

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Our Divine Defense Attorney

Scripture: 1 John 2:1

Code: 62-9

Our Divine Defense Attorney

Speaking of familiar words, tonight we return to 1 John chapter 2, actually we'll start reading again in chapter 1, that's why I say familiar words, this is about the sixth message that I have given in a section that stretches from 1 John 1:5 down through 1 John 2:1. Though it is a brief section, it opens up to us all kinds of important matters to which we have given our attention now for a number of weeks.

I want to read the text from...well we'll start in verse 6 and read down into verse 1 of chapter 2, just as a setting for our particular focus tonight.

1 John 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us. My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

For tonight I want to focus on that last statement, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Jesus Christ is introduced here as our Advocate, our *parakletos*, the one who comes alongside to help. In this case the word is used to refer to someone who is a defender. And that's why we've called the message, "Our Divine Defense Attorney." There are surely lawyers in heaven, but only one practicing. There's only one practicing attorney in heaven and He is the defender of all who belong to His Kingdom. In our final study through these verses, down into verse 1, I want to concentrate on that last verse, that last sentence, "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The language there is legal. It presumes a courtroom setting in which sinners are accused before God, the divine Judge. This is God's hall of justice. The accused sinner comes before the bar of God and Jesus Christ comes as the sinner's Defense Attorney. This

introduces us to a perception of the whole matter of salvation that is very, very important, very basic. And it is this, that salvation is a matter of divine justice. Salvation is a matter of divine justice. Salvation in some ways is an operation of law before the holy Judge of all.

When we think about salvation, we think of it as an operation of divine grace. We think of it as an operation of divine mercy. And so very often in gospel presentation, the grace of God is emphasized, the mercy of God, the love of God, the compassion of God, but here is the very necessary element of justice dealt with. And salvation is a matter of divine justice as it is also a matter of divine mercy. There is more to our salvation than elements of love and grace and kindness and mercy. There is more. There is the matter of justice since God cannot ever disregard His own perfect, holy Law and justice. Some have wrongly thought that God's love somehow overpowers His justice. That is not true. Both love and justice are equally satisfied in God's salvation plan.

Salvation is a matter of forgiveness. It is a matter of advocacy, as we see here. John is laying down very absolute standards by which to define, determine and designate a true Christian. The tests that he gives by which we are to measure ourselves to see the validity of our claim to Christianity are very, very rigid tests. This would be an overwhelming experience to read this epistle and to expose yourself to this epistle were it not for the initial emphasis on the matter of forgiveness and advocacy. The statement, for example, in chapter 1 verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The statement in chapter 2 verse 1, "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father." The statement in verse 12 of chapter 2, "I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His namesake." Those are very important statements.

I'm afraid that without those statements in the opening of this epistle, the message would be overwhelming for us because John is so absolute. Let me show you what I mean. In chapter 1 verse 5, he says that, "God is light and in Him there's no darkness at all, if we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." Christians, John says, don't walk in darkness. That is they don't live their lives conducting themselves the way the dark world does. In chapter 1 verse 9 he says, "Christians confess sins." They're characterized then as those who walk in light and not in darkness, that is to say they manifest the life of God in their conduct and they are quick to confess their sins. In chapter 2 verse 3 he says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments. The one who says I've come to know Him and doesn't keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in Him. But whoever keeps or obeys His Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know we are in Him." Christians don't walk in the darkness, they always walk in the light. Christians are eager to confess their sins. And Christians obey God's commands. They keep His commandments. They obey His Word.

In chapter 2 verse 9, he says, "The one who says he's in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother, abides in the light and there's no cause for stumbling for him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, doesn't know where he's going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." John simply says Christians love their brothers and if you don't love your brother, you're in the darkness. And if you're in the darkness, you're not a believer. Christians conduct themselves as those who manifest eternal life. Christians confess their sins. Christians obey God's commands. Christians love their brothers.

In chapter 2 and verse 15, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." There's a very black and white statement. If you love the world, the love of God is not in you. It's just not there. Christians don't love the world. They don't love the evil system. They don't love what's in the world, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life, and that ever-present lust of the flesh which is not from the Father but is from the world which is passing away.

