

We Have An Advocate With The Father

Christ The Intercessor And Propitiation

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When we sin, are we totally and permanently cut off from fellowship with God? Can we be forgiven apart from Jesus Christ? If sin separates us from God, how can we be restored to a righteous standing?

In the first chapter of his first Epistle, the apostle John laid down some of the basic principles with regard to the issue of fellowship with God. When he wrote his letter he was an old man, knowing that the end of his life was close at hand, and that he was leaving a number of Christians behind, many of them very young.

So he was anxious to help them to know this wondrous fact of spiritual union with God; he wanted them to know exactly how that fellowship is to be arrived at and how it is to be maintained, so he began laying down certain principles.

Those who are now Christians have passed out of death into life. Of course, we do not do this by our own ability; God loves us and sent Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins. He then caused those who were dead to be born from above, giving us life.

With life, God gave the Spirit and spiritual understanding, with the result that believers are no longer, "of the world," or "of the devil," but are "from/of God," and "of the truth." God now abides in His people, His Word abides in us, and we abide in God; as a result we abide in the light because God is light.

Another way of describing this relationship is to say that Christians know and love God.

Being made alive, receiving the Spirit, and knowing God naturally results in transformed behavior, which John describes in terms of loving God, obeying God, and loving one another.

However, even with this blessed position, we sometimes fail to live up to God's wonderful standard of righteousness, and we knowingly or unknowingly sin and are immediately or later repentant of it. Thankfully, though, we have an Advocate with the Father.

Jesus is an Advocate, taking up the cause of believers in the presence of God the Father.

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I John 2:1-2 My little children, these things I write 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 the whole world.

The first thing to notice in this passage is the pure affection in it. John begins with the address, “My little children.” In the original Greek, words indicating smallness carry a special affection. They are words that are used, in a sense, with a hug. John has nothing but tenderness for the faithful brethren.

These two verses succinctly set out the work of Christ. Confronted with the high standards of God, we are often ethical failures in comparison. We accept God’s commands and then fail to keep them. As a result, there is a barrier erected between humans and God. How can we enter into the presence of God, the Holy One? That problem is solved in Jesus Christ.

Here, in I John 2, the apostle John sums up chapter 1, possibly because he is so afraid of being misunderstood. He realizes that human nature will grasp at anything to excuse itself or to excuse sin. So he pointed out two things in the first chapter. The first is that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, and therefore we must walk with Him in the light. That is another way of saying we must walk in the knowledge of God and in righteousness.

Then, the second thing John points out is that knowing that God is light and is so righteous while we are so inferior makes us feel hopeless, especially when we commit sin and feel we have no right to go back to God. But John has given us this consolation that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin, and he goes on repeating this.

So here in the second chapter, summing it all up he says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.” But John does not want us to carnally take advantage of the consolation. Do not say, “Well, because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin, I do not have to be meticulous and careful.”

In effect, John was writing to the Church, not to encourage us in sin and license, of course, but in order to keep us from sinning. Nevertheless, he could not leave it at that. He had written so much about love, and he loved the brethren—his relationship with them was especially close and tender and affectionate—so he goes on, “And if anyone

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sins....”

This is a word to Christians who are conscious of sin and failure. If there are those who think they are perfect, well, they do not need to listen to this; it is a word to those who are conscious of sin and failure and who are aware of their own weaknesses.

So the question remains, “How is my fellowship to be restored with God when I sin? How can I be forgiven?”

This is the situation that is envisioned here by John.

Satan, our adversary, is vigilant in his pursuit, and if we find ourselves having sinned, he comes to us and whispers, “You have no right to go back to God! You’ve been walking in the light and now you have sinned. You sinned against the law of God? How can God forgive you for that?”

So, that is how Satan may influence us. And, some people have allowed Satan to influence them like that for years. He has kept them in a state of unhappiness and misery. They wonder if they have ever been a Christian, and they fail to see how they can be restored to that fellowship with God from which they have slipped because of sin.

