

# Our Advocate

1 John 2:1-6

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:1-6 (ESV))

A question as we begin our study of these words of God today. It's a question that I have asked often of late, but one that these words tell me I must keep asking . . . "How certain are you of the eternal condition of your soul? Do you know with absolute certainty that if you died at this moment, you would go to be with Christ in heaven, so certain that you can walk comfortably and confidently through this day and every day on into eternity?"

That is God's intention for these words in this passage, that we might be prompted to examine our souls, and especially our behaviors, and to ask the right questions of ourselves about this matter of our eternal salvation.

Some would question if a person is really able to know with certainty about such things, and they will say, "well, we can only hope that we are?"

It was a question that I posed often to an elderly friend of mine some many years ago. I would visit with her and bring her Sunday lunch. And as she ate, we would talk. She especially enjoyed keeping abreast of the financial markets, stocks and bonds. And she really had an excellent grasp of how to invest money.

Often, I would lead our conversation around to the question of her relationship with Christ. And when I would pose this question to her about her eternal salvation, she could only answer, "Well, I hope so."

And each time I would say back to her, just as I am saying to you and to me today, that yes, we really can know for sure! And I would quote for her the words of 1 John 5:13.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13 (ESV))

It is so vitally important for each of us to know the truth about this question of eternal salvation, that we really can know for sure that we are eternally saved. And we should also know what it takes in order for us to have our eternal salvation. And it is all given to us clearly here in 1 John. Recall that we studied these words in an earlier message. Listen again, 1 John 5:11-13.

11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

(1 John 5:11-13 (ESV))

Simple words and simple requirements that we can believe and trust. To have eternal life, we must have Jesus, the Son of God, and we must believe on His Name.

Here in today's passage, John is bringing this very "spiritual" matter of our salvation, and the necessity of "living it every moment", out into the reality of daily living in this sinful and fallen world. And His words bespeak the problems and conditions that we have been examining over the past few messages, that of sin being ever-present and pursuing after us as we live and move and have our being within the mysterious ever-present "darkness" that is all around us each day.

May I read these words again for us!

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:1-6 (ESV))

Throughout this Book of 1 John, God speaks in very strong words about our attitudes toward sin, admonishing us to check ourselves carefully, saying in essence, "If you think yourself to be saved, but you still continue to practice the same old sinful behaviors you practiced before you "prayed that sinner's prayer", you are probably not really saved." 1 John 3,

6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. (1 John 3:6 (ESV))

9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:9-10 (ESV))

Some preachers describe the Apostle John as being hardnosed and stern. And I might agree, except that these words given by John were first given to John by the Holy Spirit. So, this sternness in these words is coming from God, and we need to heed the things He is saying.

And here, in today's passage is some of that hardnosed sternness. But along with the sternness, he also gives very fatherly counsel, beginning with kind words of love, calling us "his dear children", and here, warning us to always take care. Because even though we be truly saved, sin does not ever cease its relentless pursuit of us, continually tempting us to sin.

Folks, may I say to us again the warning that I have given so many, many time, that "sin" is not just a matter of our stumbling over one of the laws of God. Sin comes looking for us. It has a nature and a power all its own, a relentless predator that is always pursuing after our soul. As we are told in Genesis 3, "Sin desires to have us", to have and to control our eternal souls. And our only hope for protection from its power is to be "born again" of God and have His "Seed" abiding in us. 1 John 3:9,

9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.  
(1 John 3:9(ESV))

This "Seed" that God put into our soul at the moment we were first saved is His very nature itself, the living "Word" of God, the Lord Jesus, to help, guide and protect us as we wander through the sinful minefields of our day.

