

Lesson 5: “That You Might Not Sin”**1 John 2:1-2****Craig Crawshaw**

1 John 2:1-2 *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 those of the whole world.*

“THAT YOU MIGHT NOT SIN”

Do you feel the tender heart of this old saint for the younger generation? Do you sense his desire above all else to instill in his hearers a desire not to sin against God and to remain pure in all their ways? The phrase “little children” is a term of affection translating loosely as “young born-again ones.” It would be like a child calling his father “daddy”, or like followers of Christ called “Christians” = “little Christs.”

This patron saint of the faith, now approaching a century old, was speaking endearingly to his flock urging them above all else to “not sin.” He knew this was an impossible ask, considering that “all sin.” Yet it was the heart of this spiritual father to all. It is like the earthly father who wants so much for his child not to fall into error, and does all he can to protect and guide his child into all truth. And yet, the father knows the child will someday fail and fall, and that he will be there to lovingly rebuke and restore when it happens.

It also reminds me of the earthly challenge of our Savior Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, when he tells his listeners: *“Therefore you are to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.”* (Matthew 5:48). Jesus knew this was impossible, yet it is the standard expected.

Let me ask you, “Is it really your desire that you not sin?” I mean, is it truly your heart’s desire that you and your Lord work together for the goal of your not sinning again? Read this first verse of 1 John 2 once again. And rather than hear John say it to his listeners, hear God say it to you: “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.” Have you ever thought that God wrote stories to you in the Bible about great saints who sinned and paid the price, so that you would not fall into those same sins? Have you ever thought that God wrote the stories about Jesus dying on the cross for your sins, so that you would not want to ever sin again, rather than just be forgiven?

King David wrote of God in Psalms 119:11, *“Your Word I have treasured in my heart that I might not sin against You.”* If you and I truly realized that to read, study, meditate on and apply the Word of God would keep us from sinning as much, would we not do so more? Yes, I’ve spent a long time having us think on this opening phrase – but like God, I want you to know that it is His goal for you that you not sin. And since it is so, it should be your goal and mine as well. Selah (think on that!)

“AND IF ANYONE SINS”

God is a realist in that He knows that despite His high standard and our high hopes of not sinning, we will commit sins. We sin by nature, by choice, and by practice, as we discussed in last week’s consideration. In 1:8, He already reminded us of our sins nature: *“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves.”* And in 1:10, He reminded us of our specific sins: *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”*

Yet more than being a realist, God is an optimist, believing that there are those people of His creation who by His wooing will give their hearts to Him and seek His answer for dealing with sin and sins. And we who are believers are those to whom God is optimistic! In these opening verses of 1 John we already have been given 3 specific and practical ways to avoid and repudiate sin.

1. WALK IN THE LIGHT – this is a metaphoric challenge to live our lives in God’s pure truth
2. CONFESS YOUR SINS - this is a daily challenge to agree with God that we have erred, in order to receive his forgiveness and cleansing
3. RELY ON JESUS AS YOUR ADVOCATE – this is an understanding of Jesus’ role in heaven

“WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE”

There are many names for, and offices of Jesus that we know – most commonly Savior, Redeemer, Shepherd and High Priest. But His office of “Advocate” is not as commonly considered and appreciated.

As Savior, He has saved us and continues to save us from our sins. As Redeemer, He meticulously changes us from what we were into what we will be. As Shepherd, He lovingly guides us through life and into all truth. As High Priest He is the “bridge” between God and mankind, ever offering his sacrificed body and blood as what makes us righteous and holy in God’s eyes.

But what is His role as Advocate? Well, the word in Greek is “parakletos.” Some of you might remember that this is the word Jesus used when he taught his disciples in the upper room of the coming Holy Spirit, saying He would be the “Comforter” (“paraketos”) who would come. “Parakletos” is an “action” word which describes one who comes to the side of another to support and lift them up in encouragement. In the spiritual sense, it is One (the Holy Spirit) who comes to our side to comfort, support and lift us up to the Father.

But do you remember that Jesus promised “another Comforter?”

John 14:16 *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Paraklete), that He may be with you forever.*

Well, if the Holy Spirit is “another Helper”, or Advocate, who is the “other” or original One? It is Jesus Himself! While He was on the earth, he “came alongside” His disciples to comfort, support and lift up to the Father. But He would not always be with them in the physical sense, so He gave them the Holy Spirit who would indwell their physical bodies to continue the ministry. So is Jesus’ ministry as Advocate now finished and passed on to the Holy Spirit? No indeed. His ministry of Advocate continues in heaven, where He is at the right hand of the Father “advocating” for His brothers in the faith.

Using the action word of “parakletos,” He comes to our side and lifts us up, as it were, to the Father as our “defense attorney.” In the usual use of “advocate” it refers to a lawyer or negotiator that we might hire to defend us against an accuser. In this legal sense, our lawyer/advocate defends our rights and argues our case before a judge, opposing the claims of an accuser.

