

Christ Our Advocate

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the role of Christ as our Advocate who intercedes for us and restores our fellowship with God despite our sins.

Duration: 33:35

Scripture: John 16:22, 1 John 1:7 - 2:2

Topics: "Advocate"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of asking questions and seeking understanding when studying the Bible. He shares a story about a Jewish boy who was supposed to read the Torah and Talmud but wanted to go out and play instead. The boy claimed to have read both texts, but his father noticed something was off. The speaker then delves into the concept of fellowship, explaining that sin breaks fellowship with God and other believers. He highlights the significance of confessing sins and the role of Jesus as an advocate for believers.

Transcript

This is my first time back since you've had your facelifting operation. I must say I like it. Really a big improvement, I think.

I thought I'd like to speak with you this morning on the subject of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Advocate. I've never spoken on it, on that before, and I think it's a very profitable subject. So would you turn to 1 John chapter 2, and I'd like to read the first two verses, and then I'm going back to read the entire first chapter.

First of all, 1 John chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. My little children, these things I write to you, 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.

Now chapter 1, verse 1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled concerning the word of life, the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. That which we have seen and heard, we declare to you that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

And these things we write to you, that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. When we study the Bible, we should study it asking questions. Not that we should question the inspiration of the scriptures, but we should be continually saying, what does that mean? For instance, chapter 2 verse 1 begins with the statement, These things I write to you.

What things? There used to be a ditty in the old days. Each time you look within this book, five things observed with care. To whom it speaks, of whom it speaks, and why, and when, and where.

And actually, we never grow as students of the Bible unless we adopt that attitude of asking questions. What does that mean? A Jewish father once gave his little boy his Torah and the Talmud, and he was supposed to read it every day. And so, on this particular day, the little boy wanted to go out and play.

His father said, I want you to read the Talmud, I want you to read the Torah. So, the little boy sat down, and he breezed through the readings for that day, and he said, Can I go out? His father said, Did you read the Torah? He said, Yes. He said, Did you read the Talmud? He said, Yes.

And the father said, Well, you can go out. And when the little boy went out to play, his wife noticed a very dejected look on the face of the father. And she said, What's the matter? He did what you told him to do.

He read the books. The father said, He didn't ask any questions. And sometimes I feel like that Jewish father.

They don't ask any questions. People read the Bible, and they say, Well, everybody else knows what it means. I don't know what it means.

I will not show my ignorance by asking what it means. And so, our ignorance is perpetuated, isn't it, by not asking what it means. Let's start asking questions about these first two verses in chapter two of 1 John.

My little children, to whom it speaks, to whom is John speaking? Well, he's obviously speaking to members of the family of God. He's not speaking to the unsaved in this passage, is he? He's speaking to those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, of those who have become children of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be terrible to put unsaved people in this passage and apply what comes afterward to them.

My little children, these things I write unto you. What things? Well, he's just finished with chapter one, and so it's natural to think that he's speaking about what he has just said. These things write I unto you.

What was he talking about in chapter one? Well, the key word, probably, in chapter one is the word fellowship. Fellowship. Did you notice it as we read verse six? If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Seven. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship. What is fellowship? We have a camp not far away called Koinonia.

That's the word for fellowship. It means holding things in common, and in fellowship, in this case, means the happy spirit in the family when everything's going along well. That's really what it means.

A happy family spirit when everything is going along well. So, chapter one is about fellowship. What does it say about fellowship? Well, it says sin breaks fellowship.

When sin comes into a believer's life, fellowship with God is broken. Fellowship with God's people is broken. Is that bad? Yes, that's very bad.

You can't have fullness of joy if fellowship is broken. Verse four. These things we write to you that your joy may be full.

You can't have sin and joy at the same time. These are moral incompatible. You can have suffering and joy at the same time.

God's people go through deep times of suffering and trial, and yet the joy of the Lord is their strength. You can have sorrow and joy at the same time. You can sorrow over the departure of a loved one to be with the Lord, and joy that his sufferings on earth are ended.

But you can't have sin and joy, and that's what John's talking about in chapter one, isn't it? John is saying, look, dear friends, I want you to have fullness of joy. I want you to enjoy fellowship in the family of God, but there's something that breaks that fellow to that sin. So he says, these things write I unto you that you sin not, that you may not sin.

