

“Our Advocate Before God”

August 21, 2011

Text: 1 John 2:1-2

The world watched with fascination as Casey Anthony was tried for the murder of her 3 year-old daughter, Caylee.

She had been indicted for murder in October, 2008, but her 6-week long trial didn't take place until this year.

The jury heard evidence from Casey's father that in June of 2008 she had left home, taking Caylee with her.

She hadn't returned for 31 days, & later told a 911 operator that Caylee had been missing for those 31 days.

In December, 2008, Caylee's dead body was discovered, near the family home.

Many people were shocked when Casey Anthony was declared “not guilty,” and she was released 12 days later.

They had serious misgivings about whether/not justice had actually been done.

In our text today, we will learn about another courtroom scene—a heavenly one.

There, God is the Judge, Satan is the accuser, and men are on trial for the crime of sin.

They are fighting for their lives, because Rom 6:23 says the wages of sin is the death penalty.

The Apostle John has just told us in 1 John 1:9=> *“If we confess our sins, **He** [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

That's good news!

But realistically, where's the justice in it all, if God simply forgives us of our crimes?

Imagine the jurors in Casey Anthony's case saying,

“Actually, we're pretty sure she did it, but we just decided to forgive her of it.”

Does God just sweep our sin/guilt under His cosmic rug, pretending it never happened?

From everything we know about Satan, he would never just drop the matter & let it go at that.

The answer to this dilemma cannot be that Xns are reformed & no longer sin so there's nothing more for God to judge.

1 Jn 1:8=> *“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*

We Xns continue to sin even after we're born again, so by all rights, we should be on trial just like the unsaved.

Our sins are no less offensive to God than theirs are.

In Gen 18:25, Abraham asks=> *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”*

The implied answer is=> “Yes, of course He will!”

So how can a just/holy God justify people who have always sinned and who still sin?

And how can He impose the strictest standards of justice on the unsaved for their sins, while simply forgiving Xns of theirs?

Does He ignore the demands of justice in their case?

A God who is truly just could never do that, and God
is truly just.

**In today's text, John will deal with the question of God's
justice in the lives of believers, by explaining the 3 key
advantages we have over nonbelievers=>**

- * Perfect Encouragement
- * A Perfect Advocate
- * A Perfect Plea

*** Perfect Encouragement**

**John begins as a loving father, encouraging his readers to
keep themselves from sin.**

[1 John 2:1a] (John)=> *“My little children, I am writing these
things to you that you may not sin.”*

John has just said that if we confess our sins, God forgives them.

That might cause believers to think God's justice no longer
applies to them;

That they can freely indulge in sin, then immediately ask
His forgiveness and thereby escape His judgment.

So John says, *“I am writing these things [his whole epistle] to
you that you may **not sin**”*—How?

By underestimating the seriousness of sin and sin's
consequences.

He warns them against treating God's gracious willingness
to forgive a Xn his sin, as if it were a license for
wickedness.

**John doesn't declare "Thou shalt not sin," like a law-giver,
but encourages/appeals-to them as a loving father.**

He says, "*My little children,*" a diminutive form that expresses the affection of a man who truly cares about their souls.

He obviously has a tender relationship w/ them, & lovingly writes to protect them from their own sinfulness.

Switching from the polemic tone he used to attack the Gnostics' false claims, he pauses, takes a breath, & addresses himself gently to these people he loves, adopting the language of affectionate/benevolent endearment.

He's fully aware of the human frailty that can cause them to stumble, and of the power of Satan to tempt them into sin.

He knows the misery/defeat/spiritual-vulnerability such sin/guilt will wreak on their hearts/minds if they yield to sinful temptation.

And the thought of their struggle w/ sin moves him to fatherly concern/tenderness as he seeks to protect them from all that.

John knows too, that ultimately he can't protect his readers from sin altogether, any more than he could do so in his own life. But he wants to put them on their guard against it, knowing that it can result in God's fatherly chastisement.

Xns are no longer under condemnation, but they are still subject to God's discipline.

Even His discipline is done out of love, for their good.

Heb 12:6 says=> *“THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”*

But it’s still an unpleasant form of divine judgment, just as it was in the life of Israel as a nation.

John says his purpose in writing is=> *“that you may not sin.”*

The exact meaning of his words is=> That you might not commit individual acts of sin.

All of Scripture is a record of God’s redemptive plan.

Every book of the Bible was written to warn people against the dangers of sin.

But it’s also a promise that, when God has finished His redemptive work in our lives, we won’t sin at all, ever again.

X’s atoning sacrifice will someday produce a society of sinless people who always obey Him & who never sin.

They will have been glorified through His power/grace.

Meanwhile, knowing that God loves us so much that He sacrificed His own Son to save us from sin’s scourge, is a great source of encouragement for us, in our resistance against it.