This reminds us of the story in Job, chapter 1, when Satan comes before God in heaven to accuse Job. The account says that Satan came to present Himself before the Lord, having come “*from roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.*” (Job 1:7) Satan said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him?” (Job 1:9-10). The Lord (think Lord Jesus) gave Satan, the accuser, permission to tempt and torment Job, but only to the degree that Satan could not destroy him. We learn that this was God proving to both Satan and Job himself that Job was the beloved and protected of God.

Satan is the accuser of God’s children. Thus he is your accuser. And Satan tells God that you are not worthy to be his child, and reminds God that you are a continual sinner, and rightly belong to his kingdom of darkness. But Jesus is your “parakletos” – your Advocate before the Father, the Judge of all. And Jesus advocates on your behalf that you indeed are worthy to be in the kingdom of light.

Note in 1 John 2:1 that “if anyone sins, we have an Advocate ...” Jesus is Advocate for you the moment you commit a sin. For that moment, Satan would remind the Father that you are not worthy and deserve to be in his kingdom of darkness. But Jesus performs the ministry of Advocate time and time again, arguing that you are in the palm of God’s hand because you have received Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross as covering for your sins, past, present and future. Oh how many times Jesus has advocated for you and for me before the Father. And oh how many times Satan has been rebuked and pushed back in defeat, having wanted to claim us for himself. Praise God for the Advocate ministry of Jesus! – coming by our side to defend us and lift us to the Father! We have an Advocate! And note that it is the righteous perfection of Jesus that allows Him to be that advocate, covering our unrighteousness with His perfection.

So note again the 3 critical and practical ways that John helps us to deal with your sin:

1. **Walk in the Light** - that is, make every effort to partner with God, the Light, to walk in integrity, honesty, transparency and morality
2. **Confess your sin and sins** - nurture the spiritual discipline of confession

- 3. Rely on Jesus as your Advocate** – don't allow the world to convince you of your unworthiness
– you are God's precious Child, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus

HE HIMSELF IS THE PROPITIATION

In most translations, verse two reads *"and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins,"* speaking of Jesus. In a few popular translations such as New International it substitutes "atoning sacrifice." Surely Jesus is our atoning sacrifice – "atoning" meaning "covering" of our sins and "sacrifice" meaning a selfless act of giving Himself for us. But that particular phrase does not convey the meaning of "propitiation" that is so much more profound.

The English word that comes closest as a synonym for "propitiation" is "satisfaction." Jesus is the satisfaction of God when it comes to us. His atoning sacrifice on the cross "satisfied" God's demand for justice for sin. Another close synonym is "appeasement" – as in appeasing the wrath of God. It is true that God hates sin and it is true that God could not fellowship with a sinner, but many struggle with the concept of God being wrathful and needing an appeasement for this fellowship.

I think of one of my favorite early Pixar films, "A Bug's Life." In this film, a large family of ants are intimidated by grasshoppers who threaten to destroy the ants if they don't continually leave a certain large quota of grain for the grasshoppers to eat. Begrudgingly, the ant do this in order to appease or "propitiate" the grasshoppers. The grain becomes the propitiation on behalf of the ants. (By the way, the ants find a way around this appeasement through a "savior" ant of their own.)

Native cultures through history have believed that they could appease or propitiate their gods of wind, rain, fire or whatever through sacrifices of everything from food, to good deeds, to human sacrifices. So the concept of propitiation is not at all foreign to humanity. But we as Christians somehow want to shy away from propitiation and appeasement thinking that our God is far more gentle and loving and unwanting of our appeasements. Yes He is gentle and loving. But He is also a jealous God who hates sin and in His righteousness cannot and won't tolerate unholiness of any kind in His presence.

And it is not as if God was caught off guard by sin. He didn't "wake up" one day and wonder what to do about this sin problem of his creation and so send Jesus to do something about it. Rather, Jesus in the book of Revelation is revealed as "the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8). This, to me, is indication that God as three in One decided from the beginning that Jesus the Son would be the propitiation or satisfaction of God to answer the "sin issue." Jesus would be the "Lamb of God" – the sacrifice upon the cross that would pay the price for the sin and sins of the world.

FOR THOSE OF THE WHOLE WORLD

This verse and many others of the Bible teach that Jesus paid the price of sin for all.

John 1:29 Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

John 3:16 God so loved the world that He gave ... "

1 Timothy 4:10 ... who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."

But clearly the Bible does not teach in universal salvation, meaning all go to heaven despite their profession of faith. Propitiation, therefore is like the life buoy that is thrown to all who are drowning with the admonition "take hold." In this sense, Christ has died for all – the provision has been made for all. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for all.

But only some respond. Jesus said in Matthew 26:28 "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." Jesus' death satisfied God completely – He is the perfect propitiation. But man's response has not satisfied God completely. Many have not responded in faith to God's free gift of salvation. So Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for all, but not efficient for all. For not all receive the gift.

FINAL CHALLENGE

Dearly beloved of God -

1. Have as your goal to never sin

2. When you sin, rely on the advocacy of Jesus on your behalf
3. Jesus has satisfied the justice of God in regards to your sin
4. Though His sacrifice is sufficient to save all – many still need to respond
5. So let them know what they are missing!