Now I John 2:1-2 is a great spiritual lesson to all such people; it is a wonderful statement on the doctrine of forgiveness, and especially about the forgiveness of the sins of Christian people.

The first great principle is that there is no forgiveness except in and through Jesus Christ.

A lot of people seem to think that God could forgive us our sins without Jesus Christ, and that is why, of course, they never see the necessity for Jesus Christ.

They say that God is love and God can forgive sin, so if we commit sin, all we have to do is to ask God to forgive us, and He does so at once. And it is because so many believe something like that, that they never truly believe in Jesus Christ, because they have never seen how essential He is.

But notice that is the introduction to the whole of New Testament doctrine. The moment sin is mentioned in the New Testament, immediately Christ is mentioned. There is NO forgiveness of sin apart from Jesus Christ. John puts it like this: “If any one sins....”

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Well, what happens? Do we just ask God to forgive us? Not at all! We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Immediately He comes in.

Everything in the Old Testament looks forward to salvation through Jesus Christ. Take all that you can read in books like Exodus, Leviticus and Psalms, and the other books about what God told the nation of Israel in that old privilege regarding burnt offerings, peace offerings, and various meal offerings. Go through all the great ceremonials and rituals and everything that was connected with the tabernacle and the temple, all these minute instructions—they were just types and shadows of that which was to happen fully and finally in Jesus Christ.

They did not really deal with sin; they were merely a covering for it for the time being. They were all looking forward, suggesting those things that were eventually to take place. Certainly, God gave all these regulations to the ancient people to impress upon them this great truth, that He cannot forgive sin by just forgiving it.

That is a major goal of all that teaching. Something must happen before God can forgive sin.

God, because He is holy and righteous, will not just say, “Well, you have sinned and I forgive you.” There are legal requirements that have to be dealt with.

That is always the danger of transposing what we do as individuals to what God does. Some argue that surely a parent has the right to forgive a child if the child does wrong and then comes and says he is sorry. So if we can do that, why can God not do the same? He is infinitely greater and has infinitely greater love.

But the fallacy there is to forget that none of us is righteous enough. God is absolutely holy and just and righteous, and God’s nature and character make it impossible for Him to deal with sin in that way.

Something has to be done about sin; the shedding of blood is essential, because without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

All of the Old Testament teaches that and points forward to Christ. Here we have the doctrine, of course, and then when the apostle John comes to consider this subject of

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sin and what can be done about it, immediately he talks about Christ.

So let us take a firm hold of this essential doctrine; without Jesus Christ we can do nothing, from the beginning of the Christian life to the end. The greatest saint dying on his deathbed needs Him and His atoning work; it is in Him alone that we are rescued; it is in Him alone that we are forgiven.

Therefore, again we must ask ourselves the question that we must never cease to ask: "Is my whole position and all my thinking centered on God the Father and Jesus Christ?"

The word of John, as is the word of the New Testament everywhere, is that Christ is the beginning and the end; the start and the finish; the Alpha and the Omega; and unless we always realize when we go seeking forgiveness that we have no plea except through Jesus Christ, our relationship to Him is essentially false. That is the first assumption.

Now let us consider this statement more in detail. How does Christ accomplish or bring to pass our restoration to fellowship with God? John shows this in a very encouraging way. He does it by being our Advocate.

We read in I John 2

I John 2:2 And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

John uses the same word in his Gospel. The term translated "Advocate" in I John 2:2 is 'parakletos', which in John 14:16 is translated "Helper" in the NKJV and ESV; "Comforter" in the KJV; and "Counselor" in the NIV.

John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper [parakletos], that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

The same is true in chapter 16; Christ again said that He would send us another Helper.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [parakletos] will not come to you;

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but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

The word 'parakletos' is of familiar use in Greek referring to the legal advocate who appeared on behalf of his client. Therefore, in the double sense of priestly and legal representative; as a priestly function Christ is our intercessor in Heaven and from a legal function He is our advocate.

