

CHAPTER TWO

2:1-2. Believers Should Not Commit Sin

In I John 1:5 - 2:2 the subject of an individual's relation to sin is discussed. John has already shown that God is characterized by light rather than by darkness and has no sin (1:5); whereas, those who falsely claim to have fellowship with God, while living in darkness, lie and do not practice the truth (1:6). A correction for this false claim has been made in 1:7: those who walk in the light have fellowship with God the Father and with each other and are being continuously cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ (1:7). Those who falsely claim to have no sin nature deceive themselves (1:8), but God is faithful and righteous to forgive the sins of those who acknowledge them and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness (1:9). By contrast those who falsely claim not to have sinned make God a liar, and His word is not in them (1:10). In 2:1-2 John shows that righteous Jesus Christ, Who satisfied the wrath of God which was directed against the sins of the world, is the very One Who pleads on behalf of believers before God the Father. In the conditional statements beginning in verse 6, John alternates between the false statements some were making and the truth. I John 1:6, 1:8, and 1:10 deal with false claims being made by unbelievers; whereas, 1:7, 1:9, and 2:1-2 contradict these false claims. I John 2:1-2 is consistent with God's nature, which is characterized by light rather than by darkness, and contradicts the claims of those who say they have fellowship with God while living in darkness. It is also consistent with conducting one's life in the light as God is in the light, with having fellowship with God and with other believers, and with having continual cleansing from defilement by the blood of Christ. John desires that his readers live holy lives. He does not want them to take sin lightly, especially in view of the facts that they still have a sin nature and that when believers confess their sins, God will forgive their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness. John does not want them to take the attitude that they can commit sin anytime they wish and then flippantly confess their sins, receive forgiveness, and immediately return to commit more sins. He wants them to realize that they should not be committing sin at all. However, he recognizes that believers, including himself, will still commit sin and that provision has been made for their forgiveness. He does not want sin to be the norm in their lives; instead, he wants them to live lives characterized by holy and righteous living. The fact that they have been granted the privilege of confessing their sins and of receiving cleansing and forgiveness for them does not grant them a license to commit sin habitually.

(1) 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:
(2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

2:1

In verse 1 John urges his readers not to sin; but if they do commit sin, Jesus Christ, the righteous One, will plead their case with God the Father. **My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin,**

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we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. In verse 1 John addresses his readers as **my little children**. The term translated *little children* is a diminutive of the word translated *child*. John is quite old at the time he is writing this epistle; so all of his readers are regarded by him as his little children. The use of *little children* shows John's affection for his readers. *The* does not appear in the Greek text before *little children* in order to emphasize their quality as *little children*. **These things** is an expression of what John is writing throughout this epistle so that what is stated in verse 1 is another statement of John's purpose in writing I John. **Write I**, where **I** is John and where **write** indicates action presently going on, is *I am writing*. **Unto you** is *to you*, where **you** refers to the readers of this epistle and functions as the indirect object of *write*. **That ye sin not** indicates the reason John is writing these things to his readers. **That** introduces a purpose clause and is understood in the sense of *in order that* or *for the purpose that*. **Ye** is *you (plural)* and refers to the readers of I John. **Sin** is the term which means to *miss the mark* or *do wrong*, and its tense indicates action which is contemplated as a single whole. Hence, when combined with the negative, it means *in order that you not ever sin* or *in order that you never sin*. **And** is used to indicate an additional idea, or it may be used to introduce a contrast and understood in the sense of *but*. There follows a condition about which nothing regarding its truthfulness is assumed. The condition is **if any man sin**. As far as the Greek text is concerned, it may be true; or it may not be true. **Any man** is the translation of a pronoun which means *any, anyone, anybody, someone, or somebody*. It is not limited to adult males. **Sin** means *commit sin, do wrong, or miss the mark*. Its tense contemplates action as a single whole. Hence, it means *if any one ever sins* or *if anyone ever commits a sin*. Because all people have old sin natures, there is no question about whether this is going to happen even though the Greek text makes no assumption regarding the reality of this

