

Exposition of 1 John 2: 1, 2

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"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."

It is a self-evident truth that in all ages mere professors of religion have been holier in their own eyes than were or are the truths of the Gospel. Their language always has been, and it is so to the present day, to every free grace, positive truth of the new covenant, "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou." The Lord saith of such, "They are a smoke in my nose; a fire that burns all the day." Hence in ancient times they forsook God's covenant, considering it dangerous, and not holy enough; they threw down God's altars, put an end to the simplicity of his order of things, and set up as many altars as there were weeks or days in the year; they slew the Lord's prophets, and would have prophets of their own making. And just so it is now. How many professors there are that say, election ought to be preached moderately, for it is dangerous to preach it much; that the perfection that is in Christ ought to be preached now and then only, for it is dangerous to preach it very much, and that the certainty of the work of the Holy Spirit ought to be preached now and then, but not very much, because of the danger of it, for, say they, these doctrines, if preached too prominently, will lead to sin.

Now then, it does appear here that among the persons to whom John was writing—for some of them had already gone out from the truth; "They went out from us because they were not of us;"—it does appear that there were some trying to persuade the people of God that the doctrines of grace led to sin, that the doctrines of grace tolerated and sanctioned sin; and that it matters not in what profligate way you live, so that you hold these doctrines. This is evidently what some of them were trying to persuade the people of God.

And therefore the Apostle says, "And not (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come;" a thing that no child of God under heaven ever did, or ever will do, or ever can do. The real Christian knows that holy ends must be obtained by holy means, and that righteous ends must be obtained by righteous means, and that godly ends must be obtained by godly means. Therefore, says John, not so much from any fear of the people of God going wrong as to repel this general accusation against them, " My little children," listen not unto them that charge these doctrines with leading to sin, listen not unto them that are holier in their own eyes than the truths of the gospel. I do not write unto you to make you careless; I do not write unto you to drive you on to ungodliness; I write unto you just the reverse, "that ye sin not." Thus he would not only exhort the people of God kindly, but he repudiates the general charge brought against the truth. And if ever the truth of God was badly off it

is in the day in which we live. There are conversions now by scores, moral, mental conversions; men who, if they go on straightforward in the world, honest and upright men, revere the Sabbath, revere the Bible, and fear their Maker, as moral and responsible agents, and make no profession of religion, they might be honorable men. But what do these new converts do? They take that upon them which Saul of Tarsus took upon himself that is as far as they can. If a minister of truth be coming into a country town, these are all at work just before his coming to prejudice everybody against him. Don't go to hear him; he is an awfully dangerous man; he preaches most awfully dangerous doctrines. Duty faith men are one in just the same kind of union that there was between Samson's foxes; only with this difference, Samson's foxes were not so bad as they are, for Samson's foxes burnt down the corn of the Philistines, but these try to burn down the corn of the Israelites. Therefore do these professors appear to me to be twofold more the children of hell than when they made no profession at all. Thus, then John in this exhortation to sin not evidently alludes to that cast of professor who is holier in his own eyes than is the truth. Why was the Savior crucified? Oh, he's such a wine bibber, he's such a gluttonous man, and he's such a friend of publicans and harlots, that for the moral interests of society we must crucify him. And why were the Apostles treated as they were? Why, for the moral interests of society, of course; of course it was. And this has been the pretension, and is the pretension now. Oh what a solemn scripture is that, that "Satan is transformed as an angel of light!" But those of you that know your own hearts, and that know the truth, will not be moved by these devices of Satan, for "wisdom is justified of all her children." And the people of God will never blame one of their faults upon the truths they profess, they will blame their faults upon themselves, they will confess them before the Lord. And this scripture I have just read shews how the Lord will deal with those that love his truth that do not forsake his covenant. Abide by his covenant, and then you have a remedy for your faults; abide by his altar, that is, by the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, then you have a remedy for your woes, abide by his prophets, and then you have a word suited to you as the matter shall require. Now see the fourfold remedy. First, here is the person of Jesus Christ. "We have," we who abide by the covenant, we who abide by the true altar of God, we who abide by the prophets of God, the ministers of the Gospel, — "we have an advocate, Christ Jesus." Second, we have him in his intercession, he is an advocate with the Father. Third, we have him in his righteousness, he is Jesus Christ the righteous. Fourth, we have him in his propitiation. So then give me the person of Christ, my sins are gone, give me the intercession of Christ, though my mouth be stopped, and I whisper out of the dust, and feel unable to pray, may Heavenly Aaron can speak well and will bring me off more than conqueror. Give me the righteousness of Christ, and I am free from condemnation, give me the propitiation and the atonement he hath made, and I am eternally free, in spite of all the adversary can say or do.

