

THAT YOU MAY
KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

“Assurance and
the Sufficiency
of Christ”

1 John 2:1–2

October 1, 2025 | Men of the Word | Grace Community Church

“Assurance and the Sufficiency of Christ”

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.”

—1 John 2:1–2

I. The Sincere Petition

1 John 2:1a



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

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin” (2:1a).

- **“My little children”** – not an insult, but an address of spiritual affection; it shows the deep concern of an aged apostle for his audience.
- **“These things”** – the teaching John just provided in 1:5–10 on the need to confess sin and the freedom of God’s forgiveness.
- **“So that you may not sin”** – another mini-purpose statement (see 1:4); since sinlessness is myth (1:8, 10) and forgiveness is free (1:7, 9), one could conclude that it is acceptable to practice sin, but John insists that these truths lead in a different direction.



“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

—Romans 6:1–2

“My little children, I am writing these things to you
so that you may not sin” (2:1a).



- “So that you may not sin” – despite the forgiveness and cleansing freely provided to restore fellowship, “God is [still] Light, and in Him there is [still] no darkness at all” (1:5).
- Correct thinking about the holiness of God, the reality of sin, the provision of confession, and the promise of forgiveness *does not allow* the Christian to respond casually to sin.



- “Sin is so heinous in the sight of God that it may not be indulged in even once” (Raymond Gingrich, *An Outline and Analysis of the First Epistle of John*, 55).

“Every sin, no matter how seemingly insignificant, is an act of rebellion against the sovereign God who reigns and rules over us and as such is an act of treason against the cosmic King.”

—R. C. Sproul



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II. The Sympathetic Provision

1 John 2:1b



*"And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous."*

**“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous” (2:1b).**

- **“And”** – not a simple continuation from the previous sentence, but a *contrast* to it: **“But.”**
- **“If anyone sins”** – a condition expressed as a hypothetical situation; it is intentionally broad, allowing for application in all kinds of circumstances and by all Christians without distinction.
- **“Sins”** – a broad term that means “to miss the mark,” “to fall short” of the standard of purity established by the God who is Light (1:5).

“And if anyone sins, **we have** **an Advocate** with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous” (2:1b).

- “**We have**” – a reference to the “little children” (believers) of v. 1a, but with an added element: John includes *himself*.
- “**An Advocate**” – a very special term; the basic idea: “one who is called to someone’s aid,” “one who appears in another’s behalf,” “one who is summoned to the side of another.”
- In some extra-biblical contexts, the term described an “advocate” or “sponsor” who spoke on behalf of the accused.
- The term is only used four other times in the NT—all in John’s Gospel, and all used to describe *the Holy Spirit* (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

παράκλητος
paraklētos; Advocate

**“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous” (2:1b).**

A diagram with yellow arrows and boxes. One arrow points from 'an Advocate' to 'Jesus Christ', and another points from 'Jesus Christ' to 'the righteous'. Both 'Jesus Christ' and 'the righteous' are enclosed in yellow rectangular boxes.

- This “Advocate” is described in three ways:
 - 1) **“With the Father”** – He currently stands *before/in the presence* of the Father, the God of Light (see John 1:1–2; 1 John 1:2).
 - 2) **“Jesus Christ”** – He is the Incarnate One, the promised Suffering Servant, truly human *like us*—a perfect representative.
 - 3) **“The righteous [One]”** – He is completely without sin; He conforms perfectly to the standard of Light (see 1 John 1:5).
- This is the One—a sympathetic High Priest (Heb 4:15–16)—who eagerly takes the side of the sinning believer and sponsors his appeal!

“Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

—Romans 8:34

“Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

—Hebrews 7:25

“Christ’s intercession is the continual application of His death to our salvation. The reason why God does not impute our sins to us is because He looks upon Christ the intercessor.”

—John Calvin



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III. The Sufficient Propitiation

1 John 2:2



*"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not
for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."*

“and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*” (2:2).

