

# First John (5) - Correcting Serious Mistakes(3)

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Date: 03 November 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1st John, the first letter of John, picking up our studies here in 1st John, and we'll read from 1st John 1, verse 10, into the first few verses of chapter 2.

So, 1st John, chapter 1, and at verse 10, If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

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 for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. This is a quick recap for those who may have not been here over the last couple of weeks, just to pick up the study so far.

We are looking at this part of chapter 1 as three units very closely tied together, each of them beginning with these words, If we say, and we looked at that from verse 8 onwards, if we say, and verse 6 onwards, if we say we have fellowship with him.

[ 1 : 16 ] Verse 8, if we say we have no sin, and then verse 10 tonight, if we say we have not sinned. And that carries on into chapter 2. And the structure of these units, each of these has this statement, if we say, where we thought that, at least interpreters think, that commentators think, John is using the thoughts or even the words, perhaps, of the false teachers that he is warning his readers against and countering by this letter.

And anyway, whether that is the case or not, this is what he is saying. If we say this, and then he follows that by the outcome of that, if that is what it is, then we have an outcome.

We make him a liar, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. And then he, each of these times, he follows it with a very important foundational teaching, indeed, very important doctrine, to counteract the false teaching of those who were trying to pull people away from the true gospel.

And some already had left and had started following that false gospel. So he was addressing false teachers in this letter. I want to alert you to something that is very local.

We always try and make the gospel pertinent to our own situation. That is what it is for. There is no use looking at something that John the Apostle wrote to the people of his day, and imagine that this is really just a historical exercise for us, just looking at the history or looking at something way, way back in the midst of time, and we leave it there.

[ 2 : 49 ] This is relevant. This is for ourselves. This is applicable to our situation. I was alerted recently to meetings that are taking place in the Calhoun Inn every Lord's Day evening, and also on Wednesdays.

And it's by a group or an organization, at least called Christian Rethink. That sounds pretty reasonable, Christian Rethink.

Of course, we have to think through what we believe. We're faced with challenges from different points of view, from atheism, humanism, or other types of views of the Bible, and we actually assess our own thinking in the light of that.

It's a healthy thing to do, just to ask yourself, why do I believe this? Why is this important to me? Why are these matters in the Bible about Jesus? Why do I believe these things as I do?

Well, this group, Christian Rethink, fit into the kind of situation that John faced, to a degree at least, because one of the most dangerous false teachings is the one that mixes up truth and error.

[ 3 : 58 ] And if you look at their website called Christian Rethink, you'll find that there are items there that accord with our understanding of the gospel, that we're saved through Jesus Christ, and so on.

But there are items as well that we profoundly disagree with, and actually are in error, and pose a danger, certainly to people who may not be that familiar with the gospel, and particularly if they are

rather tired of or of something against the church.

Let me just pick out two or three of these quotations directly from the website. This seems to be a one-man organization. I couldn't find any name attached to it, but this one person who has a number of self-made videos as well.

But he claims that this represents a group of people, as he says, who look to live a church-free Christianity.

They are church-free Christians. This is what he says. First of all, he asks the question. The questions, for question and answer section, I'm taking a bit of time on this, because I want you really to be alert to this, and how it poses a danger.

[ 5 : 14 ] It's strange that the answers begin with judgment and that sort of thing, but this is question nine. Is God in control? A perfectly reasonable question.

And then the answer is, yes, but. That always flags up something, doesn't it? Yes, but. But in Genesis 1.28, he says, Be fruitful and increase in number.

Fill the earth unsubdued. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. That's a direct quotation of Genesis 1.28. And in this comment, this verse is extremely significant, since it is God giving control of the earth to Adam and his descendants.

This means that men have control and responsibility for what happens on earth until the final judgment, when God will take back direct control. God generally limits his interventions on earth so as not to compromise his decision to give control to men.

There are times of obvious intervention when he attempts to divert men onto a better coach, the flood and ascending of Christ being the most obvious.

[ 6 : 26 ] Now, you can see yourself, I hope, tonight, that to actually think of the sending of Christ by the Father into the world to be just an attempt to divert men onto a better course is at best misleading and at worst in serious error.

Is that really what the mission of Christ was about? An attempt by God to divert people into a better course. Well, he says then, just to clarify, the idea that God predestines everything and that nothing happens outside of his perfect will is absurd and untenable.

And he gives an example. Consider this, he says, if you lend your car to a friend, are you in control of it? Yes, of course you are. It's your car.

But when your friend is driving it, he is in control, not you. Which is it? God has given control to men for a time, but will take it back at the end of time.

