



1 JOHN

WE'RE GONNA MESS UP

1 JOHN 2:1-2

MAIN IDEA

Christians have been saved from sin, but still battle its influence and need to repent when they give into sin. Yet, they do not despair, even when they sin, because Jesus Christ is able and willing to save them. His saving work carries on through their entire lives until glory.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- **Have you ever been rock climbing? What types of safety measures do rock climbers use to try and ensure they don't face ultimate harm if they do fall?**

- **How might we relate this to the Christian life?**

Rock climbing is a popular sport around the world that attracts people from all walks of life. It provides participants with the opportunity to spend time in nature, get some exercise, and challenge themselves. There is no shortage of thrills, especially for the adventurous.

Rock climbers take numerous measures to ensure their safety before reaching for their first handhold in the rock. Most importantly, they make sure they are attached to a rope that is kept taut by a partner on the ground. This rope is the only thing that

stands between a climber falling to a catastrophic injury or death if they lose their grip. When a climber falls, the rope catches them and keeps them from crashing to the ground.

Similarly, Christians are kept safe from destruction from sin by Christ. Though Christians may fall, they are kept safe by Christ's work on their behalf. Jesus's death on the cross was sufficient not only to cover the sins that a person has committed in the past but also to cover the sins they will commit in the future.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> *Have someone in your group read 1 John 2:1a.*

- **If Christians know any sin they commit is covered by the blood of Christ, what keeps them from being emboldened to sin more?**

Recall that there were two thieves crucified with Jesus, one on each side of Him (see Luke 23:32-43). The criminals, of course, were justly suffering the punishment for their own sin. At the first they both ridiculed Jesus (Mark 15:32), but one later repented. The repentant thief turned to Jesus and asked Him to remember him when He came into His kingdom. Jesus said that very day the man would be with Him in paradise. Now, can you imagine that this thief would ever begin to mock Jesus again? If what he said to Jesus was genuine and he truly had faith in Jesus Christ to save him, then he would never begin to mock Christ again.

This is an illustration of the Christian life. It is just as unthinkable for a Christian who has truly recognized his or her desperate situation and looked to Christ for salvation to then have the notion to sin heartily because they have a free

ticket to heaven. The fact of the matter is that a person who has truly been born again has been transformed completely. They now have a distaste for sin and a desire for the things of God.

- **John said he was writing to them so they would not sin. Is it possible for Christians to not sin? Explain.**

People who have been made alive in Christ can now not sin. This contrasts with those who are not in Christ. Unbelievers' natural inclination is toward sin. They are enslaved to sin and children of the devil (1 John 3:10), and they are described as being dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-2).

The only way for a sin-dead soul to be made alive is for something or someone to intervene. A cadaver doesn't just wake up and start obeying God because of some monumental self-willingness. Dry bones don't piece themselves back together. It takes a supernatural work of God. God must give us a new heart. He must put His Spirit in us. And when He does, redeemed ones have a desire to know Him, serve Him, and obey Him. When people become children of God and God's Spirit indwells them, they seek after the things of God more and follow the allurements of the world less (see Ezekiel 36; Acts 16:14; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

For this reason, Christians must be careful about how they talk to unbelievers about Christianity. It can be very tempting to say to someone who shows interest that if they want to be a Christian, then they have to start reading their Bible, praying, going to church, and avoid sin. These are certainly characteristics of a true believer, but they will never make anyone a Christian. The fundamental message that unbelievers need to hear is this: All are guilty of sin and judgment is coming. Flee to Christ, for He is the Savior of sinners!

- **If you are a follower of Christ, how has your view and inclination toward sin changed?**
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> **Have someone in your group read 1 John 2:1b.**

This text reminds us of two important theological concepts. The first is “radical corruption,” which simply means mankind is corrupted by sin. The second, which follows it, is known as “regeneration.” This is when God opens the heart of an unbeliever so they might truly hear the gospel and respond with faith and repentance as He did with Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:14).

- **Once a sin-dead soul is made alive, what ensures them that they will not lose their salvation?**

Christians languish much of their lives under the heavy load of doubt concerning the certainty of their salvation. They wonder how God could truly love them and claim them if they still fall prey to sin. John’s words in this verse are a potent remedy to the shadows of doubt that can have such debilitating influence over Christians.

A Christian has a continued hope because Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross not only paid the price for past sins, but His saving work is effective for the sins we will commit even presently and in the future.

- **How does it change your perspective to recognize your salvation is dependent on Jesus’s work and righteousness and not your own?**

The fact of the matter is that if a person could lose their salvation, they would. If it were left in the hands of a fallible human being to maintain the work Jesus started, then heaven would be empty and hell would be overflowing. Christians need Jesus Christ to justify them and to sanctify them. Christ must nourish the grace of faith in the hearts of Christians or they are lost.

Jesus Christ's work on behalf of believers can be described as that of a priest. He made atonement for His people through a blood sacrifice (His own), and He continues to intercede for His people based on that atoning sacrifice. Two times in the New Testament and once in the Old, we are told that Jesus is making intercession for the people of God (see Isaiah 53:12; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).

