



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 3:21-26

“The Finished Work of Christ, part I - Propitiation”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We thank Thee for the Holy Spirit who is our teacher and our guide in the things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ. May our hearts be open to his teaching and may, Lord, he teach us the things that will help us to know Thee better. For we ask it in his name. Amen.

[Message] Now, tonight we are to begin a three part series on propitiation, redemption and reconciliation as you notice on the chart. These three doctrines are extremely important and just for the sake of an outline or diagram, I've put on the board the doctrines of propitiation, redemption and reconciliation as being an apt summary of the finished work of Christ. You probably have often heard, or you will often hear, the term the finished work of Christ. By that is meant that when Jesus Christ died on the cross and cried out "It is finished," that the work of redemption was accomplished at that time, and that there is nothing more for him to do, or nothing more for us to do in order that we may have salvation. He has done it all, so it is our duty not to do anything in order to be saved, but rather to receive as a free gift that which Jesus Christ has done. So we speak of the finished work of Christ.

Now of course to talk about the finished work of Christ would engage us for one whole year, because this is a doctrine that is taught all throughout the Bible and in the Old Testament it is taught by illustration, by example, by type. In the New Testament it is taught directly. And there are many facets to it. So when I have put here on the board "The Finished Work of Christ" and have just mentioned the doctrines of propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption, I'm not suggesting that these three doctrines make up all of the work of Christ, but rather that they give us a good summary of that doctrine.

So we're going to study propitiation tonight, and therefore, let's turn to Romans chapter 3 in our Bibles and we will just stick to this one passage tonight. Romans chapter 3, and verse 21. This is page eleven-ninety-four in the Scofield edition of the King's James Version. The epistle of Paul the apostle to the Romans. Romans 3:21-26. I say we shall stick to this passage. I do not mean we will not refer to others, for in a moment I'm going to refer to one in the Old Testament. But this is the subject of the study tonight.

Beginning now with verse 21. Now remember in Romans at this point Paul has stated the theme in the first chapter verses 16 and 17, then he launched into a rather lengthy section in which he demonstrates that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners, and in fact, he says "all are under sin." Notice the 9th verse of this 3rd chapter, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."

Now, of course Paul's reason for talking about sin is in order that we might see our need of salvation. So with the 21st verse now he begins to discuss that which meets our need in sin. So verse 21,

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (and of course when we say the law, we mean the Law of Moses in the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, which was known as the Torah or the Law of Moses.) But now the righteousness of God apart from

the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (there is our word, propitiation) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Now, let's think for a moment about this doctrine of propitiation. Now you can see it is very closely related to justification. In fact, Paul states that propitiation is the means of redemption, which in turn is the means of justification. So, we're declared righteous through redemption on the basis of the propitiation which he has accomplished.

Now, those are big words, aren't they? A lot of people have difficulty with these big words, redemption, justification, reconciliation, propitiation. Now, you just have to face the facts. The Bible uses a few big words. Don't let that disturb you. You cannot read the newspapers without understanding something about some big words. After all, we're living in the space age, you know.

And furthermore, if you ever talk to a doctor, you know that he uses words that sometimes are far over our heads. But nevertheless, we have to learn to get along with them. Appendicitis, you know, that's a pretty long word too. Most of us know what it is because we spend some time studying it. So when we come to God's big words, let's don't abandon them because they're big or say that God did not know what he was doing when he gave us a few big words. After all, we ought to be intelligent enough to learn a few. So, don't let the big words stumble you; just make an attempt to understand them.

Now I want you, at this point, to turn with me to a book in the Old Testament because I want you to see that this problem of justification or as we shall see propitiation is a problem that is as old as man. So turn with me to the Book of Job.

Now Job is in the Old Testament. It is about halfway through the Old Testament, I think. At any rate, chapter 9 is on page five-seventy-four and five-seventy-five of the Scofield edition of the King James Version. Job chapter 9.

Now we want to be sure and get this chapter. It has some very interesting verses in it. Job chapter 9. Now, have you got it? Every one of you, I want you to be able to see it with your little eyes. Job chapter 9. We all have it. I know the children have it. Do the adults have it? Have you found it yet? Let's read just two or three verses here, verse 2 and then we'll skip.