An advocate is one who represents another; he stands before a court, and he presents the case of someone else; he represents this person and puts forward the pleas. And John tells us that Christ is, for all who believe in Him and trust Him, our Advocate with the Father.

However, this word 'advocate' (parakletos) merits our closer attention. We must never think of it as if Christ were there pleading for us before an unwilling God. You will find that certain statements have often been made that sound as if God were opposed to us and as if God, who is total righteousness and absolute perfection, were there insisting on His 'pound of flesh' and insisting on His right to punish us for our sins. Then they picture Christ as pleading desperately and urgently, trying to persuade the Father and at last succeeding in getting Him to change His opinion.

But that is an impossible suggestion, and we must be very careful not to view this idea of advocacy in that way. It is impossible because we are told so plainly and clearly in John 3:16 that, "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son."

It was not that the Son decided to come on His own and then, having done so, is pleading urgently and passionately for our deliverance. No, it was the Father who sent the Son, Who went willingly.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

II Corinthians 5:18-19 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

So as we consider the advocacy, let us never entertain the idea that God is unwilling

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and that He is not prepared to forgive.

But at the same time we must be very careful not to go to the other extreme and think that what John means by 'advocate' is just that the work of Christ on the stake prevails and continues throughout eternity, always in the mind of God, and that therefore, in that sense, Christ and His work are advocates for us.

We must not think that, because that makes it something quite passive, and that is an idea we must reject, not only because of this specific text, but also because of the words in Hebrews 7 where the whole argument is that, "He always lives to make intercession for us."

Hebrews 7:24-25 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Christ always lives to make intercession (that is, to bring our requests to the Father) as we approach God through him. Since the ever-living Christ intercedes for us, we can have great confidence that we will never perish. In fact, we can know that all things in our lives will work together for good, because God the Father will answer the intercession of his Son.

He constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason WHY we should be saved. The precise method, however, in which he makes intercession in heaven for us, is not revealed. The general meaning is that Christ undertakes our cause, and assists us in overcoming our enemies and in our efforts to live a holy life.

He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; He secures the aid that we need against our enemies; and He is the pledge or security for us so the law is honored, and the justice and truth of God is maintained, though we have the guarantee of salvation.

It is reasonable to presume that this is done by the presentation of the merits of his great sacrifice, and that that is the ground on which all this grace is obtained. Since the effect of His sacrifice and God's grace are infinite, we do not have to fear that it will ever be exhausted.

An advocate (parakletos) has been defined as, "One who lends his presence to his

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friends.”

More than once in the New Testament, there is this great conception of Jesus as the friend and the defender of man. In a military court-martial the officer who defends the soldier under accusation is called, “the prisoner’s friend.”

Jesus is our friend. Paul writes in Romans 8:34 of Christ who is at the right hand of God and who intercedes for us. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus Christ as the one who always lives to make intercession for men; and he also speaks of him as appearing in the presence of God for us.

The tremendous thing about Jesus is that he has never lost His interest in, or His love for, us.

We are not to think of Him as having gone through His life on the earth and His death on the stake, and then being finished with humanity. He still carries his concern for us deep within Himself; He still intercedes for us.

Christ is unlike the Levitical high priest who came and lived and died and then a new person had to be appointed. The whole point about Him, says the author of Hebrews, is that He lives. He is without beginning and without end—it is this eternal priesthood—and it is because He always lives that He is able to save to the uttermost.

In other words, once more we are confronted by a concept that baffles our understanding. But of this we can be quite certain, that as Christ looked after His disciples and followers while here on earth—their interests and doing certain things for them—so also He is now equally active for us there in Heaven.

He is representing His people; He is there looking after us and our interests. We do not fully understand it; we know it is not a conflict between Father and Son; but the Father has handed this particular work to the Son.

So, we have this great comfort and consolation that Christ is our great High Priest, which means not only that He has offered Himself, but more than that, He takes our prayers and transmits and transforms them and passes them on to the throne of God.

