

1 John 2:1b-2. “Our Advocate” (p.959)

Ajax Alliance Church. Sunday February 7, 2016

1 John 2:1b-2. (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 (ESV)

Every day it seems there is a **new court case** before us. **People are naturally drawn to the drama of court.** Court drama has been **the subject of** movies, television, newspapers, books in **as many combinations** as could **possibly be imagined**. There are **full-time television stations** dealing with courtroom drama. **People bored** with their own lives, **seeking the power** to decide over the lives of others or even **lacking** justice in their own situations **avidly follow** the latest high-profile trials, turning them into the judicial system’s offering of entertainment, **pandering** to this jaded culture’s appetite.

Yet above all other court proceedings is a **cosmic courtroom drama** that **dwarfs** all human trials in scope and severity. **God the Father is the Judge** (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 7:11; Heb. 12:23), **Satan** is the **accuser** (Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10; cf. Job 1:9–11; 2:4–5), and **every person who ever lived is on trial**. **The issue is how unjust** sinners can be justified before a holy God. All those standing before the bar of divine justice are guilty of violating God’s holy law; they “are all under sin; as it is written, ‘There is **none** righteous, **not even one**’ ” (Rom. 3:9–10), and “whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10). **The just sentence the divine court should hand down is eternal punishment in hell**, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). But all is **not** hopeless for the guilty, because **there is one more character to consider** in this divine courtroom scene: **the Lord Jesus Christ**. He acts as the Advocate, or **Defense Attorney**, for all those who believe savingly in Him. **He is a most unusual defense attorney**, however, since He does **not** maintain His clients’ innocence, but rather **acknowledges their guilt**. Nonetheless, He has **never** lost a case—and **never** will (John 6:39; cf. Rom. 8:29–30). **Using the language of the courtroom, Paul declared**, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? **God is the one** who justifies; **who** is the one who condemns? **Christ Jesus** is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:33–34; cf. Col. 2:13–14). **That last phrase** is the key to how the Lord Jesus Christ infallibly wins acquittal for those who put their faith in Him. **He intercedes with the Father** on the basis of His own substitution for sinners in sacrificial death, which fully paid sin’s penalty for all who trust Him for salvation, thus meeting the demands of God’s justice. Because “He ... did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for [them] all” (Rom. 8:32) and “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on [their] behalf, so that [they] might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21), God “justified [them] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24, NKJV). **The result of the divine verdict** is that believers, “having been justified [declared righteous] by faith ... have peace with God through [their] Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

If we are honest with ourselves, we know that in everything we do, we **don't** get it perfectly right. **From the moment we are born, we need help in the things we do.** As simple an illustration of the reality of life that this is, **the cosmic picture is even grander.** When we **fail to meet God's standard of perfection what do we do?** **Ignoring** the problem **won't** make it go away. **Redefining the reality of God's standards, fail up** against His clear teachings. **Even our best charitable or religious actions** have self interest that **disqualifies** them in the face of true altruism. **Our conscience, others and even Satan himself** rightly accuse us of **sinfulness.** **So what can be done to truly alleviate the guilt and shame?**

The good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is that He is the advocate for those who trust Him as their defense attorney. It is that **divine courtroom drama that underlies the apostle John's thought in this section.** **Building on the glorious affirmation of 1:9** that God "is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," **John explains that He can do so because His Son is both 1) The believers' Defense Attorney** (1 John 2:1b) **and 2) The Perfect Propitiation for their sins** (1 John 2:2). **That twofold truth is central to the gospel.**

We can have confidence in Christ because He is:

1) The Divine Defense Attorney (1 John 2:1b)

1 John 2:1b (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** (ESV)

When John says "**if anyone does sin,**" **he is communicating** that we all may sin, but need **not.** **In this case** he is using a third-class conditional clause to **describe a hypothetical situation.** He is saying that, for the sake of argument, **one might** be able not to sin. However, **in the event that a person does happen to sin** there is provision. That sinlessness is a hypothetical situation is evident in that he **has just affirmed** that to **deny** the presence of sin in one's life is to call God a liar and that **every believer must be honest about his or her sinfulness as well as about particular sins** (cf. 1:8, 10).. Moreover, **he has just stated his purpose** in discussing the confession of sin. **He is trying to motivate them not to sin**

Derickson, G. W. (2012). *First, Second, and Third John*. (H. W. House, W. H. Harris III, & A. W. Pitts, Eds.) (1 Jn 2:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.)

