

Walking with Our Advocate

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Preacher: Paul Thompson

[0:00] He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Whoever says, I know him, but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word in him truly, the love of God is perfected.

By this we may know that we are in him. Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you've given us your word. These letters written down, protected for years and years, and the ability to gather here 2,000 years later and read it and teach it and hear it.

Lord, we ask that your spirit would apply it to our hearts. Help us to see the goodness and grace of our Savior and the call to walk as Christ walked. In Jesus' name, amen.

[1:02] Amen. We're picking up in chapter 2 of this book by the Apostle John. This is the same John that wrote the gospel of John, and he was an eyewitness to the life and death and resurrection of Christ.

[illegible]

Jesus as rabbi and teacher, but he didn't yet know him as Savior. And it can be easy for people to say that they know Jesus. A lot of people have an idea about who Jesus is. Some people don't care, but a lot of people have some sort of opinion about Jesus. They may say that they know him. John is writing to Christians who have been influenced, or starting to be influenced by Gnosticism or the beginnings of Gnosticism. We've talked about that in our first sermon.

But essentially, this Gnostic thought was teaching that the best way to mature, the best, the way to salvation, the way to eternal life, the way to grow to all your future capacity, is that you could seek out this secret knowledge, that you could find ancient mysteries and secrets, and you could know the divine. It was all about knowing and learning the secret knowledge.

[3:26] And to these false teachers, knowing God was the goal. As long as you knew about God or knew about the divine or some sort of divinity, you were good, you were smart, you were learning.

They weren't concerned much with living for God. They wanted to know as much as they could about God, and that was their goal. They boasted in their knowledge. They probably let everybody know how much they knew, what secret things they figured out, what mysteries they've uncovered. They may have even boasted in the church that they really knew Jesus. But John is not content with his readers just knowing about God.

He's not content with them just knowing about Jesus or who Jesus is. He wants them to know God. He wants them to experientially know Christ. He wants them to abide in Christ.

He wants them to believe in the work of Christ and understand that true knowledge of God shows up in obedience. His goal is that true knowledge of God shows up in obedience.

[4 : 36] John wants his little children to know the truth about Christ because knowing Christ and what he accomplished on the cross orients how we walk and live our life.

So John's first point in chapter 2 is really that we need to know the truth about Christ. And we need to run to this Christ when we sin.

John Flatley says in this first verse I don't want you to sin my desire, my reason for writing to you is that you do not sin. He says, my little children I write these things to you so that you may not sin. What does John mean? What does he mean by sin? If this is your very first time in church you might wonder what do we mean by sin? Now the word can mean lots of things it can mean that you're missing the mark or you're falling short.

Paul uses that when he says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It could be breaking the Ten Commandments disobeying the commandments that God's given us and doing the opposite of those.

[5 : 42] John defines it as lawlessness in 1 John 3, 4 he says everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness sin is lawlessness.

But I like how comprehensively J.C. Ryle puts it he says sin consists in doing saying thinking or imagining anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God.

Again sin consists in doing saying thinking or imagining anything not in conformity with the mind and law of God. And by that measure we've all sinned I've sinned today already I've gotten impatient I've struggled with pride I've been distracted during worship I've not loved my neighbor as myself and I've not loved God with all my heart soul and mind.

Ever since Adam sin has been the corrupt human experience. We're born with it. It's pervasive and corruptive. And John wants to be very clear that there is a remedy for this sin.

The remedy for sin is found in our advocate Jesus Christ the righteous. Jesus Christ the man who has never sinned. An advocate is kind of like a lawyer someone who goes to court with you he knows all the terminology in the process he knows the courtroom language he's there to represent you so that you don't make a mistake when you're talking to the judge but in this case this advocate's different in this representation of Christ he doesn't deny that you've sinned he instead advocates with the father on his own obedience he pleads his own sacrifice his own righteousness John says we have an advocate with the father we have an advocate who comes before the father and pleads his own sacrifice his own righteousness he's our advocate and he advocates because he's paid the price for our sin in full the sinless advocate pleads the case of the sinner

