

September 20, 2015 by Steve Brandon



Dealing With Sin

1 John 2:1-2

1. Don't Sin (verse 1a).
2. Deal with Your Sin (verse 1b).
3. God Dealt with Your Sin (verse 2).

This past week I had an opportunity to speak with a man who was running from his sin. He had committed some horrific sins in his life, and was facing the consequences. Because of his sin, he had nowhere to go. He had worn out his welcome at home. He had no money. He couldn't call anybody, as his phone was out of minutes.

Now, as is often the case in such circumstances, he had options. He simply didn't want the options presented to him. He had opportunities. But, he turned them all down. He wanted things his way on his terms. And when I encountered him, he seemingly didn't have anywhere else to turn.

Rather than owning up to his sins, he was running from them. Rather than taking blame himself, he placed much blame upon other people and took very little responsibility for actions. As a result, the guy was hitting rock bottom.

In talking with him, I told him that he was in a good place. Because, he had nowhere else to turn, but to God, himself. And so I shared the gospel with him. I shared the hope of forgiveness that is found in Jesus Christ. But, it seems as if it all fell upon deaf ears. And the gospel became to him nothing other than yet another option that he wanted no part of.

Now, I let him use my phone to find some help from some sympathetic family members that he hadn't spoken to in over a year. They came and picked him up to take care of him. Where he is today, I have no idea. My best guess is that he is out of state and living with his grandmother. His fundamental problem was this: he was running from his sin. And he was facing the consequences of doing so.

Now, the reality is that there are many in our country who are doing the same thing. Oh, they may have enough going for them that they don't find themselves homeless and penniless. But, they are still running from their sin. My message this morning is entitled, "Dealing with Sin." That's because our text this morning shows us how to deal with our sin.

I invite you to open your Bibles to 1 John, and chapter 2. We are going to look at the first two verses of this chapter. And as I read them, I want for you to ask yourself the question, "What do these verses teach us about dealing with our sin?"

1 John 2:1-2

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.

Here's my first point, ...

1. Don't Sin (verse 1a).

This is clearly the message of the first half of verse 1.

1 John 2:1

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

This is one of several similar statements that John makes about his purpose in writing. We have already seen one of them, in verse 4.

1 John 1:4

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

John is writing for his joy. John is writing for our joy. Our greatest joy will come when we walk with God!

Though sin may be attractive at the moment, it fails to bring joy in the end. Sin is the caramel-covered poison apple. Oh, it looks so good. It's sweet on the outside. It's sweet going down. But, it leads to death. John's heart and desire is that we would heed the words of his little letter, and walk in the path of righteousness and know the joy that it brings.

Another purpose statement comes in chapter 2 and verse 26, ...

1 John 2:26

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

In John's day there were false teachers, seeking to pull them away from the faith. John was writing to set things straight, so that they wouldn't be deceived. And it's no different for us today. The airwaves and internet are flooded with those trying to pull you away from the faith. These can be from secular voices. Or, these can be from professing Christian voices. Listen, just because someone names the name of Christ doesn't mean that their words are helpful.

Remember, Jesus spoke of the wolf in sheep's clothing -- the one who on the outside looks like he's OK, when, in fact, he is trying to lead you astray. John's words were helpful for those in the first century. John's words are helpful for us today.

Another statement regarding John's purpose in writing comes at the end of the book.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

Fundamentally, this is the biggest purpose statement of the entire book. It is the grand reason why John wrote: that his readers would have the full assurance that they knew Christ and have eternal life.

A few weeks ago, we considered this verse in light of the entire book of 1 John. We said that we will have assurance when we pass the obedience test. That is, walking rightly before the Lord. We said that we will have assurance when we pass the love test. That is, loving the brothers. We said that we will have assurance when we pass the doctrinal test. That is, believing in the true Jesus who has the power to save. It was pointed out to me in our small group that you can call this the "OLD test." OLD: Obedience, Love, Doctrine.

And when we pass these tests, we will have assurance that we have eternal life. And the purpose that we are looking at today (in chapter 2, verse 1), fits right into the grand purpose of the book (i.e. 5:13). Because, the greatest path to assurance is a path of righteousness. See, when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, he will transform you. And you will live differently.

