

# DIVINE DEFENDER

## 1 John 1:1-2:2

*The passages highlighted in yellow are main points in the outline.*

### **Introduction: Courtroom**

You're standing in the middle of a gleaming white room. The light is blinding, and as you squint against its radiance, you can begin to see shapes and silhouettes that help you figure out where you are. You must be in a courtroom of some kind – but it doesn't look at all like traffic court downtown... it doesn't even look like a supreme court room – this is bigger than that. Way bigger...

As your eyes adjust, you begin to realize that you are in a different realm. The judge's desk and chair look like something a mighty king would seat himself at. The room is filled with people – some you know, many you don't – and across the room, you see the prosecutor... he looks like a monster – skin like a serpent, a forked tongue... you're repulsed.

Herald trumpets sound the arrival of the Judge. You thought the room was bright before! You can't bear to look at this One whose light floods the room. The entire audience in the courtroom is on their faces before this One, and a loud voice says,

“The case of the Law of God against ... your name ... The Lord God Almighty, Creator, Sovereign, and Judge of all that is seen and unseen is presiding.”

You realize you're the defendant! And before a word is spoken, you realize that you are guilty. Whatever is read will be just, whatever is said will be true, whatever verdict handed down – that's what you deserve. [*beat*]

The Scriptures say that this scene plays out all the time. Our epistle lesson today from 1 John deals with a lot of this. It's a long passage and I'm going to try to give you an overview of a few things and then go into more details on others.

### **Background: Bad Teaching Then and Bad Stuff Now**

The back story is that **John is writing to Christians in the city of Ephesus**. Paul, of course, wrote to them in the epistle called “Ephesians”. The city of Ephesus was a pretty cosmopolitan place – lot of different kinds of people, lots of different viewpoints, and lots of different religions. **It was Mecca for those who worshipped the goddess Diana**... the magnificent temple of Diana had 127 columns 60 feet high surrounding a worship space

that was 93,500 square feet! The ornate, huge structure added credibility to this cult which practiced prostitution as part of its worship.

Philosophically, there was a false teaching that infiltrated the church known as **Gnosticism**. Lots of people say lots of stuff about this, but at its core **Gnosticism taught that knowledge was superior to virtue**, and your spiritual substance could be split from who you were physically so that it was possible that what you did had no bearing on who you were.

Theologically speaking, **this had impact on teachings about Christ**. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Gnosticism taught that either Jesus Christ

- (a) was an extended heavenly hologram that wasn't really physical or
- (b) He was a real human, born to Mary and Joseph (note the denial of the virgin birth) who received the spirit of the Christ when he was baptized and that spirit of the Christ left him shortly before he was crucified.

**In either event, according to the Gnostics, Jesus Christ, the Son of God** – the One who said “I and the Father are One” and “if you have seen Me you have seen the Father” – that Jesus, **did not die on the cross**. This is vitally important, because it has a bearing on whether or not the suffering and death of Jesus on that old rugged cross can really pardon and sanctify any who call on the name of the Lord. If Jesus Christ did not die on the cross, then there is no Savior, no salvation, and the resurrection also is a myth. And, as Paul said, “We are of all most to be pitied.” (1 Cor. 15:19)

Practically speaking, **Gnosticism had an impact on how people lived their lives**. If knowledge is elevated above virtue, then it doesn't matter how you live! Go ahead and run a Ponzi scheme to line your pockets; cheat on your taxes; step outside the bounds of the law or institutional establishment in order to get your way. After all, it's what you know! You're enlightened, intelligent, and doggone it, people like you! [beat]

The Word of God is clear about sin, isn't it? We know that sin is real, **it affects our relationship with God and others** and it is something of which God can have no part. We learned a couple weeks ago that **sin is missing the mark**. **God sets the standards, and we miss them**. It doesn't matter how much we know; what the first man and woman did and what we have done create the sin barrier that separates us from God. And the Scripture is clear that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. (Hebrews 9:22)

“But I'm a Christian!” You say. “I believe in Jesus. Hasn't Christ forgiven me of all my sins? Isn't that what we just observed on Good Friday and celebrated on Easter?”

