

More Than an Advocate

1 John 1:8 – 2:2

Last week, as we looked at verses 5-7 we spoke about the idea of *Christian Fellowship* or *koinonia*. Much more than sharing a meal together, it truly is the idea of living life together. As I've shared:

Koinonia carries with it the understanding of community. Community, the idea of "sharing in", "in participation with", the supreme expression of friendship.

Throughout the culture, true *koinonia* shows a common-union in life: a partnership and a brotherhood in life.

It is actually through that process of *Koinonia* that our lives as brothers and sisters in Christ are encouraged and strengthened. And, it's through the process of *Koinonia* that we **earn the right to speak into someone's life...** And yes, even when that means **challenging** a brother or sister when we see them...

- Making bad or sinful decisions,
- Speaking hurtful or non-God honoring words or
- Acting out in ways that are sinful or destructive

– either to their relationships with others on **the horizontal plain**, or in their relationship with God in that **vertical plain**.

The fact is, **when we care for someone enough, we need to be willing to step up and, in love, admonish the one in sin.** Even Paul tells us in Galatians 6 –

*¹ Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of **gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

So, when we tie all of these issues together, we see where for the Believer, ***Koinonia*** (*that true and deep fellowship*) really does depend upon the spiritual status of our lives.

That is the focus of what John said in 1 John 1:5-7

1 John 1

⁵ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have

fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ ***But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.***

As we walk in obedience to the Truth and the Spirit of God, we are **walking in the Light**. This is the bond that solidifies the sweetness of Fellowship between Believers and it's what also allows us to walk in true Fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin and disobedience hinder the Fellowship with both our vertical and horizontal relationships – we still remain as Brothers and Sisters in Christ, but we are not walking hand in hand; we still remain as Children of God, but we are not experiencing the sweetness of His presence.

This then brings us to tonight study, the warning John gives beginning in verse 8

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

There is **so much within the meat** of these few verses that it is no wonder the enemy of our soul has done so much to bring about confusion for so many Believers in the understanding of these words.

What John is telling us first and foremost is: *in this life, while carrying this flesh, we cannot obtain sinless perfection.*

But the encouragement comes as John had just told us *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*. The *blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from the eternal impact and consequences of our sin*, but it **does not make us sinless in a practical sense**. The sad truth is some churches teach that we can and should reach sinless perfection. I submit to you, that within those types of churches you'll have two types of people:

- First of all, **LIARS** who say they are sinless when they know full-well they still have sin, yet they try to hide it from all the others, and

- Secondly you have those that are ***absolutely frustrated and discouraged*** because they **DO** recognize their sin and their inability to rid themselves of the acts and attitudes of the flesh.

This is what we see John trying to communicate with us here:

1. When we are walking in obedience, there is nothing to hinder us in those times of horizontal and vertical fellowship
2. But the problem comes in the fact that we don't walk in obedience 100% of the time. Therefore hindrances occur.

So John now moves into the idea of being honest with ourselves and with God.

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The real deal issue is, what are you going to do with the reality of the sin that still plagues your natural flesh, that stinky carcass we continually have to haul around with us?

John says **the first thing we need to do**, even as Believers, we need to continue to **confess the reality of our need –**

¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us

Please, please, please, understand that John is not saying that if we do sin we are no longer Believers, and neither is he saying that if we try to ignore that sin, pretending it isn't there that we are none Believers. We need to see these verses within the context of all of God's Word and in particular all of John's message. He doesn't change his message throughout the letter, but he does **give the Believer hope** in the midst of our failures.

He doesn't excuse our sin, but reassures us on the basis of God's Word and Promises that our ***sin can and will be forgiven as we honestly confess it to Him.***

This is all a part of what is called **“our sanctification.”** The root of the word *sanctification* is related to the word *saint*; both words have to do with *holiness*. They come from the Greek root word *hagios*, meaning to **“set apart”**. But more than simply setting apart, it has the fullness of meaning as to **“set it apart for special use”**. It’s where we get our word **Holy**. So, to “sanctify” a person is to make him *holy*. Sanctification is the carrying on to perfection the work begun in regeneration, and it extends to the whole man¹

As a base point of understanding, you need to recognize the Biblical truth that at the Cross, **all** sin is forgiven: **past, present and future**. The eternal consequences of our sin is **wiped clean by the blood of Jesus Christ**. We may still have temporary consequences, but eternally we are washed and cleansed completely. Our standing with God is **“clean and forgiven”**. This is what is called **“our positional sanctification”** – we are positionally **Holy** before God. This is how we continually stand before God as He views us through the covering of the Blood of Christ (*we’ll see this more clearly later*).

