We All Need An Advocate!

Theme: Christians can rest assured in the qualifications of their Advocate before the Father.

Scripture: 1 John 2:1-6

A. Have you ever needed an advocate?
   1. By “advocate” I mean “one that pleads the cause of another.”
   2. You have if you have ever submitted a resume with references... in essence your listed references serve as a witness to your work ethic & character.
   3. From a homeschool perspective we are members of the HSLDA which acts as our legal advocate should we ever have problems with public school officials).
   4. If you have ever committed a sin? Then you need an Advocate! Romans 6:23
      a. We're not talking about human advocacy... for the problem of sin is beyond the pay grade of mankind to rectify on their own.
      b. Romans 3:23 ESV... “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
      c. Whether “in Christ” (a Christian) or outside of Christ (lost)... help is needed to address the condemning problem of the personal violation of God’s will (what is commonly called “sin”).

B. Our text today in 1 John tells us about the most important Advocate we can ever have in life... Jesus Christ the Righteous.
   1. The letter of 1 John is an important letter for the church (in the first century and today) since it reinforces themes that people often struggle with:
      2. Assurance: “We can know that we have eternal life...” (5:13)
      3. Authenticity: “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil...” (3.10)
      4. Action: “Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” (3.18)
      5. Advocacy: “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.” (2:1)

C. Today we will look at what John has to say about Jesus and His Divine Advocacy.

I. Our Need for His Advocacy. (2:1)

   A. With a sense of fatherly affection, John tells the troubled church that they have need for an Advocate.
      1. “Little children” = appears 7x in the epistle, but the addition of “My” makes it personal for the apostle (perhaps he converted many addressed?)
         a. It’s a phrase that speaks of John’s position of superiority/authority within that relationship. (Baylor: Culy)
         b. It’s a phrase that shows the depth of personal care by John. (3 Jn 4)
      2. Given the talk about Christian assurance (1.5-10) ...it is only likely that some might misconstrue John’s point to mean that it’s okay to sin.
         a. There are certainly some who would claim to be Christians today who would hold to such an idea. (Christian "Antinomianism")
         b. “Jesus saved me. I cannot lose my salvation. Therefore why be bound by moral dictates that keep me from enjoying happiness in the now?”
         c. Such an attitude is common & perverts the grace of God: Rom. 6:1-2
d. **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**: "Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as a Christian ‘conception’ of God... Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate... Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ" (The Cost of Discipleship, pp. 35–37).

3. **John wasn’t condoning sin, nor promoting the practice of sin...**
   
   John was writing "so that you may not sin" (v1a) = aorist subjunctive
   
   a. The word for "sin" here is *hamartē* which literally carries the image of “missing the mark.” (Judges 20:16 LXX)
   
   b. It is used in the sense of sin committed against both man and God (since any sin by definition is a violation of God's revealed will).

4. **John merely acknowledges the fact that Christians, though cleansed and set apart for God’s use, are imperfect and will occasionally sin.**
   
   a. The Greek for "sin" is aorist tense (point action)... contrasted with the present tense “walking in darkness” (habitual - 1:6).
   
   b. **Wuest... “If any man commit an act of sin...”**
   
   c. **Baylor Handbook:** This “effectively highlights the absolute incompatibility of sinful behavior and a relationship with God.” (Culy)

5. **John moves from “you may not sin” to self-association with the continual need for divine advocacy (forgiveness)... “WE have an Advocate.”**

**B. Since we will can commit an act of darkness, and God cannot tolerate sin, we need someone BEYOND US (DIVINE) to plead our case to the Father.**

1. John uses the term “Advocate” (*parakletos*) to refer to the continual work of Christ on behalf of His faithful disciples.
   
   a. This word only appears 5x in the NT (all in John’s books and every time with reference to deity: 4x to the Spirit and 1x to Jesus).
   
   b. **BSL:** A person who acts as a spokesman or representative of someone else’s policy, purpose, or cause, especially before a judge in a court.
   
   c. **Baylor Handbook:** “The focus isn’t so much on the ability of the parakletos to defend someone, but rather on the status of the parakletos, which allows him to bring about a good outcome for the one being accused.” (see Philo, Flaccus, 21-23)

2. Since the character of the Advocate was paramount... we can better understand John’s identifying ours as “Jesus Christ the Righteous.”