Sin translates a form of the verb *hamartanō*, the most common New Testament word for **sin**, which **literally means "to miss the mark."** God's holiness sets the standard of behavior (Ex. 15:11; Lev. 19:2; 1 Sam. 2:2; Rev. 15:4), and **humanity has missed that supreme benchmark** (Gen. 6:5; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 5:12; Gal. 3:22a), **utterly violating** God's requirements of perfect obedience (Rom. 3:23; James 2:10).

Please turn to Zephaniah 1 (p.740)

In keeping with the imagery, **God appears as the supreme Judge of the universe**, seated at the heavenly bench and judging all people according to the absolute perfection of His holy law. **He is the author** (Lev. 26:46), **interpreter** (Ps. 119:34), and **applier** (Jer. 31:33) of the law. But **believers must view the reality of divine justice with great sobriety and respect** (1 Peter 1:17; cf. Acts 17:31; Col. 3:25), since **God possesses the power and authority to condemn to hell every sinner who ever lived**. **Jesus gave this sober admonition**: “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**” (Matt. 10:28; cf. Luke 12:5; 2 Thess. 1:5–9). **The Old Testament prophets also gave clear warning about that kind of divine judgment** (cf. Amos 5:18–20; Zeph. 1:14–18).

Zeph. 1:14–18 ¹⁴ The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. ¹⁵ A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶ a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. ¹⁷ I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth. (ESV)

- **God’s jealousy** means that he cherishes his position as unique in the affections of his people to such an extent that he makes it the foundation of his covenant with them (Ex. 20:3) (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 1734). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.).
- **People will deceive themselves** by thinking that **judgment** will **not** come. They will **trust in their own** strength of wisdom, financial assets or ingenuity. They will trust in their armies or infrastructure, but they are **blind to the realities of God** and their **rebellion** against Him. For **all those who do not have a divine deliverer**, **their judgment** will be **unexpected, swift, severe**.

Those who trust in Christ alone for eternal life need **not** fear divine justice because **1 John 2:1** declares that they **have an Advocate with the Father**. He is someone that we **“have”**. This is a **PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE** which refers to Jesus’ ongoing intercession as our heavenly **Advocate** (*paraklētos*) (Utley, R. J. (1999). *The Beloved Disciple’s Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John* (Vol. Volume 4, p. 200). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.)

Here **Advocate** translates *paraklētos* (“**one who comes alongside**”) and **denotes in legal settings the defender or counselor who comes to aid his client**. It means **a person who intercedes on behalf of somebody else**. That this was one of the meanings of the Greek word is well attested, and the idea of intercession before God was at home in the Old Testament and Jewish background of the New Testament. Paul too speaks of **Jesus as the one who is at God’s right hand** and makes intercession for us (**Rom. 8:34**), and he also refers to **the work of the Spirit** as the one who assists us in our feeble prayers by his intercession for us (**Rom. 8:26**). **We have nothing** that we can plead before God to gain us forgiveness for our sins, but **Jesus Christ** acts as our advocate and enters his plea

for us (R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, New York, 1967, and London, 1971, II, 1135–1144; O. Betz, *Der Paraklet*, Leiden, 1963.)

The Advocate is **with the Father**. It does **not** say *with God*, but rather *with the Father*. He is **still our Father** even if we sin. This reminds us of the blessed truth that though sin ... does **not** break relationship. **When a person is born again**, he becomes a child of God. **God** is henceforth his **Father**, and **nothing** can ever affect that relationship. **A birth** is something that **cannot** be undone. A son may disgrace his father, but he is still a son by the fact of birth (MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 2311). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.).

Christ is the perfect **Advocate**, since **the Judge** is His Father and **they** are always in perfect harmony (cf. Matt. 26:39; John 4:34). But **He accepts as clients** only those who confess their guilt and their desperate need to receive Him as Savior and Lord (cf. Matt. 7:21–23; 25:31–46; John 6:37; 10:3, 14–15). When that occurs, **He becomes for them** the incomparable intercessor who always gains acquittal for those who trust in Him. He is described as **Jesus Christ the righteous**. Though **He can say nothing** good of us, **He can say much for us**. It is **His righteousness**, or obedience to the law, and endurance of its full penalty for us, **on which He grounds His claim** for our acquittal (Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 527). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.).