[7 : 59] John says as much in verse 2 when he says he speaking of Christ is a propitiation for our sins not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world Jesus is this unique advocate because he was the propitiation for our sins not just for the Jewish readers but for Gentiles too not just for the local body that John was talking to but for people all over the world Christ is the propitiation of all who would trust in him now propitiation is a big word we don't use it a lot but it means a sacrifice that turns away God's wrath by atoning for and paying for the sin that made us God's enemies the idea is very closely tied to the picture in the Old Testament of the day of atonement remember the priest would go and he would make a sacrifice for himself because he had to be blameless before God then he would take two goats one goat would be sacrificed and killed and his blood would be sprinkled on the Holy of Holies on the altar the Ark of the Covenant to show that sin requires payment sin requires blood to be shed the second goat which was the scapegoat had Israel's sins confessed over it the priest would lay his hand on the goat and confess the sins of the nation then it was released into the wilderness it went away it was gone symbolizing their guilt being carried away from them so when we say that Christ is our propitiation we mean both goats represent the work that Christ accomplished both goats were a type and a shadow of his work

Christ would be slain his perfect blood would be shed to pay for our sin but he would also remove and take away our sin he would throw it as far as the east is from the west he bore our sin and our guilt away from us and we've talked about John we've talked about this apostle who is an eyewitness to the things of Christ and John was an eyewitness to the life death burial and resurrection of Christ so he says something like we have a propitiation or we have an advocate with the father he's saying this as somebody who observed first hand the sacrifice of Christ John is not just stating we've got an advocate and not leaving it and leaving it open those words carry with it the remembrance and the memory of Christ the gospel of John is his first hand account and he's

recounted in that gospel the things that he's seen with his eyes and touched with his hands for example he reads writes in

John 19 17 and 18 and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of the skull which in Aramaic is called Golgotha there they crucified him with two others one on either side and Jesus between them and then he continues recounting his memory of the event in John 19 28 through 30 after this Jesus knowing that all was now finished said to fulfill the scripture I thirst a jar full of sour wine stood there so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on the hyssop branch and held it to his mouth when Jesus had received the sour wine he said it is finished and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit John was the first one when he raced Peter to the empty tomb John sat and ate breakfast with the resurrected Jesus so when John says that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins he certainly has in mind that day the pain of seeing his teacher he loved being beaten and crucified the surprise of being given charge of Mary

Jesus' mother and days later the surprise of the news of the resurrection then seeing and interacting with Jesus seeing Jesus being taken up into heaven all of that experience and that memory squeezes into these two verses Christ lived died and was resurrected and ascended into heaven now as our advocate so John went from knowing and loving Jesus as teacher and rabbi to knowing Jesus as the propitiation and advocate as the one who sacrificed for his sin so if you want to know Christ if you want to know who Jesus actually is you have to know him as the sacrificial advocate as the atoning sacrifice as the propitiation for our sins that brings us peace with God Jesus suffered as a propitiation for our sins and bore the wrath of God for all of his people because we have such a redeemer such an advocate the father took our sins and nailed them to a cross this is the Christ you have to know

Paul says in Colossians 2 and you who were dead in your trespasses! and the uncircumcision of your flesh God made alive together with him having forgiven us all of our trespasses by counseling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands this he set aside nailing it to the cross Jesus provided the payment to make sinners right with God Isaiah prophesied that Christ would accomplish this in Isaiah 53 verse 5 he says he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was a chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed John wrote these things to this church so that they wouldn't sin and I think a big part of that is reminding ourselves of the reality of what sin means we can't treat sin casually we can't just be comfortable with sin because Christ has already paid for it the cross reminds us that our sin brought death it brought death and the wrath of God upon Jesus not us so continuing in sin willfully living in unrepentant sin while claiming and rejoicing in forgiveness really adds your voice to the crowd that yells crucify him continuing to live in unrepentant sin willfully ignoring calls to repentance wants both the forgiveness of the cross and the sin at the same time and as followers of Christ we need to recognize that our forgiveness our reconciliation with God had a cost we should see the sin that we struggle with as repulsive we should see the sin we struggle with as ugly so ugly that it required the death of our Savior it should make us hate sin

