

Propitiation

by Ron Bailey

The sermon explores the concept of propitiation through the lens of priesthood, emphasizing the journey from separation due to sin to restoration in God's presence through Christ.

Duration: 1:00:06

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Genesis 3:24, Matthew 6:33, 2 Peter 1:3, 1 John 2:1, Revelation 21:4, Revelation 22:14

Topics: "Propitiation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Jacob and his encounter with his brother Esau. Jacob, known for his cunning and strategic thinking, divides his family into two groups to protect them from any harm that Esau may bring. The speaker emphasizes the use of various words and illustrations in the Bible to convey deeper meanings and associations. The sermon also touches on the parable of the prodigal son, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and confessing one's sins to God. Overall, the message emphasizes God's constant desire for repentance and forgiveness.

Transcript

I want to think a little bit tonight about a particular aspect of priesthood. If you have come from a religious kind of background, you may have in your mind an idea of what a priest is. You may think he's someone who has special powers that have been given to him, or you may think he's someone who dresses in a particular way, or speaks in a particular way, with a twang or through his nose or something like that, I don't know.

A priest really is an in-between person. He's a mediator. He's someone who is able to connect two people who are separated.

He is the piece in between the two pieces. He's the one who makes a join possible so that there can be again fellowship and a flow of life between the two. And this is one of the pictures that God has given us.

This book is absolutely gem-packed full of pictures. They're illustrations that God has given to us because no one picture is big enough to say it all. There's a lovely hymn of Isaac Watts that says you can join all the names that are given to Jesus and yet you still come short of what you really want to say about him.

So what God has done to help us to understand is he's given us lots of different kinds of words and sometimes we take up the word and don't know the origin of it, don't know exactly where it came from. And

I want to do something tonight. Just take a very, very simple idea from the Bible and just show you how God built this into the experience and into the history of the people of Israel to begin with so that later on he'll be able to say things and they would know what he would mean because of that association.

Let me illustrate it for you in a very simple way. Just looking around there are enough greyheads here I think to kind of do this experiment. If I were to use a certain word for some generations here it might mean it would give them thoughts of a certain kind.

If I use the same word for others of a different generation it would give them quite different thoughts. For example if I use the word Dunkirk, for a younger generation it's a French seaside town. For an older generation that's not what they think about because that has become part of this country's history.

It's become part of almost the psyche, the way that people think. Now what God did through hundreds of years with his people is he built into their history things that when he put his finger on them would provoke reactions in them. He trained them, he taught them so that they were perfectly prepared so that when the word came everything would become clear.

That's why it's such a double tragedy that the scripture says he came to his own and his own received him not. He came as a fulfilment of so much that God had been preparing them for for hundreds of years and they missed the punchline if I can put it like that. They missed what God was really saying.

It started of course way, way back and what I want to do tonight is not with every bit in between but I want to go from Genesis to Revelation. Some people say I always do that anyway. But I'm not going to go through every verse but I just want to give you a feel for a word, for an idea.

And it's amazing this particular idea is an idea that's in our language as well. You know you have these things in language called idioms which is a kind of a picture way of speaking. You talk about a road running up a hillside and you know that the road isn't actually moving but that's a sort of an idiom.

Now in Old Testament times and in New Testament times God I believe carefully oversaw, superintended the development of language in Hebrew and in Greek to make these languages a perfect medium through which he could then speak his word so that people would understand and I want to show you an idea that starts off way back in Genesis, turns with me please to Genesis chapter 3. You know this story well. It's the story of Adam's sin and it's, it's, this is the only book in the world that explains how we got to where we are. This is the only book that really understands and tells us why the world is in the state it is and it's in places like Genesis chapter 3 so it explains it and with interpretations later on.

For example when Paul says in Romans, by one man's disobedience sin entered and that is such an important thing for us to realize because he's telling us very plainly that sin is older than the human race. By one man's disobedience sin entered. It did not come into existence, it was in existence before that but as a result of one man's disobedience it entered the human race and became part of our condition, became part of our experience and it had a devastating effect and this is the way the story is told as in Genesis chapter 3. Let me go right to the end of it, I presume you know the rest of it, the way in which God gave them one single law that they must keep.

