

PROPITIATION

Text: Romans 3:19-26

When the gospel message is preached, it doesn't start with the love of God. Let me be clear, God is love and expresses great love towards fallen humanity but that isn't where the gospel message starts. **It starts with the HOLINESS of God.** God is completely separate from everything in creation, utterly unique, and entirely without moral fault. God is not part of the universe He made; He exists in a completely different category of being. Nothing in creation compares to Him. God has no sin, darkness, or flaw. His character is completely untainted, making Him the absolute standard of goodness, truth, and righteousness. In Revelation 4:8, God's holiness is the only attribute repeated three times for emphasis "Holy, holy, holy". This means holiness is not just one trait among many; it colors and defines all of His other attributes. Like spokes in a wheel connecting to the hub..His love is holy love, His wrath is holy wrath, and His justice is holy justice. Examples of God's holiness:

- **His descent on Mount Sinai** - Before God descended, He ordered a multi-day spiritual and physical preparation. This emphasized that human beings cannot simply stroll into the presence of absolute holiness. Moses was commanded to set up a perimeter around the base of the mountain. Anyone—whether human or animal—who so much as touched the mountain while God was there had to be put to death by stoning or arrows. No one was allowed to touch the offender. The people spent two days washing their clothes and abstaining from normal physical relations to ritually purify themselves before meeting their Creator.

The next point in the gospel message is the sinfulness of man. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they brought the fall of entire human race. **Romans 5:12** Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: *Their transgression made them spiritually dead and separated from God. Their nature was corrupted from innocent obedience to guilty rebellion.* Their sin nature was passed down by them to every generation. It is our nature to rebel, to be selfish, to be destructive, to exalt ourselves, to seek our own glory. This is how God describes fallen man: **Romans 3:10-18** As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good,

no, not one. Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. *This is a powerful indictment of human nature, declaring that every single human being is deeply corrupted by sin.* Sin is an inward problem that manifests outwardly.

- **Mark 7:21-23** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.
- **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The Dilemma: Since God is holy and just, He can never allow sin or evil to go unpunished. A just judge cannot simply ignore crimes. Because God is just, He must punish sin, evil and rebellion. Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death. If God ignored sin, He would cease to be holy and just. God's dilemma in forgiving sinners is how to remain perfectly just while showing mercy to people who are completely guilty. The dilemma arises because God is also perfectly loving and desires to rescue and be in relationship with human beings. This creates a massive theological tension:

- **If God only executes His justice:** All of humanity is condemned to eternal separation and death because of the **fall** and our universal **sinfulness**.
- **If God only executes His mercy:** He pardons sinners without any penalty being paid, which violates His **holiness** and compromises His absolute justice.

The Solution: God solved this dilemma through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life of complete devotion and obedience, went to the cross to be our sin-bearer, absorbed the wrath and justice of God, shed all of his blood to be the PROPITIATION! Propitiation means turning away anger or wrath by offering a satisfying sacrifice.

The Two Core Elements of Propitiation

To understand propitiation completely, two things must be true:

1. **An offense has caused wrath:** Because God is perfectly **holy and just**, His holiness burns with a righteous hatred against sin and evil. Human sinfulness deserves His judgment.

2. **The wrath is appeased by a sacrifice:** The penalty for the offense is fully paid by a substitute, which completely removes the anger of the offended party.

The Resolution: The Cross of Christ

On the cross, both attributes were perfectly fulfilled at the exact same time:

- **His Justice was Satisfied:** Sin was not ignored; it was fully punished. Jesus took the exact judgment, wrath, and death that sinful humanity deserved.
- **His Love was Demonstrated:** Because the penalty was paid by a substitute, God can legally and righteously extend total forgiveness and mercy to sinners.

Through the cross, God did not have to choose between being just or being loving. He successfully remained just and the justifier of them which believe in Jesus. Since the wrath and justice of God has been satisfied, He is free to display His grace.

The Legal Results (Your Standing Before God)

- **The Complete Removal of Wrath:** God's holy anger against your sin is completely exhausted and turned away. There is no lingering resentment or leftover judgment waiting for you (Romans 8:1).
- **Justification:** God legally declares you to be righteous in His sight. He doesn't just wipe your slate clean; He credits the perfect, sinless life of Jesus to your account.
- **Full Forgiveness and Cleansing:** The legal debt of your sin is cancelled in full. God promises to remember your sins no more, removing them "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12).
- **Reconciliation and Peace:** The deep spiritual chasm caused by the **fall of man** is bridged. You are no longer considered an "enemy" of God due to sin but are brought into absolute peace with Him (Romans 5:1).
- **Adoption into God's Family:** You are brought into God's household as a son or daughter. Propitiation changes God from a terrifying Judge into a loving Heavenly Father.

The Responsibility of Sinners: The responsibility of a sinner is not to fix themselves, pay for their sins, or earn God's favor. Because Jesus completely satisfied God's justice through propitiation, a sinner's responsibility is to respond to what God has already done. The New Testament summarizes this responsibility into two core, inseparable actions: **repentance** and **faith**. Repentance means a radical change of mind that leads to a change of direction. It is a response to understanding human sinfulness in light of God's holiness. A sinner must stop excusing, hiding, or

justifying their behavior. Like the diagnosis in Romans 3, they must agree with God that they are guilty and helpless on their own. It involves a sorrow not just because of the consequences of sin, but because sin is an offense against a holy God. Repentance means choosing to turn away from a life of self-rule and rebellion, desiring to walk in obedience to God instead.

Faith is the hand that receives the gift of salvation. It is not just a vague belief that God exists, but a deep, personal trust in the person and finished work of Jesus Christ. Shifting all trust away from one's own "good deeds" or religious rituals. A sinner must rely entirely on Christ's **propitiation** as their only hope of being right with God. Faith involves surrendering control, acknowledging Jesus not just as Savior from hell, but as the rightful Lord and King of their life.