

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

Christ Our Advocate

1 John 2:1-2

GraceLife: 06/21/2009

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Good morning to everyone in GraceLife and a happy fathers' day greetings—very happy for our heavenly Father, amen? Glad that we have a heavenly Father far more than an earthly father even though we appreciate them as well.

Knowing that people come with many different things on their hearts, I think this is going to be an encouraging time this morning as we continue to consider the important first two verses of the second chapter of 1 John and I invite you to turn there.

And as you turn there, I would say this, that if indeed you are discouraged this morning, if you have perhaps strayed in to sin and feel the weight of that on your guilty conscience, if you just look at your life and say “You know, I am in danger of losing my first love as a Christian, my love for Christ has grown cold,” I want to say that God has brought you to the right place this morning because this passage and the things that we are going to consider today are of immense value, of immense encouragement, this is the water that keeps the thirsty soul going day after day in the long walk that we have in Christ on this earth.

And so, look with me at the first two verses of 1 John, chapter 2 where the apostle John, writing with great pastoral affection to his spiritual children, he says this:

My little children, I am writing these things 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.

It is important to set today's message in the context of what we said last time. Last time we talked about how this passage gives us the framework of a mind for holiness. God saved us out of sin in order to make us holy. And there were four things that we said about that, we said:

First of all, we have to have a settled reverence for the holiness of God. In 1 John 1:5 John says:

God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.

As a foundational settled matter that we never question or never call in to account, we have a settled reverence for the holiness of God as believers in Christ.

Secondly we said as we deal with sin, as we pursue holiness in our lives, we said that there is a mindset of no denial. What we mean by that is that there is no denial of sin in our lives. We have a settled recognition and the word “settled” is just very important for understanding what John is communicating here, that’s why I repeat it so often—a settled confession of sin. We have it settled in our mind that we are not good enough for God, that we do not deserve His favor. In fact to the contrary, standing in our own merit we deserve His judgment because we have sinned against Him, we have broken His holy law and we recognize that, we realize that we have sin in us, we commit sins, so there is no denial, we have a settled confession of sin. John says in verse 8:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Thirdly we said that this mindset for holiness, these are the tracks on which the train of personal sanctification run—there is no compromise. What we mean by that is that we have a settled resistance to sin. We have it settled in our mind that there is no sin, there is no area of our life that we are willing to give over to sin, quite to the contrary, we resist it. John says in verse 1 of chapter 2:

...I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

We want to take as believers the spiritual resources that God has given us and resist sin with all of our might. There is a settled resistance to sin, we say no compromise because we understand that 95% is not acceptable. If we say “I’m going to carve out this area of my life where I’m going to live like I want.” You are just asserting sovereignty, so-called sovereignty over your own life when you do that. You are saying “In the final analysis, I’ll determine what’s acceptable in my life and what’s not. 95% of the way I’m happy with God’s ideas, 5% I’ve got my own ideas.” Beloved, it does not work that way. We make no compromise with sin. We don’t accept it in any way whatsoever even when it is painful to put the flesh to death—no compromise. John wrote so that we would not sin, not just so that we basically would not sin—no compromise. Settled reverence, settled confession, settled resistance to sin.

And then we said last time (this is where we are going to pick up and launch from today) that in the midst of that, there is no despair. We recognize because of our indwelling sin that we still fall short of the glory of God. We still have wrong attitudes, wrong thoughts about God, and we realize that we fall short even as believers, but we don’t fall in to despair over that. We don’t collapse under the weight of morbid self-introspection and pursue that because we are looking outside of ourselves to Christ as our satisfaction, Christ as the one who merits the presence of God for us. Christ our joy, Christ our peace, Christ our light, Christ our sufficiency, Christ our all in all. No despair because God has sent the glorious Son of God to be our savior and His purpose in coming was to save

sinner. And so with a settled confession of sin, we say “Lord, I am one of the reasons why you came.” And so we don’t despair because Christ has borne the penalty of our sins in His own body on the cross and He has reconciled us to God. In the words of 1 Peter 3:18, He has brought us to God, bearing us on His shoulders as it were. And so we don’t despair even though the battle continues against sin. We never tolerate sin, it is never acceptable, but we don’t despair because of Christ.

