

(1 John #9) the Atoning Sacrifice for Our Sins

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the role of Jesus as our advocate and the significance of His propitiation for our sins, assuring believers of God's forgiveness and love.

Duration: 27:23

Scripture: 1 John 2:1

Topics: "Atonement"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a personal relationship with God and maintaining a life free from sin. He highlights the role of Jesus as our advocate and propitiation, who intercedes for us with the Father when we fail and sin. The preacher encourages Christians to remember that even in the midst of their failures, they have an advocate with the Father who pleads their cause. He also emphasizes the need for confession and resolution of sin through the ministry of the intercessor. The sermon draws from the book of Matthew and the writings of John to support these teachings.

Transcript

The theme that has been occupying us recent Sunday mornings, we propose to continue today because it is so appropriate for the occasion that brings us together to the Lord's table. I would like to read, therefore, as the basis of our short message before the Communion itself, verses 1 and 2 in the second chapter of the My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Now, we have already been recognizing in verse 10, which begins this brief section in the epistle of John, that if any man claims that he has not sinned, then he is simply a liar and makes God to be a liar. And the truth, the word of God, simply cannot be in that person.

To claim sinlessness, says John, is simply a delusion, and it has serious consequences. Even so, though none of us can claim attainment, the apostle John makes it quite clear that he is writing, writing his epistle, writing his letter, in order that we should aim at nothing less than abstinence from sin. These things I write unto you, he says, that you sin not.

We may not have achieved, but that does not mean to say that we should not aim at achievement. On the contrary, all the machinery of the soul should be geared to this one thing, to have no truck with sin, to steer

our lives away from all semblance of evil, to the glory of our God. But the question remains, what happens when we do? Aiming at the ideal that is here set out for us, we nevertheless miss the mark, and that is, of course, the definition of sin, one definition of sin in scripture.

Missing the mark, we fail. What then? Now, here is our message this morning, and it's a very comforting one. If you, if I, if we are found together this morning among those who are ill, and in process of so doing we are found to fail and to fall, God has made provision.

If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. Now, we spoke of the advocacy of Jesus Christ last Sunday morning, and one thing remains for today, the adequacy of his advocacy with God. And this is what I want to say, this is the only thing I want to stress this morning, it's the total adequacy of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ to deal with the exigency of sin in the life of the believer, and to maintain peace and communion with God.

Now, the first thing I want you to notice in this connection is the position of our advocate. We have, says John, an advocate with the Father, a place he occupies. The moment you come to believe in God as he is revealed in his Son, in his word, and in his world, you need no further argument as to the importance of God's judgments.

Anybody that knows the judgments of God are final. He has the word of destiny in his hand. God is our judge.

To be right with God is to be right. To be wrong with God is to be eternally wrong. This is the most important issue in the life of every creature, of every man and woman everywhere, it's to be right with God because his judgments are irrevocable and final.

Now, when a Christian sins, one thing that happens is this. He becomes increasingly conscious of the fact that God is his judge. Normally, as I believe we mentioned last Lord's Day morning, normally in the Christian life, the supreme awareness of all the people of God probably is that of the fatherly care of God.

We turn to him as our father. We come to read our father's word. We avail ourselves of his fatherly provisions.

This is essentially the main approach to scripture and to God. Normally, this is what we should be aware of, the great fatherly countenance of our God welcoming us, the fatherly care of God for us and so forth. But when a Christian sins, he senses that the father has somehow become a judge.

And so often at that point, prayer ceases. The heart becomes cold and the conscience tricks and a sense of distance is created between the believer and his God. Now, this is right and this is wrong.

It is wrong in this sense. God is not simply judge when we sin. God is always judge and he's always father to his people.

And it is wrong in this sense. Though God judges our sins and will chastise his people, he never ceases to become our father at that point. Whereas in our conscience, consciousness of God, we tend to fear at any rate that he ceases to become father when he looks with anger upon our misdeeds.

Now, that is not so. He is always judge and he is always father. He is judge even when he's father and he's father even when he judges.

God is always and eternally unchangeable in his fatherhood and in his capacity as the judge of all men. But we become aware of his justice and aware of his indignation and this is the point when we become afraid. Now, listen to this word.

In the very presence of God, at the very point where you sin and become aware of your miserable failure, at that very moment and in that very place, we, says John, have an advocate. There is one who is our paraclete. He pleads for us.

He takes our side, as it were. He represents our cause and he's there right with the father. Now, that's the first thing.

That's the scene then envisaged here this morning. In the place where decisions are made, where judgments are and sentences passed, we have an advocate with the father. The next thing is our advocate in his person.