Poem: Satan is the **accuser** of the brethren. **In Revelation 12:10** we are told that he **accuses** us before our God day and night. Satan is there at the throne of God **accusing** you and **accusing** me. Remember how he accused Job. **In effect, he said to God**, “If you will let me get to him, I’ll show You that he will curse you.” When that happens in our case, the Lord Jesus is able to step in as our **Advocate**. He died *for us*! Yet **the accuser** is there, and some folk are very disturbed by that. But the **Advocate** is far greater than the accuser. **(Poetically it has been said):** “I hear the accuser roar Of ills that I have done; I know them well, and thousands more, Jehovah findeth none. Though the restless foe accuses—Sins recounting like a flood, Ev’ry charge our God refuses; Christ has answered with His blood”. (Author unknown. Recorded in McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (1 John)* (electronic ed., Vol. 56, p. 39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)

Finally, we can have confidence in Christ because He is:

2) The Perfect Propitiation (1 John 2:2)

1 John 2:2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (ESV)

Christ could never make **His case for the saints as their divine Defense Attorney** if He were not also **their Propitiator** who completely turned God’s wrath from sinners to **Himself**, thus **removing** all their guilt and condemnation. **Propitiation** through the death of Christ is one of the critical doctrines of the Christian faith, at the very center of God’s redemptive plan (Rom. 3:25; 5:1, 10–11; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:18–19; Col. 1:20–22; **1 Peter 1:18–20**; cf. Lev. 10:17; 17:11; Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:47; Acts 20:28; Heb. 12:24; 13:20). **An accurate understanding of this truth** in all its essential aspects is vital to salvation and the pursuit of a life of holiness. **Jesus’ “atoning sacrifice” involved the propitiation of God’s wrath** by taking on the punishment due for the sins

that needed removal (expiation). Fellowship with God is possible because the sins that caused offense to God have been **removed** through Jesus' atoning sacrifice, so that **God's wrath** no longer abides on those who have fled for refuge in the Lamb of God (Akin, D. L. (2001). *1, 2, 3 John* (Vol. 38, p. 84). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

Please turn to Romans 3 (p.885)

The term **propitiation**, in definition and application, is most notably a biblical and theological word. It is a translation of *hilasmos*, which **means "appeasement," or "satisfaction."** **Christ's sacrificial death on the cross satisfied the demands of God's justice, thus appeasing His holy wrath against believers' sins.** What this suggests is that **the notion of atonement in the OT** is best understood comprehensively to **include both the cleansing and forgiveness of the sinner, and the turning away of God's anger.** **Propitiation** is necessary because of **our sins** (cf. Ps. 7:11; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 1:18; 3:23; 6:23; 1 Thess. 1:10). **Sinners** continually shatter God's perfect law (Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19–20a; John 8:34; Rom. 3:9–19; 5:12–20; James 1:14–15; 2:10–11) and **He, as the righteously offended Creator,** must react justly in **holy anger, wrath, and judgment** (Gen. 6:6–7; Deut. 25:16; Job 34:21–22, 25; Ps. 5:4–6; Prov. 6:16–19; Isa. 59:1–2; Jer. 10:10; Nah. 1:2–3; Luke 13:27; 16:15; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 3:17). **God's justice must be satisfied. Every sin ever committed by every person who has ever lived will be punished in one of two ways. Either God's wrath will be satisfied when all unrepentant and unbelieving sinners suffer eternally in hell (Matt. 13:42; 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:15), or for all who, by the convicting and regenerating power of the Spirit, repent and believe savingly in Jesus, God's wrath is satisfied by the punishment of Christ Himself on the cross (John 3:14–18). Divine punishment rendered forgiveness according to God's sovereign love and grace (cf. Rom. 3:24–26).** (Kruse, C. G. (2000). *The letters of John* (p. 76). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.)

Rom. 3:24–26²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (ESV).

