­­WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE: JESUS CHRIST

Lesson 2

1 John 2:1-14

Key Verse: 2:1b

“But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

In chapter 1, we thought of that which was from the beginning and came to this world and lived among men. He is Jesus, the Word of life. Even now, Jesus is audible, visible and tangible, because he is the Word of life, which is to be proclaimed. And our Christian fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This fellowship is possible when we walk in the light, in the life of repentance, having the place of the truth of God’s word in our hearts and lives. In today’s passage, Apostle John seems to be very concerned that his children, the believers in Christ Jesus, would not lose but continually maintain the amazing blessing of the fellowship. In this passage, we can think of Jesus Christ, our advocate with the Father, the significance of obeying God’s word in the practical life, and his specific foundational principles to the believers in different kinds of ages and stages.

**First, Jesus, our advocate (1-2).** Verse 1 says, “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” When Apostle John said, “My dear children”, it showed his deep affection for the believers. As an old man, John would depart from this world at any moment, but the believers who were like little kids to him had to remain in the world which was hostile to them. So he showed his deep affection for them.

In chapter 1, John wrote that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. In this grace of God, it may be easy for them to make light of sin. So here, John enjoined them to have a clear attitude toward sin. In KJV, it is in a form of command, “I write this to you so that you sin not.” Jesus said to a woman who was caught in the act of adultery and was under the people’s condemnation, “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11). Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:17, “If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!” Our being sinners cannot be an excuse for sin. Christians are those who have an uncompromising attitude toward sin. We are to know how much our holy God hates sin. And sin breaks our relationship with God and with one another. Sin is a spiritual virus. Sin makes us spiritually sick. We should always remember that our sin caused the death of the Son of God, the dearest and the best one. One important way of not sinning is positively living the godly life, and that means walking in the light.

John says continually, “If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” In other translations, “…we have an advocate with the Father…” In the Old Testament, we see that God is the God of the fatherless, the widow and the alien. Deuteronomy 10:18 says, “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.” Then God who is rich in mercy sent his Son to be our advocate through his death and resurrection. “Advocate” means “one who comes alongside” as a helper. Jesus said in John 14:16, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor/advocate to be with you forever.” Here another advocate is the Holy Spirit, meaning Jesus is the first advocate. In Greek, “advocate” is *paraklétos* with the connotation of comforter, helper, and intercessor.

According to Hebrews 2:17, Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest being made like his brothers in every way. And Hebrews 4:15 says, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.” So he can truly help us in our time of need. And Hebrews 7:25 says, “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

Then here, in 1 John 2:1 it says “…an advocate with the Father.” It means that our advocate now and again does not enter in to be allowed to represent us, but rather that he is always there sitting at the right hand of God (Ro. 8:34) in absolute intimacy with God. “…an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He was anointed and appointed by God and he is the Righteous One. He never sinned. No fault was found in Him. He is absolutely perfect. No one who is himself unworthy can possibly plead for another. We need such a representative in the presence of God because of the holiness and the absolute righteousness and justice of God. Job 16:19 says, “Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.”

So what an advocate we have, who can truly understand us, help us, intercede for us with full qualification, waiting for us to come to him! Those who are conscious of sin and failure and who are aware of their own unworthiness can come to him. When we come to him and offer our prayers to him, He takes our prayers and transmits and transforms them and passes then on to the throne of God. It is good to know that the Holy Spirit intercedes within us and Christ is interceding for us. Psalm 51:17 says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Jesus said in Matthew 5:3-4, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” May we come to him with a lowly and broken spirit and a contrite heart, who is right there as our advocate!

John then says in verse 2, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world.” He is the high priest and the offering; he is the sacrifice and the high priest. The word “propitiation” is one of the most significant word in the Bible. It means “an offering to appease God’s wrath.” The word “propitiation” is used 4 times very sparingly in the Bible. John wrote again in 4:10, “This is the love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice/propitiation for our sin.” God sending his Son as an atoning sacrifice is the sole expression of the amazing love of God. Apostle Paul also wrote in Romans 3:25, “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement/propitiation, through the shedding his blood—to be received by faith.” And the author of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 2:17, “…he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement/propitiation for the sins of the people.” 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. We need nothing else, we need no one else; He himself is the propitiation. He is enough, sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world. The propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, is the foundation of his redemption, the foundation of the forgiveness of our sins, the foundation of his advocacy and the foundation of his kingdom. Truly his atoning sacrifice and his being our advocate is the unshakable foundation and the confidence in our life of faith, and the true hope for this world. Praise God for Jesus, the atoning sacrifice, the propitiation!