And there's also a section on a supposed repudiation of the doctrine of the Trinity. I haven't included that, but if you look at it, this is what it says. That Trinity is not a biblical concept.

[ 7 : 45 ] It doesn't appear in the Bible. The word, we should reject the idea of God being a Trinity. We have a Trinitarian foundation to the Christian gospel, to the Christian salvation.

It is absolutely vital, foundational, that you hold on to the teaching of the Bible that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, equal in power and glory, one God.

Because otherwise, you're not going to understand anything of the workings out of salvation where Father, Son, Holy Spirit have their own power to act in that.

Then he says, Are churches Christian? The word church should not be in the Bible. It should say people of God.

The true church is all those who are genuinely saved in Jesus. No organization reflects that group. The churches in general exist as a surrogate form of Christianity.

[ 8 : 48 ] The first church, brackets the Roman one, having been set up to divert Christians from the true path. Should I go to church if I am saved?

Just listen to the answer. If you feel it's right to go, you can. If you imagine your salvation depends on it, you would benefit from more time spent reading the scriptures.

In other words, this is a church-free Christianity. You can imagine how that is going to appeal to people who have fallen out with the church, don't find the church acceptable, maybe even have been let down by the church at some point, and have come to reject the idea of the church as an organized group of people who meet in the Lord's name with its ordinances and structures that we believe are biblical and scriptural.

You can imagine what an appeal this is going to be to people who have rejected that idea and who say, Great! Here's Christianity without having to go to church.

Here's Christianity without having to meet all these hypocrites who go to church. You can see how that's going to appeal. That's why I'm saying this is something I'm alerting you to as false teaching in our own locality.

[10:09] And it seems that these meetings are programmed on every Lord's Day evening all the way through into the new year. I went up as far as April on the We Love Stornoway website, which just simply has a calendar.

You click on it, what's happening on that date. False teaching. Teaching that mixes truth and error. Teaching that is very liable to take people astray from the gospel and from salvation, especially those who fit the categories I've mentioned already.

Well, here is John and he's facing false teaching. False teaching of a different kind, but nevertheless, the same in essence as designed to lead us away from them, away from the truth. So, here's the mistake number three. We're following the pattern here. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. Now, he said earlier in verse 8, if we say we have no sin, so we saw that that's a denial of our nature being sinful as we are as human beings that were born into this world.

We have a sinful nature. We have a sinful heart. It's from that that our actual sins proceed. And is this what he's saying now? If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar.

[11:25] In other words, if we're denying, the Bible's teaching about our actions being sins when they do not fit with the standard of God, when he transgressed the law of God, in whatever way you describe it, that we say that we have not sinned in that, well, we're making God a liar and his word is not in us.

And you can see that that very much fits in with the culture we belong to in the modern world, but also, sadly, the church has fallen into this kind of idea as well that sin is an outmoded thing, certainly the way the Bible describes it.

It's no longer relevant. We have to readjust these things. That's why you have certain readjustments in the thinking of people, in people's conversation, in what you read, in how things are described. Just for example, you have, well, so-and-so has had an affair. The Bible says, so-and-so has committed adultery.

That's what it's about. But you change the word just to fit the mood of the times, to make it appear less serious. You have a change also, a resort to redefining something like vengeance or retaliation retaliation or violence, which really is interpreted as just standing for your own rights.

[12:49] This is my right. This is, I'm just defending myself and defending my rights. I have every warrant to do that. You see, there's a whole lot of definitions, and it goes right through to things such as abortion and euthanasia.

It's just termination. It's dealing with a fetus. It's not really human life. Or if it's a human life, towards the end of its days, it's mercy killing. You see, the way things are changed just so as to get away from the seriousness of sin and the fact of sin and the fact of sins.

You and I have to face up to two things that John is telling us, and we have to face up to them seriously and honestly. That's what the gospel calls upon us to do. And the two things we have to face up to are that we are inherently sinful.

I don't like hearing that about myself. It doesn't appeal to me until God opens my eyes and shows this is actually how it is. Nobody wants to actually accept this until God persuades you, this is the truth about yourself.

But not only am I inherently sinful, the things that I do that proceed from that, that transgress the law of God, that don't meet God's standards, they are sins.

[14:02] God sees them as sins. Why does He tell us that? Why is the Bible so plain and so blunt about these things? So that we will see that God has actually made provision for us.

And that provision is not in a denial of sin. That's what John is saying. If we deny, if we say that we have no sin, or if we say that we have not sinned, then we make Him a liar.

