

**~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:**

"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin [even once]. And if any man sin [once], we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1, R. V.).

This aged Apostle, nearly one hundred years old, writes to younger Christians, many of them no doubt his own converts, with tender benignant grace, addressing them as, "My little children." In the first chapter he has told them about a mighty Savior and His full salvation from sin, in contrast with the deadly heresy of salvation in sin. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all . . . If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:5, 7, 9). This is the blessed salvation that God has prepared for all men, which will enable us to live without sin.

The companion verses (6, 8, 10) were written against the Gnostics, who were indulging in orgies of vice, yet professing to be Christians. John says that all who make such professions, yet live so wickedly are liars, and God's Word is not in them. Then follows appropriately the opening of the next chapter.

1. "THESE THINGS I WRITE UNTO YOU THAT YE MAY NOT SIN [EVEN ONCE]." I insert the words "even once" in brackets because the verb is in the aorist tense and denotes a single act. This is admitted by the most scholarly modern commentators. Says Bishop Wescott: "The thought is of the single act, not of the state. The tense is decisive against the idea that the Apostle was simply warning his disciples not to draw encouragement for license from the doctrine of forgiveness. His aim is to produce the completeness of the Christ-like life." Whedon: "The main aim of the epistle is to show the incompatibility of sinning as an actual practice, or sin as a permanent State, with the divine fellowship or communion." So Alfred writes: "That ye may not sin at all; implying the absence not only of the habit, but of any single act of sin." So Dr. Steele: "In aiming to produce complete and constant victory over sin, he was not endeavoring to get forth an abnormal character. An unsinning Christian was in his estimation neither an impossibility nor an anomaly. He plainly asserts that sinlessness is the aim of his teaching. We call attention to the aorist tense, "May not sin, that ye may not commit sin -- a single sin." Lange says: "Sinning applies here to particular sins, not to small faults and inadvertences which would properly be no sin."

The venerable Apostle was not teaching the world the false doctrine that sin was a necessity. He himself had been pardoned, and then had been sanctified in the Pentecostal chamber. He had experienced what he wrote about in verses seven and nine of the previous chapter. And the opening of this second chapter implies that he was not conscious of any single sin, much less of a state of sin. He wanted his converts to live a holy life, as he was living, without sinning even once.

"This," says Dr. Clarke, "is the language of the whole Scripture; of every dispensation, ordinance, institution, doctrine and word of God. Sin not. Do not run into sin; live not so as to promote your own misery; be happy, for it is the will of God that you should be so; therefore He wills that you should be holy; holiness and happiness are inseparable; sin and misery are equally so."

Let this then be the aim of every child of God to sin not. Let it be your fixed purpose not merely to sin as little as you can, but not to sin at all. And by the sanctifying grace of God, let this aim be realized. We are not to anticipate failure but success. By God's cleansing and helping grace, we may find holiness to be not a distant and impossible ideal, but a blessed, joyous experience.

We should not sin out of respect and reverence for God; for it has made Him endless sorrow and trouble, and He hates it with an infinite and eternal hatred. It is opposed to His nature, His perfections and His supremacy. If it should prevail it would involve His universe in ruin.

Again we should not sin for Jesus' sake. Sin cost Him descent from eternal enthronement, the humiliation of His earthly lot, the contradiction and abuse of vile sinners, the anguish of Gethsemane, the scourging of the Judgment Hall and the dying agonies of Calvary. He bore them all for us that we might escape the sorrows of a lost eternity. How wickedly ungrateful it would be to grieve such holy love by wanton sin!

Still further, we should not sin because it grieves the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sent to take Jesus' place and to be ever present to counsel, guide and help us. He hates sin just as Jesus does. And when we willfully sin it

insults and grieves Him, and drives Him from our hearts.

Again we should not sin for our own sakes. Sin necessarily and inevitably makes woe. It avenges itself, inflicts its own penalty, strikes its fangs of retribution into the soul that conceives it, and kindles the fires of its own eternal burnings. And even if a Christian should sin and afterwards repent and be forgiven, he has suffered an eternal loss that never can be made good. An act of obedience has been subtracted from his record for which he can get no reward; an act of sin has taken place whose evil influence will be felt through eternal ages. Nobody but God can measure the evil influence and eternal disaster of one sin. No wonder the holy Apostle entreated his converts not to sin even once.