They, everything was theirs, everything was theirs, expression of God's perfect provision for them, just one thing they must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And you know this story, how it develops in the way that God said in the day that you eat of it you will die. This is the end of this chapter 3,

verse 22.

And the Lord God said behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever, one of these unfinished sentences, so he drove out the man and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to God the way of the tree of life. Just picture this, the cherubim are, according to the scriptures, they are angelic beings. I think they're the same beings referred to in Isaiah and they're called seraphim, which means the burning ones.

These are angelic beings who stand in closest proximity to God, they are the guardians of his wholeness, they're the ones who are most conscious of who he is, the ones who themselves veil their face as they worship him and who say one to another and have been doing it now, how long? Well, Isaiah heard them about 700 BC, John heard them about 90 AD and I guess if we could hear them they'd be saying it still, holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth is full of your glory. That's not a chorus they're singing, it's their reaction, it's their continuing response to being in the presence of God. They're not conscious of their own holiness, the Bible speaks of holy angels and before holy angels we might be absolutely overwhelmed, but they're not conscious of their own holiness, they're only conscious of his, and they worship him.

These cherubim were placed on the gates of the garden of Eden to make sure that Adam and Eve could not force their way back into the presence of God. That word that God spoke in the day that you eat of it you will surely die was a true word, it was absolutely true. It was another 900 years before the undertaker got his body but he died the day he sinned.

Something in him died and the expression of it is that he is banished from God's presence and in God's presence there's everything, there's fullness of life, there are pleasures forevermore, it's all in God's presence. Did you ever notice if you've read the gospels how people couldn't stay dead in the presence of Jesus? Did you notice that? How the widow's son at Nain was raised, how Jareth's daughter was raised, how Lazarus was raised, it's almost as though they could not stay. I've sometimes wondered whether that's what Jesus meant when he said it was necessary for us to stay away so that he should die.

Almost as though he's saying if I go there he won't die. And there are things that have to be seen, things that have to be worked out and they won't be worked out unless we let this go to its extremity, so I'm going to stay here and then we'll go and deal with it. Just death could not stay dead in his presence.

These creatures were put as guards on the gates of Eden and Adam and Eve were banished from the presence of God. If you were looking up the word presence in the Bible, the idea of God's presence, the idiom that the Hebrew uses is face. It always talks about the face of God.

Every time you find the presence of God in your Bible it's almost certainly face. It's the way it expresses it, being before God's face. If you go through, for example, the book of Leviticus, which is all about the way in which men approach God to seek his face.

Do you hear the kind of language we use? We use it constantly and don't realize what we're saying. The way that they began to seek his face, you go through the book of Leviticus and get a concordance. Look at the word before when it talks about being before the Lord.

You'll see dozens and dozens of times in the book of Leviticus it'll refer to things being before the Lord. This sacrifice was before the Lord. This priest did this before the Lord.

It's literally before the face. It's this consciousness of being in God's presence, of being before his face. We use the same kind of language in different ways.

We talk about eye contact. We talk about someone perhaps who has offended us and we say, he wouldn't look me in the eye. It's amazing, this language, this idea, this way of expressing things isn't just in the Bible, it's through our language as well.

And if we're in agreement with someone we say, we don't always say we're the same shape as Tony Penn. We might say, well we really see eye to eye on this matter. Isn't this amazing? These pictures of face to face contact so that we look one another in the face.

As a result of Adam's sin, man was not able to look God in the face. He was driven from his face. He was driven from his presence.

So they should not get back to this train of life. And really the end of this story that begins there in Genesis chapter 3 is in Revelation. We'll do some of the verses in between, but not all of them.

This is Revelation chapter 22. I've got my old Bible with me at the moment and parts of it are falling to pieces. I've got a friend who says, have you noticed how Bibles that are falling to pieces are usually owned by people who aren't? But this is nothing to do with my state, it's just my old Bible.

