

Christ our Advocate, the Hope of Nations

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[0:00] And so that would be our text, Christ our hope, our advocate, the hope for the nations. And I'd like us all to turn in our Bibles to 1 John.

As I read 12 verses, the 10 in chapter 1, and then the two that are our text from chapter 2. And if you would, keep your Bibles readily available because there are some other sections of Scripture that complement what I'll be talking about. And I'd like them to be readily available for you. Hear God's Word. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the Word of Life.

The life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testified to it, and proclaimed to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

[1:25] That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

[2:38] My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

He is the propitiation for our sins. And not only for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. I think we have another slide here, yes.

And this is not an outline, it's just some points of reflection that follow the message that I'll be giving today. And I would encourage you to think through the different parts, the questions, and how they would apply to the scripture that was read and also to your own lives.

Let me pray again. We are so thankful for your Word, it is so clear. It teaches us about the triune God.

It teaches us about the gospel message. The truth that sets us free. Lord, help us to listen to it, to read it, to mark it, and to inwardly, in our hearts, digest it.

[4:02] For your glory and for our sanctification. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So I do, I have sent the manuscript of what I'll be teaching for anyone that is blessed and would like to study the information that I've sent more.

And so you would talk with Ellen about that and she could get that to you. Let's begin. Again, the message is Christ, our advocate, the hope of the nations.

In the mid-20th century, there was a prominent psychiatrist by the name of Carl Menninger from the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas.

And he wrote a book that shocked his colleagues. The name of it was Whatever Became of Sin. I remember going into a Christian bookstore, and I'm not even altogether sure that Carl Menninger was a believer, but he certainly saw something.

[5:19] For roughly 40 years of working in the courts and the family counseling ministry in Topeka, the concept of sin had altogether been disregarded.

And it had been replaced with the concept mental illness. And human responsibility was altogether put aside.

Menninger suggested something. He saw that something was horribly wrong. Something was missing. Mankind was more than just a victim of his environment.

As a result, he began to entertain the idea that secular wisdom did not have the answer. And they had dismissed the concept of human sin.

Many of his contemporaries and associates rejected his ideas as radical. That they had come out of his sympathies with the Jewish refugees that fled from Hitler's Germany.

[6 : 39] Apparently, he had been shocked by the raw evil that he had seen afflicted on mankind. And his associates thought this was ridiculous.

How could anyone in our modern, sophisticated world, these enlightened people of our day, go so far backwards as to this antiquated notion?

Sin. Well, in John's first gospel, something similar was taking place by a group of people known as the Gnostics that had infiltrated the church.

In their pride, they were denying human sin, believing that a person could reach a state of perfection through their efforts and through human knowledge.

So we can see at the get-go that not much has changed in 2,000 years in man's thinking outside of the gospel.

[7 : 48] So John saw what was taking place. And he made it clear in the first chapter, which we just read, of the gospel or the epistle of John that sin is real.

And it's ugly. And that his children cannot walk in it. They must walk in the light. These were the words that we read. They must humbly trust in Christ by faith and his light, repenting of their sins in humility and moving toward the grace of God.

And even though in this life they would never reach a point of sinlessness, still they are commanded to grow in faith and holiness.

This then is where chapter 2 begins, our section that I'll be focusing on the most. Based on John's admonition that when Christians sin, they repent.

They confess their sins. They receive forgiveness. They are reestablished in their relationship with God.

[9 : 07] He saw the heinousness of this denying of the gospel message from the Gnostics.

And he wrote these words, starting in the second chapter. He says, I write these things that you will not sin.

But, there's that conjunction, but if anyone does sin, he has an advocate with the Father. So, he's going to present to us that idea of an advocate.

What is an advocate? You see, the heart of the gospel is not that we won't sin, but that when we do sin, we have an advocate.

Well, why is this so important? From my experience as a biblical counselor, I've seen many individuals desperately attempt, through human effort, to alleviate their shame, their guilt, their despair, from the sinful choices that they have made.

[10 : 27] Or, they simply deny that sin even exists and move on. And, they find themselves not having the peace that the gospel provides for us.

Having rejected the good news of an advocate, they reject their only hope in this life and in the life to come. In 1606, William Shakespeare wrote a tragic drama called Macbeth, where he demonstrates brilliantly man's futile attempt to deal with sin and guilt.

You see, for the sake of political ambition and greed, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth were involved in the murder of King Duncan.

And in her guilt and regret, imagining the blood of the king still on her hands, she washed her hands desperately, saying, Out, damned spot!

Out, I say! Here's the smell of blood still! All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. And, as Macbeth sees his wife coming unhinged from the distress, he says to a medical doctor, Canst thou not minister to the mind disease?