You see, it's not changed, the situation. In fact, you could say that the outcome here, verse 10b, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Essentially, what that is, is really a proof text for the existence of God. You could easily use it as that. Because if God didn't exist, that verse would be meaningless.

If God didn't exist, how could it possibly be the case that we make Him a liar? What it means is, seeing God exists, seeing God exists as He describes Himself in His word in the Bible, then to

actually deny what He is saying to us, or to reject it, is to make Him a liar.

[15:20] If we say that we have not sinned, if these things are not sin, if they're not serious, if we reject the Bible itself as the authoritative, dependable word of God, the fact that we might claim, but I don't believe in God, doesn't really matter.

Because He does exist. And whether people will say He doesn't or He does, the fact is to reject His teaching and to say something else is to make Him a liar.

Is to say, well, then God must be guilty of untruth, and His truth is not, His word is not in us. So, we need to believe those two things about ourselves, but you see, you can only accept these things about yourself and myself.

Human beings can only accept this about themselves if there's such a thing as God, and because of a being as God, and if there's such a thing as moral absolutes.

Why do you think false teaching wants to get you away from the whole idea of a sinful nature and our actions actually being sinful? Because false teaching has no time for moral absolutes.

[16:35] The world of our day has no time for moral absolutes. Everything is relative. Everything is what you make it. It's what it is to you. It's what behavior is as you see it.

Not as the Bible tells you, because you reject the Bible. Because I reject the Bible, people will say to you. And will say, I don't believe in moral absolutes. I don't believe that there's a law there that governs every other law, that governs every human being as an absolute law.

I make up my own laws. Or I belong to a group that live by its own regulations. Not tied to the Bible. Not tied to Christianity or to the church.

But because God exists, and he exists as he's revealed in the Bible, that's his word, there is a moral absolute. A moral absolute commensurate with himself, corresponding to himself.

His law, his word, his promises, his gospel. They're the absolutes. And you know, tonight I know that for our own natural way of thinking, moral absolutes are not very popular.

[17:54] we would rather be without them when we're left to our own thinking. But when God shows you yourself, and God shows you himself and what he's like, then you're thankful for moral absolutes.

And you're thankful all you parents who are here tonight, and grandparents, that there's such a thing as a moral absolute. That there are rules, indeed, that are set out as guidelines for human life. It's when you go beyond the absolutes, when you reject the absolutes, that's when human beings get into trouble. That's where you find such awful behavior as you find in our day.

Such views of human life as you find either before birth or even towards the end of life. There's no accident whatsoever. I know I've said this countless times.

We have to repeat it. There's no accident that that's how people think. Because the Bible has been pushed aside. Moral absolutes are disappearing fast.

[18:59] And human wisdom and human prejudice and human preferences have taken its place. You see, that's what John is saying.

But then he says, my little children, beginning chapter 2, we have to move on. I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. This is the correction. That's how he introduces it.

I'm writing to you that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, you have to keep these two things together. This is the purpose of his writing so that these people, these Christians may not sin.

That they may make it their purpose not to sin. But then John realizes, I know that's to be our aim. I know that's the way that our life must be directed. But then, we know that we still sin.

That we fall into sin. That we do things that are wrong. That we speak things we shouldn't say. That we don't speak things that we ought to say. Whatever type of sin it is, we know that we fall into sin.

[20:05] It's different to being in a pattern of sin that hasn't been halted. He's talking here to his little children. That is to say, these Christians that he's writing to. That every single one of us as Christians tonight know for ourselves that we are prone to and do indeed sin day by day.

And it doesn't do anything positive to those that we witness to deny that fact. But this is John's great emphasis.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father. In other words, he's saying, there are two extremes that you have to avoid when you're thinking about sin.

One is to be too lenient. The other is to be too rigid. To be too lenient to make it less serious than the Bible makes it. To be too rigid to forget that there's God's provision against it.

And this is the provision against it. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. In other words, he's literally talking about somebody that has been called in to help us. [ 21 : 15 ] Somebody that's been called in to our side of our relationship with God. Somebody that's been called in beside us to be our legal representative, if you like, with God.

Because that's what the word advocate literally means. We have an advocate. We have somebody who will represent us. Well, somebody who will take our case, difficult though it is.

You might say, impossible though it is. Just imagine the case that needs to be presented before God has to include the fact that we are guilty sinners deserving of hell.

Who's going to take on that case? Many times in ordinary life you'll find some lawyers saying, well, this is just an impossible case, I'll take it on, but there's not much hope that it'll be successful.