What an incredible thought! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, interceding for Christians. The Bible teaches that those who are truly saved will persevere. They will persevere in the faith because they are cared for and maintained by God Himself.

- **How have you experienced God's sustaining grace as you persevere in your Christian faith?**

> Have someone in your group read 1 John 2:2.

The perseverance of the saints is a precious and comforting doctrine that is clearly expressed in the Scriptures. The perseverance of the truly redeemed is so sure because of the surety and extent of the work of the One who guarantees it. Note that saints don't persevere because they have the ability within themselves to do so but because the Spirit of God dwells in them, the Scriptures anchor them, prayer helps them, and Christ nourishes faith and repentance in them.

In verse 2, John explained why the work of salvation is so effective. It is because Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, is Himself the atoning sacrifice for sins.

- **Why has Jesus's sacrifice been effective for us in a way that no other person's ever could?**

Jesus Christ was the only sufficient and adequate sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was both God and man. The eternal Son of God took on flesh and lowered Himself to be born of a woman under the law at the right time. This is

important because it made Him an appropriate Mediator between God and man. Because He was fully God, Jesus could lay His hand on God. Because He was fully man, Jesus could lay His hand on man. Through His sacrificial death, He brought these two parties together for reconciliation.

Jesus's sacrifice was effective because He was able to bear the wrath of God and be a perfect sacrifice, while at the same time suffering as a true man the penalty of sin. His suffering was both physical and spiritual. He underwent tremendous anguish of soul and torment of body.

No one else could do what Jesus Christ did. He is truly and uniquely the Savior of sinners. He is able to save and He is willing.

- **Why did Jesus have to die to save sinners?**

Jesus shed His blood to save sinners because this was the required payment. The soul that sins must die (Ezekiel 18:20). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Without the shedding of blood there is not forgiveness for sins (Hebrews 9:22).

In Numbers 35, Moses described the punishment for a manslayer. The manslayer would be punished by the avenger of blood. This was the law of God, and it serves as an illustration to help us see the seriousness of sin and that the punishment for sin is more than we can bear. All people, if left to their own devices, will die physically and then die spiritually. Every person is a manslayer and there will be no escaping the avenger of blood.

But Christ is a refuge for manslaughterers. Christ put on the clothes of the manslayer and stood before the avenger of blood and died. He paid the penalty; He annulled the arrest warrant.

- **Have you ever felt as though you had to pay for your own sins by doing good deeds or suffering? Why is it impossible for you to atone for your own sins?**

APPLICATION

Christians have fellowship with the Father through the Son and their joy is complete because Christ cleanses them from all sin. They can come before the Father as beloved children on the merits of the righteousness of Christ. Now that they have been made new and have been welcomed into the family of God, they ought not sin, for this is against their Father and their Savior. It grieves the Spirit. But if they do sin (for they still wage war on the flesh), they have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Their Savior's saving power doesn't stop at conversion but continues to work for them until heaven. The Advocate is able and willing to save sinners.

- **When were you born again? How did your life change when you became a Christian?**

- **How should remembering that all who are in the family of God have needed and received the same grace that we have change our interactions with one another?**

- **Who can you have a gospel conversation with this week—sharing about the advocacy of Jesus for sinners?**

PRAY

Praise God for His kindness and mercy in Christ Jesus. Give thanks that there is more mercy in Christ than sin in you. Ask the Lord to help you remember and rejoice in the fact that Christ's saving work continues even today and that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for you.

1 JOHN 2:1-2

2:1–2. Most Bible teachers agree that the first two verses of chapter 2 conclude the discussion of chapter 1. John does not change subjects until verse 3. Therefore, we will deal with those verses in this chapter.

We see in this chapter a delicate balancing act between feeling forgiven and feeling free to sin. The apostle John says in 1:9 that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven. We have no reason to be buried with guilt because of our inability to eradicate sin in our lives. Just because Jesus is willing to forgive our sins doesn't mean we can feel free to keep on sinning. This Scripture is written so we won't sin. "Do your best not to sin," we might paraphrase, "but if you do, you have help."

"Dear children" signifies a fond affection for the people to whom John wrote this letter. The exhortation to walk in the light encourages us not to sin. But we will. All is not lost when we do sin. Jesus is our advocate, one who speaks to the Father in our behalf, as a defense attorney would argue our case before a judge.

The advocate speaks with extraordinary authority before the judge, however, because his defense for us is that he, the defense attorney, has already paid any price the judge could impose. The willingness of the judge to forego judgment is not based on the life of the one on trial (us), but rather on the merits of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus sacrificed his life in our place. He paid the price for our sin with his death. He is our atoning sacrifice (sacrifice that pays the price and allows forgiveness).

Jesus' atoning sacrifice is sufficient not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. Does this mean that everyone is saved? No, the Bible makes it clear that not everyone will be saved (Matt. 7:14; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21). But anyone who hears the gospel can be saved if he or she wants to be (Rev. 22:17).¹

Notes:

REFERENCES

1. David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999).