



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

If You Give Evidence, You Have an Advocate (1 John 2:1-6)

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Maybe you've heard the story of the ruthless and unethical businessman who greatly admired the Ten Commandments. The wealthy man once told his acquaintance, Mark Twain, that he hoped that before he died he could make the trip to the Holy Land, reach the top of Mount Sinai where the law was given to Moses, and read the Ten Commandments aloud. Twain simply said, "Why don't you just stay in Boston and keep them?"

Our lives give evidence of what is important to us. Just making a statement of our priorities means little. What we love and what motivates us are truly what we cherish. Words are cheap, but lives mean everything when it comes to the proof of the truly significant matters in our hearts.

John knew this. We have seen his words already in this book of 1 John that a person cannot claim to live in God's light, yet give evidence of living in darkness. He writes in the verses we'll study now that if one truly loves God and is devoted to obeying Him he will show it by his decisions, how he treats others, how he spends his time and money, how he views Scripture and so forth. The true believer cannot keep it hidden from those who observe his life. The walk confirms the claim; there is no need to climb Sinai.

Many in the capitol community have studied or have a background in law. John uses some language in this passage that will remind us all of a courtroom. What evidence will be considered? Who counsels the child of God? Who is accusing? Who is the Judge? How do we proceed for our case to be heard and an acquittal to be given?

I. THE ONE WHO AIDS (2:1)

1 John 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.

In 1865, William Tecumseh Sherman wrote to his friend, U. S. Grant, "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come--if alive." There is great comfort in knowing you have someone to aid you in a time of need.

John finished chapter one by stating that we all are sinners. God said so and we must agree (which is the essence of confession). He continues his thought now by saying that it is possible for the person who follows Jesus to say no to sin by the power that God provides

and the power of Scripture (John's epistle, for example – it's why he's writing).

But if we do sin, and we will, there is an Advocate ("Parakoleo" in Greek, or one called alongside). Jesus is the one who answers the charge of guilty. He points to His work on the cross and his resurrection as the basis for our acquittal if we believe in Him and repent of our sin. He is the one who comes to our aid.

The Bible calls Satan the one who is the accuser, persistent in pointing to our sin and bringing up our failures.

Revelation 12:10 - Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Now you can picture the courtroom. We are on trial. Satan is accusing believers before God, the Judge. The believer's Advocate, Jesus the righteous, pleads our case against the prosecution, because the accuser is right – we have sinned. But if we have sinned and are guilty, there must be punishment. How will we ever be freed?

II. THE ONE WHO APPEASES (2:2)

1 John 2:2 - He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

This verse answers that question. God is just and does not let sin go unpunished. Accepting God's love and mercy is easy, but the Bible also clearly teaches God's anger toward sin.

Romans 1:18 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Because we are guilty before God, we need to pay the penalty. But this verse presents the good news that Jesus has paid that penalty. That's what a propitiation is. It satisfies or appeases wrath. Christ's death was the payment, taking our place. So not only is he our Advocate, standing up and defending us against the accuser, but he took our punishment so by faith in him, we could go free. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would do this hundreds of years earlier:

Isaiah 53:5, 6 - But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we

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are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

John also says here that Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. That does not mean that everyone ever born will be saved from God's wrath, even though some falsely teach and believe that. The Bible is clear that some will believe and some will not.

Mark 10:45 - For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

John 3:36 - Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Even though the message of Jesus' death and resurrection will not be accepted by everyone, it is still a message for the whole world.

Matthew 28:19 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

So, we stand guilty as charged by Satan the accuser before a holy God who must punish our sin. Jesus advocates for us, though, and meets God's requirement for payment. That's the good news of salvation. Believers who follow Christ are justified (another legal term) by faith only through the work of Jesus.

III. THE ONES WHO ABIDE (2:3-6)

1 John 2:3-6 - And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

To keep with our legal analogy, here is where evidence comes in. The Advocate only speaks for the one who is a true follower of his. How can we know that this is true of us? According to these verses, we know that we have that personal relationship with Christ and truly know him, if we obey. Otherwise, it's a lie to say we know him, yet live a life of unrepentant sin, giving no evidence that Jesus has changed the heart.

I hope you can sense the confidence found here. John is saying that we can know for sure if we belong to Christ as one of his true

followers. That is not something many people enjoy. Even some who claim to know God do not have full assurance that they are a child of God. But John says that we can know. He says it later in this letter as well:

1 John 5:13 - I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

I once asked a man if he knew where his eternal destiny would be if he died that day. "Heaven, I hope," was his answer. He tried to be good, keep the rules he heard about in church or do good things as society defined them. But he didn't know for sure. John wants us to know and writes with the encouragement of very confident language. You don't have to wonder or hope. One of the main proofs will be a desire for the things Jesus desires.

Peter and John were among Jesus' closest friends on earth. He took them aside, along with John's brother, James, for special times of training and fellowship. It's interesting that the words John uses here mirror closely what Peter wrote in one of his epistles:

1 Peter 2:21 - For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Let's end with an important clarification. Following in Jesus's steps or doing good deeds, is not how to be saved. It is evidence that you have been truly changed by saving faith. How do we know that? For the answer, we can turn to that biblical legal term: justification. This is the condition of the person who believes and is saved, whose sins are forgiven by the Judge through faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Set free – justified.

And just so we wouldn't try to depend on good works to earn our justification, God saw to it that the Scriptures pointed us to the real reason a person can have the assurance of salvation.

Rom. 3:28 - For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Do you have an advocate for your case before God? You will be accused regardless of who you are, but unless you turn to Christ in faith, allowing him to change you to walk like him, you will have to rely on your own defense, which will not end in justification.