But the problem is, on a daily basis sin creeps into our lives. Or, even at times, we invite sin into our lives. And **as this sin remains, the Koinonia or Fellowship with God is hindered**, but as John tells us here, *“if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* This deals with **our Fellowship, our Koinonia with God**, and is all a part of the **progressive work of our sanctification**.

If you can receive it, this is the very message of Jesus to Peter and the rest of the Disciples in the Upper Room as Jesus washed the Disciples’ feet. After Peter tries to stop the Lord from washing his feet and gets reprimanded by the Lord he then says, *“Oh no, no. Go ahead and wash my feet, my hands and my head.”* Then Jesus responded to him, *“He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you (John 13:10).”* The message Jesus is

¹ M. G. Easton, [Easton's Bible Dictionary](#) (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

sharing with the Disciples in the Upper Room is the same as what John is writing here in verse 8-10.

We are cleansed, but we need to *continually* receive His cleansing **because *ultimate sanctification isn't available in this life***. And that leads us to the third and final stage of our **Sanctification**: that of **ultimate sanctification** (or as some call it "**prospective sanctification**") when at last this flesh is laid aside and *when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality* (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

Those are the three stages of Sanctification: **positional, progressive, and ultimate (or prospective)**. Each laid out in the Scripture and each stage true in the life of every Believer. But as we are living this life, we are working through our **progressive sanctification** and as such, **there will be times when we will fall, we will fail**.

- Solomon of old knew that as he wrote, *"For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin (Eccl. 7:20)."*
- But even James, as a Believer in the Lord Jesus tells us, *"For we all stumble in many things (James 3:2),"* he is in full agreement with John here in verse 10.
- As the great Apostle Paul tells the Philippians: *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected (3:12)... Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended (3:13)..."*

It's for this very reason that here in 1 John, John warns us, ¹⁰ *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

Then, as we move into Chapter two of 1 John, we have this awesome declaration of **purpose and promise**. Personally I don't agree with the chapter break here. I feel that within the context of what John is writing here verse 1-2 of chapter 2 should be within the same chapter or paragraph as verses 8-10 of chapter 1. But they didn't ask for my opinion, so...

John first gives us **another of his great purposes** for writing this short letter:

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.*

John writes with such a deep heart of compassion: *My little children, I don't want you to sin. You should make it your goal not to sin; but, if you do sin there is an advocate continually working for us, who stands before the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.*

You can feel his compassion coming through as he writes to them in an effort to strengthen their walk in the Lord and to offer them **hope when they fail**. This **isn't an excuse for sin or even the hint of a freedom to sin**. John clearly knows the damage sin brings in every relationship.

But he also wanted them to understand that Jesus Christ **still remains as our Advocate before the Father**. The **Advocate** is the one who speaks for us, for our benefit. He is in essence our personal Defense Attorney. I love what **Max Anders** writes in reference to the work of the Advocate:

The advocate speaks with extraordinary authority before the judge, however, because his defense for us is that he, the defense attorney, has already paid any price the judge could impose. The willingness of the judge to forego judgment is not based on the life of the one on trial (us), but rather on the merits of Jesus' sacrifice. ²

Praise God, we have an advocate who pleads our case on His merit. It is **never** on my merit, but always on the **merit of our Advocate**.

As I was thinking about this idea of the **merit of the Advocate**, the thought came to me in the simplest terms possible – that's usually how I work.

It would be as if I went into the local grocery store and stole a pint of chocolate milk. I love chocolate milk and I didn't have any way to purchase that chocolate milk. So, I stole it. As I walked around the store, I drank that chocolate milk and

² David Walls and Max Anders, [I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude](#), vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 160.

enjoyed every last single drop. As I walked out of the store, there met me two men in official law enforcement uniforms and the store manager.

In the hands of the store manager was a copy of the video they took with the security cameras, showing I took the chocolate milk, I consumed the chocolate milk, and then I left the store without paying for what I had consumed.

Because I didn't have any money to purchase what I had consumed, and I no longer had the ability to give the chocolate milk back, the police arrested me and placed me in jail as I awaited my trial.

As the trial date approached, I heard from some that my Judge was *a loving Judge, gracious, kind, and merciful. Perhaps I can get off with a warning.* However, as I went into the court room I saw that sitting on the prosecutor's side was the owner of the store, the Judge Himself. Turns out that I hadn't stolen from just anyone, I had stolen from the Judge. My heart sank.

