

Title: The Joy and Constraint of the Believer

Text: 1 John 2: 1-2

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1 John 2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

John addresses brethren as “little children” 9 times in this epistle. This was how the Lord addressed his disciples—no matter their age, no matter their time in the faith, he said, “Little children, yet a little while I am with you” (John 13: 33.) It reminds us of our frailty and dependence upon our heavenly Father. By the Spirit of God in the new birth, the elect of God are made “little children.”

Matthew 18: 3: Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And John gives the reason he is writing these things, “these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” Let’s go back and see what these things are.

1 John 1: 1: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2: (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3: That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John 17:21:...as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:...

1 John 1: 4: And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Ephesians 3: 17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;...19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

So we see two reasons John has given for this word he is delivering. Here he says, “that your joy might be full”. Before he said, “that we sin not.” What is the word that will do that! It is the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace: electing grace, predestinating grace, redeeming grace, regenerating grace, forgiving grace, preserving grace, glorifying grace. Salvation is all of God’s grace. Grace did not choose any sinner because of anything in the sinner and nothing in the sinner will cause God to forsake his child of mercy.

1 John 1: 5: This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Every sinner who believes on Christ—shall have God to do for us what is right and faithful and just—we shall have the light of life because in God *is no darkness at all*. Christ Jesus said, “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8: 12.)

1 John 1: 6: If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

If a person says he believes on Christ. Yet, that sinner walks in darkness. He is yet hiding from Christ the Light. He is afraid he will be reproved, rejected by God because his deeds are evil. Such a man is yet in darkness. He hates the Light. He is afraid of Christ. He does not know the faithfulness and justice of God to forgive all who come to him.

John 3: 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

1 John 1: 7: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

If we walk in Light, as Christ is in the Light, we have fellowship with God and God with us. We come to Christ the Light in the first place because the blood of Christ through the Holy Spirit has purged our conscious from the darkness of our natural heart so we that draw near, confessing we are only sin and need forgiveness. And coming to Christ the Light, we behold through faith that in Christ that his blood has cleansed from all sin. And Christ continually cleanses us from all sin daily. By this Light of God's fellowship, by his continual faithfulness and forgiveness, he keeps us walking before him in truth.

Psalm 56: 13: For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt not thou deliver* my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Psalm 89: 15: Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

1 John 1: 8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...10: If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Any sinner who will not come to Christ because he thinks he has no sin—is deceived in the darkness of the natural heart. The truth is not in us. Sinner, the one thing keeping you from Christ is that you will not take sides with God against yourself.

And any man who claims to be a believer and imagines he has not sinned-- today, this hour, or since we have been sitting here listening to the gospel—that man deceives himself and the truth is not in him and he calls God a liar.

As believers, by God's grace, through faith in Christ Jesus, we know that in Christ, by his one offering to God as our Substitute and Sin-Bearer we are:

- Freed from the guilt of sin
- Freed from the condemnation of sin
- Freed from the dominion of sin reigning in us
- Freed from the wrath of God toward our sin
- Before God in Christ the believer has no sin

But because of his Light, we know that in our flesh still dwells “no good thing.” Sin is mixed with all we do, every moment. The believer knows, we have need of being cleansed from our sins every hour, every day-- “O wretched man that I AM!”

Remember: John is writing this that our joy might be full and that we sin not. Here is **The Joy and Constraint of the Believer**. This is what drew us to Christ in the first hour and what continues to draw us to him through this life of faith:

1 John 1: 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- *God is faithful*—to Christ, for Christ’s sake—to his children for his righteousness sake
- *God is just*--by the blood of Christ who has paid all that his children owe for our sins
- And God shall do so—he forgives and cleanses the believer of all unrighteousness.

Joy is being able to come to God in honesty confessing what we are knowing that God is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. God proves this to us a thousand times a day. His love keeps filling our hearts and drawing us to him.

Here is the question: how can God be faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness?

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An advocate is one who pleads for another before the Judge.

Illustration: Think of a lawyer who stands up for his guilty client and says “I will pay the sentence my client owes. Not only for his past crimes but also add to my sentence the penalty of all the crimes he will commit in the future.”

So the Advocate satisfies justice in behalf of that one he represents. Then when his client breaks the law in the future, the Advocate appears before the Judge for that man saying, “For my sake that has paid for his crimes and for the sake of the justice of this court do not charge any of these crimes to him.”

Get this: Forgiveness for one of Christ’s redeemed is not only an act of mercy from God it is an act of justice. *He is faithful and JUST to forgive us.*

Christ has honored and magnified the law of God for those he represented on the cross—Jew and Gentile all over the world—and Christ is the Advocate with the Father for his people by his presence with the Father in glory. Psalm 69 is Christ speaking when the Lord made him sin for his people.

Psalm 69: 5: O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee.

First, in confessing the sin of his people to be his own, Christ justified *the sentence of the law* against himself in the place of those for whom he died. Secondly, in presenting himself to pay the wages of sin *Christ vindicated the sanction and perfection of the law*. Thirdly, in paying the wages of sin, *Christ satisfied the law*—he is the propitiation for our sins. Thus, Christ has honored and magnified the law of God for those he represented on the cross.

So, Christ as the Advocate of his people, as the Righteousness of his people, as the Propitiation for the sins of his people, pleads two things:

1. FOR HIS OWN SAKE;
2. FOR THE SAKE OF GOD’S OWN JUSTICE.

Psalm 69: 6: Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for MY SAKE; let not those that seek thee be confounded for MY SAKE, O God of Israel. Because for THY SAKE I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.

“For my sake: because I bore the shame and reproach of their sin, and paid for their crimes—BECAUSE I AM THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS—lay not this charge to them. And for thy sake, O Father: because your justice has been satisfied toward them, for the sake of your own righteousness, lay not this sin to their charge.”

Payment God cannot twice demand—
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.
— Augustus Toplady

So by the blood and righteousness of Christ who died in the room and stead of his people, God is faithful and just to forgive all of his redeemed from all our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

When we have cast our care on Christ confessing our sins, through the blood of Christ the Spirit of God cleanses us in the court of our consciences by speaking into our hearts

Zechariah 3:4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

Isaiah 51: 22: Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again.

The fruit his grace and forgiveness produces in the believer is this:

1. It fills us with joy.

Lamentations 3: 58: O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.

2. It mortifies our sinful flesh, creates a desire to keep the commandments of our God, creating love and mercy in us toward our brethren.

Ephesians 4: 32: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.

Only this word of God’s grace of forgiving our sins for the sake of Christ causes the believer to delight, not merely in the letter of the law, but in the God of the law.

Application

Dear sinner, flee to Christ, confess all your sin to Christ. Test him. Come to him and see if God is faithful and just to forgive us. Believer, may his faithful forgiveness fill us with joy and cause us to desire to sin no more.

AMEN!

