

1 JOHN 1:2:1-2

INTRODUCTION – John up to this point in his letter has been addressing and refuting the sort of things that the false churches have been saying. Their teaching has been causing confusion within the churches of Asia Minor. Now as we start chapter 2 there is a brief pause in thought as John addresses specifically the church as his dear children. He is going to appeal to them as his beloved children; he has a strong affection for them and is concerned for their well being.

John was obviously concerned that his words in chapter one especially verse 8 could be understood to mean that because Christians do not expect to be free from sin then perhaps some could argue that they have a license to sin especially as they have one who is faithful and just to forgive them when they do sin. John fears that some Christians might react as they did in Rome and claim that they can go on sinning so that grace may abound (Romans 6:1).

It was John's concern and care for the church that led him to teach the church. True concern is not only to show sympathy but it is to correct, instruct and teach so that those under our care will believe the right things and live the right way. That is what every preacher is seeking to do he is seeking to get his hearers to understand so that they will live properly as Christian people. Therefore John has to spell out what a Christian's attitude to sin should be.

1. CHRISTIANS ATTITUDE TO SIN (v 1).

The Christian's attitude to sin should be one of hatred for it and a longing and desire to be free from it. This means that in practise a Christian knowing that sin breaks their fellowship with God should seek not to sin. John has been spelling out the fact that we all sin and that sin ruins our relationship with God, for he is light and cannot have fellowship with darkness. Therefore the implication of what John has been saying should be a longing not to sin. It is of course easy to live without sin if you deny like the false teachers that your acts are actually sinful.

So although John is writing so that his readers will not sin he also wants them to be realistic about sin. He wants them to see it as God sees it, to abhor it and do something about it whenever it is present in one's life. He wants the church to recognise the all-pervasive character of sin and yet live without sinning. Now this is a mark of a genuine Christian. We are people who understand the seriousness of sin and the effects of sin upon our lives and our community.

We understand how sin affects our relationship with God, and therefore we seek to live without sinning everyday. It should be our deepest desire to be perfect to be sinless. However Christians are also very realistic about sin, we know how much power sin has and how it grips one's life and so easily dominates in our lives. Yet when we do sin we grieve over it for we know it offends our Holy God and at the same time it affects our fellowship and relationship with him.

So the true believer will always keep these two parallel thoughts in mind, a desire not to sin yet a realism that we will sin. Yet we will never blame our sin on the fact that we can't help it because sin is all pervasive and powerful. When we sin it is our fault,

our relationship with God and others is affected and we will want to turn from it. But knowing that sin is real and that as Christians we do still sin; John now turns to what Christians do when they sin.

2. WHAT CHRISTIANS DO WHEN THEY SIN (vs.1-2)

The good news is that although Christians do sin there is a solution for sin and it lies in the fact that we have one who speaks to the father in our defence. The NIV is a paraphrase of a Greek word, which is usually, translated 'advocate.' The Greek word means to come alongside to help and it was used in classical Greek for someone offering legal help. In this context here it is being used as a legal term such as an advocate or counsel for the defence.

It means a person who intercedes or speaks on behalf of somebody else. Now we are all familiar with the court system to understand this term, someone accused of a crime will get a barrister to speak on the defendant's behalf in order to present his case before the Judge. Hopefully evidence will be presented so that the accused is found not guilty. Well in the same way every Christian has a defence barrister who speaks to God the judge on our behalf.

We need an advocate for we are guilty and we have nothing that we can plead before God. We are guilty of sin but Jesus Christ is our advocate and he enters his plea for us. The reason why Jesus Christ can act as our advocate is because He is described as the Righteous One. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life when he walked this earth he is sinless and the One who is not contaminated with sin in any way. Therefore He is qualified to represent us before God the Father.

We would never dream of employing the average man on the street to represent us in a court of law for that person is not qualified to do so. We get someone who has been trained and can stand up in the court and present our case. In the same way when it comes to pleading for us before God the Father there is no one qualified to do so for all have sinned except Jesus Christ the righteous One. He who knew no sin can plead for those who are sinners.

But this raises the question what exactly does he plead what is the ground on which our advocate rests his case (v 2). John tells us that he is the 'atoning sacrifice for our sins.' Now the word, which is, translated here as atoning sacrifice in the NIV, has been debated by scholars over many years. What does the word mean, does it mean atoning sacrifice or propitiation as the AV translates it. The idea behind the word propitiation is the notion of placating an angry God and turning his wrath away from the sinner and thus making God favourable towards us.

Now there is no doubt in my mind that this is the idea behind the word so the meaning here is that Jesus propitiates God with respect to our sins. In the previous verse the thought was of Jesus as our advocate before God now the picture continues here with the idea of Jesus pleading the cause of guilty sinners before His Father who is being petitioned to forgive their acknowledged sin.