Notice the 2nd verse, "Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?" Do you see that? Job asks the question, How should man be just with God? For you see, he's beginning to sense something of man's sinfulness. And so he asks the question, how can man be righteous before God.

Let's turn to verse 30,

" If I wash myself with snow water, (that is the whitest of water) and make my hands never so clean; Yet thou (God) shalt plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he (God) is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment."

In other words, he is not like man. He is so holy that I cannot enter into his presence and stand before him on the basis of my righteousness. "He is not a man, as I am."

Will you also now turn to verse 20? "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." So you can see from

this that this matter of a man being just with God has been a problem, not only in our day, but a problem through all the days of human history. And Job long, long ago expressed the problem: how should a man be just with God? "He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment."

Now will you notice the 33rd verse, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

Now a daysman is an umpire or a mediator. So Job says there is no mediator; there is no "daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." In other words, as he expresses it, there is no one so far as he knows who is able to lay his hand upon God and able to lay his hand upon man so that he may bring the two into fellowship.

So how should a man be just with God? We cannot justify ourselves. If we say we are righteous, our own mouths prove us perverse and there is no one who can lay his hand upon God and man and bring us together into fellowship.

Well now, with that as the problem, let's turn now again to the New Testament. And I want you to read with me verses 16 and 17 of Romans chapter 1, for this is the theme of Romans. Romans 1:16 and 17. Now you see the problem. Let's see what Paul has to say some many hundreds of years after Job; Paul says in Romans 1:16 now.

And watch the occurrence of the word justification or righteousness. For remember, the terms just or justice or right or righteousness, that's r, i, g, h, t, righteousness, that's not very good writing, but any way, righteousness, all of these are the same words. Just, justice, righteous or righteousness, these are all the same words. These are in different English translations of the same word.

Now let's read these verses. Do you have it? Page eleven-ninety-two. Romans chapter 1, verse 16. He is writing to the Roman church and he says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, "the good news of Christ, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Now stop for a moment. What Paul is saying here is that he is not ashamed of the good news concerning Christ. The reason he is not ashamed of it, because it's the power of God unto salvation. As he proclaims it, men come to know Jesus Christ and are saved. They are delivered. They find forgiveness. They find righteousness. So he is not ashamed of it. Who would be ashamed of the gospel, when the gospel does so much for us?

But to Paul, how does it save us? How does it make us right with God? "For therein" that is, in the gospel. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." In other words, God's righteousness is made known through the gospel. And he adds, "from faith to faith." It is on the basis of faith. "As it is written, The just (the righteous man) shall live by faith." In other words, what Paul says then is I'm not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God unto salvation. And it's the power of God unto salvation, because in it there is a righteousness of God which is available to men on the basis of faith.

So you see, this problem that Job has had, How should a man be just with God? is answered by the gospel of Christ, because as Paul says, a righteousness, a justification, a justice before God is found in the gospel, so that when I believe in the Lord Jesus, I have this righteousness. I am just before God. In other words, Job's problem is solved in the gospel. So when we talk about righteousness, we're really talking about the gospel. When we talk about justification, we're talking about the gospel.

Now let me stop for a moment and illustrate this from Martin Luther and the Reformation, because this of course was the real heart and core of the greatest event in the history of western civilization, the Reformation.

As you know, Martin Luther had been a monk and was greatly troubled over how he could be right before God. He knew that he was a sinner. He felt his condemnation. He labored under the burden of the fact that he had no forgiveness before God. And he studied the Bible constantly. He was a man who even lectured on the Bible. You see it isn't enough to lecture on the Bible. A man may lecture on the Bible and not be a

Christian. A man may lecture on the Bible and not know anything about the righteousness of God which is given to men just as Luther.

He said after which, when he discovered the true meaning of righteousness, that as he studied it, in his earlier days he thought the righteousness of God was that righteousness whereby he judges men who are sinners. And there is a sense in which that is true. We will see that in a moment in Romans 3:26. It is true that he is just and he does judge men. But that is not the only sense of the word righteousness. Finally he discovered that the righteousness of God was something that he gave to men who believed on Jesus Christ who could not earn righteousness. But God in wonderful grace gave it to them when they were willing to accept it on the basis of faith.

