any man sins, John says, advocate. There's an advocate.

We have an advocate. Now, this is so amazing. This is the only place in the New Testament that answers the question, if anyone sins, what? I sinned.

What do I do? What does God say to any Christian who ever commits a sin? In the moment, what is God saying? He's written it down in verse one. So when you sin, does God, what does He say? Does He say, you know, you're such a knucklehead. You just really, really sin.

So now, I want you to grovel as low as you can. Begin to beat yourself up over this. And I want you to accomplish perfect humility.

I want you to repent perfectly. And you're on probation until you do better. Just feel bad for about a week and then come back sheepishly into my presence.

Clean yourself up. Do better. And if you become serious enough and sincere enough, if you get holy enough and you work harder and you read your Bible more and you read three books on sanctification, does God say any of that when you sin? Huh? No.

But that's what we say to ourselves. That's what our pride says. And that's what the devil whispers to us.

Listen, you sinned. So atone for your sin. Pay for it.

When we're tempted to sin, Satan says, go ahead. It'll bring pleasure. It's no big deal.

God will forgive you, won't He? And then when we sin, He says, well, God won't forgive you. That's horrible. No help for you.

That's what the flesh within and that's what our enemy says to us. But what does God say when we sin? What does Christ say? What does the Bible say? The immediate answer, the only answer, God's only

reply when you sin is, you have an advocate, my child. In that moment, that's God's truth for you.

If and when you sin, you have an advocate. And that's where you go. Your immediate response is not introspection and beating yourself up and feeling bad until you get to 100% feeling bad.

No, the answer is not inward. The answer is here. If anyone sins, they have an advocate.

If when you and I sin, God doesn't turn our attention on the sin to focus on it. Because we know when we sin. We know we've sinned when we've done it.

Our conscience says it. Our new heart says it. We know when we've sinned.

God's heart then for us is one thing, the gospel. Oh, Lord, I feel so guilty. Yes, but I bore your guilt.

Lord, I'm so ashamed. Yes, but I bore your shame. Lord, I just sinned.

How could I do it again? I sinned. Yes, but I took your sins and your sorrows and made them my very own. I bore the burden, the calvary, and suffered and died alone.

I am Jesus Christ, your righteous one. Yeah, that's right. That's the gospel is the only answer to if anyone sins.

I'm your advocate because I was your perfect propitiation. We'll get to that in a minute. The answer, the help, the victory over that sin is the gospel, not something within yourself.

Brethren, this is the key to maintaining assurance because when you sin, you're going to just examine yourself carnally and sink down and think, well, maybe God's not my father. Maybe I'm not a true Christian. Your eyes are on yourself and on your sin, and they're not on the gospel.

When 1 John 2, 1 tells you, get them on the gospel when you've sinned because you have an advocate. That's our only immediate response to when we sin. That's where we're to go when we sin.

That's our refuge and our help. It's like in baseball. It's like home plate.

You're running for home plate. That's where you're going. Where to run home, beloved, that's home plate.

Where the gospel applies itself fully to any sin that any believer ever commits. Do not turn to self atonement. You've sinned.

Flee to the cross immediately. Flee to your advocate. Yeah, I know.

We know that if we give in to sin, we feel dirty. We feel impure. We feel compromised.

We feel ashamed, and we should. We feel a lot of things. But those things, what do they do? They keep us back.

They keep us away. We withdraw. We're ashamed to come.

We stay back here on the bench. We stay back here in self-probation rather than drawing near to a throne of grace. To obtain help and mercy in time of need before our great and merciful high priest.

The answer to the question if anyone sins is the atonement. The death of the cross. The dying sacrifice of the bleeding lamb.

Here are words of gospel love in verses 1 and 2. Advocate. Jesus Christ the righteous. Propitiation.

That is the gospel. Nothing about you. It's about Him.

