

Christ Our Propitiation

1 John

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Bible Text: 1 John 2:1-2
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We're having a wonderful time for those of you that are visiting or are new to our church. We are having a wonderful time going verse by verse through the book of 1 John. That's where we've started several weeks ago and we've come to chapter 2, in the first two verses, chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, and so if you want to turn in your Bibles to that passage, that's where we're going to be speaking from this morning. So let me just read the two verses to kind of reset the context for you. We've spent a lot of time in these verses and we've got a couple more weeks to go after today as well. 1 John 2:1- 2 says,

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

There is an amazing amount of impactful material packed into those two verses. You see, first of all, that John is speaking to believers as he writes this. He says, "My little children." He's referring to true Christians as he's writing here so we need to understand it from that perspective. This is not primarily an evangelistic text that we're looking at here, but this is instruction meant to build up true believers as John is writing. "My little children, I am writing to you," and so this is instruction that is intended for the church and one of the things that we believe here at Truth Community Fellowship, is that Sunday morning should be devoted to the instruction and edification of believers; that this is the one time and the one place that believers can come apart separated out from the world and receive instruction from God's word so that they can be built up. Then we go out and then we evangelize but we intentionally don't aim our services to please the world; we intentionally don't seek to appeal to lost people here in the service and structure what we do in order to appeal to people that are unsaved, this is a time for the church to gather together and hear the instruction of God's word. Now, if unsaved people come, we love that. They are welcome but we're not aiming it to please their desires. We're aiming to please the Lord Jesus Christ and part of the way that you please the Lord Jesus Christ in a church is to do what is necessary to build up his people through the preaching of his word, and so that's why we do what we do on Sunday morning and we're happy to do that, happier than you could possibly know how happy we are to do that.

Now, John says as he's writing here, he says, "I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin." You see, Christians are supposed to grow in holiness; they are supposed to grow in sanctification; they are supposed to have an ever increasing separation from sin, an ever increasing conformity to the image of Christ in their character. That's what Christian life is supposed to be like and John says, "I'm writing to help you in that regard," and we went through a few weeks ago about exactly what he was talking about and we emphasized that that ability to grow spiritually is rooted in a fundamental conviction that God is a holy God. If you believe that God is a holy God and you've been saved and brought into his family, then you're going to begin to manifest the characteristics of your Father. Someone who doesn't show any kind of characteristic affections or characteristic conformity to the character of God is someone who obviously does not belong to his family in the first place. Just as biological children show the traits of their biological parents, well, in the same way, God's spiritual children should reflect the spiritual characteristics that mark his holy character and someone who does not do that, someone who is not interested in holiness, someone who does not show progress of some kind somewhere over the months and years after which they profess their supposed faith in Christ, someone who doesn't show any evidence of that is someone who is not a Christian because the life of God inevitably bursts through in the life of the one who has been saved. It couldn't be any other way. Light dominates darkness and so God's Spirit dominates the character in a way that starts to show the manifestation of the character of the one who saved us. "I'm writing to help you so that you can grow in that process, writing to help you so that you may not sin." So that's why he's writing."

Then he goes on and says in verse 1, this is all by way of review for those of you that are new here, and he says, "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This is what we looked at last time. We talked about the advocacy of Christ on our behalf as believers. And here's the beauty of it, John says, "Look, I understand that despite your lofty character you have not been made perfect yet. I understand that from time to time sin will crop up in your life even as a believer." That's a great comfort to us. We realize that God has anticipated our ongoing sinfulness even as believers, that there are going to be times where we stumble and God has covered that in his work of salvation on our behalf.

How has he covered it? Well, look at here, he says, "And if anyone sins." Remember, he's talking to believers so he says, "if anyone sins, if anyone among you believers sins as you're walking through this life, remember this one important point." He says, "Remember that we have an Advocate with our Father who is in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous." We have someone who represents us as our great high priest. He has entered into the throne room of God having purchased our salvation with his own life blood, and on the strength of the power of his omnipotence and on the affections of his loving gracious heart, he represents us in heaven before our Father, having satisfied all of the demands of justice against us. Your salvation is perfectly complete. Your status with God is a perfect status. As we said last time, due to the work of Christ and based on the work of Christ on your behalf, you belong in the very throne room of God because Jesus Christ bought you with his own precious blood and now represents you in the throne room of God. He represents you. He is your surety. He is your representative. Because you belong

to Christ and Christ belongs to God, you belong even in the holiest throne room of God. That is how great and lofty salvation is and that's what we looked at last time.

Now, today as we pivot, today we are going to see what is the basis of this advocacy of Christ on our behalf. On what basis does he represent us so perfectly before our Father. And what we're going to see is that Christ satisfied the demands of God's justice and on the basis of his work on the cross, the satisfaction of God's justice, therefore we are reconciled to God. Christ has done a work that is the basis upon which he represents us in heaven and it's that work that John is speaking about at the end of verse 1 and bleeding over into verse 2.