In verse 29 of the same chapter, "If you know that He is righteous, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him." This is another test. How can you tell a Christian, the Christian practices righteousness. He follows a righteous pattern.

It gets even more stringent when you come to chapter 3 verse 6, "No one who abides in Him sins, no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." That's pretty straightforward. Christians don't sin, he says. "Little children, don't be deceived, don't let anyone deceive you," verse 7, "the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the devil." Verse 9, "No one who is born of God practices sin because His seed abides in him. He cannot sin because he's born of God. By this the children of God, the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who doesn't love his brother." And he sort of sums up what he's been saying.

Christians don't walk in the darkness. Christians do confess their sins eagerly. Christians obey God's commands. They love their brothers. They don't love the world. They practice righteousness. They do not practice sin. Down in chapter 3 again, verse 14, "We know we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren. He who doesn't love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. You know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. If you have hate in your heart for somebody you do not have the love of God, therefore you do not belong to God. Whoever loves is the child of God, whoever hates is not. And if we love...verse 18...in deed and truth, not just word and tongue, we shall know by this that we are of the truth and shall assure our heart before Him." You're going to know you're a true believer because you love truly from the heart and the deeds that you do toward the one you love are manifest.

Down in chapter 3 verse 22, he says, "We keep His commandments, we do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us by the Spirit whom He's given us." Here again he says the same thing in different words. Christians obey God's commands. Christians demonstrate love toward one another. Chapter 4 reiterates the same thing, verse 7, "Let us love one another for love is from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." Verse 8, "The one who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love." Verse 21, "This commandment we have from Him that the one who loves God should love his brother also. Whoever believes that Jesus Christ...Jesus is the Christ is born of God, whoever loves the Father loves the one born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His commandments."

Then in verses 4 and 5 he says, "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." John is cycling back through the same basic elements. He is saying, if you're a true believer, you walk in the light and not the darkness. You love the Kingdom of God and not the world. You obey God's commands. You do not practice sin. You love the brothers. These are the tests.

The purpose of all of these is in chapter 5 verse 13. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life." All of this, John says, I have written to you for the single purpose that you might measure yourself against these tests and therefore know that you have eternal life. And then he summarizes everything down in verse 18 of chapter 5, "We know that no one who is born of God sins, but he who is born of God keeps Him and the evil one does not touch him."

We don't sin, John says. We love the brothers. We obey God's Word. We follow a righteous pattern. We reject the world. Strong statements, absolute statements, statements that are black and white, absolutely unbending, objective statements, repetitious and relentlessly so. John just cycles around through these things repeatedly. Each time with a little more insight and a little more elucidation.

But if we were to just read those statements and it's true, historically it's true through all the ages of the church, people who read those statements are sort of stunned by them. And it's easy to conclude that on the basis of all of those statements, only people with perfect love for the Lord, perfect love for others, perfect obedience to the Word of God, only people who don't sin, only people who have no love for the world whatsoever are going to be able to say to themselves, "Well, I know that I'm a true Christian." Unless you are perfect in your love, and perfect in your obedience and perfect in your righteousness, you're not going to pass the test. These requirements have proven to be, through the

centuries, able to induce a certain breathless kind of response. It's as if you're stopped dead in your tracks and you say to yourself, "I don't qualify, my love is not perfect, my obedience is not perfect, I'm not sinless, I'm not unattracted to the world, I'm not free from all sins of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, I...I...I just don't pass the test. It seems as though this is a call for sinlessness."