And then he said that which had been before to him a great burden became to him that which opened the doors of paradise. He said he had always thought of God as an angry God sitting on a rainbow waiting to hurl thunderbolts of judgment upon men. But then he discovered that God was a gracious God who, though he knew man sinned, paid for that sin himself and made it possible for men to have a righteousness that avails before God.

Now you see, this is the heart of the teaching concerning God. And frankly, I do not think you can really understand the God of the Bible if you do not understand in some measure the way in which God saves or justifies the man who believes in Jesus Christ.

Well, if you want to know the details of it, it is found in Romans 3:21-26. So now let's turn and with that as an introduction, look at the need of justification, the work of justification and the purpose of it, remembering that propitiation is a part of the doctrine. And we will explain that in a moment. Let's begin now with verse 21, for Paul is going to show us the need of justification.

Remember this, God is a holy God. Therefore, he cannot stand in the presence of sin except he judge it. Remember Habakkuk said in chapter 1, verse 13, "Thou God art of

purser eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." He is a holy God. He cannot look upon iniquity. He has stated also through the Lord Jesus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind."

May I ask you a little personal question? Have you loved the loved the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind? Don't answer. I know you haven't. Because you see, no one has except Jesus Christ. Now if we have not loved him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, we have disobeyed him. We have disobeyed the eternal God, the holy God, the righteous God, and therefore, we stand condemned before this holy and righteous God.

"But now," Paul says, "the righteousness of God apart from the law," apart from the Ten Commandments, apart from doing, "is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." We had some inkling of it in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament Passover service, remember, we saw illustrated how the blood of the animal provided a redemption for the children of Israel. We saw how Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock. He sacrificed the animals and the blood was shed. That was a witness of the righteousness of God which would be conferred on the basis of faith.

"Being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all that believe." In other words, there is a righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ. Think of that. Do you know it is possible on the basis of simple faith to have a righteous standing before God? That's what Paul is saying. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Now perhaps you are sitting in your chair thinking something like this. Well, Dr. Johnson, I may be a sinner, but I'm not near as bad as my next door neighbor. I grant you that may well be true. You may be much better than your neighbor. Of course, if you're a Christian, you're expected to be.

But nevertheless, suppose you don't know much about Christianity at this point, and you think that God recognizes men on the basis of a kind of relative merit. May I

illustrate it from the biblical standpoint? Remember Paul says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Well, let's suppose that Mr. Prier and I are walking down the street. And we see a museum, and since we are lovers of art, we want to see the things that are found in this museum. And so we walk up to the door, and we notice there's an admission price of one dollar. And so I reach down in my pocket and I pull out forty-nine cents. And Mr. Prier reaches down in his pocket, and being an engineer and an affluent member of the affluent society, he reaches down in his pocket and he has twenty-six cents [Laughter] Now, which one of us will get in? Why of course, neither one of us will get in, will we? Now I'm closer to getting in than he is, but neither one of us gets in because one dollar is the admission price.

Now the Bible says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It does not say that all have sinned in the same degree. It says all have sinned and all come short. It's true; you may be just a little bit more righteous than your neighbor. I hope you are. But remember, that human righteousness always falls short of the divine standard.

Now, if we were to get up on top of one of our high buildings here in Dallas, and we were to look down on the street, we would notice people walking by. The higher you go, the smaller people look. And when you look down from fifty stories and see people walking, you cannot tell the difference in height between a man who is six foot five, say, and a man who is five foot five. There is actually a foot difference in their heights, but you cannot see it from above. When you get down on the ground, you can immediately see that one of them looks like a basketball player and the other is a runt perhaps. But you cannot see it from above.

Now, when God looks down from heaven upon men, he does not see human distinctions such as we see. He sees "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It's just as if we were to have a contest to see who can reach up and touch the

moon. Now immediately you might run out and try to reach, or if you had a little more intelligence, you might go to some of our high mountains and reach. Or you might, if you knew the highest mountains were in central Asia, you would go there and you would reach. But we would all come short, wouldn't we?

