



The Sermon

1 John 2:1-2

"Meet your Advocate"

TRANSCRIPT

Great to be back at Trinity. If you have a Bible with you, 1 John. 1 John this morning. 1 John 2, the first two verses. And I'm going to read from the English Standard version. You just follow along in whatever version you have. 1 John 2, verses 1 and 2. This is the word of God. "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. He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This is the word of God. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the privilege to gather in the name of Your risen Son. We thank You for the privilege to open up Your Word. And now, Father, we pray that Your Holy Spirit would be our teacher, that You would illuminate our lives and illuminate our minds. And that because we met You in Your Word today, we would be different people. Father, thank You for the advocacy that we have through Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father, I pray today that You would open our minds and open our hearts, that we might appreciate and treasure and value like never before the fact that in Jesus we have an advocate. And we pretty in His strong name, Amen.

One of my favorite movies was the movie Spartacus. Some of you may have seen that many years ago. Kirk Douglas, and in a lot of great movies, but that was a favorite. I was reading an article about Kirk Douglas several

years ago. And in an interview, he indicated that he kind of had a thing about picking up hitchhikers. He just wanted to help people. And so one day out in California, he's driving along and he sees a sailor by the side of the road with his bad. And so he decides he'll pick him up. Well, the sailor throws his duffle back in the back seat and hops in the front seat and looks at the guy driving and does a double take and says, "Hey, man, do you know who you are?"

And Kirk Douglas recorded about how funny he thought that was. But I was reading that story. And I thought about our passage today. Hey, man, do you know who you are? And I'm not here to take everybody on a self-flagellation road. I'm not here to remind you of how terrible or how sorry you are. But the fact is, the most definitive thing about you, and me, is that we're sinners.

Now, we're made in the image of God. But we are sinners. And to sin is to fall short of God's glory. To put it another way, God has a standard, and you and I have failed to live up to it. And the Bible says the wages of sin is death. So you don't have to be an Einstein type of theologian to realize that we have a problem. Made in the image of God, loved by God, no doubt about that, but marred and disfigured by sin.

And so we can go through our lives trying to address that ultimate problem in any number of ways. "Oh, if I just feel better about myself, then maybe the sin problem won't plague me so much." Or, "If I just make enough money, or I'm just successful enough," and we never address that core basic foundational problem. And the problem is that I'm a sinner and that you are a sinner.

Well, sin is bad news. I like to remind myself the gospel is such good news, because the bad news is such bad news. And the bad news is that I'm sinner and you're a sinner. And the bad news is that God executes His wrath against sin. Again, not a popular idea today, the wrath of God. Well, what is the wrath of God? One of my favorite writers says the wrath of God

is God settled hostility toward sin, His resolve to condemn it. So we got a problem.

God says, "I'm against sin. I refuse to compromise with it. I'm going to condemn it. The wages of sin is death." A person outside of God's provision is doomed and damned, no matter how smart or good looking or healthy or wonderful he or she is. And that leads us to today's passage in 1 John. John, the beloved apostle, is writing and he's saying to those that he loves greatly many of these are his spiritual children. And he's saying, hey, don't be misled. There are some heretics, there are some false teachers out there that are saying that there's no such thing as sin. Sin's not anything we need to think about. After all, it's all about what you have in your head, the head knowledge. It doesn't matter how you behave. And so there was this extreme dualism. Spiritually, as long as I talk about these things and I look spiritual and I sound spiritual, then it doesn't matter what I do with my body. It doesn't matter if I'm immoral. We don't need to talk about the idea of sin.

So historically, there's really two or three things that people do with sin. Number one, you have people that altogether deny sin. That's what you got in verses 5-10. If you look back, you see what John is doing. "If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. If we say we have no sin, we make Him a liar." So for the person who claims sinless perfection or the person who says, "I'm not going to get caught up in this sin thing. I don't really think I'm that bad of a person. There's no such thing as sin. That's just this archaic idea." Look at what the Bible says.