Let's look at it again. He says, " And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father." Well, how is it, John, how is it that Christ can be our representative? How is it that he can advocate on our behalf? Well, he explains that. I love just how logical and precise and progressive this is. He says, "He is Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." It's because he is the propitiation for our sins that he can represent us before God the Father in heaven. These are wonderful wonderful truths.

What I want to do today if you're going to take notes, I'm going to ask and answer three different questions about this concept of propitiation. Three questions that I'm going to ask and answer and as we go through these carefully and systematically, you're going to, as a believer, you're going to see the foundation upon which your salvation is built. You're going to see why your place in heaven is absolutely secure. It has nothing to do with your subsequent conduct as a Christian, it's all about the perfection of the work of Christ on your behalf. And for those of you that are here and you say, "I don't know if I'm a Christian or not," maybe you know that you're walking in darkness and that you have no part of the life in Christ, well, then you're going to see here why this passage is so urgently necessary for the consideration of your eternal soul. This is going to lay out for you how you can be reconciled to God, and so this has something for everyone here and even for the most mature advanced Christian, that these truths are familiar to. This never gets old. This is precious to the redeemed soul Monday through Sunday, 24/7, 365 days out of the year. Nothing that we talk about here ever gets old to a true Christian and that's why we are so glad to be able to come to God's word and consider it here this morning.

So three questions that we're going to ask and answer about Christ our propitiation, and the first question is this and I'm going to answer it real quickly and simply, but the first question is this: what is propitiation? What is propitiation? And I think that question needs to be asked and answered at a time like this because propitiation is a rather uncommon word in our vocabulary. You don't hear it used in daily discourse in business or in the media or anything like this, and so it's kind of a foggy characteristic if you're not used to biblical terminology. What is propitiation? I'm just going to give you a real simple definition here, simple but profound. In this context as John speaks about propitiation, it means, propitiation means: it is a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God. Propitiation is referring to a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God. That's fairly simple. God's wrath against sinners must be turned away if anyone is going to have eternal life. That's what propitiation is. It's a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God.

It's a sacrifice that satisfies the demands of God's justice and therefore allows the sinner to go free because the debt has been paid on his behalf. That's what propitiation is.

Now, let's go back to the text for just a moment with that definition in mind. "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Well, let's plug in the definition here, "and He Himself is the sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God." That's what John is saying here. Sacrifice, that propitiation, you cannot satisfy the wrath and judgment of God through the works of your own hands. Give it up. Forget about it. You cannot do that. A guilty sinner cannot do anything with his own heart, with his own life, with his own hands to do anything that would turn away the wrath of God because guilt cannot produce innocence. Your guilty hands cannot do innocent works that would somehow vindicate your guilty soul so give it up. Realize that you cannot be good enough to earn eternal life. Give it up because you cannot go to heaven on your own merits. If you are to go to heaven, if your sins are to be forgiven, if you are to have eternal life, someone must act to rescue you because you cannot save yourself.

Those are very sobering words and those of you that are in here that have trifled with the Gospel, you've trifled with the Scriptures, you've trifled with the Lord Jesus Christ, this needs to be a wake up call for you this morning. You need to wake up out of your slumber and realize how seriously you have offended a holy God because you're in serious danger, serious eternal danger if you have trifled with the Gospel and never considered Christ worthy of submitting your entire life to and turning from your life of sin. If you've never done that, you're lost. I don't know how else to say it except to say it plainly and to say it clearly. And, you see, we all need someone to provide propitiation for us, someone to help us and to turn away the wrath of God from our souls, and if you're not a Christian, that is the most urgent thing you need. That is the only thing that you need this morning. You don't need me to tell you how to have better relationships or a better marriage, how to find more satisfaction in your work. That's totally empty. That's totally meaningless compared to the eternal value of your soul and the threat of eternal judgment that waits for those who do not receive Christ. So let's not deal with trivialities, let's deal with what the Bible says about the well-being of our eternal souls. That's why we're here this morning is because we think those things are important.

So what is propitiation? It's a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God. Now, the wrath of God. Second question here: why is propitiation necessary? Why is propitiation necessary? Why is it that we need the wrath of God turned away from us? Now, there are four sub points that I want to give you as we go through this as we kind of set the stage to look at the text here. Why is propitiation necessary? If you have been here at all for the past few weeks, if you're visitors, I don't expect this from you, but if you have been here over the past few weeks, you should know almost instantly what I am about to say because we have been saying that the cornerstone of Christian thinking is the holiness of God. The cornerstone of right-thinking is to realize the holiness of God as it is revealed in the inspired 66 books of the Bible. You always start with the holiness of God. Any issue that you're dealing with in life or Scripture, in despair or in joy, you always must start, "Well, somehow the holiness of God impacts what we're about to say." Somehow the

holiness of God impacts this situation and it is certainly most primary as we consider this topic of propitiation.