[12 : 13] Is she pleased? Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow? Raise out the ridden troubles of the brain with some sweet, oblivious antidote?

Cleanse the stuffed bosom of the perilous stuff that weighs upon it. You can see the pressing guilt in her heart.

The doctor replied, insightfully, Therein the patient must minister to himself. Is that the answer?

Pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Cover ourselves up in our guilt through medication or through self-destructive behaviors.

Burying ourselves in entertainment, overwork, sexual sins, achievements. What makes our unbearable guilt go away?

[13:24] This is the age-old question that faced mankind in the garden at the fall. Who can bear it up for us?

The good news is that God has already provided a remedy for our sin. When one comes to grasp the truth that someone has paid the penalty for our sin, there is peace and joy.

You see, it's an objective forgiveness that God offers. It's not based on our feelings. It's not a matter of us trying to forgive ourselves.

It's based on the promised faithfulness of God himself, the just who died for the unjust.

The Apostle Paul, and I would like you, if you would, please, turn to this brief section in Romans 8, 22. Romans 8, 22.

[14:40] The Apostle Paul describes the human condition and solution this way. The creation itself will be set free from the bondage of corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

You see, there's something horribly wrong. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

All creation suffers as a result of the fall. Like John, Paul is explaining the core teaching of the gospel message.

Hear these words from 1 John 2, 2 again. Jesus is the righteous advocate who is the propitiation for our sins.

It is only through the atonement of Jesus' death on the cross that we can have right standing with God.

[15:52] So at this point, we're going to examine two important words. Words that we know and sometimes we know wrongly. One of those words is the word advocate.

And the other word is the word propitiation. And unfortunately, due to our understanding of advocate in the American justice system, we don't normally do it justice.

and also the word propitiation from the pagan influences that stain our understanding, we miss the point.

And if we miss the point of these two words, advocate and propitiation, we miss the gospel.

If we take the secular meaning, we miss the gospel, which promises to every believer justification by faith and peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[16:59] So in our day, the most common understanding of the word advocate is in a court system, a lawyer, an attorney, and usually the attorney has an objective.

His objective is to present his defendant as innocent based on his merit, the defendant's merit, or to somehow, in a rather unethical way, to get the person off on some technicality, acquitting him or her of the crime.

This is not the biblical understanding of an advocate, someone who gets somebody off on a technicality, or that a person is presented before the judge on his own merit, or be it.

Let's read 1 John 2, 1 again, and I'll have it here, and it reads, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Well, this word comes up also in 1 John 14, 26, the Gospel of John, where it is the word paracletos.

[18:24] The paracletos is the Holy Spirit. It's a helper. It's someone who is making intercession for another.

It's his merit that we're talking about. And so let's contrast them again. So both advocates are helpers.

But the helper that John has in mind is defending the person who is guilty on the basis, and here it is, the advocate's perfect merit has nothing to do with the person.

The person has nothing to bring to the table. The advocate is nothing less than the perfect son of God standing in on behalf of the guilty.

A vital concept for us to understand. And we can also see something of this in the Old Testament.

I'd like you to turn, if you would, to the second to the last book of the Old Testament, Zechariah.

[19:40] Zechariah 3, 1 through 4, and I'll delay just a few minutes because as I read before, I heard some pages that were still shifting around.

It's kind of like the late R.C. Sproul said when he was in Phoenix some time back, and when he was hearing in the hot summer the pages of the Bibles moving around, he said, ah, Baptist air conditioning.

He was a Presbyterian. Zechariah 3, 1 through 4. It reads, then he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, the Lord rebuke you, O Satan, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, his elect, rebuke you.

Is not this a brand plucked from the fire? Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, remove the filthy garments from him.

[21 : 07] And to him he said, behold, I have taken your iniquity away and you will be clothed with pure vestments. here again we have in seed form in the Old Testament the gospel message.

That this is a message that because of the angel of the Lord, Joshua, the high priest's sin and guilt will be removed.

This is a picture of none other than Christ himself in the Old Testament, taking away the iniquity and clothing Joshua with the pure garments unstained.

What a beautiful picture. What a beautiful Old Testament picture of the gospel. So the next word then is propitiation.

And we see that in 1 John 2.2. He is the propitiation for our sins. And here again we have a misunderstanding of this word if we look in the pagan culture.

[22 : 19] For what we see in paganism, if a person has done something and things are not going so well in his or her life, it was believed that quite likely they had angered the gods.

If they had done so, it was necessary that they make a sacrifice substantial enough to appease or placate the arbitrary, all those are key words, arbitrary wrath of these gods, little g.

They were making a propitiatory sacrifice to an angry god. The gods were all together to human in their actions. Further, they were capricious.

They would frequently hold out for the best sacrifice, even competing among themselves on who's going to offer the best sacrifice, and the most costly was human sacrifice.