So there are people who deny. They deny the existence of sin. And so John is writing to people who are faced with that. Now, there's another thing people do with sin that's far more common today. They dismiss it. They're a part of the school of NBD – no big deal. Everybody's a sinner. We all make mistakes. I mean, don't you understand Matthew? Don't you understand that God exists in order to forgive people? That's why God exists, they'll tell you. Don't worry about sin. God's job is to forgive.

And so there's this view about sin that it's just no big deal. So we got these two extremes, don't we? Some people thinking there's no such thing as sin. They deny it. And then others who dismiss it. "No big deal." But let me talk to you about a third area. And maybe I'm talking to somebody that's here this morning.

Some people deny sin. Some want to just dismiss it and blow it off. But some people are in despair about it. And I may be talking to somebody here this morning. There's something that happened in your life 10, 15, 20, 25 years ago, or maybe it was 2 months ago, I don't know. There was a failure in your life that was so severe, so significant, so embarrassing, that you honestly felt like "I've been taught that I can't lose my salvation. I've been taught that I'm secure in Christ, but I'm so devastated by this. I am so broken by this that I just want to throw in the towel and give up."

Well, who is Paul addressing in these verses? Well, I think he's certainly addressing those who would deny the existence of sin. I think he's also addressing people that would have a light view of sin. You see, John's not writing to say, hey, don't worry about sin, no big deal. No. So I think John is writing to those people. But I think above all in this text he's writing to that person who might despair over sin in his or her life.

Well, I love that the Bible gives me both warning and consolation. Don't you like that? The Bible wounds us and then it binds us up. Here is a text that does that. Now, look ahead and you have that famous text. 1 John 1:9, "If we confess," the word confess means to agree, literally to say the same as, so when I confess my sin, when you confess your sin, if you're doing it Biblically, you're saying, "God, it is what You call it. I'm not going to excuse it. I'm not going to whitewash it. It is what You call it. I agree with Your assessment, God. I have failed. I've sinned against You." Now, what does the Bible say? If we confess our sins, He's faithful and righteous to cleanse us from all our sins, right?

And then we move into the second chapter. And it's fascinating, because look at what John does. "My little children," that term of endearment, "My little children." And notice his purpose clause. "I'm writing these things to you in order that you may not sin." I'm not giving you a free pass. "I'm writing these things to you in order that you might grow in holiness and that you might avoid sin." Then look at what he does next. From a purpose clause to a conditional clause. "But if anyone does sin," and the idea and the grammar of that text, if anyone does sin –and he or she will – this side of heaven, we don't reach a state of perfection.

So you see what John's doing? He's not excusing sin. He's not dismissing sin. He's saying, look, here's the mindset you need to have as a believer, when there's been failure in your life. What happens when a Christian sins? But if any of you sin, and you will, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. If you don't remember anything else I say this morning, I want you to go home with this: When sin threatens to paralyze you, remember the provision of an advocate for you. I'll say it again: When sin threatens to paralyze you, remember the provision of an advocate for you.

Well, you say, Matthew, where are you getting that? How can I know that this passage is giving me that comfort? Well, I want us to break this text down. And at the end I hope you'll see that the Word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, offers some powerful encouragement. This morning right now, as you are, and as you were when you came into this place, if you know Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ is presently interceding for you, carrying out an advocacy for you that is unparalleled. Isn't that great to know? You got the King and the Lord and the master of the universe. And He is your personal advocate.

Well, how do I know that? Let's look at the first part of this text in verse 2. I want you to consider with me our advocate's unceasing activity. You see what John writes? "But if anyone does sin, we have" – you could translate it "we are having." We have now and we go on having. We are having an advocate. Well, let's unpack that word. That's an interesting word. In the

Greek New Testament, it really translates a word that is connected to the Holy Spirit, the paraclete. We use that in English sometimes - one who is called alongside. But this particular term speaks of one who lifts up his voice on behalf of another, an advocate, one who is at the right hand, one who is a counsel for the defense.

I'll date myself here, but some of you are as old or maybe a little older than I am. Here's a text this morning that makes the advocacy of Perry Mason, makes him look like a pipsqueak, okay? Y'all know what I mean. I remember watching Perry Mason. At the first of the show, you think, man, this guy's got a big problem. I don't know how Perry can ever untangle this mess. And lo and behold, by the end of the story, guess what? Perry has gotten that guy off the hook. It's incredible. Why? Through his unparalleled advocacy.