But, if you haven't experienced any transformation in your life, then you will have little assurance that you are indeed a believer. Because, a sinful life is an indication of the devil's work. Look over at chapter 3 and verse 8.

1 John 3:8

whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

See, if God has transformed you, then you will no longer live in the ways of the world. Indeed, that's what John makes abundantly clear in verse 9.

1 John 3:9

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

See, if God's word is in you and you are trusting in Christ, and he is changing you, and you are experiencing a Godward life, then you have every reason to believe that you have eternal life. But if not, then you have every reason to doubt that you have eternal life.

This isn't too difficult. This isn't rocket science. It should be evident to all. It should be evident to our hearts. Look at what John says in chapter 3 and verse 10.

1 John 3:10

By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

We see here the obedience test. We see here the love test. And whoever does not obey, and whoever does not love, is not a child of God. I love the way that the New American Standard translation puts it.

1 John 3:10 (NASB)

By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious ...

Such things ought to be obvious to people. Sadly, it's not.

I was talking with someone recently. He was talking about a guy he knows. And he said to me, "I'm not sure whether he has ever made the commitment to follow Jesus or not." And having some knowledge about the individual, I said, "Yes you do. Based upon what 1 John says.

What does his life look like? Does he live a righteous life? Does he obey God? Does he love God's people? Is he involved in a church or fellowship anywhere?" And the answer came back, "No." And I said, "Well then, it's pretty clear that he doesn't know Jesus and he doesn't have eternal life."

One of my aims of preaching through 1 John is that each of us at church would know for sure, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we have eternal life. But, another of my aims is that we would also be discerning enough to know who doesn't have eternal life. Because, it matters on how we deal with them. Do we deal with them as a fellow believer in Christ? Do we deal with them as one outside the faith who needs to come to faith.

One of the biggest changes in my life came when I was taught that not everyone who says that they are a Christian actually is a Christian. See, I had been taught that if you have believed in Jesus, you were a Christian. And you would be forgiven of your sins on the final day. Which is true, but it's only a half truth. Because, there are many who say that they are a Christian, but who are far from God. And they will not be forgiven.

Understanding such things really helped me to know how to deal with other people, especially those who professed faith in Christ, but were not following after God. Such people need to hear, gently and with love, that they are lost. And that's the heart behind, the command here in verse 1.

1 John 2:1

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

Did you notice how tenderly and compassionately John addressed his readers? He called them, "Little children." This is an expression of endearment. It's a expression of compassion and kindness. John cares for his readers like he cares for his own children. And I would encourage you to have similar feeling toward those you have opportunity to speak with about the gospel.

And there are many people today who are deceived regarding these things. And they need to hear that they are in trouble. Even this man I spoke to you about at the beginning of my message. When I shared the gospel with him, he said to me, "God will forgive me of my sins." He was clearly deceived in his thinking. And so, as lovingly and as graciously as possible, I pointed out some things in his life that would lead to another conclusion.

Anyway, verse 1 is a call for obedience. Particularly, it is obedience to the commands of God and obedience to the heart of God. Or, as I have said, Don't Sin (verse 1a).

Now, in some regards, this is the message of the entire Bible. God has given us plenty of commands to obey. He has given us plenty of direction in our life. And John is encouraging us to be obedient to all of the commands of Scripture. In fact, look at how extensive the call here is.

1 John 2:1

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

That is, in every way, we are called to be fully obedient to the commands of God. This is similar to the call of the Old Testament (which Jesus repeated in the New Testament) to "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37). Now, of course, we know that this is impossible. In fact, those who claim that they have kept such a command are called liars.

1 John 1:8

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

So, what do I do when I actually do sin? Well, one thing you don't do is ignore your sin. Rather, ...

2. Deal with Your Sin (verse 1b).

This is my second point. Deal with Your Sin (verse 1b). This comes in the second half of verse 2.

1 John 2:1

... But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Now, the surprise here in this verse is the little word, "if." "John, what do you mean, 'if'? You just said (in 1:8 and 1:10) that we have sinned and will sin. Why do you say, 'if anyone does sin'? Shouldn't you say, 'when anyone does sin'? 'When!' not 'If!'"

