

CHRIST, OUR PROPITIATION

(Romans 3:25)

INTRODUCTION

Today I want to preach about “Christ, Our Propitiation.” You’ve probably not heard many sermons on ‘propitiation.’ It’s a hard word to pronounce. Maybe that’s why. “Pro – pish – e – a – tion.” What does it mean? Is it important to know?

The Bible uses the word four times in the New Testament to explain the significance of the work of Christ.

(Rom 3:25 NKJV) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

(Heb 2:17 NKJV) Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

(1 John 2:2 NKJV) And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

(1 John 4:10 NKJV) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

So propitiation is an important truth found in the Scriptures but it has been largely overlooked in the Lord’s churches. Why? Is it really because it is a long word and hard to learn to pronoun? I don’t think so. I believe that it has more to do with the trend today not to want to talk about the wrath of God. Propitiation doesn’t make sense if we deny or play down the wrath of God on sin. Propitiation is not necessary if God’s wrath on sin is not a real.

Let’s look at three facts about propitiation this morning so that we can have a better understanding of the basis of your salvation, what saving faith entails and how you can have confidence that your standing before God is safe.

PROPIIATION SATISFIES GOD’S WRATH

The first fact is that propitiation satisfies God's wrath by way of covering your sin with the blood of a sacrifice.

(Rom 3:25 NKJV) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood ...

The dictionary definition of the word 'propitiation' is "The act of appeasing wrath and conciliating the favor of an offended person; the act of making propitious." Synonyms for propitiation are: appease, satisfy, placate, pacify. What is appeased, satisfied, placated, pacified? It is the wrath of God that our sins provoke. God's wrath as defined by one theologian (Robert Reymond) is "*simply God's instinctive holy indignation and the settled opposition of his holiness to sin, which, because he is righteous, expresses itself in judicial punishment.*"

Without the wrath of God being real, Christ being our propitiation is not real. Without the wrath of God being a just response to our sins, Christ's death on the cross is not just solution for our sins.

Wrath is in the context of Romans 1-3. Back in chapter 1:18 God's wrath is introduced as being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. The argument in section one of Romans is that we are all unrighteous. The wrath of God is hanging over all of us. Romans 2:5 mentions that there is a Day of Wrath coming. What will protect you in the Day of Wrath? Is there any way to satisfy the wrath of God which your sin provokes before you stand before God in the Day of Wrath? What will assuage the wrath of God? It is the blood of Christ. In context of Romans propitiation has to do with the satisfying God's righteous and holy wrath against our sin. Propitiation presupposes the reality of the wrath of God.

Note that God set forth Christ as a propitiation by His blood. The shedding of his blood is what makes Him our propitiation. What is this alluding to? It is alluding to an Old Testament prescription of how the high priest was to make atonement for the sins of God's people. Turn with me to Leviticus 16:15-16. It describes what took place on the Day of Atonement.

(Lev 16:15-16 NKJV) "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. {16} "So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

When the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat in the Holy of holies on the Day of Atonement it was a picture of what the Blood of Christ would do for us. The blood made atonement for our sin. The blood covered our sins. The blood propitiated the wrath of God that our breaking God's law deserves.

When we sing about the blood of Christ we are worshipping Christ as our propitiation!

You may say I don't see the word propitiation here. Well, actually the word is in this passage and in all the passages that mention the 'mercy-seat.' In the Greek translation of the OT, the LXX, it uses the same word translated 'propitiation' in the NT for the 'mercy-seat.' The mercy-seat on the day of atonement became the place where God's wrath was satisfied because Blood was shed and sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Christ's cross is our mercy-seat. It is there that the blood was sprinkled which covers our sin.

In the book of Hebrews Christ being our propitiation is related to his work of being our great High Priest.

(Heb 2:17 NKJV) Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Christ offered His own blood as our Great High Priest to be the propitiation for the sins of the people.

The blood of Jesus satisfied the just requirements of God's holy law which mankind broke, paid the penalty for man, and thus removed the guilt and penalty for sin which had separated a holy God and sinful man and satisfied the wrath of God.

This idea of satisfaction is communicated in Isaiah 53:10-11.

(Isa 53:10-11 NKJV) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. {11} He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

When God saw the travail of Christ on Calvary He was satisfied – that is, the requirements that His justice demanded were fully satisfied. You see, "he made

him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” and “expressed his love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died in our place.” God’s justice demanded death, and Jesus died that death for you.

The first fact about propitiation that I want us to see is that it satisfies the wrath of God. This is again summarized by Paul in Romans 5:9

(Rom 5:9 NKJV) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

PROPITIATION PUBLICLY PROCLAIMS GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

The second fact is that Christ being our propitiation also publicly proclaims God’s righteousness. Again verse 25-26:

(Rom 3:25-26 NKJV) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, {26} to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Why did God send Jesus to die? Most of the time we think that it was primarily to show that God loves us. And it most certainly does. **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** (Rom 5:8)

We might also think the purpose of the Cross is to act as a deterrent against further sinning. We see what it cost Christ, his suffering and death, to purchase our salvation and it should move us not to sin. And it does.

But the primary accomplishment of Christ being our propitiation is that it demonstrates the righteousness of God. It is the proof that God’s act of justification is a righteous act. It is the act of a holy God who doesn’t lower his standard of righteousness to forgive the sins of sinners. Or to put it in the words of verse 26 **“that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

Whenever God passed over sin of believing sinners before the cross without having their sins paid for, He was bestowing mercy without having justice satisfied. This made God appear as if He condoned sin, which had to be set right in the thinking of the human race. People could accuse God of unrighteousness by making the assumption that a God who does not punish sins is not a righteous God. Now the cross is the demonstration that God is righteous when He passed over

those sins because in the mind and plan of God Christ was going to be the propitiation for our sins.

God did not just forgive your sin and treat it as though nothing had ever happened. He forgave your sins because His righteous anger had been satisfied for all the world to see on Calvary. Sin was paid for, not condoned, and sin was paid for by the righteousness of God.

Christ as our propitiation shows that “God is just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.”

PROPTIATION IS PART OF SAVING FAITH

Now, the last fact I want you to consider is that Christ as our Propitiation is part of saving faith. Let's back up and read Romans 3:24.

“whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood”

Note that it says that “God has set him forth.” God has set Jesus forth, He has put him in the forefront of our faith. We are to have faith in Jesus as our Propitiation. Note that it says “through faith” in his blood.”

What kind of faith is required there? Literally it is “though faith in his blood.” We are to trust the Blood of Jesus. What does this mean? It means that we are to look at Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and be satisfied that God's justice and wrath were satisfied. In other words “Faith is being satisfied with what satisfies God for your salvation.” Is this your faith? It is essential, if you are to have saving faith!

CONCLUSION

We sing in our hymn:

My faith has found a resting place, Not in device nor creed;
I trust the Ever living One, His wounds for me shall plead
I need no other argument; I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.

Fanny Crosby also expressed her trust in the Blood of Jesus in this way:

Jesus, keep me near the cross,

There a precious fountain
Free to all -- a healing stream,
Flows from Calvary's mountain,
In the Cross, in the Cross,
Be my glory ever;
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

All our songs about the Cross and about the Blood of Christ are expressions of our faith in His Blood.

Christ is our propitiation. Christ's shed blood satisfies God's wrath and justice. Therefore God is just to justify sinners who believe in Jesus.

Faith means that we are satisfied with what satisfies God for our salvation. Are you satisfied?

Amen? Amen!

Christ's death satisfied the wrath of God not to win the love of God for us but to show the love of God for us!