Well, Perry Mason's a pipsqueak up next to the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are having an advocate. He is a counsel for the defense. Now, you tell me, if you could have anybody go to bat for you, so to speak, if you could have anyone go to bat for you and to take up your cause and to appeal your case, so to speak, could you have anybody better than the Lord of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ? No, you couldn't.

So I'm saying on this hot morning of July, when we live in a crazy world, sometimes it's so discouraging. We're discouraged by the failures of others. We're discouraged by our own failures. He's an encouragement. I have, you have, those who name the name of Jesus, if you put your hope in Christ, you are having presently and advocate, a counsel for the defense, one who will lift up His voice on your behalf. And His name is Jesus.

Well, if that were all that there were in this text, that would be great. But it gets even better. Look at it. So we look at our advocate's unceasing activity. There is never a time when Jesus is not advocating for you. But secondly, I want you to consider your advocate's premium location. Now, if somebody's going to be my advocate – and let's just take the courtroom

imagery for a second – that advocate needs to be in the right courtroom. Now, I mean if he's advocating, but he's in the wrong place, he's in the wrong courtroom, he's not going to do me any good. Look at this. Look at the place our advocate is in. We are having an advocate with the Father, with the Father. Literally, we have an advocate face to face with the Father. Face to face with the Father.

So here we enter into this mystery, the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the picture that John gives us in this text is that when I sin, Jesus is ceaselessly my advocate. Then He's in the most important, necessary place. He's in the presence of the Father, face to face. Well, how can He do that? How can He do that? Well, He does it on the basis of His perfection, on the basis of His perfect life, His without-blemish life, His sacrificial death, His complete perfection. He's qualified to be face to face with God the Father.

I read elsewhere in scripture, Jesus ascended to the Father in Acts, right? And the author of Hebrew says that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. That's the place of honor. And from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. So you and I read about Jesus, the incarnation. We celebrate that at Christmas. Jesus took on flesh and blood. He lived a sinless life. He was crucified on a Roman cross. He was placed in a borrowed tomb. He rose again on the third day. He ascended to the Father. He's presently at the right hand of God the Father. Until He shall come again in power and glory. And you know what? Where Jesus is right now is the best place He could possibly be to do you and to do me the greatest amount of good. And don't think for a moment that's not a part of the sovereign supernatural plan of God. That's His plan. That's His plan.

So look at it. This text says I have an advocate. He's ceaselessly active. And He's in the best place, before the throne of God, before the face of God. But it gets better. Look at the third thing: Consider your advocate's matchless qualifications. Now, it's great if I have somebody that's pleading my case. And then it's great if I have somebody in the right place. But if that advocate doesn't have the qualifications, it's all for naught. But would

you look at the qualifications? Jesus, a reference to the humanity of Jesus, of the second person of the Trinity. Jesus, fully man, fully God. So in order for Jesus to be my advocate, He's got to be fully human. He wasn't a phantom. He wasn't an apparition. No, He's a human being, in the flesh, just like you and I.

Then look at the second word, "Christ." Same thing we use for Messiah, same word. Jesus Christ, God's anointed one. And so here's a reminder in this text not to become a modern Marcionite. You remember Marcion, the early church heretic? His spirit is alive and well today. Marcion said the God of the Old Testament is this wrathful, vengeful, mean God. And the God of the New Testament is this loving and forgiving God who pours Himself out in Christ. Well, that's heretical.

I read in Isaiah Chapter 53, it please the father, right, to bruise the son. So it won't fit to look at this passage and say, okay, God wanted to save us and Satan cast a dissenting vote and Jesus broke the tie. That's terrible theology, because the Bible says that the whole plan of salvation is from God Himself. God planned it. One writer says the wisdom of God ordained a way for the grace of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God. Isn't that beautiful? That's what God does. That is what God does.