A man may stand twenty-six thousand feet above sea level, but he's still a long ways from the moon. And he's a lot higher than the man who is standing on the ground here in Dallas. But you see, there's a lot of difference between them.

Now, the Bible says "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Not all equally, but all stand condemned. And so this is why we need a justification. This is why we need a salvation, because we all come short. Regardless of human evaluation of merit, human merit is insufficient.

Now that's why we need it. Now, let's look at the work of it. And these two verses, I really think that I can say this, if you understand these two verses in Romans 3, you have gone a long way to understanding most of the New Testament. So these verses are important.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Now, I want to stop just a moment and define two words, justified and I want to define propitiation. Now justified, justified is often defined in this way. Justified means, I'm going to write the word and that's all, justified.

Justified is often defined: to make righteous. Now it does not mean to make righteous, because you see, no one as a Christian is ever made righteous. I'm not righteous in the sense of having been made righteous, because I still have my old nature with me. Even though I am a Christian now I still have the old nature. And I still sin, and you will still sin after you have become a Christian. Justified does not mean to make righteous.

It is a legal term. It is as we say a forensic term, that's the same thing, a legal term. It means to declare righteous, declare righteous. Remember, a judge may

pronounce a sentence after a trial and say, "Mr. So-and-so is declared acquitted, not guilty. Now he may be very guilty. Remember the colored fellow who stood before the judge and he heard the judge pronounce the sentence, and he said this court declares that the defendant is not guilty. And he said, Judge, what do you mean? This court declares that the defendant is not guilty. He said, Judge, does that mean I have to give back the watch. [Laughter]

Now the court had declared him acquitted, but he was very guilty. Now justified means to declare righteous. That is, God declares righteous the justified man. He himself, in himself is a sinner, but he is declared righteous.

Now it is often said justified means "just as if I'd" never sinned, see. Justified, just as if I'd never sinned. That is insufficient. It is more wonderful than that. This word means just as if I'd never sinned and just as if I had always done everything right to be right with God.

Now, to be right with God means that I have not only not offended him, but I have also done everything that I should have done. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind." How can I ever live up to that? How can I ever have such a standing? Why God says it is possible for me to have such a standing as that, to stand before him just as if I'd never sinned and just as if I'd always done everything right. Now isn't that wonderful?

Now, you see, if a man stands before God in this way then he has boldness in the presence of God. He has freedom, he has access. He is able to come to God in prayer with boldness. He is able to call him father, because now he's in the family of God. Well, that's going on beyond the text, but it's still true, nevertheless.

"Being justified," now that's the first word. Remember to declare righteous, not to make righteous, to declare righteous.

The second word is propitiation. Now, propitiation, I say, is a long word, but to give you a simple synonym, a simple synonym is the word satisfaction, satisfaction. Let's

just read that verse that way. "Whom God hath set forth to be a satisfaction," that is a satisfaction of his righteous requirements, satisfaction. Now let's think about that. In a moment, we'll say a little more about it. But coming back now to verse 24.

"Being justified (declared righteous) freely." Do you notice that word? "Freely", what does that mean? What does freely mean? Well, for example if we were to go out to the Cotton Bowl game on New Year's Day and they should suddenly throw open the doors and say you no longer need those tickets, and all were able to enter, we could say, We got in the Cotton Bowl game freely. There was no charge. There was no cost. There was no admission price. It was absolutely free. It was by grace. Somebody did something for us. We didn't have to pay for it. That's the meaning of freely.

"Justified freely." Now I want to take this word which is the word *dorea* in Greek. *Dorea*. The word *dora* means a gift, so this is gift wise, like a gift. We're justified. And I want to look at it in a couple of other places in the New Testament.

So keep your hand in Romans 3, but turn with me to 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 8 first. 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 8. Now Paul is talking here about how preached the gospel among the Thessalonians. By the way, that's page twelve-seventy-two, twelve-seventy-two. That's in the New Testament; it's right after 1 Thessalonians. [Laughter] You see these children had it already. They've been going to Sunday school and they've learned these books. Sometimes I think children learn faster than adults. Have you found it yet? I want you to find it and see it with your little eyes remember.