Why is propitiation even an issue? Because God is holy. God by his very nature is holy. God because of the holiness of his intrinsic character, must punish every violation of his law. He cannot compromise justice. He cannot sacrifice his holiness at the altar of human sin. Human sin must be brought to an account because a holy God requires it, and a holy eternal God who has his eternal law violated metes out eternal punishment for the violation of his law. These are lofty holy things that are in danger of being lost in most preaching in most churches around the country these days and so we have to go back and see what the Scripture says. When you go back to the Scripture, the holiness of God rises up and grabs your attention in a way that cannot be avoided. Exodus 34:7 says God "will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." While we trivialize sin, while the world glories in sin, don't ever let the opaqueness of our modern mind, the darkness of our modern mind deceive you into thinking that God looks at sin the same way we do. God sees it as a violation of his very character, a cosmic treason against the universal order that must be brought to account. Why is propitiation necessary? Because God is holy and takes sin profoundly seriously.

Now, secondly, let's apply this personally. Secondly, what's the implication of the holiness of God as we think about this? Well, secondly, sin separates you from God. Sin separates you from God. It's a cosmic travesty to think that God will just benignly forgive every one of all of their sins and that everyone will go to heaven. That is a travesty that totally ignores and turns upside down the biblical teaching of God's holiness and the reality of sin. Listen, the Bible teaches that all men have sinned, broken God's law. Psalm 143:2 says in speaking to God, it says, "in Your sight no man living is righteous." There is no one righteous in the sight of God. Romans 3 echoes that same theme and by its very nature, by its very nature, sin separates men from God. It creates an eternal vast chasm between man and God which man is not able to cross. God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden when they sinned. They were cast out of paradise and that sets a picture for the totality of the human race. There is a separation from God that takes place as a result of your sins and mine. This is of great consequence. This is of great consequence. When our parents Adam and Eve fell into sin, they took the whole human race with them, and it's not just that inherited guilt from Adam that separates you from God, I say this gently, I say as one to whom this applies as well, but your own sins have had that same effect on your own soul. It's not just that the world is guilty, it's that you're guilty. You individually are guilty of violating the law of God and you must take that seriously. You must realize that this is a serious problem. Isaiah 59:2 says, "your sins have made a separation from you and your God." So God is holy, sin separates us from him. God is here, we are there with this vast chasm that no man can cross as a result.

Now, you might think, "I'm okay with that. If he's over there and I'm over here, I can live with that. I'll just do my thing and not worry about it. If we are separated, I don't care because I don't want him anyway." It doesn't work that way. It doesn't work that way because, you see, God's holiness means that he pursues sinners in his judgment. He doesn't leave you alone in your sin. There is an active wrath of God that abides on

sinners. This is the third point of: why is propitiation necessary? We said it's because God is holy, because sin separates us from God, and now thirdly, sin brings God's wrath. Sin brings God's wrath. That's why propitiation is necessary. Sin not only separates us from God but it brings God's righteous anger against the sinner. Psalm 7:11. I'm not having you turn to all of these verses just for the sake of time but Psalm 7:11 says that, "God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day." And those pulpits that merely proclaim that God is love, there is no cause for alarm, you see what a Satanic deception that is for preachers never to call this to the attention of those that trust them for spiritual guidance. It's an utter Satanic deception to hide this from people as if it weren't a true reality. The Gospel of John says in chapter 3, verse 36, it says, "he who does not obey the Son, the wrath of God abides on him."

Wow. Wow. This is really sobering. It's really serious. And so using the picture that we have here of God here and you here and the gulf of sin separated, no, you can't cross that chasm to get over to God yourself but in his holy vindication of his eternal law, he crosses the chasm and his wrath rests as a black thundercloud over the head of sinners. Sin brings God's wrath. He has indignation every day. One writer, just to give you a sense that this is no isolated theme in the Scriptures, one writer has estimated that the Old Testament alone mentions the wrath of God 585 times. The book of the New Testament that most systematically teaches the doctrines of salvation, the book of Romans starts out in verse 18 saying, "The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." So this is a very serious issue. It's a very profound problem that the human race faces, that each individual sinner faces. God's wrath is righteous. He is settled in his opposition to sin. The sin of humanity he settled in his opposition to your sin and he is not going to brush it away with a wave of the hand and a wink of his eye. It doesn't work that way. God's holiness forbids that kind of trifling with sin.

He's settled in his opposition to it and here's what you need to see is that punishment for sin flows from his holy wrath. His wrath must be vindicated. His law must be upheld. The violations, the lawbreakers must be punished. The law must be vindicated for the full authority that it has, and if sinners are not punished for breaking the law of God, the authority of the law of God is compromised and that reflects on and would demolish the authority of God himself. His very character and the very nature of his law requires the punishment of sin. And how ungodly, how unrighteous, how inappropriate, to use a very weak word, is it that those of us who are his creatures, those of us who draw our very breath from the good pleasure of his hand, would break his law, would sin against him and go on as if nothing had mattered. Just the whole trivialization of the whole attitude of disregarding his law, of acting as though it doesn't matter and suppressing the testimony of our own conscience and saying, "No, I'm a pretty good person," while conscience is desperately crying, "No, you're not! You're guilty!" And men say, "Shut up!" But that's what men do, they tell their conscience to be quiet, to hush up, suppressing the very testimony that wells up within them about the reality of this kind of guilt. The guilt, the shame of that is incalculable and it's no wonder that God is actively righteously opposed to it.