And so here I have Jesus, fully human Christ, fully God, and then notice the next designation, the righteous one – righteous – without blemish. If someone's going to go to bat for me and plead my case, he needs to be present. He needs to be in the right place. And he needs to be without blemish and absolutely perfect. You see, I need an advocate. The best kind of advocate is an advocate who himself needs no advocate. That is Jesus. That is Jesus. Needs no advocate, without blemish, without stain, without mark, without failing. That's our advocacy.

So we have an advocate, unceasing action, premium location, right? Matchless qualifications. Let's see put it altogether. If you're a believer



here this morning, hear me. Every believer has an advocate at all times, in the best place, who can provide real help. Now plug that in. Let's go back to what I said at first. What's your biggest problem? Your biggest problem is not how you're going to make ends me. It's not how you're going to get along with your spouse or how you're going to bring up your children or afford braces or college. Those are big problems, but your biggest problem is how are you going to be reconciled to a holy God, who in His sovereign, supernatural hand holds your eternal destiny. That's your biggest problem.

What this text is saying this morning is you do not have a hope apart from Jesus Christ. Look at the rest of the text. "He is the propitiation." Well, what is that all about? Well, in the last part of verse 2, you know what John's doing? He's saying, "I want you to consider your advocate's private substitution." You see what's going on in the text? The present advocacy of Jesus for you is based on His prior substitution in your behalf. Look at that word, "propitiation."

In the Old Testament, Greek translation of the Bible, this word that's used in this text describes the mercy seat. And the mercy seat was that place on the top of the Ark of the Covenant, where on the Day of Atonement blood would be sprinkled. The blood atonement would be signified and made. And so that word "propitiation" is important. Don't miss it. And He is the blood atonement for our sins.

A payment for sin had to be made. Our culture doesn't like that today. Well, I'm a good person. I've lived a good life. In fact, I'm a lot more moral and upright than most of those people I know that go to the church. But you see what the Bible says is that Jesus is a substitute. And His advocacy for you at every point, and for me, is based on that substitution, that propitiation, that sacrifice for me.

Now let me address an important question. Let's really begin to clarify this. You may be sitting there thinking, well, wait a minute, Matthew, I'm not sure I understand this. I thought when I was saved that when I asked Jesus to

come into my life and forgive my sins, I thought that I was saved then and there. You were. The Bible is dealing with the issue of justification there, right? At the moment I call on Christ, what happens? I'm justified by faith. I'm declared right with God.

And then Paul does this. There's a second aspect to the Christian life. It's called sanctification, a fancy word that just describes the Holy Spirit's work of conforming you and shaping you into the image of Jesus – sanctification. And the third aspect is glorification. When we get home to be with Jesus and we receive all the benefits of our salvation, right?

What this passage is concerned with is that middle part, sanctification. John is writing to people who'd been justified. They'd been declared right with God on the basis of faith in Christ, right? Well, what happens when a Christian, having trusted Christ, blows it or messes up or makes a mistake? Some would say, oh, Christians can reach sinless perfection in this life. No, no. Others would say, well, you got your Jesus card. You got Jesus living in you. You got your ticket punched. You can live any way you want to, because as far as, grace is greater than our sin.

You see how practical this passage is? What John is pointing us to is you can, I can. We will never take sin lightly so long as we take the cross seriously. You mark it down. It's true in my life, it's true in my life. If as a professing believer I begin to take a light view of sin or blow off sin in my life, you can guarantee my attention, my focus, is off of the cross. I have begun to take for granted the depth of God's love for me in Jesus.

Well, I love what one writer says. When Jesus pleads my case, He doesn't plead my innocence. He doesn't say before the throne of God, "Hey, don't punish Matthew there. There were extenuating circumstances. You just don't understand." No, before the bar of God's almighty justice, the Lord Jesus the advocate says, "He's guilty. He deserves eternal damnation. He deserves every punishment that could be rendered him. No excuses, he's guilty."

But then you know what Jesus does? The Bible indicates – and I love how one writer puts it – "Every time I sin, the Lord Jesus pops out His portfolio of propitiation." And He exhibits the benefits of Good Friday at the bench. And the Father says, "Accepted in the beloved." And the Father sees me through the merit and the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I have my covering. It's an amazing thing. When I sin, I am asserting my independence from God. And I am declaring my opposition to His will. That's a problem for us sometimes. We think about sin in terms of how it might hurt us or how it might hurt somebody that we love or that we're close to. But sin is ultimately and first of all against God, isn't it?