Question. Doesn't God know that we sin? Of course he knows that we sin. Why does it say that you may not sin? Why doesn't it say, my little children, these things write unto you that you sin as little as possible? Because it wouldn't be God speaking.

See, God's standard is always perfection. God cannot condone sin in any respect. God couldn't permit the slightest sin, because he's a righteous, holy, and just God.

And if you ever turn to your Bible, first John chapter two, verse one, and found, my little children, these things write I unto you that you sin just a little, then you'd know it wasn't the word of God. God cannot say that God's standard is absolute perfection. That's why we read in Romans, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The glory of God is his excellence, is his perfection. And we all come short of the perfection of God. Sin is anything that comes short of the perfection of God.

But doesn't God know I have to sin? That is not Bible language. I mustn't say I have to sin. You say, but I do sin.

I know, but you mustn't say you have to. If you are a child of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, it is not Bible language to say I have to sin. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is given to us as a power for holy living.

And the only time we sin is when we don't depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. We do sin. We sin every day in thought, word, and deed.

But we mustn't say we have to sin. We mustn't say we haven't sinned. First John chapter one takes care of that pretty well, doesn't it? Verse eight, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. We do have sin. We have sinned.

God's standard is that we shouldn't sin, and he wants us to have fullness of joy. He wants us to have fellowship in the family of God, and so he says don't sin. And if anyone sins, oh, you say Christians do sin.

Yeah, Christians sin. But you know, there's a difference between a Christian sinning and an unsaved person sinning. Maybe some of you can look back into your own lives before you were converted to Christ.

You sinned with the full consent of your will. Sin had dominion over you. Sin had the whip hand in your life, and perhaps you got to the place where you could sin, and it didn't bother you.

None of those things is true of a child of God. Unfortunately, a Christian does sin, but he doesn't sin with the full consent of his will. Sin is not the dominating influence in his life.

Sin shall not have dominion over you. Paul says, writing to the Romans, for you're not under law, but under grace. Sin doesn't have the whip hand in the life of the child of God, and when the child of God sins, he's ashamed to his tiptoes in a way he never was before he was saved, because now he's sinning in the full light of Calvary, and he remembers that it was his sins that nailed the Christ of God to the cross, and the grace of God and the love of the Lord Jesus are the greatest deterrence to sin that could possibly exist.

So I think it's good for us to remember that there is a difference between the sin of a sinner and the sin of a saint. Not that it's any better, I don't mean that. There's a difference.

Actually, a sinner can come to the place where he sins and it no longer hurts. Word of God speaks about consciences that are seared as with a hot iron, and it says in Ephesians chapter 4 concerning this class of people, who being past feelings. They can sin and it no longer bothers them.

It's like taking a drink of water. None of that is true of the child of God. Notice it says, if anyone sins, it doesn't say when anyone sins.

If God had used the word when there, it might have just condoned it a little. But if, which expresses the exceptional case, doesn't it? Not the way of life, not the habit of a person's life, but the exceptional case. If anyone sins, what? We have an advocate with the Father.

Please notice that carefully. It doesn't say if anyone is sinless, we have an advocate with the Father. Dear friends, if you're sinless, you don't need an advocate.

The only time you need an advocate is when you do sin. It doesn't say if anyone repents, we have an advocate with the Father. It doesn't say if anyone confesses, we have an advocate with it.

It doesn't say if anyone mourns over his sins. I'll say that. If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father.

First of all, let me speak a word about that expression, advocate. When we think of an advocate, we think of a lawyer. And it has that force in this passage of Scripture.

It does have that force in this passage of Scripture. But the word is much wider than that. It's the same word that you have in John, where the Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come, and it's called a comforter there.

And that's not too good, a comforter. It really means a person who comes alongside to help in any time of need. I was thinking of that when we sang that first hymn, The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me down to lie in pastures green. He leadeth me, the quiet waters fly. And it goes on to tell all the things that the Lord the shepherd does for us.

That's all embraced in this word. Paraclete, comforter, and here advocate. The ministry of the Lord Jesus, wonderful thing, isn't it? Coming alongside to help in time of need.

Actually, I don't think there's any word in the English language that says it all, which is all right. You could use the illustration of a nurse in the hospital. You're there in the hospital, there's a need arises, you're lying on the hospital bed, and the nurse comes alongside to help.