Now, fourth aspect why propitiation is necessary. All of this comes together here. This is the fourth sub point here: sinners face God's eternal judgment in hell. Sinners face God's eternal judgment in hell. Eternity is a very long time. Eternity is endless and so these are no trifling matters. No man will escape accountability for his sin. Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." There is not going to be a second chance. There is no such thing as purgatory that lets you burn off some of it for a few thousand years and then everything is okay in the end. That is a total fiction. There is no such thing as reincarnation. There is no such thing as annihilation where you die and you're forgotten and you just go to sleep and never wake up. No, no, that would be trifling with the holiness and the eternality of God. It could never be that way. No, what Scripture teaches is that we live this life, we're accountable to God for how we live this life, and that one day after we die, we're going to stand before him in judgment and give an account. And Jesus said, applying this to sinners, Jesus said in Matthew 25:46, you can jot the reference down, Matthew 25:46, that sinners "will go away into eternal punishment." Not just punishment but eternal punishment. He said that in that place there will be weeping and darkness and gnashing of teeth. Make no mistake about it, relentless, eternal torment in hell awaits everyone who dies with unforgiven sin because sin must be punished and sin must be punished because God is a holy God. His righteous anger must be vindicated.

Let's stop there for a moment and just realize that we're at a little bit of a pivot point here in the message. Beloved, beloved, your eternal welfare depends upon that eternal wrath being turned away from your soul. There is nothing more important in your life than to have the eternal wrath of God turned away from your eternal soul. Nothing else matters. Nothing else matters and that is why the passage in front of us is so very consequential and important. That's why this is of such colossal magnitude for us to consider here today. How is it, if you have any question in your mind about whether you are a true Christian or not, the question that should be reverberating through your mind is, "How is it that I can know that this wrath has been turned away from me because the consequences of receiving that wrath in my soul are too great to contemplate. I can't bear the thought of it. I must find relief from my guilty accusing conscience and I must find relief from the burning wrath of God against my sin and the question is, is there anything like that could do it? I know, I'll write a bigger check to the church today. I'll come to church three times a week. Oh wait, this fellowship only meets one time a week, that's not going to help." And you start desperately looking for things that you can do as if the one who so produced the guilt in the first place, the one whose heart fountain was producing bitter sinful waters in the first place could suddenly start producing clean water that would wash away your sin. It does not work that way. You must come, if you are going to have the wrath of God turned away from you, you must come to the end of yourself and the end of your self-efforts and realize, "I'm the problem. And if I'm the problem, I can't fix it on my own." And when you come to that point, then you start looking outside of yourself. You start looking for help from someone else and you need to do that if you haven't, if you've never come to that place of crisis realization of the wrath of God against you because the consequences of facing God and judgment are too great to bear. And I say that not to frighten you, I say that not to intimidate you, say that not to manipulate you, I say it because it's the truth of God's word. This is what God has

to say about it. We don't get to vote on whether we think it's a good idea or not. This is reality and so the question is: how are we going to respond to reality? Where can we find relief? Is there any way to find relief from this righteous wrath of God?

Well, that brings us to our third question this morning and the third question is this: where can we find propitiation? Is there any place in the universe that we can look to where we can find a sacrifice that has turned away the wrath of God? A sacrifice that would secure the eternal well-being of your soul? Because if you can find that, then everything else is secondary. If you can find that, then there is joy and peace and satisfaction for your soul if you can find propitiation somewhere, someplace. And if there is going to be propitiation found against a holy God, a holy wrathful God, listen, you've got to understand something that's just really obvious and fundamental: you have to find propitiation on his terms, not yours. You can't bring your own definition of what would be satisfactory for God to forgive you of your sin. You are hopelessly dependent upon the revelation that God has given in his word if you are going to know anything about what can relieve the guilt of your sin. You must come to his word in order to find it and abandon all of your thoughts about what you think justice should be like or, "I think God should do this. Or this ought to be enough." The only thing that matters is what God thinks. What we think about this is irrelevant, but if we can line our thinking up with God's thinking, then we can have a sure foundation upon which we can have hope in the face of coming judgment.

So where can we find propitiation? Let's go back to 1 John 2:1 and 2. In some ways everything I said was just kind of introductory up to this point but look at what he says here in chapter 2, verse 1, "if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." In light of everything that we've said, those words ought to be really rich and meaningful and sweet to your ears. "You mean there is an avenue out of this dilemma?" John is laying it out right here. "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God for our sins." Now, follow me here as we go through here. This passage teaches us how we can have certainty, not probability but certainty, that Christ has turned away the wrath of God from our souls. This is meant for you as an individual to take and appropriate and to enjoy the spiritual benefits of. This is not general teaching to a general audience, this is to anyone who would receive these words and receive Christ for eternal life.