And so when you sin, when I sin, we're saying, "God, I know You have a plan for me. I know You didn't spare Your one and only son for me, but I just need a little bit more." You see what an attack my sin is and your sin is on the character and integrity of God? It's saying, God, I know You want what's best for me, but I just feel like I know a little bit better. Lord, I know You said You'd satisfy the deepest longing in my soul, but You're just not enough, and so I got to disobey You. That is how you and I need to view our sin.

You can't take the cross seriously without taking sin seriously. In fact, one of the old Puritans used to say one of the best things that a person can do when he or she is tempted by besetting sin is to contemplate and to think about the suffering of Jesus on the cross. That's a good word. That's a good word, isn't it? Yeah, the portfolio of propitiation.

Well, we're going to remember the Lord's body and blood here in just a moment. And I just want to say to you this morning that all of us in this room, the biggest issue in our life is a sin problem. And we're going to stand before a holy God. And if you don't have Jesus as your advocate, you're in a hopeless and a helpless situation. And I would plead with you with all my heart today, right now, for you to be reconciled to God and Jesus Christ. Because you do not want to go into eternity trusting in your own wisdom and strength and righteousness, a righteousness which

according to Jesus, according to the Father and the Word, is as filthy rags. You need the covering of Jesus.

And He is the propitiation for our sins. And not for our sins only, but those of the whole world. What's that all about? I think what John is saying is if anybody is going to be forgiven, if anybody's going to be right with God, it's going to come solely and exclusively through Jesus and not anybody else. He's the only covering that God has authorized and prescribed. Nothing else will do.

There is an old Anglican prayer that I think ties into this text. The old Anglican prayer, one aspect of it reads, "And dear Lord, give us a do sense of Your mercies." Isn't that great? God, give me a do sense of Your mercy. I see mercy all over this text. Lord, give me a do sense of Your mercy. You've had pity on me when I deserved damnation, when I deserved complete obliteration. You had pity on me. You related to me with loving kindness and tender mercy.

So you miss what I'm saying here this morning if you walk out and say, well, that guy just talked about how terrible sin is and how we're all terrible sinners. I did talk about that. But listen, the best part is that God knows the worst about you and me. He's chosen to love us anyway. He has made a provision for us. But this text says that His provision is the absolute, only provision.

I love what Augustus Toplady wrote. We don't sing it much anymore, "Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee." Listen to one of the last verses. He writes, "Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to Your cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress. Helpless, look to thee for grace. Vile, I to the fountain fly. Wash me, savior, or I die."

Here's what this text is saying. If you come to the place in your life where you have said, "Lord Jesus, Son of God, clean up my mess, I can't clean it

up. Wash me or I die." And if you've gotten there, you're in the safest, best, beautiful place that you can be. We are having an advocate before the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Trust Him. He's your covering and He's enough. Let's pray.

Maybe you're here this morning and there's never been a time in your life where you've said, "Lord Jesus, Son of God, I can't be good enough. I can't fix myself, but I come to You. And I need You to come into my life and change me and save me and forgive me." I know that there are leaders who would love to visit you and talk with you about a relationship with Jesus Christ. Don't leave here today without a covering, without the advocacy that is that of the Lord Jesus.

Many of you are here today and you know Christ. In fact, maybe you've been a believer for many, many years. Maybe this morning this text will be a reminder to you of the security and the comfort and the depth of mercy and kindness that you have in the person of Jesus. And maybe the Lord will use this passage to encourage you in the phase of life you find yourself in right now.

Father, thank You for Your Word. I pray that Your Holy Spirit would do His powerful life-changing and indelible work in all of our hearts on the basis of Your Word. Thank You that we have an advocate and that He's in best place and that He's ceaselessly at work for us and that He's imminently qualified. And Father, thank You that Your advocate, the Lord Jesus, gave Himself for us. We praise you and we rest in Him. In His name we pray, Amen.