But then, my defense attorney stood before the Judge. At first what he said made me greatly nervous, *"Yes, Your Honor, this man stole the small bottle of chocolate milk values at \$1.98. Yes Sir, he consumed it to his complete enjoyment without ever intending to purchase it. As a matter of fact, he was fully aware he was unable to pay for it, Your honor. He truly is completely guilty, without excuse."*

I thought to myself, *"That's the last time I ever want to use a Public Defender!"*

But, to my surprise and eventual delight, my Defense Attorney wasn't finished. *"Your Honor, he is guilty but I would like to **step up into his place** and pay his penalty. Not only will I pay his penalty, but Your Honor, I own the cattle on a thousand hills – I will repay You with the proceeds of all of those cattle and all of their milk from now until eternity. On top of that Your Honor, on all of those thousand hills I grow orchards full of the best and highest quality cocoa trees and I will give not only the proceeds of those trees, but even the trees themselves to You as payment. As a matter of fact Your Honor, I will give all that I have to*

provide payment above and beyond what this man stole. Yes Sir, he is guilty, but I will pay more than the price needed to cover his wrong. If You would receive my payment.”

This is the very thought of what John gives us in verse 2 as he writes of our Advocate also being the **propitiation for our sins** –

¹ John 2

² *and He (the Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous)--He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world,*

Propitiation – it’s a great word and you ought to try and incorporate it in your daily conversations over the next few weeks.

Seriously though, **propitiation** is an amazingly powerful word. For within the action of propitiation, we are **able to realize and experience**:

- The Holiness and the Mercy of God at the very same time;
- Both His Righteousness and His Grace;
- Both His Justice and His Pardon.

Through the process of **propitiation** God isn’t required to bypass any of His Holiness, His Righteousness or His Justice in order to also reveal and offer His Mercy, Grace, and Pardon.

The word **propitiation** comes from a Greek word with the understanding of **atonement** or the “*act of making reconciliation*” or bringing together two that were separated – “*at-one-ment*”. **But it is much more than that.**

It also carries with it the understanding of *expiating* or “*making full payment*” for something **in order to appease the one wronged or to correct the wrong.**

But then it **also carries** with it (*and this is the exciting part*) a picture of the Old Testament action of the Priest on the Day of Atonement. The root of the Greek word is the same as the word used in the Septuagint (the Greek Translation of the Old Testament). In the Temple of the OT, the Holy of Holies was a very sacred spot. Within

the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant. The lid or the covering of the Ark of the Covenant was called the Mercy Seat. It is upon this “seat” or lid that the High Priest would sprinkle the Blood of the Sacrificial Lamb each year for the atonement of the sin of Israel. The name for this seat is the same root word of where we get our word **propitiation**.

Within the Ark of the Covenant was the Tablets of the Law of Moses (the Law of God) and Aarons Rod which had budded (the Promises of God). The word picture God was giving Israel was that as He looked down from heaven upon the Ark of the Covenant, he would see the Law that Israel was guilty of breaking time and time again. He would also see the Promises He had made to the people, which they disregarded and counted as of no value as they disregarded their relationship with Him as His Chosen people.

As God looked upon these things, Israel was found guilty. There was no doubt, they had stolen the Chocolate Milk. But, when the priest sprinkled the blood of the Lamb upon the lid of the Ark of the Covenant (the lid which was called the Mercy Seat), He would see Israel covered by the Blood of the Lamb. This was the **Propitiation** – all that was necessary and so much more to not only cover our sins, but to make full restitution, and to bring our relationship with the Father back together again. All that was separated by our sin, was brought back “at-one-ment”.

John shares with us here that –

² ...He (the Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous)--He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world,

Once again we see the overwhelming vastness, the absolute abundance of the payment that was made on our behalf. But not only for ours, *God loved the WORLD so much, that He had made available to Whosoever would call upon His name, the opportunity of being sprinkled by the precious blood of the sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ the crucified, risen Savior who stands now as our Advocate.*

Although this is a study on the writings of John's Epistles, I want to close the study tonight with a blessing the Apostle Paul wrote to God in his letter to the Ephesians. I just feel it is fitting for tonight's study –

Ephesians 1

³ Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did bless us in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ according as He did choose us in him before the foundation of the world, for our being holy and unblemished before Him, in love, ⁵ having foreordained us to the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He did make us accepted in the beloved, ⁷ in whom we have the redemption through his blood, the remission of the trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, ⁸ in which He did abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the secret of His will, according to His good pleasure, that He purposed in Himself...,

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