He adds to our feeble prayers the incense of His own blessed, glorious, perfect Person; so He represents us in that way.

Intercession

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Let us take a closer look at this intercessory work of Christ as our Advocate. Christ is making intercession for us and on our behalf, representing us always to the Father. In order to better understand Christ as an advocate, it may be helpful to understand His intercession for us as well.

The general conception of Jesus Christ's mediatorial office is summed up by His intercession in which He appears in His office of High Priest, and also as interceding with the Father on behalf of humanity whose cause He has taken up.

First, let us view Christ's intercession in its priestly aspect. The function of the priesthood in the Old Testament involved the position of mediation between man and God. The priest represented man, and on man's behalf approached God; accordingly he offered sacrifice, interceded and gave to the offerer whom he represented the sanction and expression of the divine acceptance.

There was also the transfer of guilt and its conditions, typically by laying the hand on the head of the animal, which then bore the sins of the offerer and was presented to God by the priest. The acknowledgment of sin and the surrender to God is completely fulfilled in Christ's offering of Himself, and His death.

Isaiah 53:6-7 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him [Jesus Christ] the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

II Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Christ's intercessory quality in the sacrifice of Himself is not only indicated by the imputation of guilt to Him as representing the sinner, but also in the victory of His life over death, which is then given to man in God's acceptance of His representative and substitute.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, the intercessory character of Christ's high-priestly office is transferred to the heavenly condition and work of Christ, where the relation of Christ's work to man's condition is regarded as being still continued in the heavenly place.

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Hebrews 9:11-15 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Christ is the Mediator between God and man in respect to the new covenant which he has made, or that new privilege by which people are to be saved. He stands between God and man—the party at variance—and undertakes the work of mediation and reconciliation.

Hebrews 9:16-28 For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He

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will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

So we have redemption through the Blood of Christ. This sacrifice for sins is once for all, and in the person of the high priest the way is open to the very presence of God. Jesus Christ is serving in the priestly service of the Father anticipating His soon coming reign is His kingly office, as King of Kings when His enemies are put under His feet.

Hebrews 10:12-18 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

Also, we ourselves are invited to enter into the Holiest Place; as if in union with Christ we too become a kingly priesthood.

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

We must never forget that this right of entrance into the most Holy Place is one that depends entirely upon our vital union with Christ. He appears in heaven for us and we with Him, and in this sense He fulfills the duty of His high-priestly office as intercessor, with the added conception of 'advocate' drawn from the legal advocacy of the Roman court in the first century.

Of the methods in which Christ carries out His intercessory office, we do not fully understand except as can be deduced from the phraseology and suggested ideas of Scripture. As high priest, we are aided in our weak faith by the assurance that our Lord and Savior pleads for us.

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The intercessory work of Christ may be represented in this way: He represents called human beings before God in His perfect nature, His exalted office, and His completed work.

There is also an active intercession. This is the office of Jesus Christ as Advocate. This conveys some relation to the aid that someone who has broken the law receives from an advocate; and we find Christ's intercession in this aspect brought into connection with the texts that refer to justification and its allied ideas.

Romans 8:33-34 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

So that is a view of Christ's intercession in its priestly aspect, and of Christ's advocacy with regard to the kingly-legal requirements when a sin has been committed.

Second, let us view Christ's intercessory work from the standpoint of prayer. The intercessory character of many of Christ's prayers, and especially that of John 17, has been what has encouraged people to view His prayers as the primary method that He uses in His intercession for us.

While on earth in human form, Jesus interceded for transgressors, including His own murderers, and in a more intimate sense for His disciples and all-believers. Just before Jesus was betrayed He prayed to His Father for His faithful followers. This prayer is also a prayer for each and every member of God's church. We usually read this during the Passover service each year.

John 17:6-23 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the

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world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Christ's intercession as Advocate is for His faithful people, claiming their justification as a matter of right, on the ground of His righteousness. It is impossible for us to know exactly what takes place, but even if Christ now prays to the Father, it would not be exactly the same as our earthly prayers. In a sense, our earthly prayers are carried up to God by His Spirit.