Now, this passage teaches us how we can have certainty that Christ has turned away the wrath of God. We saw last time, Christ is our Advocate. Even as believers do not forfeit our salvation, God doesn't reignite his wrath against believers in that eternal judgmental sense, he doesn't reignite his wrath because Christ is in heaven as our Advocate. He has done the work that is necessary for our forgiveness. He stands before our Father and the demands of justice have been fully satisfied and Christ represents us as a great high priest before our Father in heaven and in that sense he's our Advocate. And now, what John is doing here, is he is explaining why it is that Christ can be an Advocate for us in that capacity. How is it that Jesus can maintain our cause with the Father? Well, there are three sub points here. Where can we find propitiation? We can find it in Jesus Christ.

How can we know that his propitiation is perfect? There are three things that we're going to see in the time that we have remaining here.

Look at it here with me. "We have an Advocate with the Father," and then every word here is important, "Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." Where can we find propitiation? In Christ. How can we know that his propitiation is perfect? First of all, remember his saving purpose. His saving purpose. This is the first way that we can know that Christ is a perfect Advocate and the demands of God against our soul have been perfectly satisfied and you remember his saving purpose. Look at the end of verse 1 there with me, "we have an Advocate with the Father." Oh, is that good news! "Tell me more, Mister Apostle John. Tell me more about this Advocate." He says, "I will. He is Jesus Christ the righteous." Jesus Christ. He names him and it's easy to forget something important about the name Jesus.

Turn back to the Gospel of Matthew, the very first book in the New Testament, Matthew 1. This is one that I want you to see with your own eyes. I want you to make this connection in your mind that whenever you think about the name of Jesus, you would think about his saving purpose because the Scriptures make it so very clear. You remember the story. This is the story about the birth of Christ in Matthew 1. An angel of the Lord appears to Joseph and look at verse 20. Joseph's thinking, "Maybe I need to put Mary away. She is pregnant. I didn't have anything to do with that. There is some kind of problem here." And an angel, God sends an angel to speak to Joseph and says, "Joseph," verse 20, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Mary's purity is vindicated by the testimony of a heavenly angel. And this angel goes on and explains to Joseph, "She will bear a Son," watch this, "and you shall call His name Jesus." Why do I call his name Jesus? Because "He will save His people from their sins." The name Jesus means that he will save his people from their sins. The reason he came, the signification of his name is that this is Jesus saves his people from their sins.

So his saving purpose is wrapped up in his name. The very name Jesus speaks to his purpose. When we speak the name Jesus, we say, "Oh, we're talking about the one who came to save his people from their sins." There is a beacon of light in the midst of the darkness of the wrath of God being revealed. "Oh, someone has come who has the power and the ability and the love to save us from our sins." The name Jesus says he will save us from our sins. We have an Advocate going back to 1 John 2:1, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus. We have a representative in heaven who is the one who saves his people from their sins. It's the whole reason he came. It was the divine purpose in his coming that he would save his people from their sins. That is the Advocate you have in heaven, one who came for the specific delineated purpose to achieve that very result to rescue you from the damnation that your sins otherwise require. Wow! That's good news! Jesus is our Advocate.

Christian, speaking to you know, if you feel the guilt of sin and want forgiveness, want the renewal of that cleansing from the sin that you drug into this room that you hadn't confessed and that you haven't repented of and the hearing of God's word has illuminated

that in your mind, these are sweet words, if you feel that guilt, go to Jesus. He came for the specific purpose of relieving that guilt from your soul. Confess it. "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And you can make that confession – here's the point, this is John's entire point in this passage – you can make that confession with confidence, with certainty that it will be favorably received at the throne room of heaven because Jesus, the Advocate, has done what is necessary to secure that forgiveness for you. He has done it on your behalf. The work is already accomplished. You're not trying to pull out forgiveness from a reluctant God unwilling to grant it. No, as a Christian, you're already favorably received in heaven because Jesus who came to save his people from their sins, is right there in the throne room of God on your behalf. These are magnificent truths from the Scriptures. John calls him actually, not just Jesus but Jesus Christ. Christ, speaking to his role as Mediator. Christ, standing for the people of God in heaven as the one who came to save them from their sins. You're not there on your own account. You're not there on your own merit confessing your sin. You're there with the overflowing righteous robes of Christ covering you and God the Father perfectly satisfied with that once-for-all sacrifice from Christ.

That's how you can have confidence. If you sin, if anyone sins, remember that, John says. When you sin, go to Christ. Go to the throne room of God. Go with confidence because it's the whole reason he came. He's not going to contradict his purpose. Having started his work of salvation in your life, he's not going to suddenly shift gears and go a different direction. Perish the thought. Don't think unworthy thoughts of Christ as though he wouldn't favorably receive you as one of his children. Of course he will. It's the whole reason he came. Don't let your feelings persuade you to stay away from approaching him because he has accomplished what is necessary. And those of you that don't know Christ, go to him. Go to him and say, "I need you in the first instance. I've never been saved. You've got to save me." And go with that same confidence because Jesus Christ is the friend of sinners, the friend of those who openly confess their sins. He's your friend but he's opposed to the proud. He's opposed to the unrepentant, and the question is which side of that line are you going to fall on? Nothing else matters, beloved. Nothing else.