Yes! If you have called on the Name of the Lord, you are saved. If you have asked Christ to forgive you, if you claim Christ as your Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Christ from the dead, then your sins are forgiven. You are a child of God.

Maundy Thursday gives us a beautiful picture of this, and you can read about it in John 13. Jesus gets up from the meal which we now call the Last Supper, girds himself with a towel, takes a basin, and begins going from person to person, washing His disciples' feet. Jesus gets to Peter who says, "No way, Master!" Jesus says, "If I don't wash your feet, you have no part with me." And Peter, in his own inimitable way gushes, "Then wash all of me, Lord!" Jesus says, "I've already done that Peter. You've had the bath – and now the only thing there is to do is see that your feet are cleansed from the dirt you picked up along the way."

When we are aware of sin in your lives, we **have two choices: cover or confess.**

## **Cover or Confess**

Looking at our text, John's first great statement is in verse 5: **God is light**. Jesus said to Nicodemus that people prefer darkness to light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). We don't do too well in the light. We're exposed for who and what we are, and we don't like it. So, if we can't run from the light, we try to assail the light and those who claim to be followers of the light.

Don't we see this in our culture? From entertainment to the reporting of our daily news, we see light portrayed as something that looks good – but beware! The sinister is around the corner! On the other side of light is dark!

Even our super heroes have to have dark sides, and when it comes to the church – well, it takes agnostics and atheists to uncover their conspiracies of corruption and deceit!

The world doesn't want to believe in virtue, because the world knows it is rotten to the core and cannot redeem itself.

For us who know the Lord, living the virtuous life God desires is really hard. Denying self and sin is difficult. Often, we believers cover up our sin because we don't want the pain of confronting it.

In 1 John, we see three ways that Christians cover over their sins. John identifies them in our text by saying "If we say" or "if we claim."

***If we say...***

1. We have **fellowship** with Him yet we walk in the **darkness**. (1:6) *finish the verse*
  - a. This is very simply saying one thing and doing another.
  - b. It's not what you **say**, it's **who you are** that counts.
  - c. If we say we have fellowship with God and walk in the dark, do we really have fellowship with Him? [No!]
  - d. We are **lying** and not **living by the truth**.
  
2. We are **without sin** we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1:8)
  - a. **Self-deception** is the result of saying we have no **sin**. And you're the only one you're fooling – God's not fooled and sooner or later, the slow humans around you won't be fooled, either.
    - i. "deceive ourselves" – lit., "we lead ourselves astray"
    - ii. Our pride **shuts out the light** and we live in an atmosphere of **manmade darkness**.
  
3. We **have not** sinned. (1:10)
  - a. What? Are you nuts? Do you have short-term memory loss? Don't you remember the last 24 hours of your life... 48... 72?
  - b. To **deny** one's personal sin in the face of God's testimony to the contrary, is to "make" God "out to be a **liar**."

### *If we do...*

1. Walk in the **light** as God is in the light. (1:7)
  - a. Walking in the light yields two fruits: **fellowship** and **cleansing**.

The fellowship is between the **Christian** and **God**. Usually, when we see the word fellowship, we think of relationships with people. In this chapter, though, it's more than that – it's fellowship between us believers and God.

Pay attention to the words "in the light". Even a little word like "in" is important! We have freedom in our walk with God!

If we were called to walk "according to the light" that would require sinless perfection – no doubt including a huge list of rules and regulations.

But to walk "in the light" suggests openness and responsiveness to the light as we choose to walk with God.

Walking in the light shows up our sins and frailties; thus we need **constant cleansing**. The verb is in the present tense and it refers to the cleansing in **sanctification**.

We still sin – that doesn't mean we shouldn't fight against it, it just means we shouldn't have any delusions of perfect grandeur, and we should always be evaluating if we're moving forward or not. Remember, **God's worried about our direction, not our perfection**. He'll complete our perfection in His time – He wants our faithfulness in the meantime.