It's almost as if the only way you could pass the test would be if you were absolutely as perfect as Jesus Christ. And some people would even say that back in chapter 1 verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, or faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" is a statement that is describing the conversion of a person. And it's possible that you could interpret it that way. That this is the confession of sin that the sinner comes to at the point of his salvation, when God is faithful and just to then forgive that sin and cleanse that sinner. Some see that verse, verse 9, as referring only to salvation and therefore that verse doesn't help get us off that hook of perfection, if you will. And there are some who would include verse 12 of chapter 2 in that same context and say, "I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His namesake," that that's a reference to their salvation, that when they confess their sins, their sins were forgiven. And you could actually interpret those verses that way so that if you interpreted 1:9 to be referring to be the time of salvation, when God cleanses us and gives us forgiveness, and chapter 2 verse 12 as looking back to that time of salvation when our sins were forgiven for His namesake, you could then conclude that we're even tied in tighter to this perfectionist interpretation of the Christian life. If those two verses don't refer to an ongoing confession and an ongoing forgiveness, but are isolated to the time of our conversion, then we might conclude all the more that this is a book which basically says once you've been saved and once you've been forgiven you're expected to live a perfect life or you're not a Christian.

Except for one statement and that's the statement before us in chapter 2 verse 1. "My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin, but if anyone sins we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Take a deep breath, you need that verse. That is huge. The statement is absolutely crucial. It shuts off the panic. It is divine relief from the rigidity of this epistle. It is welcome respite from the absolutes of God's standards. It is at the same time not just personal relief, it happens to be the doctrinal Everest of the whole epistle. It is the summit of truth because it is the pinnacle of the redemptive plan of God. It is not just theology, however, as I've already pointed out to you, it is a source of practical joy and you remember, don't you, back in chapter 1 verse 4, "These things we write that our joy may be made complete." This epistle is not supposed to shut you in to horror, it's not supposed to shut you in to fear, it's not supposed to leave you absolutely breathless and frightened, it's not supposed to convince you that unless you are absolutely perfect you're not a Christian. It's supposed to set the standard where the standard needs to be. It's supposed to call you to that standard of holiness and righteousness and love. But at the same time,

it's not intended to leave you terrified, it's intended to leave you joyful. When you start out in chapter 2 verse 1, "My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin." That seems to tighten the noose, doesn't it? That seems to make things seem worse.

But suddenly comes this relief. "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." That relief is, in fact, anticipated in chapter 1 verse 9. It is, in fact, seen in chapter 2 verse 12. And here it could only be applied to true Christians. So here we have the window we desperately need in this epistle. The comfort in the traumatic experience of self-examination that this letter motivates and it motivates us to a self-examination that frankly would leave us traumatized were it not for this one statement. And here in this first verse there's really no debate as to the people its applied to because let's go back and look at it. "My little children," John uses that designation throughout his letter. Down in verse 12, "I'm writing to you, little children." Verse 13, "I've written to you, children, because you know the Father." Verse 18, "Children." Verse 28, "Now, little children." Chapter 3 verse 7, "Little children." Verse 18, "Little children." Chapter 4 and verse 4, "You are from God, little children." There he defines the source of the life of these little children. They are the little children from God. They have experienced divine birth. He closes the epistle in chapter 5, the last statement, verse 21, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols."

These are the little children that John says are my little children, speaking as an apostle, one who, no doubt, influenced them with the gospel, much like Paul saw those who came to faith under his ministry as his children. But even more importantly, they are not just the little children of John, they are the little children of God...the little children born of God. The addition of "little" is that endearing, intimate expression, makes us think of intimacy and familial relationship. And so we know who he's talking to, he's talking to the little children who were born of God, the little children who belong to God, the little children, at the end of the chapter, who possess eternal life, the life of God. "My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin." The word "sin," the verb sin, *harmartano*, it's the most common New Testament word for sin. It means to miss the mark. God sets the mark, and you miss it. To violate God's standard, used all through the New Testament to describe sin.

And the Greek construction here is helpful. You'll notice it says, "And if anyone sins." The Greek language is..is somewhat deeper than English in what it does because English no longer maintains cases with substantives, nouns, adjectives. The Greek language does and they have nuances of meaning. Also there are classes of conditional statements in the Greek language that are discernable to the student of Greek. This is what we call a third-class conditional with the subjunctive and what that means in Greek construction is that the "if" carries with it the possibility, "if, and it is reality, anyone sins." So the "if" weighs heavily on the side of possibility. If, and you will...you could translate it that way. It could be there are other conditional clauses that would be "if, and it's probably not going to happen." But this one is, "if, and it will happen." My little children, I'm writing these

things to you that you may not sin. I'm trying to emphasize the fact that you don't sin, I want to call you to not sin, but, and *ch* should be translated "but," because it's an adversative here. "But if anyone sins," here comes the pronoun, "we...we."