But, you know, it's more than just his saving purpose that makes us sure that we can find propitiation at the hand of Christ, there is a second aspect of it, it's also his righteous character. His righteous character. Keep reading with me here at the end of verse 1, "if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Jesus Christ the righteous. Jesus has the necessary character to represent us before the Father. He can satisfy the righteousness of God because he is God. He has intrinsically the very righteousness that God requires in order to find reconciliation with him and thus he is able to perfectly represent us before the Father.

Turn back to the book of Hebrews, just back a couple of pages to your left, Hebrews 7. We'll illustrate and explain Scripture with Scripture. We believe that's a safe place to find the true meaning of God's word. Hebrews 7:25, keeping in mind the awful threat of this wrath of God that is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, look at Hebrews 7:25 in this context and thinking about the character, the righteous character of Christ. The writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore He is able also to save

forever those who draw near to God through Him." Through him. Through him. Not in the works of your own hands, not in your own merits, not even with your own tears of contrition, but through him, "since He always lives to make intercession for them." And what does the writer of Hebrews say about this intercessory work of Christ? Verse 26, "it was fitting for us to have such a high priest," here it is, here's his character, what is this high priest like, he is "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens." His character, his earthly life has perfectly fitted him for this intercessory work upon which we rely for him to do on our behalf and his intercession is always effective, it is continually sufficient because he's perfectly righteous. He not only came with that purpose, he had the character to fulfill it. Christ is wonderful.

And you know, as you hear these things from God's word, as you hear them explained, I want to emphasize something to you really important: as you hear these things explained, beloved, as you realize how desperately lost you were and realize that Jesus Christ voluntarily interceded on your behalf and out of the love of his own heart, not for anything that you had ever done or would ever do, but out of the love and grace of his own heart, interceded to save you, you should have deepening in you and broadening in your heart an ever increasing affection and love and loyalty and allegiance to Jesus Christ that comes from realizing that he is the Captain of your salvation, that he rescued you when you were hopelessly lost, and that whatever he brings into your life, whatever he requires from your hand as you walk through this life, you gladly accept, you gladly endure, you gladly bear because it is such a great privilege to belong to such a righteous gracious Savior. These things should drive you to love Christ and to honor him and to love him with ever deepening affections because you step back and realize, "Wow, if not for Christ, I would be miserably lost. With Christ, I am wonderfully saved. I belong in the throne room of God. One day I'm going to be around the throne with Christ looking in his face, perfected in glory for all of eternity, never tiring of the glories of heaven, all because Christ had mercy on my sin-sick dead soul." And the conclusion that you should draw from that, the connection that you should make in your mind from that is very simple, it's very simple, it's, "Oh, how I love him! How my affections go out to this one who saved me from my sins!"

That's the impact that it should have on you and when you love Christ in response to his saving work, then you are going to more naturally be inclined to obey him because your heart will have been turned away from the hardness and callousness of sin toward a softening toward this one who did such an amazing, wonderful, loving, gracious, merciful, undeserved work on your behalf. It couldn't come out any other way except for you saying, "I love him from the bottom of my heart. I love him more than anything else. I love him more than life itself. I love him more than anyone on earth because no one else on earth did what he did for me. No one else on earth died to save my soul. So there is an exclusive priority of my affections that belong to Christ alone and I'll never be shaken from it." That's where your mind goes. That's how you respond to wonderful truth like this.

Now, where can we find propitiation? In Christ. How can we know his saving purpose, his righteous character? Now look at verse 2 with me, and he says, "and He Himself is

the propitiation for our sins." The final basis of his perfect intercession on our behalf is his perfect sacrifice. His perfect sacrifice. Now, let's take a little breather here and think about the Old Testament. It's a good thing to read through the Old Testament in addition to the New Testament. I think it's a good thing to read systematically through the Bible as a repeated mark of your life over time because it just keeps all of these things in your thinking. Listen, listen, this is a little bit of a tangent and I'm not going to go far down this tangential road here. We want the fullness of God's revelation here in this fellowship. We love the entirety of God's word. We're not satisfied simply with John 3:16 as if that was the fullness of what God had said in his word. There are 7,955 verses in the New Testament alone, before you add the Old Testament on top of that. Well, what has our Lord revealed in his word? We want to know that. We want to know the fullness of it and so we spread out and we think about the fullness of what the Scriptures say on these things.

In the Old Testament, God established a pattern of animal sacrifices for the nation Israel to follow. Those sacrifices were designed to teach Israel about the consequences of sin. The worshiper would bring his sacrifice and he would lay his hands on the head of the animal symbolizing – this is very important – symbolizing a transfer of guilt. The guilt that his hands had incurred is transferred, symbolized by the laying on of the hands on the head of that animal and then a priest would take that animal and slaughter it as a sacrifice on behalf of the one who brought it. Now, that was done repeatedly with thousands and thousands of animals over the course of the history of the New Testament, thousands if not millions. Who knows, the numbers aren't important. But here's what is important: the Bible is clear that those sacrifices never really took away the guilt of the worshiper. It didn't provide a real genuine forgiveness on behalf of the worshiper. Hebrews 10:4 says, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." And if you think about it, of course that's the case. Of course the guilt of an amoral animal could not take away the guilt of someone morally accountable.