Now, let's read this verse. Now, Paul is, I say, describing how he preached the gospel among the Thessalonians. You know he didn't do like modern preachers. He didn't come and take a pulpit and say, Now, I want you to pay me a salary. And if you pay me a salary, and if it's big enough and also if I get a parsonage too, and if I have expense money, and if I get a few other things, I might consider to be your preacher for a while. Paul was not quite that kind of preacher, you know. He, at times, paid his own

way so that people might not say he's preaching for money, because he wanted them to see that what he was giving them was truly the mind of God for them.

So, he says here, "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought." Now, do you know what that means? "We did not eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:"

"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing." For nothing, for nought. N, it's not N A, it's N, O, U, GHT. For nought, gift wise. So what Paul is saying here is that we did not charge you anything. We did not require you to give us bread. We worked with our own hands. We paid our way. For nought, for nothing.

Now if we just took that word back and we translated Romans chapter 3 "being justified for nothing," that would be the sense of it. Being justified for nothing. Gift wise. But let's turn over to another place, John chapter 15 and verse 25. John 15, verse 25. Here is another occurrence of this word *dorean*. "But this cometh to pass," the Lord Jesus is speaking, "that the word might be fulfilled in their law, They hated me without a cause." Without a cause, now that is a little phrase that renders the same word *dorean*, freely.

Now, let's take that rendering "without a cause" and translate Romans 3:24 using it. It would read this way, "Being justified without a cause". Without a cause, without a cause in me. Justified, declared righteous, freely, for nothing, without a cause. You see what that means? That's grace. That's God doing something for us, not our doing something for God. God doing something for us.

"Being justified freely then by his grace." Grace, do you know what grace is? Grace is God's unmerited favor for those who deserve just the opposite. It's God's unmerited favor for those who deserve just the opposite. We've often said, Grace, God's riches at Christ's expense. G, R, A, C, E. God's riches at Christ's expense. G, R, A, C, E. That's what it means. "Being justified freely by his grace." A Lutheran commentator at

this point says, "Why this is pure abounding, astounding grace." And that's exactly what it is.

Now mind you, this is not my word. In fact this is not even Paul's word only. This is God's word, that we are justified, declared righteous, given a position before God such as if we have never sinned and always done everything right on the basis of nothing in us. Grace, God's riches at Christ's expense, for nothing, freely, without a cause.

How is this possible? Why, Paul says, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Redemption, what does this mean? Redemption. Redemption is a word that means in the Greek, ransoming away. It's a word of the slave market.

You know in Paul's day, there were sixty million slaves in the Roman empire. There were millions of slaves. Everybody was acquainted with slaves. The New Testament is full of instructions to slaves, because there were so many slaves who became Christians. Slaves were everywhere. It was a common thing for Paul to see the slave market where citizens, where individuals throughout the Roman empire were brought and they were auctioned off. And it was possible to buy slaves. In fact the Roman army supported themselves largely by taking captives, turning them into slaves, taking money which they obtained in the slave market as their pay.

So when we read here "through the redemption," Paul is trading on this metaphor of the slave market, through the ransoming away. For you see, we were in the slave market of sin. We were slaves to sin. We were displeasing to God. We were bound into captivity. We were so in the entanglement of sin that we could not help but sin and displease God.

But Jesus Christ has come and he has shed his blood on the cross and he cried out "It is finished." And that blood, we shall see when we talk about redemption, that blood is the ransom price which was paid so that we might go free. So when Paul says, "by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," he means through the paying, the payment that Christ provided through his blood.

And I wish you could see this in the Greek text. This is apolytrois. Now when you have a word such as this, which is a preposition apo plus the verb of the noun lytrois, this noun and this preposition make a compound noun. Now ordinarily when you have a preposition such as apo attached to a noun like lytrois. You know all of this; you're Greek students of course. Apo is intensive. Apo means away from and lytrois means a ransoming. So that the two together convey the idea of a ransoming away.

Dismon, one of the great German Greek scholars, professor of New Testament at the University of Berlin in his latter years, once said this, "This word apolytrois is very significant. Paul does not say through the ransoming, through the lytrois which is in Christ Jesus, but through the ransoming away, as if to say that we would never again come into the same old bondage. So, we have been justified freely by his grace through the ransoming away which is in Christ Jesus.