And thankfully, even when we do let our guard down and sin grabs hold of us, Jesus will always be near, our ever-present intercessor, here called our "Advocate". And He will surely come to our aid. verse 1,

1 . . . if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1John 2:1-2)

This word, “Advocate”, brings to mind a “courtroom” kind of setting, with satan, whose name is “accuser”, serving as the “prosecutor”. And there before the courts of God, satan presents his case, accusing us of each sin that we commit. But also, standing there before the courts of God is Jesus, our “Advocate” presenting the perfect defense, His righteous blood. And by His defense, the sins that satan is accusing us of committing are eternally forgiven and wiped away from our soul, “expunged” from our record, never to come up against us again. Praise the Lord!

Care must be taken that we truly understand these words. It was, and always will be, the “righteousness of Christ” that cleanses us and takes away our sins. Yes, we are to obey Him and always have good behavior. That is a necessity. But for this matter of sin, it is the Blood of Christ and only the Blood of Christ that can take away our sins and make us clean.

Here, Jesus is called our “propitiation” for our sins. And I want us to take a moment to consider the full intent of its meaning, because “propitiation” is a rarely used and seldom understood word in our daily conversation. But “propitiation” is the perfect word to explain what Jesus has done for us. The Greek word for “propitiation” is “hilasmos”, and it implies a combination of meanings, that of “expiation” and that of “propitiation”.

In this context, “propitiation” means both “the taking away of the guilt for our sins through the payment of our penalty”. And then, its meaning becomes complete as God accepts the atonement of Christ’s sacrifice and removes the enmity and the separation that our sin has brought between God and us, restoring us into fellowship with Him.

“Propitiation” is truly the perfect word because no one else’s suffering, no one else’s blood, no one else’s sacrifice would have been sufficient and acceptable, only the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. Every part of the process of “propitiation” is a transaction between the Lord Jesus and God the Father. Nothing you or I can do will accomplish the same kind of cleansing and restoration.

Simply put, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus died for our sins, and God the Father accepted His sacrifice, allowing us “sinful wretches” to come back into and abide in God’s Holy presence!

The only part for us in that whole process is “humble repentance”, doing as we studied in 1 John 1:9.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 (ESV))

Humble repentance!

And praise be to God, His “propitiation” is ever-continuing, ongoing, never ending. What Christ did on the cross is ever-effectual. In a spiritual sense, His blood is an ever-flowing atonement for our sins, past, present and future, as we struggle with the daily lures from within the ever-present darkness. Praise be to God!

And going back to the first question we asked, this is the answer. This is how we obtain a sure and eternal salvation. When we have Christ, we have all the benefits of His “propitiation”. And because of that, we can rest in the confidence that we are truly and eternally saved.

But then, as these words tell us, with salvation firmly rooted within our souls, there are behaviors and responses that really ought to begin to flow out from the righteousness that Christ has put into us. And beginning in verse 3, we are given a simple way to measure those behaviors and responses. Listen, beginning in verse 3.

3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:3-6 (ESV))

Folks, as we each know well, once we are saved and we begin that transition out from the “darkness” into the “light”, it is not often a smooth and easy change. We have built up a lifetime of entrenched behaviors and sinful habits. And too often, we really have enjoyed most of those old ways. Curse words were an easy way of expressing our thoughts. Lying was a convenient way of avoiding difficulties. Immorality was a natural part of our lifestyle. We hardly took notice of immoral behaviors and foul language.

But now, in our salvation, as the “light” of the presence of Christ shines on our behaviors, He begins to reveal the true nature of the wrongness of all of those things, and we begin to be convicted of our need to change. And the transition spoken about, beginning in verse 3 starts to take place. Listen!

3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3 (ESV))

And also in verse 5

5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:5-6 (ESV))

And again, the transition is not an easy one. As I mentioned a moment ago, we probably really did like and enjoy many of our old habits and behaviors. And because of that, we will still often stumble. But these words are a promise to us, that if and as we do our part to abide in God's presence, the right and righteous things of Him will begin to replace those old habits and behaviors with new and righteous ones, and then, we will find ourselves "walking" daily with Him. Praise be to God!

May we close with these precious words.

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:1-6 (ESV))