2. This verse outlines His divine qualifications for Advocacy on our behalf...
   
   a. **He is Jesus** = speaks to the humanity of our Advocate.
   
   b. **He is Christ** = speaks to the divinity of our Advocate. (Acts 2:36)
   
   c. **He is Righteous** = speaks to the moral-spiritual quality of his person (and the quality of His sacrifice on our behalf - Hebrews 9:13-14).
   
   c. Despite His innocence He suffered for others sake: **Isa. 53:8-9, 12**

**C. This Advocacy is exactly what Job cried out for in the OT... expressing a need for spiritual representation before a pure and holy God. (Job 9:32-33)**

1. In Jesus we have One qualified to speak on behalf of both man and God.

2. This is the true greatness of our Divine Advocate!
II. Our Hope in His Advocacy. (2:2)

A. Because we will sin we need a solution for that sin moving forward.
   1. **Baptism is for remission of past sins...** a solution is needed for new sin.
   2. **Jesus Christ and his blood is the solution moving forward...** based on His divine advocacy before the Father on our behalf.
   3. The NASB/NKJV accurately reads... “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...” emphasizing the work of Christ on our behalf.

B. What is meant by the term “propitiation?”
   1. NASB Marginal: **“He is the satisfaction for our sins...”**
   2. BSL: **“The means of appeasing wrath** and gaining good will of an offended person; especially with respect to sacrifices for appeasing deities.”
   3. This word is closely associated with the term “atonement” in the OT (LXX uses a form of the same word).
   a. The Day of Atonement is the day when the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place and make “atonement/propitiation” for the sins of the entire nation of Israel.
   b. He would sprinkle the sacrifice’s blood on the Mercy Seat (which in the LXX is a form of the word translated “propitiation” in the NT!)
   c. See... Romans 3:25 (propitiation) - Hebrews 9:5 (Mercy Seat).
   5. **In other words...** Jesus is the payment for our penalty and is the continual (“we have” = present tense) helper we need to be able to confidently stand before God the Father... **the only means by which we can find help before the Father for the problem of sin.**
   6. This is why I prefer the subjective genitive rendering of Gal. 2:20 (NET).

Conclusion:

C. Example of Robert Lincoln.
   1. The story is told of the son of a man named Wilbur Chapman.
   2. He was the boyhood friend of Abraham Lincoln’s son... Robert.
   3. Mr. Chapman’s son joined the Union forces towards the end of the Civil War and was fighting frontline battles.
   4. Robert Lincoln, upon learning of the precarious situation of his friend, instructed the soldier to write to him if he wanted him to intercede with his father... the President and Commander-in-Chief.
   5. **Later, Chapman’s son would recalled,** “I never took advantage of the offer, but you don’t know the comfort it was to me... knowing that I would have his intercession.”
   6. **For every Authentic Christian... there is complete assurance in the knowledge that our friend and Advocate in the court of Heaven is the Son of God Himself... “who always lives to make intercession for us!”**

B. We sometimes sin... but Jesus is our Divine Public Defender.
   1. His blood turns away the wrath of God towards sin... if we walk in the light and confess our sins, recognizing a need for His advocacy.
   2. He is always ready to plead our case... **He is our constant Advocate!**
B. But we must accept the terms of His Advocacy to receive His representation.
   1. There is no law on the books that states we must use a public defender in a civil trial before human judges... in fact the law protects our right to pursue self-representation (a foolish move).
   2. Jesus’ atoning sacrifice was sufficient to deal with the sins of the whole world, but His sacrifice does not become effective until the terms of His advocacy are agreed to and acted upon.
   2. Just as we have free will to choose Jesus... we have free will to reject Him and his Advocacy before the Father to our peril.

   **2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 (ESV)**

   7 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed...

   **Who is your Advocate before the Father?**

   *Christ is ready to plead your case before the Father, but you must first accept His conditions... faith, repentance, baptism, faithfulness.*