No wonder we sing "Awake my soul in joyful lays And sing thy great Redeemer's praise. He justly claims a song from thee, his lovingkindness, oh how free!"

Well, let's move on now. "Whom God hath set forth" that is Jesus Christ. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." What did we say? A satisfaction, a satisfaction "through faith in his blood."

Now what does this mean "Whom God hath set forth a satisfaction"? A satisfaction of whom? Why, a satisfaction of God. But why should God need to be satisfied? Well, God is a holy God remember. He must punish sin. He cannot look away and not punish sin. If he does not punish sin, he is no longer a holy God. He is no longer a righteousness God. And he is not the kind of God that we can worship. Holiness is his basic attribute. He is holy. He is distinct from men and he dwells in holiness as he inhabits eternity. So, he is absolutely holy.

And we read, "Whom God hath set forth (Jesus Christ) to be a satisfaction." What does he do? What does Christ do when he is on the cross? Why, he provides a

redemption. He provides a satisfaction of God's holy character, and he satisfies the justice of God that would demand our punishment forever.

So, God's claims against us are claims that would mean our utter separation finally from God forever. But Jesus Christ dies on the cross and by the blood that he shed, being so infinitely valuable in God's sight, he satisfies the requirements that God had against us. He takes our judgment, our punishment, our condemnation so that when he cries out "It is finished" all that God had against men is removed, so that no longer is there anything hindering men from coming directly to God through faith in Jesus Christ. So, "Whom God hath set forth to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood."

Now notice this. It is in his blood. It is by means of the shedding of the blood. The death was necessary. Now the death was necessary because according to God "The wages of sin is death." Sin means death. It means spiritual death. It means physical death. And it may mean eternal death to all who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But since Jesus Christ dies, he takes our judgment. And by taking our judgment, God through him has satisfied his own holy character, his own justice. So when Paul says here, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation or a satisfaction through faith in his blood, he means that Jesus Christ has satisfied the claims of God against us.

Now that is what propitiation means. It means that God is satisfied. That's exactly what it means. Propitiation, satisfaction. God is satisfied. He is no longer, he is no longer prevented from extending his love to every man because Jesus Christ has freed his holiness, or I should say freed his love so that this love may go forth toward men.

Let me illustrate this, for I think it is important that we understand that this finished work of the Lord Jesus is a substitutionary work. You'll notice it says God hath set him forth to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood. It is by means of his sacrifice that this takes place. And it is by means of his substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus Christ took our place there, so that we do not have to die.

Some years ago I read a story of an incident that happened in Concord, New Hampshire. There was a man who had Boys School and he attempted to teach his boys biblical principles as well as other principles. And in the course of the conduct of the school, in this school it was the habit of the students themselves under the guidance of their professors to make the laws of the school. And they participated in the government. And they made certain laws for certain things. If the students did certain things, they were to be punished in certain ways. And one of the things that they set forth was that if a student committed a certain crime, he would have to be whipped publicly.

And one day a little boy was found guilty of the crime which required a public whipping. And just as they were getting ready to execute the law, a headmaster had asked the students, Is he guilty of this crime, boys? And the boys had said yes. What must we do? Why he must be whipped. And just as they were getting ready to carry out the sentence, the door opened in the main auditorium of the school and the older brother of the boy came in. He took in the situation at a glance, saw what was happening, stepped forward, and said I'd like to take my brother's punishment.

Well, the headmaster asked the boys, Boys, will the law of the school be honored if its judgment is meted out upon this man? And they said yes, the law would be honored because you see, the breaking of the law would require a certain penalty, and it would be executed on the substitute. Boys, is this permissible if he is willing to do this? And they all agreed that it was so, and the brother took the punishment due the son. The law was upheld, but at the same time the brother voluntarily took the place of the younger boy.

Now this of course is a weak illustration. All human illustrations are weak of divine things. For things happened on Calvary that we cannot comprehend being human. But in a sense, this is what happened. Jesus Christ voluntarily took our place.

Some object to this and say, How is it possible for one man to take the place of others? But if he voluntarily took our place, God says he is our substitute and that is what happened.