Now, that raises a very important question, practical for each one of you that name the name of Christ today, one that goes to the deepest recesses of your heart because, we can dress ourselves up and clean ourselves up pretty good on Sunday morning and come and make a nice appearance before one another as it is. But in your heart if you are a true believer, you recognize sin and you know that you still sin from time to time, some of you more than others, but we won’t get in to quantity here. But the question is this, John said in the first part of verse 1 that his purpose was to help us avoid sin in our Christian life, in your Christian life. But here is the question beloved, how do we respond when we do sin? Stated differently, what happens when you sin in terms of your relationship with God?

Listen to this question. The question is, does God’s favor towards you rise and fall in proportion to your conduct? Is He happy with you one moment when you seem to be obeying, but then becomes unhappy the next moment when you sin or have a bad thought or say a bad word?

Beloved, the importance of that question and understanding the answer to that question cannot be overstated because of its importance for successful Christian living. Speaking from sad personal experience, if you as a Christian view God as a somewhat irritable deity whose attitude toward you depends on your own shifting conduct and faith and strength of faith and strength of joy and all of that, beloved your spiritual life will be a source of great frustration to you. If you see God from that perspective, if that is the lens through which you view God, then you are going to be very frustrated in your spiritual life and that is because sin still dwells within us, we still struggle with sin. And if your sense is that it is your conduct that determines God’s ultimate favor or satisfaction with you and His intentions to bless you are dependent on that, then when you go to Him in prayer it is going to be a very miserable experience in the end.

The apostle John knows that sin in your life undermines joy and assurance. And so what he is doing in this passage is he is explaining our position before God when we sin so that we could remain steadfast even when we fall short. In other words, he is helping us on the fourth point of this equation, no despair, settled trust in Christ. He is writing to strengthen you against the despair that you might feel, the anxiety over your salvation or the status of your relationship with God. He is writing to strengthen you so that that despair and anxiety does not overwhelm you when you fall short.

Let me say something important here. He is writing to sincere Christians here who are genuinely pursuing holiness in their lives. He says “My little children...” that’s who he

is talking to. He is writing to sincere Christians. He is not writing to give cover to spiritual phonies who want to give an external appearance to following Christ, but inwardly still cherish sin—that's not his audience at all. If you are here as a hypocrite, take no comfort from anything I say this morning because John is not writing to strengthen hypocrites in their hypocrisy, he is writing to strengthen sincere, humble Christians who have a settled reverence for God, who have a settled confession of sin, a settled resistance to sin and a settled refusal to despair when they do sin—that is his audience. And understanding who his audience is is crucial for understanding the intent of what he says here. He is writing to promote fellowship with the Father to those who truly love Him, he is not writing to give cover to those who want to play with sin.

And so beloved from the very start, I just have to tell you to examine yourself and ask yourself which category there you are falling as a professing believer. If you are a hypocrite, I am really not talking to you this morning except that the word of God would convict you of your gross hypocrisy and cause you to repent.

Today, following the line of the thought of the apostle John, we are writing to the little children who love holiness and want to be like Christ and are grieved when they fall short and find it unacceptable that want to live without sin—that's who the audience is here today and so we will understand it from that light—that's so important.

Now first of all, my outline today is not real skillful or artful, but I will try to give you enough structure here that you can hang the thoughts and the notes that you want to take around these points—they are not parallel, they are not alliterated, I would flunk homiletics in seminary if I delivered a sermon like this. Not that I care, I'm out of seminary, those days are gone; they are not going to come back and revoke my diploma based on this message. My intent here is to help you process and think through the text so that you would be strengthened in your spiritual walk, that's the goal of this.

The first point I am going to state in the form of a question. John says:

If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

First question is this:

1. What Kind of Sin is He Describing?

What kind of sin is he describing? What is the sin that is involved here? What kind of sin is involved here? What is the manner of sin that John is discussing?

Look at the last half of the verse with me again just to keep it fresh in our mind. John says:

If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father ...