Who would take on the case of a lost sinner out of sorts with God? For God himself to come to be brought into friendship with him?

[ 22 : 16 ] For them to be fully accepted with God and treated as if they had never sinned? Who's going to do that? Jesus Christ, the righteous.

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one. Every single word of that description, Jesus Christ, the righteous, is important.

We just don't have time to go into it just now, perhaps some other time if we're spared. But Jesus, that's really, essentially, his humanity. He's a human being who understands what human life is about.

Who understands what human life in this world is about. Who understands what the temptations you face in this life are about. We read that in Hebrews chapter 2. Who experiences the weakness, has experience of the weaknesses of a human life.

Who has come to face the reality of death. Who has come indeed to die. And for his remains to be buried in a sepulcher for three days.

[ 23 : 25 ] He is the very human Savior. But he is Jesus, the Christ. The anointed of God. The God provided Savior.

His own Son taking our nature. Coming to be anointed as the Christ. The anointed one. The Messiah. The expected one. This is he.

And he is the righteous. He came to deal with our sin. To take our sin. To die for our sin. To pay the price of our sin.

To pay the penalty that was due to us for our sin. The death that he died. But he is the righteous one. He is without defect himself. He never contracted any defilement in his own character.

No one else could save us but the righteous one. The one who is himself perfect. And remained perfect throughout all that he suffered and faced in his temptations.

[ 24 : 28 ] Tempted in all points like us. We are yet without sin. Who is our advocate? It's the Son of God.

But it's the Son of God in our nature. It's the Son of God Jesus. It's the Son of God Jesus Christ the righteous one. The anointed Messiah. The perfect Savior.

It doesn't matter you see how bad your sin is tonight. I'm not suggesting you shouldn't think of it as serious.

Far from it. That's not what this is teaching us. But it doesn't matter really how bad your sin is. How deep dyed the stain of sin is in your life and the fabric of your life.

It will never be beyond the capacity of this advocate to represent you successfully. you have here someone who really is himself fitted out and qualified to represent every sinner who needs representing before God.

[ 25 : 34 ] And that's you and me. Is he your advocate? Is he entering a case on your behalf? Have you come to accept him as your advocate?

Are you looking to some other supposed way of meeting with God's requirements other than the advocate presenting a case on your behalf? And then he goes on because this is tied to as well an advocate Jesus Christ the righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins.

Now that's taking us really into very deep theology and I'm not going to plunge into it tonight and not that I could go very far into it anyway but the word propitiation it's a word in Greek that could also here be translated expiation and if you've got access to the work of Prince Donald McLeod on the atonement the death of Christ you can see here that he picks up this word and says that it should really be expiation although he says propitiation is so closely tied to it that it then follows and that's

why you've got different these two words used in the translation English translations and if you don't have that book get it because it's the best work you'll get on the atonement today that sets out so clearly the death of Christ in the various facets of that death well expiation is a covering of sin so that God no longer looks upon it accusingly and propitiation is something which deals with God's wrath both of these things these elements apply to

Christ's death it's an expiation where God because of Christ's death covers sin from his sight the sin of his people and it's a propitiation because it deals with God's wrath at the same time at the same time as it deals with sin so the death of Christ deals with God's wrath it's expiation it's a covering it's propitiation it pacifies or you might say placates the wrath of God wrath that's against you and against me that's due to us and we took on ourselves and caused by our sin against him the whole area there that we haven't time to go into but this let me say this you must not think whether it's either expiation or propitiation or both together this is what the advocate this is who he is this is what he does or has done you mustn't think that as your advocate through expiation and propitiation by his death that Jesus was forcing

God the father to be merciful that he was forcing God the father to begin to love his people that he was changing an angry God into a God of love that's what many people think when they don't like this idea of God being wrathful and there's such a thing as propitiation they really say we don't need that expiation is fine leave out propitiation leave out God being wrathful because that's not really worthy of God well it is because he has said himself that his wrath is directed against sin and against the sinner too but you see this is the wonder and I just have to stop over this every time I think about it and try and just meditate for a few moments on the sheer wonder of this that it's the same God who is wrathful against us that has made provision to deal with that wrath as the [29:19] God who is love it's not changing a wrathful God into a God of love it's God who is love isn't that what we actually see throughout the letter of John that God is love that God's love sent his son into the world to be this propitiation and expiation in other words God in his love is setting up the very thing which is needed to deal with his own wrath and with his own view of sin to condemn it that is why Jesus came that is why you have to value Jesus so so much because he has been provided by the love of God the Father sent the Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins and that's why he says here not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world that doesn't mean that everybody is going to be saved what it does mean is that there is salvation in no other what it does mean is that throughout the whole world sinners will not find what you find in Jesus anywhere else he is the propitiation for the whole world in that sense is he yours have you come to make him your representative have you taken him as one who will present your case before