"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." This is a form of speech standing in contrast to mere nationality. We see in the ease of Peter going down to Cornelius, and preaching to the Gentiles, that which throws a great deal of light upon Jewish notions, and Jewish prejudices, and a great many scriptures. The Jewish Christians considered that Peter had done wrong; they considered that this Messiah came to save the literal Israel. They were not yet enlightened to see that there was a new covenant Israel, a spiritual Israel, an eternally chosen Israel, independent of all nationality. Therefore John, to sweep away their narrow notion that Christ died for a nation merely, to sweep that away, he uses the term, "whole world," to denote that Jesus Christ died for a people in all nations; as explained in the 7th chapter of the Revelation, a people out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues. So that the words, "whole world," here, do not mean all the human race, but only some out of every nation, a number that no man can number. That is the way I take it. So that the "whole world" is limited by the fact that none are saved but those for whom Christ died. However, we will take it the other way, we will take the words, "whole world," to mean the whole human race; we will take them so, and then let us see the difficulties in which we shall be involved. First, if Jesus Christ be the propitiation, the atonement, for the sins of the whole world, then it follows not one man ever was, is, or ever can be lost.

Now it is clear some are lost. But if Jesus Christ took away their sins, how can they be lost? If Jesus Christ redeemed them, how can they be lost? If Jesus Christ justified them, how can they be lost? If Jesus Christ became their surety, how can they be lost? And therefore, in order to prove that it means the whole world literally, all the individuals of the world, you must prove that none are lost. And then if you admit some are lost notwithstanding Christ's dying for them, that does not lessen your difficulty; you then come to this declaration, So if you admit that some are lost for whom Christ died, then in order to maintain your ground you will have to prove that your Maker is a liar, you will have to give the lie to the Eternal Spirit of God, you will have to give the lie to the Lord Jesus Christ, The Holy Ghost declares that "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." The Savior declares that the persons for whom he died, called his sheep, shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. And the Father declares, "As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Thus John evidently not only exhorts the people of God, and repudiates the insinuation of professors that the doctrines of grace are dangerous, but secondly shews the expansion of the Gospel, that it is to be preached to every creature, and that Jesus Christ died for a people in all nations, here called the "whole world." But if you take it to mean the whole world literally then I say it follows none can be lost, consequently those scriptures cannot be true that shew some are lost; and that the scriptures cannot be true that shew that those for whom the Savior died cannot be lost.

Duty faith has a very singular invention upon this. We are told in the printed duty faith sermons that Jesus Christ did not die for the non-elect to save them, that he did not die for them to bring them to heaven, that he did not die for them that he may present them at the last day as the consequence of his own offering; but that he died for them in order that he may lay or form a ground upon which he may invite them all to come, and then blame them for not coming. So that here is Jesus Christ inviting a sinner to what he never designed that sinner to have; inviting a sinner to receive that life that was never designed for him, to receive that salvation that was never provided for him, and to come to that heaven in which there is no place prepared for him, for "it shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared;" and then blame the man for not coming. Now this is the invitation of duty faith. And they say, it's true we do hold two opposite or contradictory truths —namely, that Christ died only for the elect, and the rest are invited; but, they say, we don't mind about this. Well, all I mind about it is that God cannot contradict himself, that God cannot deny himself, and if it be a small matter with you to wrest the scriptures, so to wrest the scriptures is not a small matter with me. But that system of universal invitation, what doth it do? It sets thousands down for Christians that are not Christians, it beclouds the truths of the Gospel. It suits the purposes of these men. Take away this element of universality, and down goes their popularity directly, the world would forsake them directly. It is this element of universality that pleases the world, feeds the pride of man, degrades the truths of the Gospel, and degrades the people of God.

May it be our happy lot while we live, to stand out as iron pillars, defenced cities, and brazen walls, for God's truth, and never move an inch there from.

Note: Take from the Earthen Vessel 1864 Page 163ff