So he is writing to prevent sin, but he recognizes that sin can and does occur in a believer's life. The grammar that he uses here indicates (get this) that he is describing individual acts of sin that occur from time to time in a believer's life. He is not talking about an unbroken pattern of sin that marks an unbeliever. You know that for certain because he said in verse 6 of chapter 1:

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

If our pattern of life is such that we manifested disregard for holiness, a disregard for Christ, then John says you are lying about your claim to be a Christian. So he is not talking about an unbroken pattern of sin, rather, he is talking about those acts of sin that come in to a true believer's life (get this) but that are contrary to the overall tenor of the believer's life. What he is recognizing here is that someone truly committed to holiness, truly committed to resisting sin, still deals with sin from time to time and that is the sin, that is the kind of person that he is addressing. He is addressing you as a sincere believer in Christ when you find occasional sins cropping up in your life, you have strayed from the path, you pursued and yielded to temptation in a way that you know was wrong and deep in your heart you don't welcome, but in your fallenness in your flesh you have submitted to it. He writes to give you help when that happens.

Now beloved, listen to me, it is a great encouragement. Sometimes we just need to make the most basic observations to set things correct in our mind and this is a basic observation. It is a great encouragement to know that when God set forth His eternal plan of salvation for those who would believe in Christ, it is a great encouragement to know that He anticipated our sins as believers and made provision for them. It is not like we first come to Christ and then we are on our own after that initial act of faith and then we are left on our own merit as though Christ simply covered our past sins, but now we have got to get it right going forward—no, that's not the case at all. God has anticipated our sins as believers and made provision for them.

Beloved, I can tell you, every one of you, that yes, you have sinned. You can say that about me even if you don't know the particulars or the details. Yes, we have sinned; you have sinned, all right? Welcome to a very large club that we all belong to. None of us have honored Christ with our lives since coming to Him in salvation like we should have. None of us have lived a perfectly righteous life, unbroken, in perfect love for God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind since we came to Christ—you all fall short and I do too.

What John is doing here in this passage is he wants you to know that God has provided the solution to that sin in His comprehensive gift of salvation in His act of undeserved favor towards you if you are a believer in Christ His Son. As part of the comprehensive gift of salvation which He planned before the foundation of the world, He has also made as an aspect of that He has made provision to cover and expunge your sins that you commit as a believer—that is an enormous comfort beloved. God is not surprised when

we sin, He anticipated it and He dealt with it before you were even born. God is not stuck responding to your conduct as an acting response to your conduct, God has planned all of this out long before.

God knows your frame, He knows all about your sin, in fact He knows about sins that you are not even conscious of. He knows that your sin is worse than you realize, He knows your frame and He has graciously provided a mean so that you can maintain fellowship with Him despite your sin.

And What John says here, look at the end of the verse with me again:

And if anyone sins (what) we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

We are not left alone, you could say. You must remember when you find yourself having sinned as a believer, you must remember as part of your settled trust, your refusal to despair, you must remember that Jesus Christ Himself is your advocate in heaven. You have one who represents you before the Father in heaven who has paid for all of your sins—all of them. He is an advocate, He is on your side beloved, He is with you. He is not an impartial observer, a neutral observer, He is not a referee, He is with you, to help you, to intercede and mediate on your behalf—this is blessed truth. And this is where the anchor against despair gets driven down buried deep in to the sea, this is where a deep foundation is poured when you understand this, that Christ is representing you before God the Father in heaven, these are things that we only know through revelation.

Now, he says that Christ is your advocate. What does that mean? And this is where we will be spending the rest of our time this morning.

Now second point here. We have seen the kind of sin that he is dealing with, he is talking about those sins that a sincere believer commits that is contrary to the true tenor of his life. Secondly, state this as a question:

2. Is Jesus Our Defense Attorney?

Is Jesus our defense attorney? That's the question I want to answer here this morning. I have read many commentaries by Bible teachers who I can only dream of being remotely aspiring after. Many good Bible teachers, great Bible teachers, Bible teachers that I would step aside in the pulpit if they were here and wanted to teach, those kinds of Bible teachers say that John here is indicating that Jesus is acting as our defense attorney in heaven. And why do they believe that? What is their basis for saying that and is it the best way to view this passage? That's what the second point is about. Why do they say that?

I want you to follow with me here because the explanation of this view and my understanding of it, what I think is a biblical response to it is going to go a long way

toward helping you understand what it means that Jesus is representing you in heaven, so I want to spend some time here.