God the Father well let's ask what is that case what does Jesus in his advocacy what is his case every advocate has a case to take to court a set of arguments that he presents before the judge in favor of the client what is the case what is the argument what is the set of points in argument that Jesus presents as our advocate it's not that we were never guilty it's not saying to God the Father really there are mitigating circumstances for many of these people they didn't understand what they were doing or they were in such a crisis in life as they just didn't understand how they came to do what they did and to speak against you and all the rest of it nothing like that it's not in any way to mitigate the seriousness of our sin or to deny the seriousness of our sin or to try and cover it without his own death his argument is plainly and simply the value of his own death that's what he presents he is the propitiation as our advocate his case his argument in favor of his people is when God the father you might imagine is asking him if you can just picture it this way I know it's perhaps not adequate in every respect I'm trying to make it somewhat more understandable especially for the younger ones when God the father says well look at so and so and look at the way that they are lost in sin look at my wrath against them what are you going to present to me that will actually meet the need of their situation that will actually mean that they go from being under my wrath to being under my favor and Jesus says they are guilty they are guilty to the extent they deserve hell forever but I died for them I died for them and my death that I died for them will forever more speak on their behalf and be adequate to meet their requirements in your presence father that's what meets our need as sinners however deep you see that need and even though that need goes far deeper than I or you can ever describe it or understand it because remember at its heart is our sin against God however deep it is however deep

God himself sees it it's never too deep for this advocacy to be successful in respects to it because the death of Christ answers everything everything everything that God and you and I require even if

you were to be the worst sinner who ever lived this advocate can successfully take on your case and present it before God the father so that you will forever more be free of the guilt of your sin and you know what as sinners we need the best advocate we can get that's why we warn people against false teaching false teaching that would take you away especially from this Jesus and all that he is and all that he must be to you because that's our responsibility as pastors over God's flock placed by God and every good pastor doesn't just present truth to his people he always presents to them whatever errors may come across especially as we've done tonight in our own locality this is God's answer this is the gospel we are such sinners that we need the best advocate there is and there isn't anyone as good as Jesus he is the best you know what he comes at no charge you employ the best advocate in this life if you need it for whatever reason to represent you in any case it's going to cost you it's going to cost you a lot they charge a lot per hour [ 35 : 52 ] Jesus comes free absolutely free you don't pay him he doesn't need payment he's already paid the price of your sin and that's why he is the advocate par excellence if he's not you tonight I appeal to you in his name take him as the gospel offers him to you let him be your representative don't listen to any voices that tell you you don't need him or you don't need him now or you don't need him tonight if you die tonight if I die tonight and I'm not in Christ who is going to represent me before a holy God I can't do it myself I can't do it for you but Jesus can and Jesus will without money and without price if you trust in him let's pray

Lord our God and our Father in heaven we know that we cannot adequately give you thanks for all that you have done by providing us with such a savior such an advocate that took our sin and advocates and enters his own death and sufficiency as our plea Lord our God we thank you that he is now interceding for his people and presenting that same case as he will throughout eternity that his death is sufficient for them Lord make us thankful we pray that you have brought us to know these things and delivered us from the darkness of our sin we pray this for Jesus sake Amen well we're going to conclude now by singing in Psalm 118 Psalm 118 that's from the Scottish Psalter page 399 and from verse 20 singing verses 20 to 26

N This is the gate of God, by it the just shall enter in. Thee will I praise, for thou me heardst, and hast my safety been. That stone is made head cornerstone, which builders did despise. This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes. In verse 26, blessed is he in God's great name that cometh us to save.

And these words, of course, are fulfilled in Christ himself as our Savior Advocate. So verses 20 to 26 in conclusion. This is the gate of God, by it the just shall enter in.

[ 39 : 02 ] Thee will I praise, for thou me heardst, and hast my safety been.

That stone is made head cornerstone, which builders did despise.

This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes.

This is the day God made in it. Will joy triumphant thee.

Save now, I pray thee, Lord, I pray. Send now prosperity.

[ 40 : 17 ] Blessed is he in God's great name that cometh us to save.

We from the house which to the Lord pertains you, blessed have.

Amen. If you let me get to the main door, please, after the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.