It's all included in it. But here, the Lord Jesus is presented as an advocate, a paraclete, if you want to say a lawyer. Actually, lawyers don't have too good a press in the New Testament.

Did you know that? And so it's kind of refreshing to come to a real good one. The Lord Jesus is the perfect advocate. Now there are two special ways in which he's presented here.

First of all, whenever I sin, I have an advocate, which means whenever I sin, the Lord Jesus goes to work for me in heaven. This is part of his present ministry at the right hand of God. I say reverently, when a Christian sins, the Lord Jesus, our advocate, swings into action.

To do what? Well, to restore us, to bring us to the place of confession, to bring us to the place of renewed fellowship with God the Father and with the people of God. Now, we're not too conscious of that, are we? When I sin, and my conscience is smitten, and I realize what I've done, it's because the Lord is working in my behalf. That's not me acting independently of him.

It's because of God, through the Lord Jesus, working in me. He's putting the shepherd's crook around my neck and pulling me back to check the one fellowship and fullness of joy. That's one aspect of his work as advocate for me.

The other aspect is this. When I sin, Satan swings into action, too. In Revelation, he's called the accuser of the brethren.

And I take this absolutely literally. I believe that when the child of God sins, Satan has access to the throne of God. And he says to God, there you are, McDonald, professes to be a Christian.

Look what he's just done. And, you know, what he says this time is absolutely true. It's true.

I have sinned. But, you know, the Lord Jesus is there. My advocate is there.

It's great to have a good advocate, isn't it? And the Lord Jesus speaks to God the Father, and he shows his hand. He shows the wounds in his hand, and he pleads the merit of his shed blood. He says, in effect, Father, I died on the cross of Calvary for all his sins.

My work there at the cross of Calvary was of infinite value. The atoning blood was shed. Just charge that sin to my account.

Satan had nothing to say. You see, the charge against me was true. The Lord Jesus comes as my advocate there before the throne of God, and it's all made right.

In this place, God the Father is the judge. We ourselves, believers, are the accused, and Satan is the adversary. Revelation chapter 12, verse 10.

The verdict tastes this. One of our hymns says, Though the accuser roar of ills that I have done, I know them well, and thousands more. Jehovah findeth none.

Because when the Lord Jesus pleads my case before the throne of God, the case is thrown out. Somebody else wrote, Though the restless foe accuses, sins recounting like a flood, every charge our God refuses, Christ has answered with his blood. Notice, please, that it says in this verse, we have an advocate with the Father.

I'm glad it doesn't say we have an advocate with God, although that's true also. But it's very significant. It says we have an advocate with the Father.

Why do you emphasize that? Because he's still my Father, even if I sin. Isn't that beautiful? He's still my Father. The fellowship has been broken, but the relationship hasn't been broken.

I'm still a child of God, a son of the eternal God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have an advocate with the Father. And you know, he's not only my Father, but he's the advocate's Father.

When you go to court, if your lawyer's father is the judge, you're in a very good position. Isn't that right? If the lawyer's father is the judge, you've got it made. I like what it says here.

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Let me put it this way. The Lord Jesus would not undertake my case before the throne of God unless he could do it righteously.

He wouldn't do what some of the people do today in courts of law. Remember that case in San Francisco recently where I think it was Dan White murdered the mayor, and his lawyer fled diminished capacity because his client had eaten too many Twinkies. And you know, that sort of thing is going on courts of law all the time.

By legal subterfuge, people who are guilty are getting off scot-free. But, dear friends, our advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous, and he can answer the accusations of Satan on a righteous basis, because he, as our substitute, has paid for all of those sins completely when he shed his blood on the cross of Calvary. And then it says, and he is the propitiation for our sins.

Now, when you study the Bible, you come across big words, and a lot of these words throw people. They just dismiss them from their mind. They think, if I don't look, it'll go away.

But we don't want it to go away. It's a wonderful word, propitiation. What does it mean? Well, literally, it means mercy seat.

The mercy seat was the lid of the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament. God dwelt above the mercy seat, and on the ground of shed blood, he could grant mercy. But here, the word propitiation really means that the Lord Jesus, by his work at the cross of Calvary, has fully satisfied the claims of divine justice, and God can now equip the believing sinner.