Now, it's not that John thinks that we can live in sinless perfection. That's the point of verses 8 and 10. But, I do think that John is raising the bar. Too often people can have a defeatist mentality when it comes to their sin. "Oh, we are all sinners. God knows and understands. He will forgive me. I shouldn't much worry about it."

Oh, we should worry about our sin. Oh, we should strive against our sin. In chapter 3 and verse 6, John is going to point out the necessity of righteous living.

1 John 3:6

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning;

The life of a believer in Christ is a life of ever-increasing love for God and ever-increasing following after the ways of God. But, lest you become discouraged about your sin along the way, John gives us the remedy. He says, ...

1 John 2:1

... But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

That is, we have someone who will "come along side of us" when we deal with the judge. This word, "advocate" is an interested word. It is the word, "paraclete." Which comes from the verb, "parakaleo." Literally, it means "to call along side." "Para" means "beside," as in "parallel lines." "Kaleo" means "to call," which you can hear in the word, "call."

The best way to understand this word is to think of a track coach, watching his athlete run the mile, four times around the track. He strategically stations himself near the last bend, so that he can gage his time and the shape of the race, and come along side of him to encourage him on. And the counsel that comes is dependent upon how his runner is doing.

If, after the first lap, his time was a bit slow. His "calling along side," comes in the form of an exhortation. "C'mon. You are slow! You have to do better! Pick up the pace. Let's go! Let's go! Let's go!"

If, after the second lap, he's in the hunt, but clearly hurting, his coach's words can come in the form of encouragement. "Stay with the pack! C'mon! You can do it. It's not out of your reach. Give it what you've got! Keep going!"

If, after the third lap, he has fallen way behind with no chance of winning, his coach's words might come in the form of comfort. "Stay with it. Just finish strong. You did well. Nice effort." And in this context, the word describes the role of Jesus "coming along side of us" in dealing with our sin (verse 1a) before the Father.

1 John 2:1

... But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Notice how the role of the "paraclete" in this verse isn't so much directed toward us, as it is directed toward God, who we offended in our sin. God is the judge, if you will. Jesus is our defense attorney. "Advocate" is a great word, used in most major translations. Jesus is the one in the courtroom, pleading your cause on your behalf.

And when it comes to the law, we often hear the Miranda Rights, "You have the right to remain silent. If you give up the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you desire an attorney and cannot afford one, an attorney will be obtained for you before police questioning."

And when coming before the judge in the courtroom, it is wise to lean upon the counsel of your lawyer, who has your best interests in mind. See, your lawyer has "Been there. Done that." He has been in the courtroom hundreds of times before. He has a feeling for how things will turn out for you. He has a feeling for this judge and what will be best for you.

So, he will counsel you if it is good to speak or not. He will counsel you on what to say if you do speak. He will often speak on your behalf.

And when it comes to the divine courtroom, we have an attorney who has "Been there. Done that." Jesus has appeared in the courtroom many times before his Father. He has a feeling for how things will turn out for you. He knows the Father very well. He has a feeling for what will be best for you. He will speak on your behalf.

Chapter 1 and verse 9 tells us how he will counsel us to speak. We should be confessing our sins. Jesus knows that it doesn't bode well to justify our sins. It doesn't bode well to try to explain them away. It does best when we admit our guilt before God.

And when we do, Jesus will take it from there. And this is what he will argue before the Father. "Father, I know that my client is guilty. There is no doubt about it. He has confessed his sin. You heard his testimony. But, you do remember what I did for guilty sinners. Right? I died in their place. I died as a substitutionary sacrifice for his sins. Therefore, according to the statute: his sin has already been punished. You cannot punish him, because you already punished me for that sin. You must let him go free. You must forgive him. I rest my case."

And the result that we know is forgiveness, as promised in verse 9. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

How true is the hymn, ...

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea:

A great High Priest, whose name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart;
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin.

Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there, the Risen Lamb
My perfect, spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I am,
The King of glory and of grace!

One with Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Savior and my God
With Christ, my Savior and my God

Did you notice in verse 1 how Jesus is identified? He is identified in verse 1 as "the righteous." He is the righteous one in the courtroom with the Father. And he can plead for us, because he is the perfect high-priest. This brings us back to the book of Leviticus. Remember the Day of Atonement? The high priest would enter into the holy of holies twice on that day. The first time was to offer the sacrifice for his own sins. The second time was to offer the sacrifice for the sins of the people.

