

## 1 John 2:1-14 (ESV)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

<sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. <sup>3</sup> And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

<sup>4</sup> Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

<sup>8</sup> At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

<sup>9</sup> Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

<sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

<sup>12</sup> I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

<sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

<sup>14</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Don't sin. But if you do sin, don't make any excuses. You're explanations won't do you any good. You're defense will fall apart under examination. Your remorse will gain you no pity.

Do not sin. But if you do sin, don't try to cover it up. Don't pretend that your good deeds outweigh your bad ones. You cannot hide from the shame of your transgression.

Don't sin. But if you do sin, don't surrender to the desires of the flesh. Don't yield yourself to your base impulses. Sin shall not be your master.

## 1 John 2:1 (ESV)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

When I give a Children's Chat, I try to use an object lesson to keep their attention and to illustrate a point. I realize that what the children remember may not be the point I wanted to make.

What I want them to remember is that their Pastor told them about JESUS. I want them to know that sin will bring them harm and separate them from JESUS.

What I want them to have in their heads and in their hearts is that JESUS is their advocate. He will speak to the Father on their behalf. He will never leave or forsake them. He loved them enough to die for them.

The world, the culture and their peers will give these little ones a different scenario; a different script to follow. They will be told that your success in life is based upon:

- Your outward appearance
- Your achievements
- Your popularity

If you do well in any of those areas, you'll do okay in life. If you strike out in any of those areas, good luck. That kind of world view will lead you into sin.

Sin is defined as any want of conformity unto or transgression of the Law of God. It works itself out when we try to find our fulfillment in life outside of the covenant of grace.

It's loving the things of this world more than the Creator of this world. It's coveting things that don't belong to us. It's wanting more of what we already have enough of.

We sin when we desire the praise of men more than the praise of God. We transgress the Law of God when we go outside the parameters that He gives us for our own good.

My little children, do not sin. Don't do that which is right in your own eyes. You are not more intelligent than God. What you lose is so much more than what you think you will gain by sinning against God.

When you sin, you are gambling with your soul. If you're lucky, you can get away with your transgression and perhaps even gain by it. It gives you a burst of adrenaline.

When you gamble, you know that the odds are against you, but you go for it anyway. You're willing to take a chance. When you have a little success, you're willing to risk more.

There comes a time when a line is crossed. No matter what you do or say outwardly, in your heart, you no longer trust God with your life.

You are hell bent to call your own shots. You have your own agenda. You have cast your lot. You have all your eggs in one basket, and you live for this life only.

Thankfully we worship a God who is sovereign. His providence rules over all. His grace is greater than our sin.

If you belong to Him, He will persevere with you and for you to bring to completion that which He began in you. But if you have gambled away your birthright for a pot of stew, the LORD in His grace, will have to break you to bring you back.

My little children, I would spare you that. You do not have to learn the lessons of life and faith the hard way. Don't yield yourself to sin. Take the narrow path that leads to life, not the wide path that leads to destruction.

Resist the spirit of the age. Go against the current of the culture. Don't always try to fit in with the crowd. You are not your own. Remember who you belong to.

*My little children.* It's with great affection that John speaks those words to his flock. The youngest of all the apostles, he writes at the time when he is now a much older man, perhaps the last of the apostles still living.

When I first came to this congregation, I was a young man, 23 years old. I was engaged to be married. I was idealistic and excited about the possibility of doing youth ministry within this church.

It's now 36 years later. I'm amused when I talk with young men on the phone who are interested in our open position of youth director.

I recognize their youthful zeal. I love their eagerness to enter into the fray. I know how much they want to serve.

I look at ministry through different lenses now. When I first came here my predecessor was my mentor; he was a father figure to me. When we hire someone new here, I will assume that role.

John here is giving a fatherly admonition to his little children. It's really more of a grandfatherly role that he's playing here. Giving a strong word to fathers who are in the midst of raising their own children in the LORD. He addresses fathers, and young men.