- **“He Himself”** – emphatic, as if to say, “He Himself, and no one else!” Jesus Christ not only serves as our *Advocate*, but He also already served as our *Atonement*.
- **“The propitiation for our sins”** – Jesus does not *provide* propitiation; He *is* the propitiation (see 1 John 1:7b – “the blood of Jesus His Son”).
- **“Propitiation”** – “to appease or satisfy an offended party”; the term is found in the NT only here and in 4:10.
- This rare term is more specific than “sacrifice” or “substitution.”

ἱλασμός

hilasmos; satisfaction

- *The problem:* sin not only estranges the sinner from God, but God from the sinner; “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1:5).
- *The need:* sin must be justly punished, and God’s righteous wrath in response to those who commit it must be satisfied.
- *The solution:* a sacrifice is offered—Jesus Christ, the righteous One—to pay the penalty for sins and bear the wrath of God to His satisfaction.



- **Isaiah 53:5** – “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.”
- **Isaiah 53:11a** – “As a result of the anguish of His [the Suffering Servant’s] soul, He [the LORD] will see it and be satisfied.”

“We are facing a justly angry Judge and stand guilty before him. Jesus’ role as our defender is not that of proving our innocence. Rather, he intercedes on our behalf before the righteous judge of the universe and turns back his wrath by satisfying this righteous demand for punishment. **He is both our defender and our sacrifice.**”

—Gary Derickson, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 129

“In 1 John 2:1 the reference to Jesus as our Advocate before the Father when we sin, specifically in his character as the *Righteous One*, implies that the One before whom he pleads our cause—who represents the offended Triune Godhead—is displeased with us. Accordingly, the description of Jesus which immediately follows in 1 John 2:2 surely suggests that it is his advocacy before the Father specifically in his character as our *hilasmos*, which removes that divine displeasure.”

—Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed., 638

“and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins;
and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (2:2).

- “**For the whole world**” – a superficial reading could lead to the position of *universalism*—that Christ has paid the penalty of all men’s sins and satisfied the wrath of God for each and every sinner; but this goes against John’s own writing.
- **1 John 3:10** – “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”
- **John 3:36** – “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

“and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins;
and not for ours only, but also **for *those of the whole world***” (2:2).

- By this phrase, John is *not* intending to speak here of the *extent* of Christ’s work of propitiation, but rather of its ***appropriateness***.
- This reality about Christ—the only propitiation for sin—is not applicable only to *the Jews* (e.g., John and the other apostles, 1:4), or only to John’s *original audience* (“my little children,” 2:1), but is the solution to the sin and wrath problem *for everyone in the world without distinction*!
- This reality is also antithetical to the teaching of the heretics John refutes in his letter—the false teachers who claimed *secret knowledge* of peace with God accessible only to a *secret society*.

“And there is salvation in no one else;
for there is no other name under
heaven that has been given among
men by which we must be saved.”

—Acts 4:12



“First, the universalist accepts the superficial interpretation of ‘whole world’ to mean ‘all without exception’ and therefore modifies the propitiatory *nature* of the atonement to mean ‘a potential propitiation.’ . . . The second option is that of the particularist. The particularist . . . seeks a way to understand ‘whole world’ that avoids doing violence to the grammar, context, and authorial intent of 1 John 1–2 and averts the problematic implications of universalism. Such a way is available. It is to understand ‘the whole world’ to refer to ‘all without distinction’ rather than ‘all without exception.’”

—John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 561

THAT YOU MAY **KNOW**

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

- ✓ Refuse to diminish the sinfulness of sin.
- ✓ Reject the myth that God is still angry at you.
- ✓ Believe that Jesus Christ is your willing and perfect Advocate.
- ✓ Trust in the sufficiency of your Savior's atonement.
- ✓ Proclaim this good news to all.

“I feel, when I have sinned, an immediate reluctance to go to Christ. I am ashamed to go. I feel as if it would do no good to go—as if it were making Christ a minister of sin, to go straight from the swine-trough to the best robe—and a thousand other excuses; but I am persuaded they are all lies, directly from hell.”

—Robert Murray M’Cheyne, *Memoirs and Remains*, 156