Who is he? Every word here is significant. It's not just the general truth that is portrayed here but every word, every word is meaningful. I would suggest to every Christian here this morning, you ought to remember this.

Passage. You ought to memorize this. What have we with the father? We have an advocate with the father.

Jesus Christ, the righteous. And every word, every designation is meaningful. He's Jesus.

Now, we're familiar with the significance of the name Jesus these days, especially at this season of the year. We remember it. Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall serve his people from their sins.

Matthew 1, 23. It speaks of his saviorhood, yes, but it speaks of his saviorhood as the one who has become the babe of Bethlehem, the man of Nazareth. That's the significance.

And the one who now represents us with the father then is not an angelic being who doesn't know anything about our human situation, but the one who became man in order to become our savior and who from within his experiences, man knows our temptations, knows our problems, knows everything that he needs to know about us in order to represent us there with the father. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews puts it, as you will remember very well, when he says, we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses or cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, in the King James Version, but one who in every respect has been tempted like as we are, yet without sin. The one who pleads our cause in the presence of the father is Jesus, who knows your life from the inside, who's been in our circumstances, who's walked our way, knows our problems, knows our needs.

Where high the heavenly temple stands, goes the paraphrase, the house of God not made with hands, a great high priest our nature wears. Oh, it's a very precious thought to remember that it is no angel great as the angels are that represents us there with the father, but one who is tempted in all points like as we are, Jesus, but is Jesus Christ. Now, the designation Jesus Christ does not simply mean that he was chosen and anointed of God, but it does mean that, of course, that's the basic thing.

But the emphasis is sometimes put on this, that he was anointed of God, and that thought has a very real significance here. Jesus is the Christ, the man Christ. Jesus is the anointed of God, not of men.

We didn't choose him. The father chose him. Oh, this is exceedingly precious.

God the father chose him to become the babe of Bethlehem, to become the Christ of Calvary, to become the intercessor for his people in his own immediate presence. God anointed him for that. You see, Jesus Christ is not there to plead with an unwilling God, to try and persuade an unwilling father to forgive us, not on your life.

That's a complete fabrication of the whole biblical truth, because God ordained that you should be there. God ordained him, it is said again in the epistle to the Hebrews concerning the high priests of old. No one takes this honor unto himself, but he is called by God just as Aaron was, so also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him, that is Bible father.

However, he is Jesus Christ just. Our advocates' moral character is consistent with the nature of God, because God is said to be just in chapter 1 and verse 9, and we know that the same truth, of course, emerges in many other places. And he is therefore concerned for what God requires of his people.

Jesus the Christ is righteous. He's not going to plead that the case against us should be minimized or forgotten. He's righteous.

He's our advocate, but he's a righteous advocate. He's there to trust the just one on the almighty, perish the righteous one. We may sum up what we have noted thus far.

The Christ of old, by the place he occupies, no one else has ever ascended to that high place. And the Christ, he was appointed by the father to stand there, and he is the righteous one. Nothing can go wrong.

No unrighteousness will emerge because he, the righteous one, is there with the righteous father to secure righteous judgment. You'll never be wronged at the throne of God. If God sends you to hell, it will be unrighteousness.

If God receives you to heaven, it will not be without righteousness. But now, it all comes to this focal point. We turn from the place he occupies and the person he is to the propitiation he has made and is.

And he there is the propitiation for our sins. And not for ours only, of course, but for the sins of the whole world. Now, what's the meaning of this? Pardon me for a moment.

I have to say a word about this because I think it's important. You can't appreciate the wonder of this if you're equivocating about its meaning. In some of your translations, you will find not the word propitiation, but another word, and very often the word expiation.

Now, that word expiation does not mean propitiation. The difference is this. When we use the word, or rather when the Bible uses the word propitiation, it envisages a situation where God has been dishonored, displeased, and is righteously indignant.

In other words, God's anger, God's wrath against sin has been aroused. Now, when the word propitiation is used then, it refers to that which appeases the anger of God so that he ceases to be angry, righteously indignant. Now, the word expiation has no reference to anger.

It is true insofar as it goes because what it means is this. Sin has such an effect upon us that it needs to be purged away. It needs to be purged.

It needs to be forgiven. We need to be conserved. We need to be purified and cleansed on account of it.

But you see, there's a world of difference, and this is the division, the theological division underlying the usage of the two words. It's not a matter of scholarship. It's a matter of understanding the Bible.

It's a matter of interpretation. Those who use the word propitiation believe that the word implies that God is angry with sin at all times, and God judges sin and sinners just as he judged people in Romans chapter 1 and gave them up to this and gave them up to that. So it will be that God in his judgment is giving up nations and giving up individuals to their own ways, and that's a token of his wrath, as Paul says, the wrath of God revealed from heaven against unrighteousness and ungodliness.