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit [Jesus Christ] also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself [Christ] makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

These verses point out that we are not left to our own resources in our suffering and groaning.

Jesus Christ the Spirit helps in our weakness. This word 'helps' in verse 26 is in the present tense meaning, "keeps on helping".

It is not that the Spirit helps in those occasional times when we are weak; our general

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state is one of weakness and the Spirit continually helps us. The Greek word for weakness may include physical, emotional, and spiritual disability evidenced by inward groaning. "Helps" is translated from a Greek word that pictures 'someone helping another carry a heavy load'.

One evidence of our weakness is the fact that we do not always know what we should pray.

In the Greek, it literally means, "what we should pray as it is necessary". In our weakness both the content and the manner of proper prayer often eludes us, but Christ comes to our rescue, and intercedes. This is in the present tense, so it means "keeps on interceding" in verse 27.

He 'keeps on interceding' for us with groans that words cannot express. The natural creation groans, and believers groan, and so does the Holy Spirit. The groaning is done by the Holy Spirit, but we do not know how the groaning is done. Is it stated audibly or conveyed mentally? Or, some other way?

The One who searches our hearts is God, and He knows perceptively or intuitively the mind of the Spirit, because Jesus Christ the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. Even if the Spirit's words are not verbally expressed, the Father knows what the Spirit feels or perceives.

This is an interesting concept about the Father's omniscience and the intimacy within the God Family. Christ continually intercedes for us in God's presence. Though we are often ignorant of what to pray for and how to voice those requests, Christ conveys our requests personally for us.

Then, again in verses 33 and 34 of Romans 8, we see more proof that the Spirit that is mentioned here is Jesus Christ, who is our intercessor.

Romans 8:33-34 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Is there anything that can be more comforting and more consoling than to know that at this very moment, and always, Jesus Christ is concerned about us, is watching over us and is concerned about our interests and is there representing us?

The Nature of the Advocacy

Now let us get back to the specific fact that we have an Advocate with the Father. We are frail and we are weak and we fall and fail, but we have an Advocate. Therefore, when you begin to feel (at the suggestion of Satan) that you cannot turn back to God and face Him, remember, you are not alone.

Sometimes when we sin we have the feeling that we have no right to approach God, but remember that we have an advocate and He is there to represent us in our weakness.

So let us consider something about the nature of the advocacy. Every word, every sentence, every specific word is, in a sense, full of consolation. We have an advocate, says John, with the Father.

Now that word 'with' is a very important little word; it means 'face to face with.' It does not mean that He now and again enters in and is allowed to represent us, but rather that He is always there. And it means that He is always, in a sense, looking into the face of the Father.

He is face to face with God, not having to make an application to God for permission to plead for us; He is always able to and permitted to look into the eyes of the Father. What a wonderful idea, that the One who represents us is always there in that absolute intimacy with God.

So when you have sinned and are full of a sense of shame and guilt and you feel you have no right to go back to God, remember that you have an Advocate with the Father.

He is NOT a God who is opposed to you; He is a great force and power, and One who loves you with an infinite Father's love. Is there any greater consolation possible than that?

Who is this Advocate?

Let us next go on to ask another obvious question: Who is this advocate? I am not asking His name; we know that! What is the description in I John 2:1? Jesus Christ the righteous.

John did not write these things accidentally. In the first chapter of his first letter, the apostle John talks about the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, and I John 2:1 he says, 'Jesus Christ the righteous.'

The words are carefully chosen and inspired; he is controlled as he writes them. The author of Hebrews also writes in Hebrews 4:15, 'We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

Notice the comfort and consolation. When you are conscious of guilt, when you are conscious of your smallness and frailty and think of God in His absolute holiness in the heavens, when you are tempted to ask how God can understand a human being who falls like this, the answer is, 'You have an advocate who understands you perfectly—Jesus.'