condition. It may or may not occur. The conclusion of the conditional statement is, **We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** **We** speaks of *believers* and includes John himself. Sometimes it is instructive to note what John did not write. He did not write, *You (plural) have an advocate*; nor did he write, *He has an advocate*; instead, he includes himself, thereby, acknowledging his own need of the advocacy of Jesus Christ. **Have** is descriptive of something that is continuous and ongoing. It is a timeless truth, something which is always true under all circumstances. **An advocate** is *a helper* or *an intercessor*. It means one who appears on behalf of another such as *a mediator, an intercessor, or a helper*. In this verse it is used in the sense of *a lawyer* or *an attorney*, particularly *a defense attorney* or *a counsel for the defense*. He is an advocate and a helper for believers. As the believer's attorney, Jesus Christ pleads before God the Father the case of the believer who has committed sin. One is reminded of Romans 8:34,

(34) Who is he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The does not appear before *advocate* in the Greek text, which implies that His quality as *advocate* is being emphasized. *Advocate* is placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text, which reads literally, *(An) advocate we have with the Father*. **With the Father** implies *with God the Father*. This advocate is named **Jesus Christ**. He is then described as **the righteous**, which is simply *righteous*. *The* does not appear before *righteous* in the Greek text, which reads literally, *(An) advocate we have with the Father, Jesus Christ, (a) righteous (one), (an) advocate we have with the Father, Jesus Christ (Who is) righteous, or (an) advocate we have with the Father, righteous Jesus Christ*. The implication of this verse is that believers should not be living lives characterized by sin. However, when believers

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commit occasional sin, Jesus Christ, God's righteous Son, will plead their case before God the Father. Those who claim to be believers who commit habitual sin are not yet saved. The fact that Jesus Christ is the believers' advocate with God the Father should not be understood as indicating that He has to talk God the Father into forgiving believers' sins. It should be remembered that God the Father is the One Who sent Christ to be the propitiation for believers' sins in the first place. I John 4:9-10 says,

(9) In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

(10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

2:2

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*. Verse 2 indicates the relationship Jesus Christ has, not only to the sins of the believers but also, to the sins of all humanity. **And** may be used to indicate a continuation of the idea of verse 1; but it may also be emphatic and understood in the sense of *indeed, in fact, yea, verily, or certainly*. **He** refers to Jesus Christ, (the) righteous (one), and functions as an intensifier of the subject of the verb. Together they mean *He Himself*. **Is** indicates a timeless truth, something that is always true under all circumstances. **The propitiation** means that Jesus Christ is the One Who has removed or satisfied the wrath of God which was directed against sin. *The* does not appear before *propitiation* in the Greek text, which indicates that its quality as *propitiation* is being emphasized. *Propitiation* has been placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text which reads literally, *And (or indeed) He Himself propitiation is for the sins of us*. **For our sins** is literally *concerning the sins of us* and implies *concerning the sins that we*

have committed. **Our** is a reference to believers in this context. *The* appears before *sins* in the Greek text and implies *the sum total of all the sins believers have committed*. None are omitted or excluded. Christ is the propitiation for each and every one of them. **And** introduces another group for whose sins Jesus is also the propitiation. **Not for ours only** implies *not concerning our sins alone*. **But also** introduces a strong contrast which indicates that Jesus is not the propitiation concerning believers' sins only, but that in addition He is the propitiation **for *the sins of the whole world***, i.e. *of the complete world or of the entire world*, which means that Jesus is also the propitiation concerning unbelievers' sins. Thus, Jesus Christ's death on the cross provided for the removal of the wrath of God as far as every person who has ever lived or ever will live is concerned. Here is a damaging blow to the Calvinistic idea of a limited atonement, which teaches that Jesus Christ died only for the elect and did not die for all humanity. It is taught in this verse that Christ's death was propitiatory for the sins of all persons in the whole world. Those who believe that Christ died only for the elect seek to get around this statement by limiting the meaning of *our* to John and his readers or to Jews and by redefining *world* to mean *elect*. *Our* is better understood as meaning *believers*, and *the whole world* is better understood as *the entire human race*. Christ's death was not only sufficient for all but was also intended for all. One is reminded that the reason people will go to hell is that they have rejected God's remedy for their sins. John 3:16-19 says,

(16) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

(17) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

(18) He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten

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Son of God.

