



Daily Devotionals

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1 JOHN 2:1-2 PERSONIFIED GRACE

¹ *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* ² *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Having established that all human beings are sinners, St. John moved on to deal with the natural consequences of that fact. St. Paul wrote that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), so if we are all sinners then we have earned our wages. If God is a holy, righteous and just God, then we must be paid what we have earned. It naturally follows that as sinners all men face universal condemnation – eternal separation from God.

Yet we are not without hope. God is not only holy, righteous and just, he is also merciful. While human creativity in relationship to sin appears to be spent on trying to manufacture loop-holes, exceptions and redefinitions, God's creativity is directed toward the expression of his mercy through grace. Totally consistent with his nature, God knew from the very beginning what would be needed in order for rebellious creatures to be reconciled to their perfect and holy God. The creative Word would be the Word of grace and restoration. From the perspective of men, the Word Incarnate would be their Advocate for reconciliation.

Jesus Christ is the way and the truth and the life...the only path to the Father (John 14:6), because he is that Word – the Word that became flesh for the purpose of providing reconciliation of men with God. According to the ordinances commanded by God in his dealings with the Hebrews, the scene was set and the explanation made known as to whom and what Jesus is. At Yom Kippur the priest symbolically placed all the sins of the people on the scapegoat which was then taken out of the city and killed, thereby “removing” the sins from the people. Jesus in his role as our defender and advocate not only pleads our case before God, but puts himself on the altar in our stead. As St. Paul summarizes the Gospel message, “²¹ *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world and not just for some of the people. His death is a universal offer of salvation. But as St. Paul wrote, it is when we are *in him*, that is, when we believe in him that we receive what has been offered. Like any defendant in the dock during his trial, we can refuse legal counsel and try to defend ourselves, but before the throne of the perfectly righteous and just God we cannot prevail – indeed we do not even have the standing in that court in order to appear for our defense.

Dear Father, may all my creativity be used to find new and better ways to serve in your Name. Make me ready to point to you and your mercy at all times and under all circumstances. Empower me to fulfill my role as one who announces the good news of your mercy and grace and protect me from the temptation to take the seat of judgment and condemn my neighbor - even my enemy. Polish the mirror that is my life so that it will accurately reflect your grace into a sinful and hurting world. Amen.