[15 : 47] Paul says in Romans 6 when he's asked and thinking about the grace of God and the way that God's grace takes care of our sin he answers the possible objection that somebody might be comfortable holding on to sin and holding on to grace at the same time he says what shall we say then are we to continue in sin that grace may abound by no means how can we who died to sin still live in it do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life Paul and John both want Christians to know that Christ has saved us we've been united with him and we're called to live out of that we're called to live out of the work that Christ has done

Paul says walk in newness of life in other epistles he calls us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling John uses the language of knowing and abiding in him and how that should look for somebody who knows Christ John moves in verse 3 from what did Christ do for us into what does Christ command from us what did Christ do into what did Christ command a person forgiven by God and redeemed by Christ is fully justified his or her sins have been forgiven they have a new heart they've been grafted into Christ they're united to him and with that union that grafting that that means fruit that means obedience follows remember that John's addressing people that have been hearing and living around people who say that their best spiritual life is found in some secret knowledge for some people they just wanted to get to know God and the secret knowledge they can

learn

John wants his followers to know Christ and to know that they know him he wants them to know for themselves and also for the teachers around them how can I know that I or somebody around me truly knows this Christ so he gives them a test it's very important to see this as a test not a prescription and not a procedure you've probably been to the doctor right you've maybe gone to the emergency room and had them take blood or do an x-ray or an MRI or a CAT scan they've ran these tests and they run tests to understand from the outside what's happening on the inside a test checks the actual values against guidelines looks for things identifies them and can be used to direct the different treatments that are required but a test is not the treatment it's not the procedure itself if your blood work came back that you needed some course of treatment or you needed some prescription the test itself just found the issue it does not fix it an x-ray can show you that you've got a broken bone but it's not going to fix it and that's the case with this test that John gives us we must treat this as a test not the treatment it identifies if we need treatment in this case

John is giving them a test they can use for themselves and others that say that they know God he gives them a couple of tests in this passage first he gives us a positive test he says and by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments a person that knows God that knows Christ will keep his commandments but keeping a commandment does not make you righteous before God John wants his believers to know that a person that knows Christ lives like somebody that knows Christ knowing Christ truly has an impact on how we live and then John gives a negative test in chapter in verse 4 he says whoever says I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him there are people who are going around saying that they knew God they had this secret knowledge they knew the intricacies of the Godhead they had this secret gnosis this knowledge but they didn't keep his commandments we've seen this in our church in churches around the world it's even talked about even a bit in the parable of the sower we've seen people that make a profession of faith who say that they know God but they show no fruit they show no interest in God they show no interest in obeying his commands or following him or doing what he asks maybe you can think of somebody that is spiritual but not religious somebody who likes and maybe agrees with spiritual things they may claim they know things about God or spiritual things they may claim to know some God or some deity but they don't love their other Christians they don't seek to honor God they don't seek to obey his commands or maybe even a little bit more common is somebody that comes to church but that's all they do that's the extent of their knowledge they hear about Christ for an hour a week but don't show any fruit they don't seek to walk in his commands they don't show any fruit of obedience to his commands and then John stacks up another positive test in verse 5 he says whoever keeps his word in him truly the love of God is perfected and this ties back Jesus' statement in John 14 15 where John recalls Jesus saying if you love me you will keep my commandments as our love for God as people that have been redeemed by him as our love for God increases matures and grows so will our desire to obey and keep his word we will know that we know him and we will know that we abide in him when we walk like him and keep his commands what commands is he talking about he's given us these negative and positive tests what is he talking about an obvious one can be found in

[22:41] John 15 where he says this is my commandment this is Jesus speaking this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends you are my friends if you do what I command you it certainly includes the ten commandments and the summary that Jesus gives them in Matthew 23 when he says you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mind this is the great and first commandment and the second is like it you shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commands depend all the law and the prophets these are weighty commands maybe you've been thinking about how you measure up to these positive and negative tests they're very weighty commands nobody but Christ has ever fully fulfilled them completely John's point is that knowing Christ communing with

Christ abiding in Christ means that our desire is towards Christ and his commandments our desire is that we obey our desire is that we live differently see knowing God has an effect on your life John Calvin uses a phrase he says knowing God is efficacious when you know God when you spend time with God when you get to know God personally it has an effect it makes you understand and desire his commands and we've seen the positive tests about keeping his commands we've seen the negative tests about claiming to know God but failing to keep his commands and another

positive test about keeping his word and then John moves from commandment and keeping his word to a more concrete positive test in verses five and six John says by this we may know that we are in him whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked this is the last test he gives us in this passage he says you can know you're in him and abiding in him this way the one that abides in him desires and strives to walk like