(19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

According to verse 19, the reason one *is condemned already* is *because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*. It is not because he has committed such horrible sins, even though he has. One is also reminded of II Peter 2:1, which indicates that Christ purchased the salvation not only of those who receive Him as Savior but also of unbelievers who deny Him (i.e. *repudiate, reject, or disown Him*). II Peter 2:1 says,

(1) But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, **even denying the Lord that bought them**, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (emphasis added).

One is also reminded of John 1:29, which says,

(29) The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin **of the world** (emphasis added).

Furthermore, John 3:17, which is quoted above, indicates that God sent His Son into the world in order that all the world through Him might be saved. In His death on the cross at Calvary, Jesus made provision for the forgiveness of sins for everyone who has ever lived or ever will live. The shedding of His blood in His death on the cross was adequate or sufficient to satisfy God's wrath which was directed against all humanity. To understand propitiation one needs some background in the Old Testament Scriptures. In Exodus 25 the Lord gave Moses instructions for building the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, which was the lid of the ark of the covenant.

Moses wrote in Exodus 25:10-22,

(10) And they shall make an ark *of shittim wood*: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

(11) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.

(12) And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put *them* in the four corners thereof; and two rings *shall be* in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.

(13) And thou shalt make staves *of shittim wood*, and overlay them with gold.

(14) And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

(15) The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.

(16) And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.

(17) And thou shalt make a mercy seat *of pure gold*: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.

(18) And thou shalt make two cherubims *of gold, of beaten work* shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.

(19) And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: *even* of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.

(20) And the cherubims shall stretch forth *their wings* on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces *shall look* one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.

(21) And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.

(22) And there I will meet with thee, and

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I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

The place of propitiation in the Old Testament was the mercy seat, the lid which covered the ark of the covenant. On the Day of Atonement the high priest was instructed in Leviticus 16:14-15 to sprinkle the blood of both the bullock and the goat of the sin-offering upon the mercy seat,

(14) And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle *it* with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

(15) Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat.

Hebrews 9:1-8 says,

(1) Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

(2) For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

(3) And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

(4) Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

(5) And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

(6) Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God*.

(7) But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people:

(8) The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.

The place of propitiation in the New Testament is the cross. Romans 3:24-25 says,

(24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

(25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

According to I John 2:2, Christ is the propitiation for our sins. According to I John 4:9-10, God demonstrated love by sending Christ to be the propitiation for our sins. I John 4:9-10 says,

(9) In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

(10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

In Luke 18:9-14 Luke wrote,

(9) And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

(10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

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(11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

(12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

(13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God **be merciful** to me a sinner.

(14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (emphasis added).

In verse 13, *God be merciful to me a sinner* is literally, *God be propitiated to me the sinner*. Its meaning in its context is, *God, treat me as one whose sins have been covered by the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice*.

Hebrews 2:14-17 states,

2:3-6. Believers Keep His Commandments

In verses 3-5 keeping Christ's commandments is shown to be a proof of one's salvation. It is not a condition of salvation but an evidence that one has already been saved. One who claims to know Christ but who does not keep His commandments is stated to be a liar and unsaved (verse 4). By contrast keeping Christ's commandments demonstrates that the love of God has already been perfected in his life (verse 5), enabling the one keeping Christ's commandments to know that he is saved. For this reason, the one claiming to abide in Christ ought to be living as Christ lived, a holy and godly life (verse 6). After all, has God not made a new creature of him, and is God not working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure? *Yes*, He has; and *yes*, He is. II Corinthians 5:17 says, *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*; whereas, Philippians 2:13 says, *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. If someone is consistently and characteristically living a sinful life and has no interest in living a godly live, he is not yet in Christ, he is not yet a new creature, and God is not working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure; instead, he is unsaved and on his way to a Christless eternity in hell.

(3) And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

(4) He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a

(14) Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

(15) And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

(16) For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels*; but he took on *him the seed of Abraham*.

(17) Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his brethren*, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make **reconciliation** for the sins of the people (emphasis added).

In verse 17, *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people* is literally, *to make propitiation for the sins of the people*.

liar, and the truth is not in him.

(5) But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

(6) He that saith he abideth in him