There's a picture of this in the story of the Trojan War. There was a general, a Greek general, moving toward the island of Troy against contrary winds.

[23 : 37] and he had believed that somehow he had displeased the gods. So, straight away, he sent someone back to the Greek, to Greece, and had his daughter ceremonially slaughtered.

Well, it must have paid off because the contrary winds ended and he was able to continue on toward Troy. he had somehow, through human sacrifice, placated the angry god or gods that he had offended.

Are there similarities? Well, yes. Both require a blood sacrifice that will make atonement for an offense.

both were to divert the wrath of god or gods. This, however, is where the similarity ends.

I took this from J.I. Packer's book, Knowing God, and he tells it this way, the biggest difference is that in Christianity, the initiator of the blood sacrifice is the triune god.

[25 : 02] himself. Just let that seep in for a minute. God is initiating the sacrifice. It is a father that in love sent his son to satisfy divine justice and holiness.

It is the sinless son who delighted to do the father's will. Further, because Jesus was the sinless substitute and representative head for all mankind, the offending party, mankind, could once and for all be made righteous before God, the father, and be regenerated through the power of the third person of the trinity.

You see, this is initiated by God in his great and sovereign love, the triune God. Rather than selfishness, there is divine love.

rather than unpredictability and competitiveness between unstable deities, there is consistency, trinitarian unity, and stability.

What a difference. The biblical advocate is completely righteous and stands in the gap before the judge of all mankind and the righteous for the unrighteous and it quits all who believe.

[26 : 36] The apostle Paul explains the situation this way and again if you would turn to a passage from the apostle Paul Romans 3 23 through 26 talking about the impact of the blood atonement or propitiation Romans 3 23 through 26 it reads for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood and he received by faith and to be received by faith this was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins it was to show his righteousness at the present time so that this is something to just soak in for a minute so that he might be just his wrath had to be satisfied he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in

Jesus so what propitiates the sin nature is the blood of the advocate who is the advocate Jesus Christ how is one saved through having faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross what a difference how different this is than the pagan notions or even the American court systems when it comes to the stability of the gospel more than one teacher of the word has pointed out the connection between self destructive behaviors such as cutting eating disorders penance trusting in the church and even some instances of suicide when we do not realize that it is a free gift by God not according to our feelings that God in his mercy initiated for us himself amen amen however there's a final phrase and it would be incomplete if I didn't attack this very last section of verse two where it says or people would think that he's talking about all mankind that the gospel went out for all mankind let me read it to you again and that is he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world some have thought that John is saying that everyone in the end will be saved this is actually a quite easy solution if you think even of the book of 1st John and the Bible itself tells a great deal about the worm hell is like the worm that will not die it will go on and on in its torment some would promote a type of universalism that all in the end would get there but this goes against everything that John is saying and even our text listen to 1st John 5 11 through 12 it says and this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his son whoever has the son has life whoever does not have the son of God does not have life I see some hands looking for that section so let me give it to you again it's 1st John 5 11 through 12 that's pretty clear whoever has the son has life and whoever does not have the son does not have life so what is he saying what is this section talking about and

I think when we take the whole of the scripture what we see is that it's saying that the gospel is not exclusive but it is inclusive of people from every people group that put their faith in Jesus Christ for their sins revelation 5 9 will be our last scripture section revelation 5 9 makes this expansion of the gospel message very clear to us yes to those of all nations that put their faith in Jesus Christ that the gospel message goes out to and we read these words and they sang a new song saying worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals talking about Jesus Christ there for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for

God from every tribe and language and people and nation God has his elect that the gospel goes out to and he knows those who are his today's message reveals to us the only ground the only ground of our hope the advocate the one who made propitiation for our sin that we are saved by faith alone this is what removes our guilt this is what the biblical gospel is other attempts that people make to assuage their guilty consciences will fall short of the mark leading only to ultimate hopelessness and despair we have a hymn that

[33 : 45] I'm just going to read the first stanza of in your hymnal it's nothing but the blood and it's in on page 302 what can wash away my sin nothing but the blood of Jesus what can make me whole again nothing but the blood of Jesus oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow no other fount I know nothing but the blood of Jesus and as we look at that you know this was the revelation this was the revelation of what God did the objective revelation of an advocate who would before a holy God that would satisfy divine justice and yet what is the response well we don't want the response to be some kind of free grace because it cost

Jesus it cost Jesus something know the call and really the rest of the book is talking about how we respond how we respond to what God has did in a thankfulness in a life of hope but a life that is pursuing holiness let's pray thank you heavenly father for your precious word how it touches our soul how it guides us through the power of the holy spirit to life eternal we pray in christ's name amen