Now others say, But I don't understand how Jesus Christ in a point in time could bear the punishment of all men which would mean their eternal separation from God. Now this is why I say we cannot understand everything that happened at Calvary, because Calvary is like an iceberg. You know, when you see an iceberg you only see about a third or less of the iceberg. The rest of it is underwater.

And we're only given a view of the cross which is necessary for us. All of the things that happened there are not told us. So we do not understand everything that happened on the cross at Calvary. But we do know this, that Jesus Christ, while he did not suffer the identical penalty of separation from God forever, he did suffer an equivalent penalty

For example, let me illustrate that. Suppose I owed you one hundred dollars. Yes, you. Suppose I owed you a hundred dollars. Now I could pay you in two ways. I could pay you by giving you a one hundred dollar bill. Wouldn't you like to have that? Or I could pay you by giving you two hundred fifty-cent pieces. Now you wouldn't mind having that, would you?

You know, those are identical in so far as our law is concerned. The fifty-cent piece, I think is still legal tender; both are legal tender but they're not the same. Just take up a hundred dollar bill. It's very light. It's made out of paper. Two hundred fifty-cent pieces are quite heavy. They are different and yet they are equivalent. They are not identical but they are equivalent. So Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross at Calvary is not identical with the punishment that men deserve and shall have if they refuse to believe in him, but it is more than equivalent in the sight of God. For he says that he died for all men.

So then, "Whom God hath set forth to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Now you know this text here becomes a little complicated, so notice it carefully. This is why; this is why this propitiation or justification takes place. "To declare," to show "God's righteousness in passing over sins that were past, through the forbearance of God." Notice that that word remission means passing over. So, here's what Paul means.

He means this, that if Jesus Christ had not come and died on the cross at Calvary, men might have said something like this, O you believers in Jehovah, whom you claim as the true God, you say that he is a righteous God, you say that he punishes sin. But we don't see that. We see the wicked prospering. We see that the wicked have large flocks and they have lovely homes in which they live. And they don't seem to be suffering at all. And yet you say that the wicked are suffering, but we don't see that.

Now all through the Old Testament God overlooked sin. He passed by the execution of judgment upon sin because Jesus Christ was going to come and die for sin. And so God did not execute the fulness of his wrath in the Old Testament times. He waited until the cross of Calvary. And there the only holy man who ever lived, the only righteous man who ever lived went to the cross of Calvary and cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Now mind you, the only holy, the only righteous man went to the cross and God allowed him to die under judgment. Now that shows God's attitude toward sin. Sin is so heinous that it requires the sacrifice of God's own perfect, holy, eternal, divine son. Now don't tell me sin is not heinous in God's sight. He passed over sins done afore time waiting for the time when he showed his righteousness by causing Jesus Christ to die.

Now isn't it interesting? You know we would have said, if we had been writing this, that God sent him forth to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood in order that we might have forgiveness of sins. But God has first place in the cross. Jesus Christ died, not first for men, but first for God. First for God, to vindicate his holiness before men. Then by means of that to save us.

Now that's not all. He says, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness." For you see, he says "the remission of sins that are past," that's the Old Testament period. Now "this time," in other words, Jesus Christ died for sins in the old covenant period and he died for sins in the new covenant period. Jesus Christ died for sins that were past. He died for sins that are future. You know what that means? That means when you believe on Jesus Christ all of these sins of course were future when he died. That means that your sins past, present and future are all provided for in the death of Christ. All of your sins are forgiven, for he died for all sin, past and in the future.

Now finally, the third reason, "that he might be just." God might be just. How is he just? Because he takes your sins and my sins and the sins of every single human being and places them upon Christ and he dies for them. So the law of God is upheld. He is just. God is righteous.

But if we had only a righteous God, he would not be a saving God. So Paul says "that he might be just, and the" what? "justifier." He not only is just, but he is the one who makes just. Did I say make just? What? Declares just. Who? Whom? I should say. Whom does he declare just? Do you notice the rest of that text? "Him which believeth in Jesus," "him which believeth in Jesus." And do you notice the first part of verse 25, "whom God hath set forth to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood." Through faith, him which believeth in Jesus. Do you notice verse 22? "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ."