Outside the New Testament, the Greek word for advocate was often used in legal setting of someone who pleads the case of someone before a judge, like an attorney, you have a legal problem, you need to go before a judge, you don't stand before that judge on your own. You have an attorney who represents you and states your case before the judge. And there is a certain attraction to viewing Christ in His session before the Father in that way—many commentators like that view. They say that John here is using legal language to describe Christ; that Christ acts like a divine defense attorney who represents us before the bar of God when we sin. And so the picture that is painted, again by good teachers, that Jesus is the defense attorney, God is the judge, Satan is the prosecuting attorney, and the believer stands as the accused. And what they say is that God always dismisses the charges because of Christ's work on our behalf—He is our divine defense attorney, He always secures acquittal, and it is in that sense that Christ is our advocate.

That sounds pretty good when you think about it at first, it is a plausible view, it might be the right view. But it is not my view, it is not the way that I see this passage, I think that is a misguided view and I want to explain to you why.

First of all, I can't find all of that stuff that I just described in the passage. Where are the references to Satan as a prosecuting attorney? Where is the description of God the judge?

This view creates some of the very problems that I think John was trying to solve and prevent when you view it that way. You see, just looking at it simply, if you view this as a court room metaphor here, it creates the idea, it makes us think that each time we sin, we return to God's judgment court. Beloved, that's not true even though the men who teach this view don't intend to lead it to that conclusion, it creates this court room environment and it create the sense that God is somehow in an adversarial position against us and judging us again when we sin. There are three main problems with that view that I want to share with you to help you see why I don't think this is the best way to understand the passage.

Problem #1 is this: The word "advocate" usually has no legal overtones. See, the defense attorney idea for this word stems from a belief that the mere use of the word "advocate" invokes a legal setting. By saying "advocate" you have immediately created an entire court room metaphor and for those Bible teachers, that controls the way they interpret the whole verse, but I don't think that's justified. The most important resource I had in my entire library, a particular Greek lexicon that I have come to trust implicitly, says this, speaking of this word it says that technical meaning of lawyer or attorney is rare. In the few places that the word is found in other literature, meaning outside the New Testament, it has for the most part a more general meaning—that's so important beloved. Stick with me because it this deals with the matters pertaining vitally to your soul. This has for the most part a more general meaning; it speaks of one who appears in another's behalf, a mediator, and intercessor or a helper.

Now a divine defense attorney (strike that from the record) (laughter) That reminds me, look, I have a natural bias in favor of the defense attorney view, I used to defend people in court, I would love to make a direct analogy, it would confer a recto active validity on that which all of you think is awful that I used to be an attorney. If Christ was a defense attorney, how could you criticize me again over that, so I am biased in favor of it.

But beloved, this brief word is not a technical legal term. Yes, a defense attorney appears and intercedes on behalf of someone, but lots of other people who are not attorneys also act as intercessors, as people who intervene and help someone who is disadvantaged or in need. There is a more general sense; the attorney idea is just one application of this more general term. And so beloved, you do not have to see Jesus as the defense attorney here simply because the word “advocate” is used—that’s my first point. And when you recognize that, it frees you from putting an artificial construction on this entire passage in 1 John.

Now if you want some more proof of that, understand this, there are four other times in the New Testament where this word is used, in John 14:16, John 14:26, 15:26 and 16:7, all on the lips of Jesus. Follow me here, using the same word here, and each time Jesus is describing the Holy Spirit as the helper of believers as is translated in the New American Standard, not the Holy Spirit the defense attorney, but the helper. The Holy Spirit is the helper, the one who intercedes for us. If you read those verses in the context, there is no court room metaphor at all in the context of those things. It is the Holy Spirit teaching and glorifying Christ in all of that, not a defense attorney. So within the confines of the New Testament, you cannot at all say that this word must be a legal metaphor because the other four times, it has nothing to do with the law setting at all.

So the first problem with the defense attorney here is that it makes a general term for helper, carry a technical legal meaning that is not justified even in the biblical usage of the term. That is so important because as soon as you say it has to be legal, then you have got to say who is God here, who is the believer here, what is the charge here. It takes the whole interpretation of the passage down the legal path that is not justified by the context

That brings us to point #2, second problem of is Jesus a defense attorney here. Second problem with that view which I already alluded to is that the attorney view violates the context. Look at our verse again, John says:

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

This is a simple observation, but beloved, look at the verse. John does not say we have an advocate before God the judge. He says that we have an advocate before God the Father. He is invoking the figure of God as a Father not as God the judge here. Look back at 1 John 1:3 where he states that his whole purpose is to promote fellowship with the Father, he says:

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you, too, may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

He states from the beginning that his purpose is to promote and to enhance our common life with God the Father. Beloved, he is talking about a family relationship here not a court room setting.