John’s fatherly love for his readers reflects his/their Heavenly Father’s love for them.

You might say that the love of God and the love of our fellow Xns keep us out of God's courtroom to begin with, but also out of His disciplinary woodshed throughout our lives as Xns.

Our motivation to avoid sin isn't a fear of God's judgment.

Rather, it's a sense of obligation, due to the loving sacrifice

He has made to deliver us from sin's devastation.

God will judge our works to determine our eternal rewards.

And He will do so with absolute justice/impartiality.

In view of that fact, we need to live our lives

soberly/reverently.

I Pet 1:15-17=> *"Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; / because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.' / And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear [reverence] during the time of your stay upon earth;"*

But ultimately, we obey the Lord out of our love for Him,

because of His great sacrifice for us.

I Pet 1:18-19=> *"...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, / but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."*

So the believer's first advantage in dealing with God's justice is the fact that he is no longer under a regime of law, but under one of grace/love.

That's an encouraging truth.

God has made it clear that He is on our side, doing everything necessary to protect us from His own judgment.

We rest in the comforting knowledge that the Law's condemnation no longer hangs over our heads.

God will judge our works, to determine our eternal rewards;

But the primary reason we obey Him is that we love Him, because He 1st loved us, & sent His Son to die for us.

In addition, the love of our brothers/sisters in X gives us a loving accountability that guards us from falling headlong into sin;

It was that very love which caused John to address his readers as "*My little children.*"

* **The Perfect Advocate**

This is the believer's 2nd great advantage in dealing with God's justice=> we have an Advocate who intercedes for us with our eternal Judge.

[1 John 2:1b]=> "*And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;*"

The word "*Advocate*" means someone who is called alongside a person, in order to help him.

It was used as a technical legal term for someone who appears on another's behalf in court (i.e., a defender/lawyer).

In God's courtroom, Jesus is our Advocate against Satan's accusations, & He's the best advocate we could ever have.

* He is "*Jesus Christ the righteous,*" a Man of impeccable, incomparable credibility with God.

He's a man like us, so He is well aware of all our frailties.

* He is God, & like God the Father, He is perfectly righteous, so that He/the-Father are always in total accord on all things.

* He pleads our case face to face w/ the Father on the basis of His own sacrificial death for our salvation.

"*With*" (vs 1) is *pros*, which means X is face-to-face with God not pleading our case from a distance.

* And He never tires of defending us.

Heb 7:25 says=> "*He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He **always** lives to make **intercession** for them.*"

For those who have formed a personal relationship w/ Jesus X by faith, He is always in God's presence, always defending them against Satan's charges/accusations.

John says, "*If anyone sins, we have an Advocate.*"

He uses a grammatical form which conveys strong probability.

The fact is, there's absolute certainty that, despite our being redeemed & indwelt by the H.S., we will sin.

Saints are still sinners—regenerated sinners, but still sinners nonetheless.

The believer is a new creature in X, & belongs to a holy priesthood, but the weakness inherent in his flesh still causes him to sin.

He doesn't revel in sin as he once did—in fact, it leaves him feeling cold/unhappy/mournful.

Unlike the unredeemed, he never really finds enjoyment in his sin, since it always ends in a bitter feeling of guilt/failure.

And when he sins, he always does so half-heartedly because of the law of God written on his heart, causing him to hate the very wickedness in which he is involved.

But in spite of all that, he continues to sin from time to time.

Spurgeon compared sinning Xns/non-Xns with sheep/pigs.

He said that, like sheep who fall into the mud, a believer who falls into sin immediately tries to get out of it, & get cleaned up.

Non-believers, on the other hand, prefer to wallow around in the mud for awhile.

Unfortunately, because of the effect of the flesh on a believer's life, sin pollutes everything he does.

Even his prayers are sinful.

Fortunately, Rom 8:26 says=> “*The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*”

Just as Jesus intercedes for us with regard to Satan's accusations against us, the H.S. intercedes for us by correcting/sanctifying our prayers.

We sin every day by the omission of giving a drink to the thirsty by the visits we don't make to the sick/imprisoned, and the many other good deeds we should do, but leave unattended/undone.

We also sin by commission with thoughts/words/deeds that dishonor our Savior, instead of glorifying His name.

We also sin as a result of our own particular moral/spiritual weaknesses.

They may include shortness of temper, a proud spirit that cares little for other people, suspicious temperament, or spiritual laziness.

Satan knows each one of our weak-points, and he plays on them like a maestro.

But praise God, John wrote, "*If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father.*"

Notice that John doesn't say "If we sin, we forfeit our Advocate."

Nor does he say, "If we do good, we have an Advocate."