Nothing unrighteous about it at all. The price has been paid. The penalty has been met.

The sinner who believes is free can say, the Savior died for me, can point to the atoning blood and say, that made my peace with God. Now, that's a wonderful thing. This lawyer pays the penalty for his client.

Have you ever heard of a lawyer who did that? But that's what the Lord Jesus did. He is our advocate. He has paid for the penalty for his clients by the sacrifice of himself.

And he's not only the propitiation for our sins, he's the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Oh, somebody might say, then the whole world is saved. No, it doesn't mean none at all.

The work of the Lord Jesus in satisfying the claims of divine justice is sufficient for all the sins of all the world of all time. That's tremendous, isn't it? Just think, all the sins that have ever been committed, all the sins that are being committed right now, and all the sins that will ever be committed, the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary was sufficient to atone for all those sins. Why? Because his blood was of infinite value.

You can't measure the value of the blood of Christ. It's sufficient to take in everybody, but that doesn't mean everybody's saved. It's only efficient for those who accept his substitutionary work.

It's sufficient for all, but it's only effective for those who believe in him as the sinner's savior. He's a propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. What a wonderful advocate he is.

First of all, he goes to work for me to bring me back to that place where I confess the sin and am forgiven of the sin. First John 1.9, we confess our sins. He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And then when the tempter comes, when the accuser of the brethren comes and accuses me before the throne of God, I've got somebody there that pleads my case, presents the value of his sacrificial debt, says, I paid the price. Pretty wonderful, isn't it? Let me share with you the way Ronald Dunn describes it. What happens if I sin? The old devil comes up to me and says, what about that sin? And I say, see my lawyer.

In heaven today, in the very presence of the heavenly father, even though I am so sinful and wretched and wicked, there's one pleading my case. John says he's a good lawyer. You want to know his qualification? First, his relationship to the judge.

The judge is his father. I hope you never have to go to court, but if you do, if you get a lawyer whose father is the judge, you'll be ahead of the game. Another qualification is his good standing with the court.

He's called Jesus Christ the righteous. But the best thing about him is he's already paid for my crime. What a strange lawyer this is.

He doesn't plead innocence. He doesn't plead justifiable circumstances. He pleads his blood.

I think that sometimes the devil comes into the presence of God. He is the accuser of the brethren, and he has a long list of my sins and demands that I be put to death. Then my heavenly advocate takes that list, and he says, father, everything the devil says about this boy is true.

But father, look at the nail prints in my hands and feet. I don't plead his innocence. I plead my blood.

I've already paid for every charge on the list. The verdict? There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. How can we be sure? We have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The presence of this person and the power of his propitiation ensures my continuing forgiveness. The blood of Jesus Christ closes us from all sin. And then in closing, just let me read this poem by Martha Nell Nicholson, entitled My Advocate.

She wrote, I sinned, and straightway, post haste, Satan flew before the presence of the Most High God and made a railing accusation there. He said, this soul, this thing of clay and sod, has sinned. It is true he has named thy name, but I demand his death, for thou hast said the soul that sinneth it shall die.

Shall not thy sentence be fulfilled? Is justice dead? Satan asked. Send now this wretched sinner to his doom. What other thing can righteous ruler do? And thus he did accuse me day and night.

And every word he spoke, O God, was true. Then quickly one rose up from God's right hand before whose glory angels veiled their eyes. He spoke, every jot and tittle of the law must be fulfilled.

The guilty sinner died. But wait, suppose his guilt were all transferred to me, and that I paid his penalty. Behold my hand, my side, my feet.

One day I was made sin for him, and died that he might be presented faultless at thy throne. And Satan fled away. Full well he knew that he could not prevail against such love.

For every word my dear Lord spoke was true. Shall we pray? Father, this morning we thank you for the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, our righteous lawyer, the propitiation for our sins. We've been impressed as we read those words.

Night and day, night and day, we're being accused before your throne. And night and day, even when we're sleeping, our Savior is pleading our case, pointing to the wounds in his hands, feet, and side. Oh, Father, we just bow low in thanksgiving today for his present ministry at your right hand.

We pray that this might be a great encouragement to us, not to sin, to live lives of holiness, lives of godliness that will tell for you in a world like ours. We ask it in the Savior's name, for his sake. Amen.

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