The paternal role model has been in the news a lot this week, hasn't it? NFL football players, many of whom had no earthly fathers, are now being scrutinized not for their performance on the field, but for their parenting skills.

What is the proper role of a father in disciplining children? Is corporal punishment ever appropriate? What does a man's relationship with the mother of his children have to do with his parenting skills?

It takes someone older to give perspective on these issues. When you are starting out in ministry or parenting, it's hard to see the big picture.

The apostle John, now an elderly man, gives all of us a strong admonition from the LORD. Don't sin. How does that apply to men today?

Don't father children out of wed-lock. Don't ever discipline a child in a rage of anger. Don't use your physical size or strength to intimidate or impose your will upon another.

Anger and rage are signs that you've not yielded yourself to the God who controls all things. He alone is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent.

When a man strikes out at someone who is smaller and more fragile, they only show how weak and pathetic they are.

Many of these huge and powerful athletes are nothing more than overgrown children themselves. They are fun to watch when things go well for them, they act like toddlers having a temper tantrum when they don't get their way.

The apostle John says, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin."

How many of you have allowed anger control your actions? Have you abused your role as a parental or authority figure? Are there some words or actions that you wish you could take back?

As a younger man, I sought to assert my authority by always calling the shots, by thinking that I always had to be in control of what was going on.

I'm older now. I may not be much smarter, but I have learned some things over the years.

Consistency is more important than control. The world does not revolve our successes or failures. What the LORD has done for me is more important than what I attempt to do for Him.

Don't sin, but if you do sin, (2<sup>nd</sup> pt) don't waste your time in trying to excuse your sin or cover it up. It doesn't work.

### **Genesis 3:7 (ESV)**

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they found fig leaves to try to cover their shame. Can you imagine how ridiculous they looked? Fig leaves; loincloths. That's as bad as me in a Speedo.

Even though we're fully clothed, it's just as ridiculous for us to try to cover our shame with our own version of fig leaves. Excuses, justifications, blaming those around you.

It's even more foolish to think that you can hide from God when you've sinned. Adam and Eve tried that as well. They hid in the bushes. Where do you go when you try to run away from the living God?

### **Psalms 139:7-12 (NIV)**

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Some people try to hide from God in their pursuit of pleasure. Some try to hide from God in their pursuit of success.

Some seek to justify themselves by living on the straight and narrow, trying to avoid God by establishing their own righteousness.

Beloved, don't sin. But if you do sin, you have an advocate. JESUS Christ, the Righteous One. He speaks to the Father in your defense.

He doesn't make excuses for your sin. He doesn't talk about your difficult circumstances and the pressure you were under. He doesn't plea bargain.

JESUS Christ, the Righteous One assumes your guilt and takes your punishment. He turns away God's wrath. He exchanges your sin for His righteousness.

Does that mean that you can sin as much as you want to because JESUS has you covered? By no means!

You may have known somebody who was raised in an affluent home who couldn't stay out of trouble. No matter how much they had, it wasn't enough. They constantly have run ins with the law.

When I was in seminary I worked the midnight shift in a juvenile detention center. My job was basically to check kids in when the police brought them in.

Most of our cliental were kids from East St. Louis. Tough kids from very poor and tough neighborhoods. Every now and then we'd get a kid from Clayton, or Des Pare, some of the wealthy neighborhoods.

When my shift would spill over into the morning, I'd see the parents of these rich kids come in and basically bail them out. There would be some dramatics, some yelling, screaming and gnashing of teeth.

But I often got the impression that the parents were more embarrassed by the incident than anything else. The sooner they could get past this, the better.

Those kids grew up thinking that money could get them out of any mess they got themselves into. I suspect that that's how they handled the challenges of life.

JESUS is your advocate, but He's not there to bail you out of trouble. A father disciplines those he loves. You will reap what you sow.

If you yield yourselves to your sinful nature, you will bear fruit that will show itself to be bad. And I'm not just talking about leaving a bad taste in your mouth. (Consequences)

True repentance is a gift of God's grace. Hating your sin is a part of your reconciliation with the only true God who is absolutely holy.