What does "we" refer back to? Little children, we, here refers to the true believer. Back in chapter 1, "If we...in verse 6...say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." Verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, deceiving ourselves, the truth is not in us." Verse 10, "If we say we have not sinned we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us." The "we" there refers to anybody in the assembly, anybody in the association, anybody who professes to be a believer, professing to be a Christian. The "we" there doesn't designate a true believer. But here the "we" is defined by the "little children." We... It is further defined, "We have an Advocate," the only "we" here is the "we who have an Advocate." Furthermore, verse 2 says, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." It is the "we" who are the little children, it is the "we" who have an Advocate, it is the "we" who have a propitiation. And here then comes the key to the doctrine of salvation. "If we sin, and we will, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one." If we sin, and we will, we have an Advocate, we have a Defense Attorney before the Father.

The imagery, now let's go back to the imagery, it is the imagery of the court of divine justice. God is on the bench. His responsibility is to uphold the perfection of His holy Law. He is just and He will render justice. We are the indicted sinner in the courtroom. Jesus Christ is the defense Lawyer who pleads the case on our behalf before the bar of holy God. And as we take a look closer, our salvation will be seen in its real richness. We will learn that salvation is not just an act of grace, it's not just an act of love and mercy, but it is an act of justice so that God's love did not overpower His Law, His mercy did not overwhelm His wrath, His compassion did not conquer His justice, rather they worked together in perfect harmony. Frankly, it's most common for people to have very shallow understanding of the gospel that fails to see how our salvation is not only by grace but by justice accomplished. And the New Testament makes it clear and unmistakable that justice was not at all ignored, justice was not compromised, justice was not set aside in our salvation. Rather justice was met. Justice was satisfied so that salvation is the perfect action of divine justice and grace. And that allows God according to Romans chapter 3 verse 25, to be just and the justifier of sinners.

This matter of understanding that salvation operates in the realm of justice is not an obscure idea in the New Testament. Here's a familiar verse. Do you know this one? "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek," Romans 1:16, and the next verse, "For in it...in what?...in the gospel the justice, or the righteousness of God is revealed." In the gospel it isn't just the revelation of the mercy of God and the revelation of the love of God and the grace of God, it is the revelation of the justice of God. And back to 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us." You think about that?

Is it just for God to forgive us? What would justice give us? Does justice give us forgiveness? It would seem that because we are guilty sinners that justice could not forgive us and therefore love somehow overpowers justice. That's not what it says. "He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." His gracious forgiveness then is an act of holy justice.

And I know that seems contradictory. Mercy and justice seem to contradict one another. Either you get mercy or you get justice. If you get mercy that means you didn't get what you deserve. How can that be justice? If you get justice, you get what you deserve, how can that be mercy? They seem mutually exclusive because the common understanding of justice is that it requires the guilty to be punished. And if God is just, then we ought to be punished. How can He be merciful and just to the same person at the same time? And don't mistake it, God is a God of justice. Listen to Scripture. Exodus 34:6 and 7, "Then the Lord passed by in front of him," in front of Moses, "and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness." That sounds good, right? Compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness and truth, who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin and then this, "Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." There is no trade off here. There is no sacrifice of justice for God to act in mercy. He is both merciful and just. Numbers 14:18, "The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty." Proverbs 11:21, "The evil man will not go unpunished." Nahum 1:3, "The Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." And Isaiah says in Isaiah 45:21 that, "God is a just God, and at the same time a Savior."

There are many other texts in the Bible that make it explicitly clear that God is just, God is righteous, God is holy and God will judge sinners and God will not let sin go unpunished. To do so would raise serious questions about the holiness of God, the integrity of His nature.

