

# 1 John

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1 John 2:1-2

Vss.1-2

- The first thing you notice here is the sincere affection John shows to us. "My little children" he calls us. John is probably very old when he writes this. He is probably the last of his generation. The last one to have actually walked with Jesus and heard Him speak. He views the new generation of believers as his own children, and so we are.
- Like any good parent, John wants his children to be good, to not sin. Here the verb tense John uses is to say that he is writing that "you may not sin even once." But he is well versed in the way of the disciple. The answer is never to lower the standard of morality and ethics Christ requires so as to help people not to sin. Nor is there is a simple shrug saying, "Well, all have sinned, so what's the big deal?" The big deal, as we shall soon see further on, is the solid lock between obedience and love. "If you love Me you will keep My commandments", Jesus says in John 14:15. So while there is always the high ethical demand, with Christ there is always grace. "Don't sin! But if you do, there is grace." Without grace the demand would be a weight no one could carry. Without the demand, grace would be mere sentimentality.
- Using the same verb tense, John says "if anyone sins at any point, we have an Advocate with the Father." When we sin, God does not abandon us. God loves us when we are not good. In God's Son, He has given us an Advocate.
- Advocate is translated from *parakletos*, literally meaning, "one who comes along side." Yes, this is the same word often translated as the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament the word can mean Comforter or Helper in reference to the Spirit. Here it related to one who pleads a case in court on behalf of the accused.
- So note two things: a) when John says, "if anyone sins", he is by default including himself as a part of "anyone". Here John is identifying with us as we

struggle. He too needs God's grace as much as you or I. He is inviting us to share God's grace with him. b) God too is identifying with us when He is both our Judge and at the same time our Advocate. 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

- "...and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...": a) the Greek word is **hilasmos**. This is a tough Greek word for us to understand in English and it presents a picture that is foreign to us. We understand who an advocate is. We get the picture of an attorney arguing our case. But the picture here with propitiation is a picture of sacrifice. The imagery comes out of the Jewish tradition of sacrifice in order to be forgiven of sin so that the relationship with God that sin has disrupted may be restored. The Jews had a very intricate system of sacrifice to cover a wide variety of sins and failing that they had The Day of Atonement when sacrifices could be made that would cover all sins. b) The word **hilasmos** and its verb form **hilaskesthai** carries roughly three different meanings, depending on the context. First, it is used when a man must pacify or placate someone who has been injured or offended and was commonly used in pagan worship for sacrifices to ease an angry god. Second, the word can also mean "to forgive". So it is the action God Himself provides so that the relationship between Himself and people may be restored. Third, the word may also mean performing a deed whereby the taint of sin is removed. When we sin, we are "stained" by that sin. One interpreter has translated the word in this sense to say that we have been "disinfected", so we are able to enter again into God's presence. So in this sense, **hilaskesthai** means not to "propitiate" but to "expiate", not so much to pacify an angry God but to disinfect, to be cleansed from the stain of sin. Remembering 1:9, Christ is faithful and just to disinfect us, to cleanse us every day from all sin.
- John concludes this thought with the powerful statement that God through Christ has done this, not for only the Jews or even the Greeks, but for the whole world! The Roman world knew of China, India, the southern coast of Africa, and the vast territories to the north and east. Salvation was for all of those people too – the whole world. For God so loved the whole, wide world!