He couldn't offer the sacrifice for the sins of others until he was first pure, himself. That's who Jesus is. He is the perfect high-priest. Which leads perfectly into our last point this morning.

In "Dealing with Sin," first of all, Don't Sin (verse 1a). Second, Deal with Your Sin (verse 1b). Confess your sins and go to your advocate. Finally, realize that ...

3. God Dealt with Your Sin (verse 2).

This is found in verse 2.

1 John 2:2
He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The great word in this verse is the word, "propitiation." I remember one pastor saying that learning the meaning of this word was worth his entire seminary education. It's that rich. So, enjoy something more valuable than a seminary education!

The NIV translates this the term, "atoning sacrifice." And that is OK. But it is more like saying "good" in response to the question, "How was your dinner?" You could say something like, "scrumptious," or "flavorful," or "delectable." That is the difference between the term "atoning sacrifice" and "propitiation."

The term "propitiation" appears here in 1 John. And it also appears in 4:10, ...

1 John 4:10
In this is love, not that we have loved God that that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

When you think of this word, another word should come to mind. It is the word, "wrath." Children, you can think of this word as "anger." Propitiation means that you have calmed the anger of another person.

The best way to understand this is by way of an illustration. Suppose that you are in the selling business. I don't know, selling refrigerators, going door to door to do so (as if anybody really does this). And so, you drive your car through neighborhoods, knocking on doors, trying to sell your product, telling of the great things about your refrigerator that you want to sell them. And most often, people tell you "no," because they

aren't too excited about you coming there in the first place.

Now,, imagine yourself, driving up the driveway of one house, when you have an accident. You accidentally hit the accelerator, rather than the brake, and you ram into their garage. The garage door is all bent up and mangled, beyond repair.

Can you imagine the anger of the home-owner? The headaches of the insurance. The bother of going without a garage door. He is angry with you. His wrath is toward you. Especially, because he would have no interest in your product anyway.

But, you say this. "I'm sorry for destroying your garage door. But, I'm going to make it right. Not only am I going to replace your garage door. But, I'm also going to make any sort of home-improvements that you want on your home, at my expense."

And the owner replies, "Funny thing that you should say that. My wife and I were thinking about putting an addition on the home out back. We got a quote from the contractor; it comes into \$100,000."

And you say, "I'll pay for the garage door. And I'll throw in an extra \$100,000 to build your addition out back."

A couple months later, when all is said and done, the garage door is repaired and the addition is built. No longer is the owner upset with you. Rather, he is very happy with you. He even purchases a new refrigerator from you.

This is propitiation. Satisfying wrath. Turning anger into peace. And even, turning anger into joy.

This is propitiation. This is what Jesus did. This is the heart of the gospel. The Father is no longer angry, as He looks upon Jesus and pardons us. He is satisfied.

Another helpful word is "substitution." 1 John 3:16 says, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." Jesus laid down his life "for us," that is, "in our place" or "instead of us." Jesus is "the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus, who "knew no sin became sin" for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was our substitute. He "laid down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 14).

This brings us to the end of verse 2: "...for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Many have taken this to imply that Jesus was the propitiation for every individual. But, this cannot be the case, because if Jesus is indeed the propitiation for the sins of everyone, then nobody can be rightly condemned to hell, because (according to this argument) Jesus propitiated their sins. Their sin is no longer an offense between them and God. God is no longer angry with them.

But this contradicts what John has been saying in this book. He says that there are sons of the devil (1 John 3:8). He says that there are those who have gone out from us (1 John 2:19). He says that there are those who profess to know God, but really don't (1 John 2:4). Instead, they walk in the darkness (1 John 2:9, 11). God's love doesn't abide in some people (1 John 3:17) and they have every reason to fear the judgment (1 John 4:18).

This cannot be every individual who ever lived. It is not "all people," rather, John is referring to those beyond just the Jews, he speaks of "people all over the world." Christ is the propitiation for our sins and the sins of people all over the world, even to Rockford this morning.

So, don't sin. Deal with your sin by going to Jesus. Trust that God has dealt with your sin at the cross of Christ.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 20, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