Over and over Paul states that this is by faith. So, we have righteousness for past, righteousness for the present, righteousness for the believer. This is why Christ died, that we might be justified through the satisfaction and the redemption which Jesus Christ has accomplished.

Now, Job said, "How should a man be just with God," did he not? He said, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, who can lay his hand upon us both" and bring us together. But if Job had been able to read Romans chapter 3, I think he would have

shouted, Glory, hallelujah, even in a Presbyterian church, because Paul says that we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

In other words, Job's question, which man has wrestled with down through the ages, is settled in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is light, but he is also love. He is just, but he is also a forgiving God. His righteousness having been satisfied, his love is freed to extend eternal salvation to everyone who will simply believe. For it is by grace, it is free, it does not cost anything.

Now, I had a wonderful Bible teacher in my years at the theological seminary. It was Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer. And you know, he used to like to stress this matter of grace and especially did he like to stress, and Mr. Prier will remember this, he loved to stress this doctrine of propitiation. And he used to say to us, referring to the publican and the sinner in Luke chapter 18, he would say to us, Men do you remember that story about the Pharisee and the publican? You remember how the Pharisee went into the temple and he prayed, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican over here. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." I'm very religious and I'm very righteous was what he was saying.

But then the Lord said, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, Oh God be merciful to me a sinner." And Dr. Chafer, he would like to point out to us this. He said, You know in the Greek text that is the same root that is translated propitiation in Romans 3:25. And so he would say what he was really saying was, Oh God, be propitiated toward me a sinner. Be satisfied with me a sinner. He pled the mercy of God.

Now Dr. Chafer would say to us in the seminary, he said, Now men, now that you know that God is propitious, you know that Jesus Christ has been set for a propitiation, you don't have to cry out to God now, Oh God, be propitiated to me. That's like going up to your wife of twenty-five years. Suppose I were to go home to Mary tonight and say to her, Mary, you know I've discovered that I'm quite fond of you [Laughter] and I wonder

if it might not be possible for us to get married. Why, I have an idea what she might do. She would probably look at me in horror and think, Too much Bible study has gone to his head [Laughter] you know, or something like that. He's crazy.

But listen. Now that you know that Jesus Christ has been set forth a satisfaction of God, all of his holy claims against man have been satisfied in the blood of Christ, then we don't have to pray to God, Oh God, give me mercy. We don't have to coax mercy out of God. We don't have to cajole him. We don't have to plead with him for mercy. God is propitious. He has done it already, you see. He is propitious. He has been satisfied. He has been satisfied; it's over. And God is just waiting in heaven for men to come to him. He doesn't want men to say, Oh be merciful to me. He, through the men who preached the gospel, he proclaims far and wide his mercy and says, Just come, come. He is propitious.

I mentioned Dr. Chafer, I think I can get this in before the tape recorders are through. I think I mentioned this once before to you, but I think it's so important that I'm going to mention it again. When I was in Birmingham in business, Dr. Chafer came to Birmingham to teach and preach before I came to seminary. I never will forget a message on Psalm 22 in the Presbyterian church in Wylam which was in the western part of the city. When he finished the message, having taught on Psalm 22, he said, you know salvation is free. And then he said, suppose you were walking down the street and you drop your handkerchief. And the person in the rear of you picked it up and touched you on the shoulder and handed you your handkerchief and said you dropped this. Now you would take that and you would put it in your pocket. And what would you say to that person? Why, you would say "Thank you" wouldn't you? Then he said, that is all that God wants us to do, to just to say "Thank you." For you see, he has set forth Jesus Christ to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood. God initiated this. He's made it possible for us to come to him. He's wiped out our sins in the blood of Christ. And all he says is just come. So what do we say? Thank you, Lord, for the salvation that you give. And

when we thank him in our hearts, we have the salvation that comes through Christ. I know, for it worked with me and it's worked with countless millions of others down through the years. Propitiation then, the satisfaction of God through the finished work of Christ.

Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee for this wonderful doctrine. May it really press home to our hearts that that thou art satisfied through Jesus Christ. For we ask it in his name. Amen.