I'll say it another way. Scripture says every sin will be punished, every sin will be punished. According to Matthew 10:26 and Luke 12:3, even the hidden sins that are unknown, even perhaps unaccounted for by the sinner himself, God is just. Justice cries for retribution. Every sin will be accounted for. Every sin is on the record. Every sin demands punishment. No sin ever committed by anybody any time, known or unknown will go unpunished. And God's mercy is not some mitigating sentimentality that softens or weakens or replaces His justice. The truth is absolute justice must be satisfied, in fact it will be satisfied. At the same time, mercy will be given to the guilty. And most gospel presentations are fixed on God's love and rarely ever consider His justice, His wholly hatred of sin. Preachers love to talk about forgiveness, they love to talk about the love of God. They give scant space to God's just demand for judgment of every sin.

I don't know if I've ever heard a preacher say, "No sin ever committed by anyone will go unpunished." If justice is to be satisfied, then it must punish sin. And the price for sin is what? "The wages of sin is death." There never will be mercy without justice. And that's the realm in which John is dealing in

this text. If anyone sins, John could have said, "He pays," because that's consistent with God's justice. But he says instead, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one." While justice demands punishment, mercy cries out for rescuing the sinner. The gospel is not that God is going to punish every sin, that's not good news. That isn't good news. The good news is that every sin will be punished and yet the sinner will be forgiven. God will save sinners and satisfy His mercy and satisfy His justice.

Let's go into the courtroom here and see how He does it. First of all, let's look at the indictment. "If anyone sins and he will," talking here about believers, we all do. If we say we don't we lie as we learned in verse 8. And in verse 10, "If we say we don't, we make God a liar." We sin. And we are all in the courtroom guilty. The Judge knows we're guilty. I really love this. The Judge knows we're guilty, He has the complete record. Even though we have been regenerated, even though the unbroken pattern of sin is now broken, even though there are new holy aspirations and desires, even though there is a pattern of righteousness interrupted by sin rather than unbroken pattern of sin, even though we as a direction of our lives walk in righteousness, obey the Word of God, love our brothers, we still sin. And the indictment is clear. The Judge knows we're guilty. We know we're guilty. And even more amazingly, our Advocate, our defense Lawyer knows we're guilty.

There is in the court then on the part of everybody a perfect knowledge of our guilt. The indictment is settled. We're guilty. Into the courtroom also is introduced the prosecutor...the prosecutor. Though not mentioned here in this text, there is a prosecutor who also knows about our sin who is eager to force the case against us before the divine Judge. What he wants to do is come to the bar, point to the indictment, the record of our sins which is complete, and demand that God be true to His own justice and damn us to hell. Who is the prosecutor? He is the serpent of old, Revelation 12:10 says, the devil and Satan who is called the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night.

Satan's busy, really busy. He's not omnipresent, he's fast, most people think he's down here all the time mucking up their little world. I doubt that. He is moving around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But a lot of his machinations and movements are before the throne of God. He's there day and night, bringing accusations against us. Satan means adversary. He is a hateful prosecutor who cries to God relentlessly that if God is just and God is righteous and God is holy, then He must punish these who have such a list of iniquities.

So we are in the courtroom, the indictment is clear. Everyone there knows our guilt. The accuser exacerbates our guilt by relentlessly pounding upon the bar and demanding our eternal execution. Then we meet the Judge. Who is the Judge? Back to verse 2, verse 1 of chapter 2, "If anyone sins we have an Advocate with the Father." The Advocate is with the Father, the Father is the Judge. Our

Advocate goes before the Father. He advocates with the Father, that is with God. This introduces us to the Judge. The one before whom we stand as guilty, the one before whom the prosecutor brings the indictments of our sin and cries against us for damnation. This is not a jury trial, by the way. Thank the Lord. This is a trial before an absolutely holy Judge who will only do what is right and though He is an absolutely and holy and just Judge, He is also compassionate, loving, and forgiving by nature, and is a Savior. We are better off in His hands, believe me, than in the hands of our sinful peers. Wouldn't want to be before a jury of those in the world because the world hates us. They would vote for our death, along with Satan who is their king. I don't think I'd even want to be among a jury of believers. I wouldn't be sure what they'd come up with.

