

The Secrets of the Letter of the Youngest Apostle of Christ

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By Dr. Ian R. K. Paisley

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Sermons of Dr. Ian Paisley
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/paisley

Open your Bible, please, at the second chapter of the epistle to John. The first epistle of John, at the chapter 2.

Last Lord's day morning, we were looking at this great epistle and we found some amazing truths, special nuggets from God's word last Sunday. I want to continue the exposition of this book for I believe it has some most valuable things to teach us, and also it has upon it the stamp of the youngest of the apostles.

If you look with me at this second chapter, you will notice that a special subject is introduced to the readers. It is the subject of little children. Chapter 2, starts with that great title, "My little children," but in the Greek text, there are two words that can be translated as "little children." They both occur in this chapter 2. If you would like to look with me just but a moment at verse 13 of the chapter, you'll find there, "I write unto you, little children," but that is not in the Greek text, the word that's used in the second chapter, verse 1. And then if you'll go down the chapter to verse 18, you'll read again, "Little children, it is the last time." That word is the same word as occurs in verse 13 but not the word that occurs right through the whole epistle. The word that we're dealing with is a word of endearment, as a mother would say of the child, "My little child." Not because the child is small but because the child is near and dear to the mother's heart.

Now, the only other place in the writings of John you will find this word is in the Gospel according to John and let's turn to this reference, and in the Gospel according to John, at the chapter 13, the Lord Jesus Christ himself uses this word and you'll see there at the 33rd verse and it says there, "Little children." That's the only time that the Lord Jesus used that word but that word stuck in the mind of the great apostle. He was there when the Lord used it and he never forgot it and it becomes the basis, it becomes the basis of this great first epistle because in this great first epistle, the Lord uses that word, and as I've said, it's a word of endearment. The other word that is translated "little children" in this epistle is a word of relationship and of growth, but it's not emphasizing so much the love that the father has for the child.

Everything about the Bible is magnificent and there is a tremendous truth in this word of endearment which is related here, but I want you to notice something: that in all the references where this little word, "little children," is used, this one word that we have

been mentioning, they have all to do with Christ. All of them and they are all to do with the power of Christ to break the power of sin. This word is a word of liberation and you'll notice in the first chapter, or the second chapter of the first verse of this epistle, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." This is a word of deliverance because God so loves us and is so endeared to us, that he has sworn by himself he will deliver us from sin. We live in a sinful world. We live in a world that's full of iniquity. We have seen in this last week, this terrible happening to that family on the continent and the abuse and violence that characterized the sinning of that man and his evil heart.

How terrible is sin, but here we have, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." It's a word of deliverance but notice the key of this deliverance is because Christ is our advocate. Look at the next sentence, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." How am I kept from sin? Because I make a resolution I'm not going to sin. There are thousands and thousands of God's people who make resolutions every day they're not going to sin and they go and sin. Why? Because they're depending on their own strength. You will not be saved from sin by a resolution, you will be saved from sin by the prayers of Christ.

Little children, you are not to sin but if any man sin, he doesn't need to go on sinning, he has an advocate. This word "advocate" is the same word that's used in John's Gospel for "comforter," and if you read the chapters 14, 15 and 16 of John's Gospel, you'll see the emphasis that Christ made about the comforter. The word "comforter" in the Greek text is "paraclete." It's one called alongside to help us. It is the picture of the ship, it has hit the strong waves, and the strong waves have put a hole in its hull and the people aboard the ship are perishing, and then the lifeboat comes and the lifeboat is called alongside to help. And thank God when we sin, there is a helper alongside us, we have the advocacy of Christ himself.

You should take your Bible some day and you should study everyone in the Scriptures who were prayed for by Christ. He's an advocate. And you will be amazed of how our great high priest prays for his people. The greatest defense as I walk through an accursed evil world, is Christ is praying for me and he's not only praying for me, but he's alongside. We might pray and say of the Father, "Our Father, which art in heaven," but when we pray for the Son, he is in our heart, Christ within us, the hope of glory.

So there is no excuse for sinning. The old devil would tell you, "Oh well, you're only a poor sinful creature anyway and you don't need to go moping about your sins." You do. Every person who knows Christ should hate sin because sin is as the old Puritans say, is a would-be Christ killer. It was sinful man who took Christ and put him on a cross and nailed him there. Murderers.