In fact, the reality that we do sin is the very thing that establishes our need for an Advocate.

Those who don't get drug into court, don't need a lawyer.

Those who don't sin, don't need an Advocate w/ the Father.

But all the sin a believer will ever commit cannot disqualify him for a defense before God, by Jesus, his perfect Advocate.

Our Advocate is the Friend of sinners, whose very name means that He came to save them from their sin, and the condemnation it brings.

When we commit some vile/gross sin that leaves our conscience burdened w/ guilt, He doesn't back off in revulsion.

When the Spirit so opens our eyes to see the truth about our own sinfulness that we cry with Paul, "*Wretched man that I am!*" (Rom 7:24), our Advocate still stays on the job.

Jesus would be of no use to us, if He could only defend/save us when we were living godly lives, like models of righteousness.

No matter how gross a believer's sin may be, X stands ready/willing to defend him before His Father.

And He will never fail in that defense;

He has never lost a case, because He has never lost a true believer to Satan yet.

In a sense, Xn's sins are more inexcusable/aggravated than other people's sins.

They have been highly favored by God and washed in the blood of the Son of God.

They've sinned over against the protests of the H.S. within them.

When they sin, they crucify their Savior afresh—an act of unspeakable treachery.

They deserve the hottest wrath, in the darkest part of hell.

You might expect X to say, “I have certain standards, & this wretched Xn has gone way over the line.”

But amazingly, the truth still stands=> “*If anyone sins* [no matter how treacherously], *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*”

*** A Perfect Plea**

With such a wonderful Advocate on our side, how could we keep from rejoicing at our good fortune?

But there's a potential problem that lies hidden in those words=> “*Jesus Christ the **Righteous.***”

You hear jokes about shady attorneys, which make the thought of a “righteous Lawyer/Advocate” seem like an oxymoron.

There's a reason for that=> a defense lawyer's task is not to defend the principle of justice, but simply to defend a client from a charge.

He may know w/o doubt that his client is guilty, but his job is to defend him as best he can, nonetheless.

Sometimes we witness the perversion of our justice system as an obvious criminal is set free through tricky legal maneuvers.

I'll never forget Johnny Cochran telling the jury, "If the glove doesn't fit, you've got to acquit."

It reminds us that until X returns, we live w/ a flawed justice system.

Jesus is not a tricky lawyer; He is "*Jesus Christ the righteous.*"

But He has us for a client, and both He/we know full well that we are as guilty as sin itself.

We know too that everything Satan is going to accuse us of is absolutely true—twisted no doubt, but true.

So how can "Jesus X the Righteous" successfully defend us w/o stooping to some sort of legal deception/slight-of-hand?

Because X's character is perfectly righteous, the plea He enters on our behalf must be perfectly righteous as well.

He's not the kind of advocate who could ever take a bad case which He'd then have to defend with dishonesty/subterfuge.

Jesus argues our case on the basis of a perfect plea=>

"The defendant pleads 'guilty,' Your Honor, but the sentence has already been imposed, the punishment fully endured, and justice fully served.

The Law has been satisfied and can demand no more."

The penalty against us has been fully imposed because He Himself has endured it as our Substitute.

The penalty was death, so He suffered death on the cross.

Moreover, Jesus meets the charge of unrighteousness against us,
by pleading His own righteousness on our behalf.

He took our sin/guilt on Himself, imputing His own divine
righteousness to us instead.

**John states this perfect plea in terms of Jesus' propitiation of
the wrath of God's justice.**

[1 John 2:2]=> "*and He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins;
& not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*"

**In order to understand what that means, we must first
determine what the word "propitiation" means.**

This word (*hilasmos*) was used in the ancient world to refer to the
appeasement of an angry god.

Greek/Roman gods were thought to be notoriously petulant
and capricious bullies whose anger was arbitrary, &
often caused horrendous human suffering.

By contrast, God's wrath is actually a controlled, sustained, but
often violent antagonism towards evil.

It is the anger we read about in Ex 32, after the Israelites
had corrupted themselves w/ a golden calf.

In Ex 32:9-10, God says to Moses=> "*I have seen this
people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. /
Now then let Me alone, that My **anger may burn**
against them, and that I may destroy them.*"

God responds with anger when sinners break His Law, which is a
moral profile of His-own-character & His-holy-will.

The only means by which God's wrath against sin could ever be appeased is the death of the sinner himself.

In the OT, God allowed the sacrifice of certain physically perfect animals to serve as a temporary substitute for the penal death of the sinners who owned them.

On the Day of Atonement each year, this was graphically portrayed with the sacrificial death of a-bull/a-goat.

In Lev 16:15, Moses was instructed to sprinkle their blood on "*the mercy seat.*"

The "*mercy seat*" was the top cover on the Ark of the Covenant.