I remember when I went before the judge back in the early eighties, in a very, very famous case in which I was sued for what was then called "Clergy Malpractice," because a young man had committed suicide and the parents determined that they would find their retribution by suing me and our church, calling us into court. It was an amazing thing to go into a jury trial. They put their case...the prosecution puts its case on against us, against me. I sat on the stand, as witnesses do, gave my story, was cross examined, went through the entire situation. They rendered their whole case against us. And it's a sort of strange thing to realize that you're being falsely accused and yet the manipulation of the attorneys, twisting the minds of the jury, would have no real sense of spiritual reality, don't understand sin. When the case of the prosecution was completed, the judge stepped in before the defense ever gave its case and rendered "Summary Judgment."

In other words, he said, "After hearing the prosecution's case, after hearing the entire case, it is my judgment that we don't even need a defense because they are guilty of nothing." And he dismissed the case in Summary judgment. The judge stepped in and trumped the jury. That was interesting because the local newspapers polled the jury and they would have voted against us. I'm glad that we have a Judge who is righteous and it's not a jury trial.

But at the same time, God is a formidable judge. In fact, He is such a formidable judge He wrote the Law. His responsibility as a judge is not only to interpret the Law, He wrote it. He is the source, the author of the Law and the interpreter and the applier of the Law. And so as we go before Him, we're glad for His justice and at the same time we are fearful for His justice. I want you to grab on to this, because it is His very justice from which we must be saved.

It was a few years ago that my friend, R.C. Sproul, shook up the whole Christian Booksellers Convention when he gave a message called, "Saved from what?" Everybody talking about being saved, and saved from what? From unsuccessful living? Saved from lack of fulfillment? Saved from personal pain? Saved from trouble? Saved from meaninglessness? Saved from emptiness? Saved from lovelessness? Saved from fear? Saved from poverty? Saved from what? Saved from sin?

And then he gave the right answer. He said, "No, we're saved from God." Everybody was stunned. Saved from God? That's right. We need to be saved from the Judge because He has the power and the right to condemn us all. That's why Jesus said, Matthew 10:28, "Fear Him who is able." That is, "Who has the power and the authority to destroy both soul and body in hell." Don't be afraid of those who destroy the body, be afraid of the one who can destroy your soul. Who's that? That's God. Luke 12:5, "But I will warn you whom to fear, Jesus said, fear the one who after He has killed has the authority, the *exousiata* cast you into hell." Yes, I tell you, fear Him. Who has the power and the authority to cast sinners into hell? God. Saved from what? Saved from God. Saved from the Judge.

You know, when you study the Scripture and you hear what a just God will do to sinners, it's pretty frightening. Listen to Amos 5:18, "Alas, you who are longing for the Day of the Lord, you who want to come before the Lord. For what purpose will the Day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness and not light, as when a man frees from a lion and a bear meets him. Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him. Will not the Day of the Lord be darkness instead of light?" Here looking forward to meeting the Lord, you better guess again. Zephaniah chapter 1, "Near is the great Day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly. Listen, the Day of the Lord, it is the warrior, in it the warrior cries out bitterly, a day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and battle cry. Nothing will be able to deliver them on the Day of the Lord's wrath." Be a terrifying day, he says.

Second Thessalonians chapter 1 says, " There's coming a day when God deals out retribution to those who don't know Him and don't know the gospel. And they will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." We have to be saved from God. We have to be saved by God from God. At the center of this whole matter is the just Judge whose Law has been violated and who is then our executioner, if you will. We have to be saved from God. We have to be saved from His holy justice. And so God in saving us saves us from Himself.