So here we have the wonderful word, "little children," a word of endearment, "but I call you and I write to you about this, that you may not sin. I want you to live above the world and sin with a heart made pure, a garment white and Christ enthroned within. But I want to tell you, if you do sin, there's an advocate." There is not one going to throw you into the waves or one who's going to let your boat sink. No, he's called alongside to help us.

But he's not only the advocate, but note with me in verse 2, he's the propitiation for our sins. He's not only the advocate, he's the atonement. He has not only given us divine strength to resist sin and resist temptation and if we have committed sin to forgive us, but he does it on the basis that he is the atoning Christ. He's not only the Christ that advocates and pleads your case, but he's the Christ who is the atonement.

What does it say? It says, "he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." The Lord Jesus Christ is the atoning Christ. I'm glad he's a Christ that pleads my case, but I am glad that he's a Christ who paid my debt. And it's in the strength of the payment of our debt that we as believers, can rejoice in freedom from sin. Christ breaks the power of canceled sin. How? By the blood of the Lamb. There is power in the blood, wonder working power. While that blood remained within the veins of Christ, it was not available for our cleansing, but on the cross Christ opened his veins and made his precious life's blood a great fountain. There is a fountain opened up today in the house of David for sin and for all uncleanness.

And thank God, today we can be saved from sin through the advocacy of Christ and we can be saved from sin through the atonement of Christ, but if you look a little further with me, you'll find something more that, "hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Here we have the accomplishment of Christ. It is the power of Christ within us that enables us to keep his commandments. Look at verse 5, "whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

So we have here the accomplishment of Christ in his love and in his love, Christ accomplishes the act of giving us power to destroy the grip and the taint of sin in our lives. Sin shall not have dominion over you. A lot of believers do not believe that and because that, they're living in sins and they're grieving God every day. God has a plan not only to forgive your sins but to break the power of canceled sin. "To set the prisoner free/ His blood can make the vilest clean/ His blood avails for me."

And many of us are living in the enjoyment of the advocate, Christ the advocate and the advocacy of Christ. "He's praying for me." I love to meet a brother when he says, "I'll pray for you." My, it does your soul good to know that people pray for you, but there is one greater than any man within the church, the King and Head of the church, and he's praying for you. There is never a day, my dear child, little children, I want to tell you, your blessed Savior is praying for you. There is a prayer meeting every day at the Father's throne. Unless the Father would forget your name, he has it engraved on the palm of his hand and he raises his hand. He's our advocate. You shouldn't be living in sin when Christ is praying for you. You should be getting the victory again and again and again. The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed.

But then, what about his atonement? The rich, ruby red blood of the Lamb has power to make us whiter than the snow and to keep us whiter than the snow as we walk through this sinful world. There is no excuse for a believer to sin. God has put in his word the way whereby we can live in the victory over sin.

Then we have this accomplishment of Christ and if you look with me you'll find, "whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." Whoso keepeth his word. The word of God is for keeping, not for breaking. The word of God is to give us power that we may accomplish the perfection of the Savior's love. The mark of the first Christians was the mark of love and it was said of them, "Behold how they loved one another." Love that breaks the power of sin.

But there is something more. If you come down this chapter further, you will find that there is marked out for us here the word about a new commandment and there is a word about the appearance of Christ for Christ is coming again, and we have the appearance of Christ which is all important. Jesus Christ is coming again and as he comes, we will know his delivering power. How many of us dwell on the appearance of Christ? Did you think about it this week that has passed? Did you think that Christ was coming again? Do you ever stop, sit down in a chair, take your Bible and read the promises about his coming? Jesus is coming again and if any man has this hope, he purify himself, even with this hope that Jesus is coming again. He is not coming to damn us, he is coming to deliver us.

Jesus is coming again but God's people have almost forgotten that the second advent of Christ is a great doctrine of the word. Just as much as his first advent is a doctrine of the word, so his last advent and the second time, he'll come a second time without sin unto salvation. He has dealt with sin. He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free.

Today, take time to read what this little book of 1 John has to say. Write down the way. Not only have we the advocacy of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the accomplishment of Christ, the appearance of Christ, we also have the affection of Christ. He loves us. "Jesus loves me, this I know/ For the Bible tells me so." You can't get beyond that great truth, we are loved of the Savior.

A person who truly loves wants the best thing for the object of their affection and Christ wants you to have the best thing and do you know what the best thing is? To be rid of sin and the whip of sin and the darkness of sin and the devilry of sin. To walk above sin. To trample on it and put it under your feet and shout, "Hallelujah! Christ hath freed me from a broken law! He has freed me from the guilt of my sin and sinning! I am his and he is mine forever and forever!"