Read Hebrews 4 and 5 and you will find it worked out at great length. The very Son of God became Jesus, became man, so that He could understand us and know our desires, needs, emotions, and pain.

We have a sympathetic high priest; we have an advocate and intercessor who knows something of our weakness. He knows the frailty of the body; He was tired; He knew what it was to feel weak; so He knows our infirmities. He understands our ignorance, because He has been a man amongst men. There He is now—the Lord of Glory but still Jesus Christ.

He has not forgotten what the life of man is in a difficult world like this. Remember that when you are tempted to despair, when you feel that God can never take you back. There is someone representing you who has feeling and sympathy for you; an understanding of you and of your infirmities.

He is Jesus Christ—and this means, of course, that He is the anointed One, the appointed One. Therefore, never believe that God is against you. It is God who appointed the Son to this specific task of advocacy; it is God Himself who gave Him the office.

Hebrews 5:1-10 For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have

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begotten You." As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"; who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek."

The high priest was never self-appointed; he was always called of God; and God appointed and set apart and anointed the Son to be the Savior and the representative of those who believe in Him.

So, comfort yourselves with this thought: The Advocate has been appointed by the Judge. The Father, in His everlasting love, has Himself set His Son apart and anointed Him for this specific task. Therefore, we can go to our Advocate with confidence and with assurance.

The Righteous

But there is still another word in I John 2:1 on which to expound, 'the righteous'—Jesus Christ the righteous. This is the most wonderful thing of all, and this is the ground of our assurance. John is referring to Christ's character; though He became a man, yet He never sinned.

No fault was found in Him. He is absolutely perfect, and you and I need such a representative in the presence of God because of the holiness and the absolute righteousness and justice of God. No one who is unworthy can possibly plead for another.

Before I can have confidence in my advocate, I must know that He is accepted by God and can stand in the presence of God. No one else could ever have done that; no one but the Son of God is fit to stand in the presence of God and plead. But He is Jesus Christ, The Righteous!

We can have absolute confidence in this advocate; He will never put forward a plea unless it is right, and this is the "righteousness" John speaks of in I John 2:1.

Jesus Christ does not merely ask God to overlook our sin or forget it; He stands there,

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and in a sense, says to God, 'It is right and just that You should forgive the sins of these people, because I have taken on their sins and suffered the punishment of their sins.'

The Advocate turns to the Father and says, 'I am here just to remind You that they are free because I have died for them.' It is He who legally enables God to be at one and the same time just and the justifier of the ungodly.

Romans 3:23-26 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Can you imagine greater comfort and consolation than that? I can answer with fear and trembling and confidence that as the result of Jesus Christ and His standing in the presence of God on our behalf, God would be unjust IF He did not forgive our sin upon Christ's request.

Christ has died for us; it is righteous and just for God to forgive the sins of all who believe in Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ, The Righteous! Jesus is an advocate, taking up our cause in the presence of God the Father. Otherwise our sin would bring judgment upon us.

I John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Although, as Christians, we have come to know God; and we have an advocate to "go to bat" for us, we must realize that the inevitable accompaniment of knowledge must be obedience. If we know that God commands us to do or not do something we must obey.

Also, we must realize that those who claim that they abide in God and in Jesus Christ must live the same kind of life as Jesus lived. In other words, union with Christ necessarily involves imitation of Christ.

From this we can surmise that knowledge involves obedience, and union involves

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imitation. Therefore, in the life of a Christian there can never be any incentive or enticement to think lightly about sin. We must never take Christ's advocacy and intercession for granted.

Conclusion

John goes on to say that Jesus is 'the propitiation for our sins.'

I John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

The Greek word from which propitiation is translated is 'hilasmos.' This is a more difficult picture for us to fully grasp. The picture of the advocate is universal because everyone has experienced a friend coming to his aid; but the picture of propitiation is from sacrifice. To understand it we must get at the basic ideas behind it.

The great goal of all Christians is fellowship with God, to know Him as friend and to enter with joy, and not terror, into His presence. So it follows that the supreme problem against that is sin, because it is sin that interrupts and interferes with fellowship with God. Sin separates us from God.