However we must understand that the Father is not being asked to declare us innocent for there is no evidence of innocence in fact all the evidence points to our

guilt, for we have sinned but Jesus pleads with his Father to forgive our acknowledged sins. However in order for the Father to be able to do that and grant forgiveness an action had to take place that would turn God's wrath from the sinner to someone else. Of course we know that that action is the death of Jesus on the cross thus taking upon himself our sin and by so doing he was turning the Father's wrath from us to himself.

The outcome of such an action is that God the Father is able to look with favour towards us and pardon our sin. We have to say that Jesus death has a double effect of forgiving the sin and propitiating God. These two aspects belong together and the NIV translation tries to show this for atonement is made for sins and sacrifice is an offering to placate a wrathful God, thus the translation atoning sacrifice. I will let you be the judge whether you think this translation is good or bad.

Now I hope you have been able to follow the argument so far. What John is saying is that Jesus is both our advocate and our atoning sacrifice. What he pleads on our behalf is what he himself has done on our behalf namely his sacrificial death to make atonement for sin and to turn God's wrath from the sinner.

So what do we do when we sin, well in my previous sermon in this series we discovered that we must confess it (1:9) that means we must acknowledge our sins and repent of it by turning from it. As we do that then Jesus takes up our case before his Father he pleads for our forgiveness not on the basis of our innocence for that is not the case but on the basis of his atoning sacrifice on our behalf. He has paid the price for our sins in full, he has propitiated God through his death therefore forgiveness and reconciliation can be granted on the basis of Christ's work of atonement on our behalf.

However these verses if pushed too far can so easily place Jesus against His Father. Let me explain what I mean. The picture that is being presented here can lead to us drawing a false conclusion that we are never meant to come too. We can conclude that the Father must be an unwilling judge from whom forgiveness has to be wrestled from by the advocate (Jesus) on behalf of sinners. But of course that conclusion would be totally wrong.

In 1 John 1:9 we read that it is God himself who is faithful and just and forgives our sins and in 1 John 4:9-10 we learn that it is the Father who gave Jesus to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. It is the Father who provides the means for forgiveness and pays the cost of it by giving his Son.

Thus God who is offended by our sin willingly pardons our sins by giving his own Son to be our Saviour. What Jesus does is to plead his sacrificial work on our behalf and the Father who gave his Son willingly forgives us. Christians we have a forgiving God. Whatever sins we have committed this day or this past week we have an advocate with the Father, He is Jesus Christ the Righteous One. Therefore confess your sins to God which means repenting of them and be assured that God our heavenly Father will grant us forgiveness because he has provided the means, his Son through which forgiveness can be granted.

Of course when God grants us forgiveness it means he will never hold our sins against us he will never bring it up again he will never say when we sin next time I told you so. No! Once forgiven, sin can and will never be used against us it is completely wiped out from our record. Therefore if you have genuinely confessed your sin and sought forgiveness through Christ then do not keep bashing yourself over the head with your sins, God has forgiven us so we do not have to keep bringing our own sins up and using them against ourselves.

That is the tactic of the old devil himself. Instead be thankful to God for his love and grace to you for his willingness to forgive you and then get on with serving Him.

The work of Jesus is sufficient to forgive us all our sins but not just ours but the sins of the whole world. Jesus death reaches out to all mankind and offers forgiveness to any who will repent and believe the gospel. If Jesus sacrifice is sufficient for the sins of the whole world then that implies that the whole world needs forgiven. There is no way to God except through Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice.

To have a relationship with God we need forgiveness and Jesus has done all that is necessary for anyone to receive that forgiveness. That means that if you are not forgiven, you are not a true believer, you are not a true Christian you have never come and confessed your sin to God. If you come to God through Jesus Christ and in repentance confess your sin then be assured that He is faithful and just and that Jesus, God's beloved Son has died to pay the price for your sins then you will receive forgiveness.

No Minister or preacher cannot forgive you, no priest in any church can forgive you but God can do so and will do so because Jesus the Righteous One is our advocate and as our advocate he pleads our case on the basis of his placating and sacrificial atonement for sin.

However Jesus dying for the sins of the whole world does not mean everyone is granted forgiveness automatically, what this phrase means is that he has paid the price for sin a price that is sufficient for the sins of the whole world but our response to that must be one of repentance, confession of sin and faith in Jesus Christ as our atoning sacrifice. Are you going to do that? Can I urge you to come to saving faith in Jesus?

There is an open invitation for you to do so. Do you feel guilty well so you should but let me point you to the one who can and will remove your sin and as a consequence your guilt and he will do so on the basis of the saving work of Jesus on the cross.

Will you come to Him?

Amen