JESUS as your advocate will separate you from your sin as far as the east is from the west. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD will have compassion for you.

But that's not taking your sin lightly. JESUS died for your sin. The punishment that brought us peace was laid on Him. By His wounds you are healed.

A part of growing up and maturing in the faith is seeing how all things are connected. When we sin, we hurt ourselves, those around us, and we become estranged from our Maker.

JESUS is your advocate. He speaks in your defense. He doesn't love you any less when you sin, but sin makes that love painful.

Do you ever remember making one of your parents cry? Have you ever hurt or disappointed your mother or your father to the point where they have wept?

Do you remember how you felt about that? It's one thing when they in anger throw the book at you and ground you for the next six months. It's quite another when you spot them by themselves in tears.

Did they stop loving you? No. Did you hurt them deeply? Yes, and that's a terrible feeling. Corporal punishment is easier to take than that.

The God that we worship is not shocked when we sin. He doesn't have an identity crisis when we do stupid things. But the Bible does say, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit."

When you sin, confess your sin. Humble yourself before God. Turn from your sin in repentance. Hate your sin, but don't turn that hatred inward.

You have an advocate, who speaks in your defense. He will answer the accuser who will claim that you are worthless and that you have nothing more to live for.

If you don't have JESUS as your advocate, you become your own advocate. That either turns to an arrogant pride which spots all kinds of faults in others but is blind to one's own faults.

Or being your own advocate can cause you to implode, to turn in on oneself with self-hatred.

If Satan can't claim your soul, he will at least try to rob you of your joy in the LORD; a joy that comes with your redemption, the forgiveness of your sin.

Satan would have you to love your sin, but hate yourself. And he does that so that you will turn on the God who made you.

He will seek to divert your attention away from grace and mercy, and have you look at the ugliness of your disgrace.

The problem is of course, is that the accuser has a lot of material to work with. There's plenty of sin in each of us for him to have a strong case against us.

But you have an advocate. He is the Righteous One. He speaks to the Father on your behalf.

Go to your advocate. Listen to His counsel. Do what He tells you to do. Place your complete trust in Him. He will gain your acquittal. He will set you free.

He also gives us a new commandment. Actually, it's not so new, it was there all along, but the commands of God are viewed very differently once you've been forgiven.

The Law of God is a death sentence to those who don't have JESUS Christ as their advocate. Name just one of the Ten Commandments that you've not violated.

We spend a good portion of our lives trying to defend ourselves that we're not as selfish and idolatrous as the commands of God expose us to be.

We try hard to have an appearance of being a decent, law abiding, God fearing person.

But as redeemed sinners, we look at the commands of God in a different way.

### **1 John 2:7-11 (ESV)**

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

<sup>8</sup> At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

<sup>9</sup> Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

<sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

<sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

The new commandment is nothing more than the old commandment lived out through the Gospel.

Israel knew the Shema. They knew that they were to love God and their neighbor. They also knew, that they failed to do that every day.

That's what the sacrifices were all about. To appease the God that they had failed to honor. But those sacrifices were pointing to something greater.

The Pharisees felt the need to go beyond the sacrifices by adding to God's commands those things that they could do and accomplish. But their hearts were unchanged. They need something greater than the spiritual disciplines.

They needed a Savior, a redeemer. One who would do in their behalf what they could not do. That's what JESUS did.

JESUS fulfilled the Law. He also loved those who hated Him. He died for those who rejected Him. He brought those walking in darkness into the light.

We can't hide our sin. Sin makes us smaller people. It makes us brittle, harsh, unforgiving, judgmental, unloving.

The new commandment JESUS gives you is not to try harder to be good, but to love others as JESUS loved you.

Sin is the reason why we don't love one another the way we should. But think about this: even while you were yet a sinner, Christ died for you.

His death acted as the propitiation for our sins. The just wrath of God was laid on Him, so that you may have His righteousness.

My dear brothers and sisters. In the name of JESUS, I give you a new commandment. Love one another, as JESUS has loved you.