Beloved, why do I need an attorney with my Father? That does not fit the usage that John is making here in my judgment. He is talking about God as our Father, the one in whom we have spiritual lineage, the one who has given us spiritual life. He is not using the court room metaphor here; he says it is an advocate with the Father. If the defense attorney view was right, I would expect him to be saying an advocate with the judge—that's not what he says.

There is a third problem with the attorney here that makes me skeptical about its accuracy. The third problem is that the attorney view violates good theology. Listen beloved, when you think of a judge, you think of someone in a black robe up front designed to impartially judge the case and to weigh the comparative merits and then render a decision. When you call Jesus a defense attorney in the throne room of heaven, you invariably, inevitably, create some kind of sense that the Father is somehow reluctant to grant forgiveness, that He has got to weigh the merits of this and then make up His mind. That's what a judge does, he weighs merits and then he renders a decision.

One writer who actually holds to the defense attorney view summarizes the problem this way, he says: "This picture of Jesus as a defense attorney and the judge metaphor and the court room scene is in danger of presenting God as an unwilling judge from whom forgiveness has to be wrestled with by the advocate for sinners." So Jesus under this view, where this view takes you, inevitably even if it is just simply in the recesses of your own heart as you are confessing sin in a broken, penitent spirit, it leaves in your mind this sense that may be God is reluctant to do it, may be He has got His arms folded across His chest, "Let me hear the case first, then I'll decide." No, no, absolutely not, we can't tolerate that view despite how good the men are that have proclaimed it over the decades. Beloved, nothing can be further from the truth where that takes you. In fairness to the men that wouldn't portray God that way, but that's where their view leads, that's what it sets in your mind, what it sets in your heart. And my responsibility today for your spiritual well being is to purge that from your mind and help you to see that that's the wrong way to think of God as a believer. Nothing about that can be further from the truth (get this) because we are talking about good theology now, this is the problem that we are trying to address.

Beloved, get this, God the Father and God the Son are both motivated by love in the matter of your salvation. It is not like Jesus really loves us and He has got to talk the father in to it. No, they both are motivated truly by love for the elect to save them and preserve them all the way to glory.

Look at 3:16. I want you to see this right in the context of 1 John because you see what was in the mind of John as he wrote the entire letter. 1 John 3:16, speaking about God the Son, this is so precious, he says:

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Beloved, who was it that laid down His life on your behalf? Jesus Christ, God the Son. The apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says, let me tell you what love looks like, look at God the Son, laying down His life voluntarily on the cross on your behalf—there's love. He says God the Son, motivated by love in the matter of your salvation.

Now get this, chapter 4:10, beloved, I am just reading scripture to you:

In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Clearly speaking about God the Father because God the Father sent the Son, the Son is distinguished from God in this verse, God the Son, God the Father. God the Father loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, to be the sacrifice which would turn away the wrath of God that otherwise would fall upon our heads. Beloved, right in the epistle of 1 John it says Jesus the Son loved us in our salvation and it says God the Father loved us and sent Him to achieve our salvation.

Beloved, there is no conflict in purpose between God the Father and God the Son. They were both animated by eternal electing love before the foundation of the world to set in motion the chain of events that would lead to your salvation—they are on the same side. God the Son is on your side when you sin, that's why He came, He lay down His life to forgive your sins. And beloved, praise God, God the Father loves you and is on your side as well—they both equally seek our welfare. God the Father is not an unwilling judge when you are confessing sin. He is a willing father who loves you and is ready to pour out forgiveness, indeed forgiveness that is already settled and accomplished. And beloved, I think the defense attorney view obscures that reality and that's why I defer with good men in the way to understand it.

Beloved, you have got to see that God the Father and God the Son love you and the whole point of salvation was a manifestation of the love that is a central feature of their character. John 5:24 says:

When you believed, you passed out of judgment and in to life.