Jesus John likes this phrase abide! before his crucifixion in John 15 Jesus is talking to his disciples including John and he says abide in me and I in you as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing if anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned if you abide in me and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you by this my father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples whoever abides in me Jesus says and I in him he it is that bears much fruit

Jesus uses this analogy of a vine and branches apart from the trunk of the vine the branches die but the branches that are united to the vine that take their nourishment from the vine grow and bear fruit they look more and more like the vine Matthew Henry says it in this way he said from a vine we look for grapes and from a Christian we look for Christianity a fruitful branch bears fruit and a faithful Christian abiding in Christ bears fruit and will walk in the way that Jesus walked you should seek to live in the way that Jesus lived what does it look like for a Christian to walk in the way that Jesus walked Jesus walked on earth as a compassionate person he walked as a man that was tender with those he loved and certain with those who needed it he walked with humility

Paul gives us that example in Philippians 2 when he says we're to have this mind among ourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus for though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross the gospels record example after example of Christ's obedience and humility and care for others we see Jesus washing the disciples feet at the last supper showing them love service and humility we see Jesus taking time away from the crowds to go pray to spend time with the father to meet with the father and then not getting angry when the crowds still find him after he's gone away we read about Jesus compassion on the crowds compassion on the sick the dying even the dead and their loved ones

[28:16] Jesus fellowships communed walked with the father prayed to the father and walked as a man who loved others above himself that's a pretty high standard to walk in the way that he walked really it's an impossible state none of us will ever walk exactly the way that Christ has walked John's not saying that only the people that know Jesus are those that have stopped sinning he's not saying that if you know Jesus you figured it out you've completed your life you've reached it we know that because he's already addressed the false claims in chapter one that anybody could even claim to be sinless he's saying that the heart and life that's been affected by the Holy Spirit the heart and life of a person that knows Christ will reflect a marked desire!

and a willingness to obey Christ's commands and walk like him so we don't give up we don't stop striving to live our lives in obedience we don't quit because we have sinned again for the thousandth time what do we do what do we do when we see how Jesus lived and we see how he walked and we see ourselves and we see our sin and we see the ways that we fall short well we go back to verses one and two my little children I write 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's the propitiation for our sins and not for sins of the whole world that's what it means to abide in him to hear the gospel and grasp it with joy to seek to know

Christ and him crucified to take every opportunity to be reminded of what Christ has done and we're going to do that in just a moment we're going to take the Lord's supper and we're going to be reminded of what Christ has done for us but also to be reminded of what he calls us to do and to look to the advocate when we fail so I ask do you show fruit of knowing Christ do you pass the tests of one that strives to know and keep his commandments do others see the love that you have for your brothers and sisters in Christ do you see love in your heart for brothers and sisters in Christ remember this is a test this isn't the treatment the treatment is to run to Christ to repent to acknowledge and turn away from the sin that you see and then throw yourself at the mercy of the only perfect payment for sin and then rest and abide in him asking him daily for the strength and

desire to obey his commands look to

Christ your righteous advocate the sinless savior if this passage has done its work you should see the ways that you daily fail to keep his commandments!

you should see the ways that you fail to walk as Jesus walked but you should also see the remedy you should see Jesus Christ the righteous the God man who walked without sin and gave his life for sinners we have the opportunity shortly to take the Lord's Supper to remind ourselves of the work that Christ has accomplished to remind ourselves that his body and blood paid it was a propitiation for our sins remind ourselves of his advocacy before the father on our behalf may we seek to know him more and more and walk as he walked let me pray Lord I thank you that you have not left us without a helper but you have given us your Holy Spirit I thank you that in heaven today Christ pleads the merit of his own blood even as we take the

[32 : 59] Lord's Supper in just a moment the juice and the bread we hold are reminders of the sacrifice that Christ paid so that his people could be made right with God help us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling help us to walk as Jesus has walked in Jesus name amen!

I'm going to call the men forward who will be serving the Lord! to God to to him to to to