2. **Confess** our sins. (1:9)
  - i. **"Confess"** – lit., **"to say the same thing."** To say the same thing about my sin that God does. It is to acknowledge reality and to affirm the truth. (Wayne Watson – "to love all the things You love and hate what You despise.")
  - ii. In the Lord's Prayer that we say each week, Jesus teaches our need to confess – **"Forgive us our trespasses."**
  - iii. "Confess" is in the present tense, and it could read "if we are confessing our sins," as in if **this is the pattern of our lives**. That doesn't mean we should be in patterns of sinning – but *confessing* ought to be the pattern of our lives.
  - iv. (Are we sorrowful over our sins?)
  - v. Confession, like love and obedience, is an evidence of salvation. And confession leads to conquering.

### ***What if we sin?*** (2:1)

1. "If anyone sins" – **"if" weighs heavily on the side of possibility**. Chances are... it will happen.
2. I love the way John calls his readers "children." The Greek word for children is *teknia*, lit., "little born ones."
  - a. On the night Jesus washed His disciples' feet, after He shared the meal with His disciples, when the darkness of night was closing in and He knew that His disciples would soon be afraid, run from Him, and even deny Him, He brought them close together, looked them in the eyes, and called them "my little born ones." I know you will be terrified – this night and the horrible day to follow will challenge all that you have ever believed. It will seem like the great sin of humanity will snuff out the light of God's love, but my little born ones – hold on! Hold on to your faith! Love one another! Believe in God, believe also in me.
  - b. In the shadow of the magnificent temple of the lascivious goddess Diana, in the midst of a Babel of religions and philosophies and even an empire that is at war with Christ and followers of Christ, my little born ones – hold on! **Don't let sin ruin you!** Walk in the light! Confess your sin! Don't treat sin lightly, it is to be mastered, it is to be conquered but you can conquer it... you can rise above it in the strength of the new life and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

There are times, though, in the lives of every believer, when because of our sin, we feel sorrowful or guilty. I want to touch on this for a moment, because I think it's important for us to understand.

- c. a positive guilt comes from the **conscience** and/or the **Holy Spirit** working in your life. It produces a **sorrow** that leads you to **the feet of Christ**, confessing your sin, getting right with Him and others, and then living in victory.
  - d. Negative guilt is brought on by listening to voices saying, “Look what a mess you made of your life and other peoples’ lives! There’s no way you can recover from this! What’s the use? Sure, you can confess, but you’ll be right back here doing it all over again! How many times will God put up with you? You might as well give up now and just keep sinning! [Fuggedaboutit!]” False guilt produces **great sadness**, but it **won’t lead you to Jesus and to wholeness in your life**. Do you understand the difference?
3. I believe that even though the text doesn’t mention it, the guilt struggle is what John has in mind when he says in 2:1 – **If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with God the Father.**

## Back In Court

Let's go back to the courtroom we were in at the beginning of this message. Almighty God has taken His seat on the Judge’s chair, His gavel in His hand. The charges are read and the prosecutor begins his accusations, screaming for the wrath of God to be poured out. What he wants to do is come to the bar, point to the indictment, the record of our sins which is complete, and demand that God be true to His own justice and damn us to hell. See, he knows *he’s* going to get it, and misery loves company, so he’s trying to get as many as he can to join him.

You know you have transgressed... you don’t have short-term memory loss.

But just as you’re ready to open your mouth and stammer out your guilt, something amazing happens. You are aware that there is Someone standing next to you. And He is there to defend you.

Yes, He knows you’re guilty, too. But it is He of whom it is said,

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows

and

He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed.  
(Isaiah 53:4 & 5)

It is He, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, who now stands before the Father. He shows the thorn-prints on His head, the lash-stripes on His back, the nail scars on His hands and feet, and the wound in His side. “He’s guilty, Father, but I have satisfied Your wrath for him. I have given her my righteousness. I am cleansing him constantly of his sin. I am helping her win victory in her life over sin that has had her bound. He has trusted in Me, I have redeemed him, and I am purifying him day by day as he walks in the light.”

The accuser has lost his case. The angels fold their wings. Someone in the audience begins to sing a hymn of praise. The Defense rests.

[Lead in prayer along the lines of how we are dealing with sin.]

Response Songs

8:30 – “Before The Throne of God Above”

11:00 – “When I Think About The Lord”

## **Benediction (Jude 24 & 25)**

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!  
Amen.