Anyone of us can ever come into fellowship with God or can ever be maintained in that glorious fellowship, for we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

**Second, walk as Jesus did (3-11).** Now verse 3 says, “We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.” All the Biblical writers have their favourite words. As for John one of them is “know.” John could have written here, “we have come to know him if we obey his commands.” But he wrote, “We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.” This is the doctrine of assurance after the doctrine of sin and the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin. This gives us assurance.

In verses 4-6, “The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him. Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” In verses 3-5, the word “know” is repeated 4 times. It comes from the Greek word “ginosko” which means not merely knowing a fact, but experiential truth. Who can dare to say, “I know God.” God is infinite and wonderful beyond human understanding. Yet, we can know God. This knowing is something personal, direct, and immediate. Chapter 5 verse 20 says, “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true.” Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian church in Ephesians 1:17, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation God gives we can know him personally. Jesus said in his high priestly prayer in John 17:3, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” So if one says, “I know God”, it is a great confession.

Yet, here in this epistle Apostle John leads us to his great first test. What is the proof of knowing God? It is not feelings, sensations, vision, amazing answers to prayer, thrills, nor the unusual. The test or proof is one’s life, how does he live or what is his life like? Does he keep God’s commandments in his practical life? It is clearly written that the man who says, “I know him”, but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not him. John goes on, “But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is complete in him.” We are reminded of what Jesus said in John 14, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (15), “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me” (21), and “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (23). In the Christian life, obeying even one word of God really matters. Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians in 8:1-2, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.” Loving God and obeying his word and knowing God and being known by God are closely related. John says continually in verse 5 continually, “This is how we know we are in him.” Through obeying his word, we are in him. Then verse 6 says, “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”

The Bible often describes our life as a walk. We member in Genesis that Enoch walked with God 300 years in such an hostile world that God took him away (Ge. 5:22-24). Noah walked with God in such a generation that only and he and his family members were saved while the whole world except them perished in God’s judgment of the flood. We remember the words of Jesus concerning how to follow him and walk with him. He said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk. 9:23). We should learn to deny ourselves particularly at the crucial moment in life. We cannot forget Abraham’s denial of himself and obedience to God. One day, God commanded him, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about” (Ge. 22:2). This was a thunderous command to Abraham, because he loved Isaac, his only son, so much. Yet, God gave Abraham this command, because he loved Abraham truly and deeply that Isaac might not become his idol. Through tearful struggle throughout the night, early the next mourning, Abraham went to the place to obey God’s command. At the moment Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, God stopped him and said, “Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (Ge. 22:12). Probably through this personal obedience Abraham came to know Jesus, for Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (Jn. 8:56) We cannot miss Jesus’ self denial and obedience to God. When he had to die on the cross, he prayed at Gethsemane, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Lk. 22:42). After this prayer, he obeyed God’s will and offered himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. We ask for God’s mercy and grace that we may walk as Jesus did in our life journey in this world.

Then in verses 7-8 John says, “Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shinning.” From the beginning of his gospel ministry, Jesus proclaimed the message of love, saying, “Love your enemies” (Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:27). And God’s command in the Old Testament is “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Dt. 6:5) and “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). According to Jesus the former is the first and greatest commandment and the latter, the second (Mt. 22:38). Then Jesus said to his disciples at the Last Supper in John 13:34, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Again Jesus said in John 15:12-13, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Here, Apostle John said in verse 8, “Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is in him and you.” In other translations, “…which is true in him and you.” Jesus’ command is true in him, for he indeed lived up to this command as he laid down his life for his friends. Amazingly John also said, “which is true in him and you.” It is possible now in a way that it was never possible before. It is possible now for Christians, as the result of receiving new life from Christ. Our old self cannot, but the new self in Christ can. Because of this possibility, this is a new command. John added, “because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining” meaning, “the darkness of hated is passing and the true light of love is already shining through Christ’s example.