Now here we stand before the Judge. The indictment is clear. He knows the record of our sin perfectly. We know we are sinners. The enemy, the adversary, the prosecutor knows we're sinners and rehearses that before God in order to bring about judgment. God Himself has every right to destroy us for the violation of His holy Law. If we are to be saved, we have to be saved from Him. And so we come to our defender. Wouldn't want to be in that court without one, would you? Who is it? We have an Advocate. We have a *parakletos*, we have one here in this sense used as a legal aide, a legal helper, whereas in reference to the Holy Spirit, for example, in the gospel of John, it is translated Comforter, here it is correctly translated Advocate in this legal imagery. We have a divine Defense Attorney. We're so glad. I wouldn't want to go into any court, even in a human court without

an attorney, without the best possible defender, Advocate. So when we go before the holy bar of God, we want the very best judge...the very best Attorney to argue our case before the Judge. Couldn't have a better one, by the way, He's never lost a case. Not only that, the Judge is His Father. And they know each other perfectly. Not only that, the Judge is our Father and He is sympathetic to His own children. Not only that, our Attorney knows our weaknesses because He became one of us. You know, some people think that Christ is for us and God is against us, but Christ convinces Him. Listen to this, God appointed our Defender. God chose a court-appointed Public Defender for us. And He chose the best one in the universe, the only one who could successfully argue our case. And He did that because God by nature is merciful as well as just. He is compassionate. Micah 7:18 and 19, "Who is a God like Thee who pardons iniquity, passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession, doesn't retain His anger forever, delights in unchanging love. He will have compassion on us, He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Yes, He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Advocate." Our Judge is also as well as just, merciful. And so He's ready to forgive, He's ready to pardon. And He appoints for us the perfect Advocate, the perfect Defense Attorney.

Though our prosecutor is relentless, so is our Defender. Hebrews 7:25, "He ever lives to make intercession for us." He's even more relentless than Satan. And He appeals to the mercy of God. Who is our Defender? Back to the verse, "Jesus Christ, the righteous one." Hebrews 7:26, "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, the very holy one." And listen, before He will accept you as a client, you have to confess your guilt. That's right. Before He will accept you as a client, you have to confess your guilt. He only defends those who confess their guilt. He only defends those who have reached out to Him as Savior. He is perfectly sinless but He defends sinner. What grace is that? For God Himself who is just because He's also merciful to appoint His own Son as the Advocate of the very ones who have violated His Law, to bring in the One who can defeat the adversary, the One who never loses a case, the perfect sinless Advocate. And so every one that the divine Defense Attorney represents before God is a confessed felon. The Judge knows it. The sinner knows it. And the Defense Attorney knows it. And yet He never loses a case. He always gets mercy, He always gets forgiveness, He always gets acquittal because of His amazing and wondrous advocacy.

The verdict is given. Where is the verdict? Back in verse 9 of chapter 1. "God forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness." He is faithful to do that and He's just to do it. How can that be? Well the answer is this, because our Defense Attorney is more than our Defender. Look at verse 2 of chapter 2, "Jesus Christ the righteous," not just an Advocate, "but He Himself is the...here's a big word...propitiation for our sins."

What does that mean? The satisfaction. He is more than just our Defense Attorney, He provided satisfaction for the justice of God. This is the great, great truth. God chose Christ not only to be our Advocate, but He chose Him to be our substitute.

What do you mean propitiation? What do you mean satisfaction? We'll see more about that next time, but what it basically means is He satisfied God's justice. "He...2 Corinthians 5:21...who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." He took the punishment, every sin, I said earlier, every sin ever committed will be punished. All of ours were placed on Christ and He bore that punishment in our place. First Peter emphasizes that, chapter 2 verse 24, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross." That's it. He bore our sins in His body on the cross. By His wounds you were healed. That is, of course, reminiscent of the great, great fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, let me just read you a few verses, speaking of Christ. "The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him," verse 6. Verse 10, "The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief if He would render Himself as a guilt offering." In other words, He became our substitute, He was the guilt offering for our sin. Verse 11 says, "He was the servant who justified many by bearing their iniquities." Verse 5, then, a familiar verse, "He was pierced through for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, the chastening for our well-being fell on Him and by His scourging we are healed."