You say “All right, enough, I believe you, I see what you're saying, it's not the defense attorney view, that still doesn't tell me what it means. What does it mean then?”

Here is what I think about that:

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3. Jesus is the High Priest Who Helps Us Before the Father

If John is not talking about a legal atmosphere here, what is he describing? The context surrounding this verse is the language of sacrifice. Look at the end of verse 7 where it says:

The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Blood, poured out in a violent death as a sacrifice to God, that blood continually cleanses us from all sin. In verse 2 he says:

He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.

We will look at this more next week, but He is the atoning sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God. The context then suggests a sacrifice being offered on your behalf. And when you talk about a sacrifice in connection with the idea of an advocate, an intercessor, a mediator, when you talk about it in that context, the picture more rightly suggests a priest who intercedes on our behalf—Jesus being that one and only priest.

Now stay with me here. The Bible calls Christ our high priest. In the simplest of terms, a priest is someone who represents people before God. A priest in that representative capacity offers sacrifice on behalf of them, on behalf of the ones he represents. And then based on his sacrifice, he intercedes for them in his God-appointed role as their representative, as the one who bridges the gap as it were between people and God—that's the idea of priesthood in general. Beloved, that is the sense in which Christ is our advocate, our intercessor.

I want to take you to some passages in Hebrews that we will just read far too quickly to help reinforce this idea that I think explains in detail what John said in such a short synopsis here in the opening verses of his epistle.

Look at Hebrews 7, beginning in verse 25, I'm just going to read 4-5 passages here very quickly. Remembering that in 1 John, he talks about Christ as our intercessor in the presence of the Father, one who is with the Father interceding for us, these passages from Hebrews open up the meaning of that to us. Hebrews 7:24, speaking of Jesus it says:

Jesus on the other hand, because He continues for ever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore, He is able to save for ever those who draw near to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens, who does not need daily like those high priests to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for sins of the people. Because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

The sacrifice that Jesus offers in the presence of the Father is Himself. He lay down His life at the cross; that was His sacrifice that brought us to God. Hebrews 9:7:

When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having attained eternal redemption.

(Verse 24) Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but in to heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

In God's presence for us, on our behalf, oh, how great this is, how precious.

Hebrews 10:14:

By one offering, He has perfected for all time, those who are sanctified.

(Verse 19-22) Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with the sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Beloved, that's the picture that I believe that John is presenting here, Jesus Christ as a high priest, having offered His life as a sacrifice for our sins, God having accepted that sacrifice in full, once for all, now Jesus, in His ascension entered in to heaven in order to represent us in the presence of God, having offered the sacrifice of His own life to affect a permanent, eternal reconciliation with God. Beloved, that sacrifice was once for all, there is no more argument going on about it, they are not arguing about this any more, they never were arguing about it—they meaning God the Father and God the Son, they were always unified, they were never set against each other.

Beloved, listen to me, thinking about your battle with sin and the guilty conscience, as a sincere believer who wants holiness, but knows that you are falling short, beloved, God the Father has accepted the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross so completely that even your sins as a believer are not a barrier to fellowship with Him. The joined purpose of love between God the Father and God the Son toward you has been accomplished, it is settled. Christ's death has turned away the wrath of God for ever. Now, on the basis of that sacrifice, Christ represents you in heaven and helps you before the holiness of God. He is not making a repeated intercession in the sense that something new happens each time you sin. Rather, John is describing a settled intercession, a complete intercession based on Christ's once for all sacrifice. Jesus Himself stands before God as your helper and representative, having for ever removed the barrier of sin

that otherwise would have hindered your fellowship with the holy God which is John writes to promote.

A high priest, not an attorney, a high priest who intercedes based on perfect sacrifice that He made and which carries eternal value in the throne room of God on your behalf beloved—you, individually.

You want a picture that will seal that intercession in your mind? Turn back to a section of the Bible that you have trouble staying awake when you read on it sometimes—Exodus chapter 28. This is a picture to help you see the reality of Christ's representation of you in heaven. In the Old Testament, the high priest wore garments that symbolized his intercession for the people. There were stones, it was an elaborate garment that carried much symbolic value that helps us get a picture of what the work of Christ is on our behalf.