- It was **the blood of the Passover lamb** (see Exodus 12–15), by which the Lord liberated Israel from Egypt...**(This foreshadowed:) the greater redemption Jesus won for his people** through his blood by forgiving them their sins through his death on the cross (cf. Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2163). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

John concludes his statement on Christ's death being the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (*cosmos*). This does **not** mean that the whole world is saved. Rather **it means** that **the work of the Lord Jesus** is

sufficient in value to save all the world, but it is only efficient to save those who actually put their trust in Him. It is because His work is sufficient for all that the gospel can be offered to all the world. But if all were automatically saved, there would be no need of preaching the gospel to them. It is interesting that the superscription on the cross was written in Hebrew—the language of God’s chosen people—and in Greek and Latin, the principal languages of the then-known world. It was thus proclaimed to all the world that Jesus Christ is a sufficient Savior for all (peoples) everywhere (MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 2311–2312). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.).

Grammatically then, the whole world must be comprehended as a generic expression that refers to humanity throughout the earth, but not inclusively to every individual. World simply identifies the earthly realm of humanity to which God directed His reconciling love and provided propitiation (cf. John 1:29; 3:16; 6:51; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9). The language of Scripture is strong and clear, stating that Christ’s death actually satisfies fully and eternally the demands of God’s wrath for those who believe (John 10:11, 15; 17:9, 20; Acts 20:28; Rom. 8:32, 37; Eph. 5:25). Though the Savior’s death intrinsically had infinite value, it was designed to actually (not potentially) secure the satisfaction for divine justice only on behalf of those who would believe. Jesus’ propitiatory death is for all classes of God’s elect, which He is calling out for His name “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9; cf. John 10:16; Acts 15:14–18; 26:23; Rom. 9:25–26; Titus 2:14). Christ’s work on the cross atoned for all those who would be sovereignly drawn by God to repent and believe (cf. Rom. 5:18), not for those believers only who constituted the church in John’s day. However, His death did not atone for or satisfy divine justice regarding the unrepentant, unbelieving millions who will appear before the Judge at the great white throne, from where they will be sentenced to eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15). We might suggest that Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world because his death was sufficient to deal with the sins of the whole world, but that his sacrifice does not become effective until people believe in him (Kruse, C. G. (2000). *The letters of John* (p. 75). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.).

- There are timeless implications in John’s teaching here. He speaks to any non-Christian who wishes to discount the importance of sin, and to any Christian who maintains the possibility of becoming sinless in this life... We cannot avoid the fact of sin, but we can avoid its practice. If from time to time we do not, there is hope for the sinner—since God’s forgiveness has been made possible through his Son, Jesus Christ (Smalley, S. S. (1989). *1, 2, 3 John* (Vol. 51, p. 41). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.)

Please turn to Isaiah 53 (p.574)

Isaiah 53 describes the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (vv. 1–4), His death (vv. 5–8) and burial (v. 9), and His resurrection and exaltation (vv. 10–12). The theme that ties the chapter together is that the innocent Servant died in the place of the guilty. When theologians speak about “the vicarious atonement,” that is what they mean... Jesus took the place of guilty sinners and paid the price for their salvation (Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 134–135). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.).

Isaiah 53:1-12 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors (ESV).

- **Acting as his people's substitute**, with **no** support or understanding from them, **the servant took upon himself the bitter consequences of their sin** (cf. Matt. 8:14–17). **The sufferings of the servant would show the consequences that sin brings to fallen humanity**, though he himself would not sin (Isa. 53:9). As a **Substitutionary offering** (Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24–25), Isaiah emphasizes how severely God punished the rejected servant for the sins of (humanity). But he also specifies what part of humanity. In **verse 11** it is for **“many”**. His triumph, which does **not** secure the salvation of every individual without exception (universalism) but **spreads out beyond the remnant of Israel to “a great multitude that no one could number”** (Rev. 7:9; cf. Rom. 5:15) (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 1338). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

Quote: Who Limits the Atonement?

Charles Spurgeon on this work of Christ our Advocate stated: “**We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that **no** man can number who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved” (Charles Spurgeon Spurgeon, “Particular Redemption,” in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons, Vol. 4* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1858).)**

- **We can have confidence in Christ as our advocate** because of **His perfect work**, in both **representing** and **interceding for those** who **put their faith in Him**.

(Format Note: Outline & some base commentary from MacArthur, J. (2007). *1, 2, 3 John* (pp. 43–50). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.)

Closing Hymn:

Prayer room Invitation

Benediction: 061

May our God who has sworn by **Himself Upon whose oath** you may depend **Who bears His own** on eagle's wind; **May He strengthen** you and **help** you, May He **uphold** you with **His** righteous hand. **Through the Power of Jesus Christ, we Pray. Amen.** (cf. Isa 41:10)