The word propitiation then has that in mind, that there are those who don't like the thought of the anger of God. One of our British theologians was probably at the head in leading against this, namely Dr. C. H. Dodd of Cambridge, and they have, of course, gone out of their way to say that the concept of anger is so often found in pagan religions, and they say that this is a pagan streak that is brought into Christianity. Well now, you cannot thus say in the light of the Bible, because in the Old Testament and in the New, from the lips of prophets and apostles and of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, we find that God is angry.

Now Lord Jesus, in the end of Matthew chapter 25, has no hesitation in saying about these shall go into outer darkness. This is because God is angry with the evil of men. Now what then is the message? What is the message of all this? He is the propitiation.

The message is this. When a Christian fails, fails to maintain the ideal of abstinence from sin and falls and becomes aware of the judgment and perhaps of the displeasure and of the anger of God towards him, he need not forget that God is his Father, and he certainly need not lose communion with God as his Father, provided he accepts the ministry of the intercessor at God's right hand, confesses his sin, and gets it resolved by the advocate. We have an advocate with the Father, and the advocate is the propitiation for our sins.

Now this is the message. When Jesus Christ died, he did not simply provide that which was necessary to bring forgiveness of sins and cleansing from unrighteousness. John has dealt with that.

But when Jesus Christ died, he so bore the penalty of the sins of his people that God can no longer be angry with a sinner whose sin is covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. All this is present. God has no argument when your sin is covered by the blood of his Son.

And he is the propitiation. He is the one who in his human body died upon the cross. Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah, what a Savior. He did that now in heaven. He is the propitiation.

You notice the emphasis not upon the fact that he made propitiation. No, no. He is the propitiation.

He doesn't need to plead anymore. His presence is the plea. He is, shall I refer to the Apocalypse, the book of the Revelation? He is in the words of Revelation, he is the lamb in the midst of the throne.

The lamb in the midst of the throne. What does that mean? Calvary and its merits are always there, embodied in the person of our high priest. And when our sins come up against us, and we fall and we fail, the one question is this.

Is Jesus Christ my Savior? Is he my advocate with the Father? Does he own me? Do I put my arms of faith around him so that he puts his arms of concern around me? Does he own me? Does he plead for me? If he does, no accusation of Satan, no trouble within my own conscience, no fear, no dread in my shit, need ever harass me, because his advocacy is infallible. He is the propitiation. But it was God who set him forth as such.

Here John tells us God has received him as such. And so he is eternally there, so that all the sins of time and of all men who own him may be dealt with, and forgiven, and forgotten. And the righteous anger of God appeased, and we know him in the sweetness of his Father.

Now there's one crucial thing to which I can refer now before we turn to the next part of our service. John says we have him. We have an advocate.

Someone was kind enough to tell me at the end of the service last Sunday morning of a blessing he had. I believe it was in Germany. Listening to someone in German repeating this, this, this, these words, we have an advocate.

We have an advocate. We have him. He's ours.

Is Jesus yours today? My friend, is Jesus Christ yours? Is the Babe of Bethlehem within your grasp? Have you put your faith around him? Is he yours now? Did he die for you, my Savior on the cross? Then I want to tell you, he's yours as an advocate in the presence of God, and he is the propitiation. Five bleeding wounds he bears, received on Calvary. Forgive him, O forgive thy cry, nor let the ransomed sinner die.

His presence is the plea. If he's not yours, I bid you make him yours this morning. If he is yours, I bid you in his name.

Look as the prophet Micah did of old into the face of your enemies, whoever they be, and say, Rejoice not over me, O my enemy. When I fall, I shall rise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me.

My Savior is alive forevermore, and he intercedes for me. I can need nothing more. There is nothing greater.

If he pleads for me, I can need nothing beyond his capacity to kill. As we come to his table then, and may the Lord give us a deep sense of gratitude. Oh, how full of thanksgiving we should be today.

Oh, how full of praise we should be. What a worshipping people we should be. If we have tasted and seen and known the goodness and the grace of God in these things, only begun to do so, then our voices should soar with the angelic host and above them, with all the saints of the ages unto him who loved us, and has loosed us, washed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. So let it be in our hearts to his glory. Just a moment's prayer.

Father, pacify every troubled conscience by giving penitence and the grace to plead the merits of the name of Christ and the virtues of his blood. Pacify every fear in every heart. No, let us go dancing out into the world, reminding ourselves that there in thy holy presence we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

And he is, till the very end of time, the propitiation for our sin. We ask it in his name.

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