In Exodus, chapter 28, God is giving commandment to Moses on the preparation of the garments of the priests. Look at verse 9, He says:

You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, (Verse 10) six of their names on one stone, six on the other. (Verse 12) You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for a memorial.

So when Aaron the high priest entered the holy place where the presence of God was dwelling, he carried on his shoulders the names engraved of the tribes of Israel on these stones. But that's not all. Look at 28:28-29, another garment, the breast piece had a similar symbolism:

They shall bind the breast piece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with the blue cord so there will be on the skillful and woven band of the ephod. Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breast piece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place for memorial before the Lord continually.

There were other jewels on which the names of the tribes were written and so on his priestly garments, on his shoulders, he had the names of the sons of Israel. On the breast piece of judgment, he carried the names of the sons of Israel over his heart. And so, when he entered in to the holy place, the high priest carried their names with him and he represented them before the father in this Old Testament picture that God had for Israel. As he did his work of intercessions, their names were written on him. He carried their names on the strength of his shoulders and over the affections of his heart.

Beloved, that is a picture of the way Jesus Christ represents you before the father. Jesus Christ bears the names of His elect on the strength of His omnipotence and in the love of His heart before God the Father in heaven, all guaranteed its adequacy and in its

sufficiency based on the power of His sacrifice on the cross, He now had carried the names of every one who believes in Him up in to heaven and represents them and defends you and intercedes for you based on His eliminable strength on the infinite love of His glorious heart. Your name beloved, inscribed as it were, on the very affections of everything that He is about.

John says that that is the kind of help that you have in heaven when you sin as a believer. God accepts you not on the basis of any merit that you have. His attitude does not fluctuate up and down like your pursuit of sanctification does—it is settled beloved, it is settled because Christ's work is settled, because His appearance in heaven is settled. Christ is there as our settled intercessor and helper before God and God the Father accepts Him—that's what He wanted, that's what He planned from the very beginning—this is too glorious for words.

Beloved, listen to me, I wish I had heard these things years ago, it would have saved me so much grief and discouragement. Jesus' intercession assures you that God will always favorably receive you when you approach Him to confess your sins. God is satisfied with Christ, Christ names you as His own. And so God accepts you based on Christ's merit, based on Christ's work. Those matters are settled beloved, they don't come up for review each time you sin, these are settled.

And so if you came here today beloved as a Christian who has fallen in to sin, and you feel the guilt and anxiety that that brings, these words cannot be any sweeter to you than what they are. You can find relief, certain confident relief from your guilty conscience at the throne of grace. God will receive your confession unfailingly because He is satisfied with Christ and Christ represents you in heaven. You have an advocate, one who maintains your cause before the Father.

Beloved, what can I say, go to Jesus, go to the Father who will receive you, that is why Jesus came. He came to save sinners and to preserve them all the way to glory. Beloved, don't dwell on the vain regrets of sin, just pursue the settled resistance to sin with the sincere confession that says "Lord, I confess the sin, I completely trust Christ to represent me before you and my heart desires to live out a life of gratitude that bears the fruit of true repentance Father. I trust you because I trust Christ."

Beloved, that kind of prayer is the prayer that God promises to receive based on the merits of Christ. Go to Him beloved, trust Him and glorify this great Christ who purchased such a great salvation. Let's pray.

As we pray and as we open, if you are not a Christian, this gift of God's salvation is available to you, that perfect work of Christ is available if you believe in Him. Based on that same sacrifice for sin, I invite you to come to Christ and find the forgiveness of your sins if you don't know Him.

Father, we thank you for the plan of salvation that you implemented and designed out of your eternal love. It was your love that is in Christ. Oh Jesus, we thank you for offering

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the sacrifice of your own life that settles the matter of our forgiveness for ever. When you said "It is finished" on the cross, it is finished, reconciliation for those of us who believe in you is fully accomplished, and we are amazed at the wonder of the glory of that, unworthy sinners, reconciled to God in the merit of Christ for ever. Oh God, we honor you, we worship you from the depths of our unworthy hearts. We thank you for what you have done on our behalf and we look forward to that glorious day when the faith of all of this becomes sight and we experience the fullness of that reconciliation face to face.

Bless us as we go Father. Thank you for your goodness to us which words cannot measure and tongues cannot tell. In Jesus' name. Amen.