To meet that problem, there must be sacrifice; and by sacrifice, fellowship with God is restored. So God had the Israelites offer the sin-offering at the Temple. That was the offering, not for any particular sin but for man as a sinner; and as long as the Temple lasted it was made to God in the morning and in the evening.

The Israelites also offered their trespass-offerings to God; these were the offerings for specific sins. As you know, the Day of Atonement was observed to atone for all sins, known and unknown. Now we come to this picture of propitiation.

As I mentioned, the Greek word for 'propitiation' is hilasmos, and the corresponding verb is 'hilasesthai'. This verb has three meanings:

1. When it is used with a man as the subject, it means to placate or to pacify someone who has been injured or offended, and especially to placate a god. It is to bring a sacrifice or to perform a ritual whereby a god, offended by sin, is placated.

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2. If the subject is God, the verb means to forgive, because then the meaning is that God Himself provides the means whereby the lost relationship between Him and men is restored.

3. The third meaning is allied with the first. The verb often means to perform some deed, by which the taint of guilt is removed. When a person sins; immediately he acquires the taint of sin; he needs something that will disinfect him from that taint and enable him once again to enter into the presence of God. In that sense the Greek verb 'hilasesthai' means, not to propitiate but to expiate, not so much to pacify God as to disinfect man from the taint of sin and thereby make him fit again to enter into fellowship with God.

When the apostle John says that Jesus Christ is the 'hilasmos' for our sins, it seems he is bringing all these different senses into one. Jesus is the person through whom guilt for past sin and defilement from present sin are removed.

The great and essential truth behind this word is that it is through Jesus Christ that man's fellowship with God is first restored and then maintained.

This work of Jesus was carried out not only for us, but for every one who has or will ever live; but this vital blessing is not accessible until a person is called and answers God's call in faith by repenting of his sins, accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, being baptized and receiving God's Spirit. So, the basis of Christ's advocacy is all put in this one word: 'propitiation.'

I John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The phrase, for the sins of the whole world, does not mean that every person will be saved in this age; because John is clear that forgiveness of sins comes only to those who are called, have faith, repent of their sins, are baptized and believe the Gospel. But Jesus' sacrifice is offered and made available to everyone in "the whole world," to be benefited from when a person is baptized and receives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We need not and cannot repeat Christ's unique saving death, but we can mirror his faith, love, devotion, obedience, and self-sacrifice; and this pattern of life will give greater assurance "that we are in him." And what we are told here is that Jesus Christ

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Himself is our propitiation; not only what He did, not simply the blood that was shed, but that He Himself is our propitiation. It means that He is the High Priest and the Offering.

In the Old Testament, everything the high priest took was outside himself, but Christ is God's and His own offering. He is the sacrifice and the high priest. Therefore, John says, He is not only the propitiating sacrifice, but the propitiation itself; everything that is necessary to reconcile the sinner with God is in Jesus Christ.

He is prophet, He is priest; He is king. He is the sacrifice; it is His blood that has been shed and presented, and He has purified the heavenly tabernacle; it is all in Him. We do not need anything else, we do not need anyone else; He Himself is the propitiation.

And because it is the Son of God who is the propitiation, we should not allow ourselves to become immobilized by fear about our sin. But, with Christ's help and the power of the Holy Spirit we must stand fast in doctrine, submit and obey God, and repent of and overcome sin. In this, we can say with John that Christ is enough; He is sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world.

Therefore when Satan, our adversary, comes and tries to drive us to the depth of despair and dejection because we have sinned, we can take comfort in the fact that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation not only of our sin, but of the sins of the whole world.

If we truly are Christians, we have been accepted by God, our fellowship restored, and can continue to walk with God.

This is reconciliation; this is the forgiveness of sins. This is the only way whereby any one of us can ever come into fellowship with God or can ever be maintained in that glorious fellowship. We can be tremendously encouraged because 'we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'