



## Sermon, Sunday August 6, 2023

# “The atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world”

**SCRIPTURE: 1 John 1:2-2:2** <sup>1</sup>We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup>this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— <sup>3</sup>what we have seen and heard we also declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We are writing these things so that our<sup>[a]</sup> joy may be complete. <sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. **2:1** 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>and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

### Introduction: The problem of sin from which all creation cannot escape

Today is the 10th Sunday after Pentecost. In the Bible, the word of God's revelation, there are passages that we can easily understand and that even non-Christians like, even though they do not attend church. On the other hand, there are passages that also Christians do not understand well. For example, the phrases **“Love your neighbor as yourself”** (Leviticus 19:18) or **“Do to others what you would have them do to you”** (Matthew 7:12) are verses that are easy to understand, and that non-Christians can also relate to.

By the way, the words of today's text say; **“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; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”** (1 John 2:1-2). These are important words in our lives, but they are not always welcomed by people, or people do not know the true meaning of these words.

What many people find burdensome in the words of the Bible is the term, ‘sin’. Generally, people think that if they do something illegal, they should be held accountable for it. This is to think of 'sin' as breaking the rules of the world. However, early Christians accepted sin on a more essential level. In other words, neither those who do not abide by the rules of the world nor those who keep them can escape the power of sin. So, what is the sin the Bible refers to?

First, the Bible says that sin is related to the fundamental nature of man, so it is difficult for man to solve it through his own efforts. All humans, without exception, have a desire for money, fame, and power. The Bible calls man's instinctive desires sin. Today's text speaks about how humans can be free from 'sin'.



## Body: Jesus Christ, the Advocate

Apostle John says in the text that we have an advocate. In today's text, the term advocate is a translation of the Greek word 'parakletos' (παράκλητος). A parakletos (παράκλητος) is a person who defends the accused in a court of law. This means that the One who defends us before God's court is Jesus Christ. The reason Jesus can defend us is because He is the source of life and only Jesus is righteous. In contrast, a man with a deep-seated sinful tendency cannot defend himself.

In fact, some find it difficult to admit that Jesus Christ is our Advocate. However, I hope everyone can acknowledge this fact through the help of the Holy Spirit.

People outside the church do not understand these claims of the Bible. They protest these claims of the Bible, asking what relationship they have with the fate of Jesus. Also, they are asking how they can be defended and redeemed through Him. They see Jesus' destiny as separate from their own life.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! The reason we cannot escape the power of sin is because we try to complete our lives with our own strength. However, human beings who are not free from the instinctive desire for money, fame, and power cannot escape the power of sin through their own efforts. Please don't forget this.

The reason why Jesus can be our righteous advocate and the atoning sacrifice is because He showed the world that our life is completed through His love on the cross. Jesus' disciples and early Christians knew and believed that fact, so they lived as Jesus' disciples even in difficult circumstances. Also, they experienced what perfect true love is through the death of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus said in John 11, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?**" (John 11:25-26).

The disciples and early Christians, who experienced perfect true love through the death of Jesus on the cross, boldly proclaimed the words of the above passage with confidence. This was possible because the disciples of Jesus and the early Christians were completely free from the idea that a successful life had to come true if they realized their desires. This is what we call '**Atonement**' in theological terms. We all must have this experience of atonement.

However, among the early Christians, there were people who misunderstood this doctrine of atonement. They were Gnostics. (Gnosticism is interpreted as a religious movement that tried to achieve salvation through mystical knowledge.) They claimed that sin had no effect on them now because their sins had already been washed away through Jesus Christ.

So Gnostics, who do not admit sin, do not need forgiveness of sins, nor do they need the advocate, nor do they need the atoning sacrifice. The attitude of these Gnostics is in line with the life of modern people who regard only their own success as an important value. They think that it is enough to live a pleasant life without associating it with sin. But can humans live such a life?

However, today **1 John 1:8** says, "**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**" Unlike the Gnostics, the orthodox church fathers took the problem of sin seriously. **1 John 1:9** says, "**If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**"

As we can see from this passage, the Church Fathers focused on the powerful influence of sin in our lives. The phrase '**confess our sins**' in this verse is not an excuse for those who sin repeatedly after accepting Jesus and who live a life that is ridiculed by those who do not believe in the Lord. '**Confess our sins**' in this verse means acknowledging that we are, on an essential level, in need of forgiveness.

The greatest challenge for people is the difficulty of confessing that we are by nature, without exception, confessing our sins and needing forgiveness.



The reason why it is difficult for us to confess our essential human sins is that we can lose the sense of relative superiority we have towards others. If we take an extreme example, we would be offended if we said that there is no difference between a person who kills a person and goes to prison and a person who has a bad thought in his heart but does not act it out. Because the human heart takes great satisfaction in being a little better than other people, it is difficult to confess essential sin.

On the other hand, there are those who confess their sins only verbally, without any sincerity. People like this say, 'Everyone is a sinner, so who can we blame?' By the way, the attitude of considering the seriousness of sin or the behavior of avoiding the weight of sin by generalizing that sin is committed by everyone is far from the 'confession of sin' that the text speaks of today. All of them do not need Jesus Christ, the righteous Advocate, and the atoning sacrifice. However, we are Christians who think and believe that true life can only be obtained through Jesus. Therefore, Christians must sincerely confess our essential sins and live with awareness of how great the weight of sin is. Furthermore, we must be able to take responsibility for what happened due to our sins.

**Conclusion: Please listen carefully to what the Holy Spirit gives us.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Now let's summarize today's message. Today, through the text, we saw the Christian community 2,000 years ago struggling with the problem of sin. Jesus' disciples and early Christians realized and experienced that Jesus is the one who advocates for our sins in the most essential part of our lives. Please remember, only Jesus can reconcile us to God, the source of life. If we want to know more about how the Lord advocates for us and serves as our atoning sacrifice, leave our busy daily life, and listen to the words of the Bible, prayer, and the Holy Spirit give us with an open mind. The Lord will surely respond to our aspirations.