He's the advocate. So, remember John speaking to Christians here. He said, my little children, what he's doing is giving us gospel advice, pastoral counsel, and comfort when we have sinned.

His intent here, think of this. His intent here is to bring our present sin and Christ close together. In our minds.

And he says it, if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us. If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father. John brings sin and Christ together.

Sin as the disease, Christ as the physician. Sin as the wound, Christ as the healer. Sin as the killer, Christ as the life giver.

Sin as the problem, Christ as the solution. God never convicts us of sin without bringing before us the gospel application to apply it right then. It's the enemy that condemns.

Because he wants to steal your assurance. But your advocate, Jesus Christ, doesn't do that. Sin, the only answer in the moment is Jesus Christ the righteous one.

So here are three gospel statements to us from the Holy Spirit through John. When, if, or when we sin. These are the three answers.

Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous one, propitiation. That's the gospel. If you want a gospel presentation to sinners, here it is.

We have an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous one, because he made propitiation. That's the gospel message. That's the marrow of the gospel.

That's the heart of the matter. Nothing else, nothing added. Jesus Christ the righteous one, your advocate, your propitiation.

Now let's unpack briefly those three things John says about him here. Number one, we'll take the second one first in verse one. Jesus Christ the righteous.

Some translations say Jesus Christ the righteous one. This is amazing. This is so wonderful.

When we sin, God sets before us Christ the righteous one. This is the only place in the New Testament Jesus is called with these exact words. Jesus Christ the righteous.

Pointing us to the one who did not sin ever, who was the obedient son in all things, who obeyed and fulfilled the law for us, who as a man lived a perfectly righteous life, our human head, the head of all mankind, who never once sinned. The perfect and righteous man, Jesus of Nazareth. The one man truly obedient to the father.

The one who actually lived a perfectly righteous life, who earned eternal life through his obedience. The only righteous human being who ever lived. He is Jesus Christ the righteous one.

And here John sets him before us as the answer to if anyone sins. He is our advocate. Now, that word advocate is unique.

This is where the New Testament applies it to Christ. But it's the word paraclete. John 14 through 16, the Holy Spirit is called the paraclete there.

Here, when we sin, Christ is called the paraclete. The one who has comfort for us when we sin. He only has comfort for you.

The sins paid for. Your savior who died for the sin comes with comfort in his hands, with healing in his wings. And he sits before you himself as your advocate, your comforting redeemer, as the loving comfort one.

Who represents you before the father. Who is your defense attorney against all accusations of sin. Against the enemy, against your conscience.

He is your heavenly advocate. And this is the only place the New Testament calls Christ your paraclete, your advocate. So the only reply when any Christian sins is, true, I did.

I have an advocate. That's your plea. That's your go-to.

And brethren, that is what it means when you ever sin to believe the gospel. You've got to believe the gospel then. It's easier to believe it when you're walking in victory and you're doing great.

You're doing things well. Oh, the gospel is a joy. What about when you sin? You blow it.

You stumble. You mess up. Is the gospel then, right then, true? Did he bear that sin? Is he ever living in heaven in your behalf to represent you? Absolutely yes.

I have an advocate when I send Jesus Christ the righteous, who fully represents me before the father, even any time that I ever sin. This is not the claim that a wicked person has who loves sin. They can't use this.

God would say to the person, who are you to take my law in your mouth? In your mouth, who's rejected my commandments? No, it's not the claim for the wicked who loves sin, so they can sin and so grace will abound. Their condemnation is sure, rather Brethren, this is for his little sheep. Christ is your righteous advocate.

So, there can never be any of us as believers who cannot in the moment of failure and grief, flee to your present advocate who is there with comfort. The sin's paid for. What does he want you to do? Believe the gospel.

And embrace him. Run into his arms. In the arms of my dear Savior.

Oh, there are 10,000 comforts and assurances and application of forgiveness. His righteousness giving to us. His living in heaven for us as our eternal advocate.

