

THE SINNER'S ADVOCATE

"... We have an Advocate with the Father." I John 2:1

Sometime ago, I read that "it is possible to exaggerate the Advocacy of Christ." The Apostle John does not seem to be of that opinion. He was not afraid of doing harm by stating, in the plainest and boldest terms possible, the full forgiveness of sins by Jesus Christ. He declares that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. But, he does not stop there. He goes on to say "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father". Many would shy away from such bold declarations, fearing that such preaching would lead men into licentiousness. It is clear from our text that John was of another mind. His purpose in assuring us of God's forgiveness of our sins was that we "sin not".

We must not ever suppose that God's children must be beaten into virtue with the whip of the law. A confident assurance of God's grace does not lead men into antinomianism and sin. Those who assert that it does, know not whereof they speak. -- The exact opposite is true. We are loved of God; therefore we must love him in return. Realizing that Christ shed his precious blood for our redemption, we hate the sin which he bore on the cross, and we love the One who died for us. There can never be a greater motive for Christian obedience than this -- "The love of Christ constraineth us."

There have always been wicked men who would pervert the truth of God. But we shall not allow such men to rob us of the soul-cheering truths of the gospel. Gospel truth will never lead the children of truth into sin. Therefore, I set before you the blessed message of this text, with the hope of comforting the people of God and promoting their sanctification. — The children of God are sinners in need of an advocate in heaven; and the Lord Jesus Christ is our all-sufficient advocate with the Father.

I. Remember, my brethren, that all of God's children, at their very best, are still sinners. The tenderhearted pastor uses mild and gentle terms, putting it as a matter of supposition, "and if any man sin". He writes as though it were an astonishing thing that any of us who have experienced God's rich grace in Christ should ever sin. Yet, his supposition is a certainty, for we are still sinners. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." To be sure, there is a great difference between the believer and the unbeliever. But that man who grows the most in the grace and knowledge of Christ grows most in the awareness of his own sinfulness.

Such is our nature that we cannot avoid sin. But sin is driven off the throne. It no longer reigns. It is still present, and will be until we die. We are so polluted with sin that everything about us has the filth of iniquity upon it. Who among us will not confess, "We are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags?" I dare say that the best faith, or the highest degree of sanctification to which a believer ever attained on earth, considered in itself, is worthy of God's eternal wrath! I say these things, not to excuse your sin and mine, but to urge us to guard against sin, and to show us that we have great need of our advocate.

II. Our text is full of comfort for God's sinning children. John teaches us that our sins do not deprive us of our saving interest in Christ! The text reads, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Yes, beloved, though we do sin, we have an advocate still. We are not told, "if any man sin he has forfeited his advocate." It says, "we have an Advocate", sinners though we are! We may fall into sorrowful transgressions, dreadful sins, and shameful iniquities, but these cannot, by any possibility, separate us from the heart of Christ.

There are certain characteristics by which Christ is revealed, which I can claim only as I own myself to be a sinner. Only as a sinner can I claim Christ as my Redeemer and Savior. Only as a sinner can I claim Christ as my Advocate.

Mark it down, my friend, as a solid pillar of gospel truth, that, notwithstanding all our sin, we are perfectly justified in Christ, if we are indeed true believers. We are pardoned only through his blood, accepted only in the Beloved, and sanctified only in his person! Jesus Christ is our advocate. He will not forsake his erring child, nor leave his wandering sheep. Though I am a sinner, I am still a member of Christ's body. And when the members of his body become diseased, he does not amputate them, he washes and heals them. Sin may mar our enjoyment of Christ; but it can never destroy our saving interest in Christ. David lost his joy, but not his Savior. Peter wept in bitterness, but Christ dried his tears.

III. But how can these things be? John tells us, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and he is the Propitiation for our sins." God has provided his son, Jesus Christ, as the Advocate for his sinning children. Here is the great source of our comfort. God knows that we are but flesh, weak, sinning people. Therefore he gave us an all-sufficient Advocate.

An Advocate is one who is called along the side of another, for his comfort and help. He is a lawyer to plead our cause in court. The judge with whom our Advocate pleads is his Father and ours. A crime is urged against us, deserving the sentence of death. Now it is the place of our Advocate to plead for his clients. Behold, Jesus Christ, the sinner's Advocate, as he pleads our cause in heaven.

Our Advocate is "Jesus" the Savior, one in our own nature. He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, he is sympathetic to our weakness. He is "Christ", God's anointed one. He is our Advocate by the Father's own appointment. Surely, God will hear him. Our Advocate is the God-man. As such he knows our needs, and knows how to prevail with God.

Our Advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous. This is the blessed thing John is driving at. We are charged with sin and unrighteousness. Our Advocate cannot plead our innocence. He cannot plead the extenuating circumstances of our transgressions. But he does plead his own righteousness! He pleads for the non-imputation of sin on the grounds that we are clothed in his own righteousness.

Do we have any assurance that God will accept our Advocate? Indeed we do: "He is the propitiation for our sins." Jesus Christ is the propitiatory sacrifice by which God and sinners are reconciled. His blood covers the record of God's broken law. so that in Christ God can show mercy. God slew his Son in our place. And now our High Priest points to his righteous life and substitutionary death, and says, "Father forgive these my children, your law has no claim against them!" All of those for whom the Advocate thus prays are fully forgiven!

What do we Say to these things? God forbid, that we should ever sin against such love and grace. But, when we do sin, let us not despair. Jesus Christ is the sinner's Advocate.



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