What was God doing, then? Well, those sacrifices provided something like a temporary cover for sin, temporary being the operative word there. It was a means of establishing a system and here's the problem for those of you that don't know Christ, it's not just what you have done, your whole heart is sinful. Your whole heart is sinful and that's the problem. You have a hard, calloused, stony heart against the truth of God. You are stubborn in your sin. You like your life the way it is. You don't want Christ coming in and taking over and ruling over you. Well, that heart issue is the problem and that is the root problem with sin and an animal sacrifice could never address that, and the fact that it was ineffective is shown by the fact that they had to repeat those sacrifices again and again and again. There was never a permanence to those animal sacrifices.

Here's where they were valuable and here's where they help us even today: the value of those animal sacrifices is that over the centuries, over the thousand years or more that Israel had been in existence as a nation, a thousand years just going back to David and even prior to that time, going back 1,500 years almost to the time of Moses, they established in the minds of the faithful this and this is in italics in my notes so it must be important otherwise it wouldn't be in italics: they established in the minds of the faithful

the need for a substitute sacrifice to take away sin. I can't take away my own sin. I can't erase the guilt of my own soul. I need a sacrifice delivered on my behalf where my guilt could be transferred to the sacrifice and that sacrifice could bear the punishment on my behalf because I can't do it on my own. That's what it was teaching. Those sacrifices established a picture to help us understand the sacrifice of Christ.

Now, with that in mind, look at verse 2 again, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." He himself is the sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God on our sins. Dwell on that. Dwell on it. Jesus Christ, who is he? He's the eternal Son of God. He's the righteous one. He existed in glory with the Father before time began. He's perfectly equal with God and he? That's what it means, there's an emphasis here, he is the propitiation for our sins? The spotless Lamb of God, the eternal Son of God, he is our propitiation? What is the genius of the mind of God in salvation that his own Son would be the sacrifice for guilty sinners? Christ himself is the sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God from your sin and makes God favorable to you. His blood availed for you because he had innocent human blood. The Bible says he was without sin. He had blood of eternal value because he was eternal God in human flesh and God's wrath was satisfied when Christ was crucified on the cross because his justice had been carried out. Jesus took our guilt and God punished him in our place. Understand that the Gospel is a message not only of forgiveness but of satisfied justice. We've said from the very start, we've said from the very start that the reason the propitiation was necessary was because God's law has been violated and that requires a penalty. Justice has to be satisfied. Well, justice in Christ for the believer is satisfied. For those of us who have received Christ, he himself absorbed God's wrath on our behalf and when you put your faith in Christ, it is as if you are putting your hands on him, transferring your guilt saying, "Lord, I know of my guilt. I place it on Christ by faith." And Christ in that one act at the cross, took the punishment of God on your behalf, standing as your substitute just like the animals were a substitute for the worshipers in the Old Testament, and there he offered a full payment for the sins of all who would ever believe in him. It's a substitution and you must understand that. It is not the works of your own hands.

Now, turn to Romans 5 as we can see the finish line this morning from where we are standing. Romans 5:8, again illustrating, explaining Scripture with Scripture. That's so very important. I would rather hear three minutes of explanation from the Scripture to illustrate a point than a five-minute personal story that is designed to make me laugh. Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." His blood, a figure of speech, a reference to his true historical point in time sacrifice on the cross, saves us from the wrath of God. That's why he can be your Advocate in heaven, it's because he offered the sacrifice that was necessary, and what this is saying is that he himself was that sacrifice.

And what does that mean? Christ's sacrifice continually and in an unbroken way turns away the wrath of God from your sins. That one act offered by one eternal, holy Son of

God is sufficient to turn away the wrath of God from your sins. And going back to 1 John now, going back to 1 John 2:1, he says, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate and He is the propitiation for our sins." It's very tightly, it's a tightly wound argument here. What he is saying is that when you sin in your Christian life, there is no need for another sacrifice. You don't need to try to add to the work of Christ by propitiating God with your own efforts. And I know how it is for some of you because it was this way for me for a very long time. You sin and you feel the weight and guilt of that and you draw back. You don't want to go to God in prayer and you say, "Well, I'll just give it a little bit of time. You know, maybe it will wear off. You know, it wears off if I wait. Okay, God, it's been a couple of days now I feel..." No, it doesn't work that way. It has nothing to do with your sense of time or your feelings about guilt or comparative righteousness. The reconciliation and your basis to approach God is always that one time eternal sacrifice that Christ offered on your behalf, and you rest in that and you go back to that when you sin and say, "Father, I know I have sinned again. I know it's the same one that I was here confessing yesterday. I understand all of that, but Christ has offered this one time sacrifice. He is my hope. He is my basis upon which I approach you and I confess my sins again and I renew my trust in this wonderful Savior." And that appeal to God is always the basis upon which you approach him to confess your sins. You don't rest in the depth of your repentance, "I'm really sorry this time, God. Yesterday I was just sorry but today I'm really sorry." That doesn't improve it a bit. That doesn't help a bit. We've got to get away from focusing on the way we feel as we approach God and thinking outside of ourselves and focusing on this great Advocate who is in heaven on our behalf, and when we do that, we're brought into that realm where God promises, "I'm not going to hold your sins against you."