And in heaven, he pleads for us. And I don't think it's vocal. I don't think he uses words to defend us.

He doesn't need to. He defends us. His life ever living to make intercession for us speaks before the Father always.

And never is one sin laid to your charge because it's been paid for. And the believer, if he sins, he grieves. And he knows the refuge is not inward.

It's upward. To flee to my advocate who paid for this sin and who has comforts for me right now in his bosom. But John, how can that be true always every time when we sin? Surely there's an end to his patience.

Next, surely if a Christian battles besetting sin, surely if the righteous fall seven times and keeps getting up or more, surely my father is going to get weary of me and tired of me always coming. John, how can it be true every time any of your children sin? Think about it, brethren. How many Christians are in the world today? Millions.

So in a month, how many sins by Christians are there in the world in a month? Millions. He doesn't grow weary. How can he be our advocate? Because he is the propitiation for our sins.

That's the key. Advocate in heaven, redemption applied because he historically on that cross became the propitiation for every sin we would ever commit. He is your atoning one.

He is your full payment. He offered himself up to God as a blameless, spotless, slain lamb. He was the legal blood offering as the one counted sinful in our place who bore our sins and our iniquities, who took our sins and all our guilt in his body on the tree.

The full recipient of God's wrath and justice toward any sin. And he did, brethren, he did not provide propitiation as something separate from himself. John says he is the propitiation.

When he died on that cross, he was your propitiation. Now, we either believe that and we believe the gospel, or we got some other answer for our sin. What's our choice? He was the one counted sinful in our place as our substitute, our redeemer, who is our present and eternal high priest and mediator.

And then John says this, look at the end of verse two, "...to, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the entire world." Not for our sins only, but for the entire world. And John is speaking here about the universal extent to the whole world. Not to Jews only, but he's the savior of the world.

If there's a savior to be found in the world, he's it. He's the only savior who ever came to save the world from sin. Nobody else ever did it, no one else could do it.

He is the savior of the world. Every nation, Jew and Gentiles, from all nations. Revelation says, "...a great multitude that no man could number, of all nations and peoples and tongues.

All are crying with loud voices, salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, Jesus Christ, the righteous one, our advocate, our propitiation, who is dead and risen and ascended and enthroned and reigning and returning, our advocate, Jesus Christ, your advocate, whenever you give in to the heinous choice to sin." And John says in Revelation 1, "...unto him who washed us from our sins in his own blood." Now, beloved, this means we have a savior who ever lives above as our advocate and our intercessor and our merciful and faithful high priest. One sin will never be charged to your account. So, do not sin, John says.

May the Spirit of God develop in us the grace of continually mortifying and putting sin to death, saying no more to sin, increasing in righteous choices because we're free from sin and we do not have to give in. Dear, listen dear ones, some of us are battle weary. Some of us today may be a son or a daughter who is battling besetting sins, struggling against them.

Whenever you sin, if you sin, your plea is the gospel. Your plea is 1 John 2, 1 and 2. I have an advocate. He's my sin offering.

He's my merciful and faithful high priest, Lord Jesus, I come. I don't want to sin, but I come to you. And in coming to him when we have sinned, that is repentance.

I come, Lord. Thank you that you're my advocate. Thank you that you died for this sin.

Thank you that there is forgiveness with thee, that you might be feared and worshipped and loved. What a merciful and faithful high priest we have. My little children, I write these things to you that you would not sin.

And if anyone sins, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, the righteous one, who is the propitiation for all our sins. Amen. Well, let's pray.

Father, apply this to all of our hearts. There's so much ground to be gained in just believing the gospel as it applies to our journey, our imperfect, struggling journey. Father, we confess as your children, we don't want to sin.

We want it gone from our lives. We want to defeat it every day and every week. And you've told us, Lord, clearly here through the apostle, that you don't want us to sin.

Lord, work in us deeply to bring about our overcoming and apply this to our souls as we need it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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