He then is the One who delivers us from the wrath to come, 1 Thessalonians 1:10. By being the satisfaction, the propitiation, dying in our place. So He's not just our Defense Attorney, He's our substitute, and He ever lives to defend us. Our names are being dragged before the bar of God all the time by the enemy who's always accusing us before God and the interceding Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ, is ever living to take our case and to reiterate that He has paid for all our sins. Thus the justice of God is satisfied in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ in which all our sins were paid for and the mercy of God is satisfied because the sinner having had his sins paid for can now receive mercy.

Turn to Romans chapter 3, we'll bring this to a close. Romans chapter 3 verse 21, "Apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifest." The justice of God, how can God manifest His justice apart from the Law? How could it happen? "Even the righteousness or the justice of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe."

How could God do that? How could God manifest His justice? By forgiving us. How could God manifest justice apart from Law? Justice is based on Law. How could God if He sets His Law aside manifest His justice? Answer, verse 25, "Because He publicly displayed Christ Jesus as a satisfaction in His blood." He didn't set aside His Law in the truest sense, He set aside the punishment that His Law rendered to us, He set it aside in terms of withholding it from us but He put it on Christ who became a satisfaction in His blood and verse 25 says, "This was to demonstrate His justice. This was to demonstrate His justice." To demonstrate His righteousness. God demonstrated

His righteousness in the death of Jesus Christ. Romans...or, Acts 2 tells us that Jesus was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. And so, if we sin, what happens? If we sin, ha...here comes the prosecutor, so-and-so sinned...so-and-so sinned. The Advocate comes in and says, "I paid for that sin, I paid for that sin, and He ever lives to intercede before the bar of God on our behalf because God was satisfied with His payment." That's why Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no...what?...condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That's why verse 33 and 34 of Romans 8 says, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Who can successfully bring an accusation? The idea, of course, is no one because God is the one who justifies. Verse 34, "Who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, who rather was raised from the dead and who is at the right hand of God who also intercedes for us." No one can bring a successful accusation against us because God has already declared us just, because justice was satisfied when our sins were paid for by Christ. And Christ Jesus is there at the right hand of God, ever and always interceding for us.

You say, "Well what if Christ doesn't love us anymore? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. So Jesus paid in full for all our sins and because He is the propitiation or the satisfaction, He can be a successful Defense Attorney. All the charges against us, Colossians 2:11 to 15, "All the charges against us...great passage...were nailed to His cross." Beautiful imagery. When they crucified somebody in ancient times, they would nail a placard to the cross that listed the crime. When Jesus died on the cross, according to Colossians chapter 2 verses 11 to 15, all the listing of our sins was nailed there as evidence that this is the reason He died for those sins. The Judge who is offended, the Judge whose holy Law has been violated, the Judge decided that He would allow a substitute to pay the price, He chose the substitute Himself, He forsook His own Son for the sake of sinners. That's how great His love and mercy are. Mercy and justice kissed each other at the cross. And even the prosecutor from hell can't argue injustice, can't condemn, can't gain a hearing. For God has declared us just in Christ. And Christ ever lives to intercede for us against every accusation that's brought before God. The price the Judge demanded was met. The Judge affirmed His satisfaction by raising our propitiator, our Defender from the dead, by exalting Him from His right hand where He intercedes for us before the heavenly throne. Therefore we are forever secure in that intercession, in that justification, in that satisfaction.

So, that's the breathing space in the epistle. If you believe and you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, this is your story. If you do not, Jesus will not be your Defender. He is not your Defender, He will be your Prosecutor and He will be your Executioner. For God has put all judgment in His hands for those who obey not the gospel. My justice is in Christ. I pray that's true for you.

Father, thank You again for these glorious truths which again are brought to light in another portion of Scripture. We are so thrilled again to grasp these great realities of our redemption. Thank You, thank You, not just for the understanding but for the reality of this. May our hearts be literally overflowing with joy, endless joy, for this great gift. We thank You that we can as we sung earlier

come boldly before the throne of God for the Lamb has taken our place. He is our propitiator and now our defender. It's in His glorious name that we rejoice and say Amen and Amen. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).