Turn back to Hebrews 10, I want you to see this. You see, we denigrate, we sully, we diminish the perfection of Christ when we try to make our confession of sin, the efficacy of it something about the emotion that we bring to it. There should be sorrow but that's not the basis on which we rest for forgiveness. You don't rest in the depth of your own repentance, you rest in the depth of the work of Christ and that is where you find the satisfaction and that is what silences your guilty conscience is coming back to this work of Christ on your behalf.

Look at Hebrews 10:17, he says, "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin." Don't promise God that you're going to make it up. Don't try to work it out and then come to him in confession, just go straight there. Go straight there based on the work of Christ on your behalf because, listen, and this is so wonderful, and one of the things that we've said for those of you that have been visiting, we've been talking about, we've been using the word "settled" a lot. We have a settled reverence for God and his holiness, and as we are dealing with sin, what is it that gives us the mindset to properly deal with sin? Well, we have a settled confession of sin. You say, "I'm a sinner. I'm not going to be perfect until I get to heaven. I know I'm a sinner and I'm not going to deny that." In this fellowship when you say you're a Christian, you're saying, "I'm a sinner. I'm a forgiven sinner but I'm a sinner." You have a settled confession of sin and there is no denial of

that. There is no denial of it and yet you have a settled resistance to it. "I'm not going to accommodate sin in my life. I'm going to resist it even though I'm going to struggle with it throughout my life. I'm going to resist it but I'm not going to have any despair either because it is settled in my mind that Christ is my Advocate in heaven."

Now, here's the thing that I want you to see: if you are in Christ, forgiveness is settled for you. It's settled. It's resolved. It is taken care of. It says right there, Hebrews 10:17, "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more," meaning, "I'm not going to hold them against them anymore." You are reconciled to God. God's wrath has been satisfied for you, beloved, because Jesus' death and resurrection and his intercession on your behalf has an eternal virtue that forever cleanses you from sin and turns away God's wrath. The forgiveness, the cleansing, the reconciliation that he bought on your behalf at Calvary was perfect and you can't make it any better through anything that you do. It's that Jesus with his still nail scarred hands, it's that Jesus that represents your cause in heaven. It's that Jesus who is before the satisfied Father to intercede for you. It's that Jesus who will continue to intercede for you until he brings you home to glory.

Beloved, there is no barrier to the Father and the Son carrying out their joint purpose of love toward you. Christ died to save your soul. God is satisfied with the work that he did. The Spirit has applied it to your heart. These matters are settled in heaven forever. That means that you can have peace even in the face of your own sin. As we've said many times, that doesn't mean that we ignore sin, that doesn't mean that we accept it in our lives, we love God's holiness, we want to walk closely with him, that's why we confess our sins as 1 John 1:9 says. The point of this verse, 1 John 2:2, the point of this verse is for you to always remember and have it anchored in your mind that as you are confessing sin, you are confessing sin in the context of a reconciled relationship with the Father. You're not trying to get his favor back. His favor never left. Christ secured his eternal favor on your soul and now Hebrews 7:27 says, Jesus "does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." True biblical salvation is a once-for-all appeasement of the wrath of God. It has brought you into the realm of his favor and that favor will never be turned away from you anymore than Christ would leave heaven on unreconciled terms with the Father. It's done. It's over. As Christ said on the cross, what? "It is finished." And that security in Christ is the foundation for your spiritual growth. Once-for-all God has been propitiated. His wrath has been turned away. Justice has been fulfilled on your behalf by someone else.

Dear Christian, you are eternally secure in him and he is there in heaven representing you right now. Go forth in that security until he one day leads you to your heavenly reward.

Let's bow in prayer.

Our heavenly Father, as we have contemplated these truths, we're struck by so many things. We're struck by your holiness that upholds and vindicates your law. We're struck by a holiness that did not compromise with sin. We're struck by a love that sent Christ on our behalf. We're struck by the perfection of a sacrifice that once-for-all settled our

forgiveness, and that as we come to you now confessing sin, not to compromise with it but to walk more closely with you, we confess that sin in the context of a perfectly reconciled relationship with you. You are our Father if we know Christ. You always receive us well because Christ is there in heaven on our behalf. Our substitute. Our Advocate. Our great high priest. How vast and how magnificent is the breadth and depth and the height of biblical salvation, our Father, and for that you get all of the glory. This was your design. This was your plan. It was you who first loved us, we did not first love you. So we humble ourselves completely before your throne. We humble ourselves and acknowledge that this is to your glory and yours alone. If we are found boasting, Father, we will be boasting in the cross of Christ our Savior and not in anything that we have done or said or thought. We honor you. We praise you for sending Christ, our propitiation, and we love him from the bottom of our hearts. And now we pray that as we close this service, that we would be so anchored in these truths, so overwhelmed with the greatness of the grace of God and the goodness of Christ in our lives, that we would walk forth with a deepened resolve to honor him as long as you give us breath. We praise you and honor you in the name of Christ. Amen.

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