Inside the Ark were the stone tablets of God's Law, which the Israelites had violated, incurring His wrath.

Hovering over the Ark was the cloud of God's Shekinah glory.

In order for God's wrath to be appeased, & for His people's sins to be forgiven, the High Priest had to sprinkle the blood of an animal sacrifice on the top of the Ark between God's Law and God's glory.

This then became the place/means by which God met w/ His people, & restored their relationship w/ Him, this point in space just above the Ark, called the "*mercy seat.*"

God's wrath was satisfied/propitiated at the mercy seat with animal blood.

But all this was merely preliminary/prophetic of Jesus' ultimate death for sin, which propitiated God's wrath once/for-all, for believers, a perfect Man suffering for the sins of other men.

Heb 2:17=> *"He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people."*

Here X is portrayed as the High Priest offering the blood of the sacrifice that would appease/propitiate God's wrath for us.

But in our own text (1 Jn 2:2) X is portrayed as the sacrificial offering Himself=> *"He Himself is **the propitiation** [the substitutionary sacrifice offering] for our sins."*

Jesus X is the sacrificial lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

But does Jesus' death propitiate God's wrath over the sins of every individual in the whole world?

That's what the last phrase in our text seems to say=>

*"not for ours only, but also for those of the **whole world**."*

But let's ask another question: If *"the whole world"* refers to absolutely everyone, where is Osama Bin Laden right now? In heaven, along with Adolph Hitler and Judas.

That's not possible, since Jn 3:36 says=> *"He who **believes***

*in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath of God abides on him.***”

Rom 3:24-25 says those who form a saving relationship w/ X

are=> *“justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; / whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation in His blood through faith**”*
(the faith of those who believe).

The *“whole world”* in 1 Jn 2:2 refers only to those who have placed their faith in Jesus X for the salvation of their souls.

Someone: Why did John say *“the whole world”* if he didn’t mean that X propitiates the sins of everyone in the world?

Ans: Because he was referring to believers throughout the whole world.

Or in the words of Rev 5:9=> *“Thou [Jesus] wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men **from every tribe and tongue and people and nation**”*
(i.e., throughout the whole world).

- * **We are the defendant charged w/ the capital crime of sin.**
- * Satan rails against us, demanding the maximum punishment.
- * Jesus stands as our Advocate and quietly makes our defense.
- * The Father bangs down His gavel, & says, “Case dismissed!”

“Our Advocate Before God”

August 21, 2011

Text: 1 John 2:1-2

1. In our text today we will learn about a courtroom scene where God is the Judge, Satan is the accuser, and men are on trial for the crime of [8 sin].

Rom 6:23; 1 Jn 1:9; 1:8; Gen 18:25

In today's text, John will deal with the question of God's justice in the lives of believers by explaining three key advantages we have over nonbelievers...

*** Perfect Encouragement**

2. John begins as a loving father encouraging his readers to [10 keep] themselves from sin.

[1 John 2:1a]

3. John knows he can't protect his readers from sin altogether; but he wants to put them on their [12 guard] against it.
4. Our motivation to avoid sin isn't fear of God's judgment; rather it is a sense of obligation due to the loving sacrifice He has made to [16 deliver] us from its devastation.

[1 Pet 1:15-17, 18-19]

5. The believer's first advantage in dealing with God's justice is the fact that he is no longer under a regime of law but under one of grace and [10 love].

*** The Perfect Advocate**

[1 John 2:1b]

6. In God's courtroom Jesus is our Advocate against Satan's accusations, and He is the [10 best] advocate we could ever have.

Heb 7:25

7. Unfortunately, because of the effect of the flesh on a believer's life, sin pollutes [22 everything] he does.

Rom 8:26

8. All the sin a believer will ever commit cannot disqualify him for a [16 defense] before God by Jesus—his Advocate.

Rom 7:24

9. You might expect Christ to say, "I have certain standards, and this wretched Christian has gone way over the line"; but amazingly, the truth still stands: "If [14 anyone] sins...."

*** A Perfect Plea**

10. Jesus argues our case on the basis of a perfect plea: “The defendant pleads ‘guilty,’ Your Honor, but the sentence has [16 already] been imposed.”

[1 John 2:2]

Ex 32: 9-10

11. God responds with anger when sinners break His Law; the only means by which God’s wrath could ever be appeased is the [12 death] of the sinner.

Lev 16:15; Heb 2:17

12. In our own text (1 Jn 1:2) Christ is portrayed as the sacrificial offering [16 Himself].

Jn 3:36; Rom 3:24-25

13. Why did John say “the whole world” if he didn’t mean that Christ propitiates the sins of everyone in the world? Because he was referring to believers [24 throughout] the world.

Rev 5:9