Then if you go searching this book, you'll not only find the importance of his appearance and his affection, you'll find the importance of his abiding. Jesus Christ abides with his people. He doesn't leave them. There are some people who come to visit you and they never stay very long. They'll walk in, they sit down, and then they say, "I'm in a hurry," and they get up and go. Well, some people on that occasion say, "Well, you're welcome to go. If you just come to walk in and sit down for a minute and quit, that's alright." But the Lord doesn't go, the Lord abides with us.

Sin and Christ cannot live in the same room or occupy the same heart, and when Jesus Christ really comes into a life, the life is changed completely for Christ abides and the word for "abide" is "at home." He's not visiting. He's in his own house. It's his house, not yours. It's his body, not yours. It's his mind, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You're not your own, you're bought with a price.

We live in a day when the standard of God's people in view of the commandments of God are absolutely devastating. This is a day when sin is excused. This is a day when all sorts of ways are made to try and ease in the believer's life the fact of sin, but sin should have no place in my life.

Look at verse 8 of chapter 3, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Are you of the devil or of Christ? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Then we're back to the birth, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The new man within you cannot sin. The new man that you got when you were born of God cannot sin. It's the old man and what have we to do with the old man? We have to put him on the cross. We are to nail him there and we're to leave the hill rejoicing that the old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed. The message of the Gospel is one of an entire deliverance from the power and the overcoming influence of sin in the believer so that you really become a little child.

Now notice the last thing that he says in this book. What is the last sentence of this book? It's interesting. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." That's the last call that Christ makes to his people. You know, when we read this epistle, our hearts are staggered with the fact that as an advocate in his atonement, in his accomplishment, in his appearance, in his affection, in his abiding and in his authority, the whole power of Christ, the living Christ, now is to free you from the power of sin.

It was Robert Murray M'Cheyne that said, "The devil doesn't mind a clever Christian. The devil doesn't mind a wealthy Christian. The devil doesn't mind a Christian that has much knowledge. But the devil hates a holy Christian." If there's one thing Satan is dead scared of, it's holy men and women of God. He can't stand up to them. The power of holy men and women and as we read history, we read about great clever men and very evil men and very scholastic men and they did nothing for their day of generation, and then we read about holy men, men that walked with their God, men that were like Christ in their ways, men who didn't trifle with sin but repudiated it, men who were pure in heart and, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." A man walking down the Ravenhill Road who is seeing God, he's the greatest testimony to the power of the blood. He has never written a book, he's never been clever, he's never been scholastic, but he knows God, and the man that knows God will be strong and he'll do exploits.

God is calling his people to rededicate themselves because they are his little children, because he loves them with all the love and power of his heart and his mind and soul. The little hymn says, "Jesus loves me and I know I love him." Oh, that God today would show

us through the apostle's first epistle the wonder of this love. What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called little children, the sons of God.

There is a story told of a great missionary and he was way out in the darkest of lands spreading the Gospel, and one day as he was passing down a street, a poor, old, broken sinner passed him and he stopped and he said to him, "Man with the peace of God in your face, can you do something for me?" Have you got the peace of God in your face as you walk around this world? Are you known by the fact that you enjoy that there is one called alongside to help you, you're never without him? Are you rejoicing that his blood has been applied to your heart? Are you rejoicing that the accomplishment of grace has been done, tis done, a great transaction is done? "I am my Lord's and I am my Lord's forever and forever." What about your appearance? Do we appear as those who are on the side of Christ? Or are we appearing like those that are on the side of the world? What about the affection of Christ? Does Christ's love fill our hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Is that love abiding in us? And does his authority keep us?

I trust that these few stammering remarks of mine this morning will bring to your heart a desire to know the blessing of God in deliverance from sin and the blessing of God to always deserve Christ to say in a term of agreement and in a term of love, "Little children. Little children." When we come to that, then the day of revival will have begun not only in our own heart but in this world in which we live.

Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Father in heaven, we thank thee for the preciousness of thy holy word and we pray that you'll keep us from idols and you'll make us little children, and that we will not commit sin, nor live in sin, nor tolerate sin, nor practice sin, or make any plan to excuse sin, but may we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, and may the glory of our pardon and peace and the glory of the enjoyment of peace, perfect peace in this world, will be stamped upon our lives, that people will take knowledge of us. We have been to Jesus for the cleansing power and we're washed in the blood of the Lamb. Be with us now and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, rest and remain with us now and forevermore. And the people of God said, Amen.