**II. BUT STILL THE BEST OF CHRISTIANS MAY SIN.** "And if any man sin [once]." The tense is still aorist, and denotes a single act. Wescott: "Here again the thought is of a single act, regarded as past, into which the believer may be carried against the true tone of his life, as contrasted with the habitual state." Steele says: "The possibility of a sinless Christian life is still implied." In this wicked world, where the moral atmosphere is so hostile to goodness, and sin is so abundant on every hand, assaulting every sense of our being perpetually, by carelessness, by a little unwatchfulness or unsteadiness of faith and lack of prayer, the saintliest Christian may trip and fall. He need not; for the keeping grace is sufficient. "Christ is able to guard you from stumbling" (Jude 24, R. V.). But He will not do it without our cheerful consent and helpful co-operation.

And if through ignorance, inexperience, the violence of temptation, unwatchfulness, suddenness, you have fallen into one sin, swerving a moment from the Christian's orbit in which you usually revolve about your center -- Christ, and you have thus grieved the Spirit, do not continue a moment longer in sin. Do not let days and weeks and, perchance, months pass by while you lie down in discouragement, and let Satan triumph over you. Do not despair of being again restored to the favor of God. Your case is indeed sad, but not hopeless. You may come back at once into the sunlight of God's reconciled face. For

**III. WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.** The word here means an attorney, or responsible speaker for us in court. The term implies that the man is now a culprit on trial before the Father for his sin, and Christ is the Lawyer to plead for him. The image is borrowed from Roman law; no such officer as an Advocate being known to the Old Testament. When brought under the Romans, the Jews and other conquered peoples were obliged to engage Roman lawyers to plead their cases, as Tertullian in Acts 24:1.

A wonderful Advocate Jesus is! (1). He is Jesus Christ the Righteous.

"Jesus," because "He saves his people from their sins." "Christ," which means the Divine, Anointed One! "The Righteous One," filled with the holiness of heaven, who will not try to save anyone in any way incompatible with perfect holiness. He will not tolerate evil, or smile upon or minimize guilt. If He secures the pardon of His client it must be in a way consistent with the safety of the government and the honor of God.

(2) The Righteous One is a successful Advocate because He enjoys the perfect confidence of the Judge. The Father knows that He will make no unworthy plea, nor ask a favor of the Court that cannot be safely granted. The Father knows that however much his Beloved Son loves the trusting sinner, He loves still more the honor of His Father, and the holiness of the law, and the safety of the divine government. This Righteous Advocate will not connive at, or condone, or in anyway conceal the sinner's guilt. There is no other such Advocate. As He appears for us at God's bar of judgment, He admits the sin; He approves of the law: He acknowledges the justice of the penalty, and yet, Oh blessed fact! He procures for all who believe, and make Him their Advocate, a full pardon. And how? Because He pleads not our merits, but His own. For

**IV. "HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS; AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY, BUT ALSO FOR THE WHOLE WORLD."** The propitiation is the Atoning Sacrifice appointed by God Himself for the sins of the world. "Jesus' vicarious sufferings were made a provisory substitute for penalty in the interest of the divine government in behalf of all who will forsake sin, and accept Jesus as their atoning Savior."

What a plea it enables our Advocate to make! "Remember, O Father, what I suffered that guilty sinners might be offered pardon! Remember the bloody sweat of Gethsemane! Remember the scourging and the crown of thorns! Remember the blood I shed that this repentant, believing disciple might be forgiven this sin! Remember the promise thou didst make that 'Whosoever believeth in me shall not perish, but have everlasting life!'"

Listen! The Father speaks: "Son, I remember it all." "Recording Angel, write, 'This sin is blotted out! this repentant, believing child of grace is forgiven and restored once more to the divine favor .

**Any Man's Lawyer**

**O child of God, "These things I write unto you that ye sin not even once;" but should you sin once, haste in repentant faith to the Righteous Advocate, apply to His blood that "cleanseth from all sin." Then go forth in the strength of Him "who is able to save to the uttermost," and "keep you from stumbling," and "sin no more."**

**O unrepentant, unbelieving sinner, persistently rejecting Christ, what will you do at the bar of God without this Advocate?**