

1 John 2:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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:

Analysis

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.

John addresses believers with tender affection—"little children" (teknia mou, τεκνία μου), emphasizing both their vulnerability and his pastoral care. The purpose statement is crucial: "that ye sin not" (hina mē hamartēte, ἵνα μὴ ἁμαρτήτε) uses the aorist subjunctive, indicating John's goal is that believers not commit acts of sin. This isn't claiming sinless perfection (which 1:8 denies) but expressing God's standard and the believer's aim—habitual righteousness, not habitual sin.

The provision for when believers do sin follows immediately: "we have an advocate" (paraklēton echomen, παράκλητον ἔχομεν). Paraklētos is the same term Jesus used for the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26)—one called alongside to help, a legal advocate or defense attorney. Christ serves as our advocate before the Father, not against an angry God but alongside us in the divine court. His advocacy rests not on excuses for our sin but on His own righteousness: "Jesus Christ the righteous" (Iēsoun Christon dikaion). He is both perfectly righteous and our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30).

This verse balances high ethical standards with gracious provision. Believers should aim not to sin—the new nature inclines toward holiness. Yet when we do sin, we're not cast off but have an advocate whose righteousness secures our

standing. This demolishes both antinomianism ("grace means sin doesn't matter") and perfectionism ("Christians must be sinless"). Instead, it presents realistic sanctification: pursuing holiness with assurance that Christ's advocacy covers our failures.

Historical Context

The concept of advocacy was familiar in Roman legal culture. Wealthy patrons served as advocates (*patroni*) for clients, defending them in court and using their influence to secure favorable outcomes. However, these relationships were transactional and often corrupt. John's readers would understand advocacy but marvel at its application—the perfectly righteous Christ advocating for guilty sinners before the holy Father.

The term *paraklētos* had legal connotations but also carried broader meaning: helper, counselor, comforter. Jewish tradition spoke of advocates before God—angels, patriarchs, or meritorious deeds interceding for sinners. Christianity transformed this: no angel or human merit advocates for us, but Christ Himself, whose own blood purchased our acquittal.

This verse addressed the Gnostic crisis directly. Some false teachers claimed enlightenment freed them from sin's consequences, leading to moral libertinism. Others taught harsh perfectionism, claiming true spirituals didn't sin. John refutes both: sin is serious (we should not sin), yet provision exists when we do (Christ advocates for us). This pastoral balance sustained believers who struggled with sin's ongoing reality while clinging to Christ's finished work.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Christ as your advocate before the Father (not merely a judge to appease) change your response to sin?
2. What's the difference between 'that ye sin not' (the goal) and claiming we have no sin (the delusion of 1:8)?
3. How does Christ's advocacy based on His righteousness (not our excuses) provide both security and motivation for holiness?

Interlinear Text

Τεκνία	μου	ταῦτα	γράφω	ὑμῖν	ἵνα	μὴ	ἀμάρτη
little children	My	these things	write I	unto you	that	G3361	sin
G5040	G3450	G5023	G1125	G5213	G2443		G264
καὶ	ἐάν	τις	ἀμάρτη	παράκλητον	ἔχομεν	πρὸς	τὸν
And	if	any man	sin	an advocate	we have	with	G3588
G2532	G1437	G5100	G264	G3875	G2192	G4314	
πατέρα	Ἰησοῦν	Χριστὸν	δίκαιον·				
the Father	Jesus	Christ	the righteous				
G3962	G2424	G5547	G1342				

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 2:5 (References Jesus): For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Romans 8:34 (References Christ): Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

John 14:6 (References Jesus): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Righteousness): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 John 4:4 (Parallel theme): Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

1 John 3:18 (Parallel theme): My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:7 (Righteousness): Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

John 8:11 (Sin): She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Hebrews 9:24 (References Christ): For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

1 John 3:5 (Sin): And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.