Then John says in 9-11, “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.” Here we see that Apostle John is serious and clearly contrasts loving one’s brother and hating his brother. Loving one’s brother in obedience to the command of love in Jesus’ example is living in the light and the alternative is hating his brother and accordingly being in darkness and walking around in darkness, not knowing where he is going with blinded eyes. Certainly, as we studied, in the darkness we cannot have fellowship with the Father and his Son Christ Jesus and with one another. May we be able to obey the command of love by dying to our old self at each moment and living with Christ in us.

Last Thursday the briefing of albertmolher.com was shocking to me. The title was “Will Christian Prayer and Preaching and Parental Conversations Be Declared Illegal? Urgent Questions Arise in Great Britain and Australia — And Will Not Stop There” and “Banning the ‘Pernicious Power of Prayer’?” What is pernicious power of prayer? Even our prayer to God that shows God’s given identity of male or female can be considered to be harmful to those who do not keep such an identify, and even such a talk between parents and their children can be criminalized. Truly God’s truth is thrown down to the ground. In this trend of the world obeying God’s word is against the expectation of the world and engaging in a great battle. Yet, we may be able to obey the word of God very personally and walk as Jesus did in this end time.

**Third, specific foundational principles (12-14).** Verses 12-14 seem to be out of the context. Yet, we can think of these verses as a kind of parenthesis in the series of appeals and exhortations between the two hard commands, ‘love your brother’ and “do not love the world’ that comes in verse 15. It is to comfort and encourage the believers as specific foundational principles.

It says, “I write to you, dear children, because you sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” In verse 12, “dear children” or “little children” in other translations is “teknion” in Greek which refers to those born of their parents. And in verse 1 “my ear children” is also “teknion”. In verse 14, “dear children” is “paidion” in Greek to refer to those who are under the mentorship of their parents. Since all believers are born of God, these words could be a general affirmation to all believers. These truths of the Christian life and of the Christian faith must be understood by all of us. At the same time, these are particular emphases that are more important at particular ages and stages. We must be absolutely clear about these fundamental, basic things. That is why, I think, John repeats these things twice. for repetition is the very art of teaching.

The first thing for all believers to be assured of is that our sins have been forgiven on account of him or for his name’s sake. The Christian is not a person who is seeking forgiveness, or who is hoping to be forgiven. Christians are people who know that they are forgiven. This is absolutely vital and fundamental. It is because the very justice of God insists upon my being forgiven, for Christ offered himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins to be punished in our place and thus appease God’s wrath for us. The second for every Christian to know is that we have overcome the evil one. We are made strong in Christ Jesus and the words of God living in us is our potent spiritual weapon and so we can be victorious in any and every situation with the victory over the evil one in Christ Jesus. The third and the last point is that we must all have a knowledge of the Father and of the Son. This is the blessed knowledge that every Christian must have a knowledge of God as Father, God who has loved us with an everlasting love, the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So it is a knowledge of the Father and likewise a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; to know Him in person as the Word of life, our Saviour, high priest, advocate and intercessor.

This is the knowledge that John also applies in particular to the different age groups in faith. In that first stage, all we really want to know is that we can reline in safety in the loving arm of God. At the beginning of the Christian life we do not understand much, so God gives us everything. Then, but go on a little bit and you become a young man; you find now there is a fight involved. In the beginning, the Christian life was easy; and now there is a conflict and difficulties. We are to engage in s a spiritual warfare. In the next stage, we no longer are interested in the gifts, no longer interested in the fight, though you are still fighting. What matters to us is the knowledge of the giver Himself. The day will come soon when we will see him face to face. We know Him that is from the beginning. We are longing to know Him better. We all are to stand on all these as a solid ground: a knowledge of sin forgiven, a knowledge of how to overcome sin and the evil one, and above all the knowledge of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy.

We thank and praise God for our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice. In this grace, may we really come to him and walk as Jesus did, following his footstep of obedience to God’s word and will and thus live in the light in this dark generation.