Revelation chapter 22. These visions in the book of Revelation, okay if you want to think of them as a future state, they are that, but they're more than that, they're the present state as well. They are things that in picture language should, can be through others now.

This is what it says, and he showed me a pure river of water of life, pure as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it and on either side of the river was there the tree of life. There we are, we're back to the tree of life.

That that Adam was banished from, excluded from, here we have access to it again in the last chapters in the book of Revelation. It's an extraordinary book you know. It really is an amazing book.

I'm off to Aurora next week and I'll be sharing in the radio thing and when I get there on Friday apparently one of the things they want me to do is to do a session on Genesis, and I think I'm supposed to do day six or something like that, and different people will have been doing the other days. And I have absolutely no idea what they've been doing these other days, and I'm going in to do the sixth day. It'll be interesting to see what happens.

Apparently many years ago the BBC had a bright idea. They decided that they would commission several different authors to write a serial, and they wouldn't, they wouldn't talk about it, they'd just each one make their own contribution. So the first man began, and he didn't really know what he was starting, so very generously he decided he'd create quite a few characters to give the next authors plenty to work on.

So he created a host of characters, and when it came to the second author, he liked some of the characters, but he still hadn't quite got the characters he wanted, so he introduced some more characters. When it came to the third author, there were so many characters it was hard to control them, so he

decided he ought to eliminate some of the characters in a bus accident. The only trouble was, he eliminated some of the characters that the fourth author was going to use, so the fourth author had to invent some more characters, and I think before it got to the end they just took it off.

It was chaos. But this book spans what, two and a half, three thousand years? Three continents, three languages, people who had no means of contacting one another, and yet it's perfectly consistent. The whole thing knits together.

It is a wonder. It is such a gift that God has put into our hands. So here we are back at the Tree of Life, in the midst of the tree of it, and on either side of the river was there the Tree of Life with its bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

This tree, and there shall be no longer the curse, but the throne of God and of the land shall be it, and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face. You know, that is so wonderful. That is the goal of everything that God has done and is doing in redemption, to bring men and women back to the place where they can see His face, where there's no longer the curse.

I believe in this for now. This is one of my definitions of regeneration. No longer the curse, but the throne of God and of the land.

See what happens when a person is in Christ, all things are passed away, behold all things are become new. The curse is no longer in power. Instead there is a throne, and it's not unoccupied, it's the throne of God and of the land.

And if you were to develop that idea, you'd discover from the book of Revelation that this water of life flows from the throne of God and of the land. When you read earlier on about the throne of God, the water isn't flowing from it. But when it becomes the throne of God and of the land, the water begins to flow.

Can you see what that's a picture of? That's the work of the Spirit. That's what happened on the day of Pentecost. The throne of God became the throne of God and of the land, and the river began to flow.

And people said, what does it mean? And people use different scriptures than the ones I'm using, but he's telling you exactly the same thing. Something has happened. Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the Father.

He is in supreme power. All authority is given to him. And he has poured forth this which you now see and hear.

No longer a curse, the throne of God and of the land. And this little phrase here, his servants shall serve him. It's so wonderful when you think of what other gods we've served, what other lords have had mastery over us, others that have driven us in other directions, but now his servants shall see him.

And this is such a simple little phrase, but to me, it speaks so deeply to my heart. And they shall see his face. No longer banished from his presence, no longer kept at arm's length, his servants shall see his face.

This idea of being driven from the presence of God, later on when God began to instruct the people of Israel, he gave them this very, to us as we read it, this very complicated ritual system. He taught them first

of all that they were to build a tabernacle, which was a sort of a framed tent, with two compartments. One holy compartment where priests were allowed to enter, and then a most holy compartment where only God was allowed to be, although the high priest, for a certain purpose, was allowed to go in once a year, taking the blood of the sacrificed.

And outside that, an altar courtyard open to the heavens. When they built this tabernacle, they built it according to very specific instructions that God gave to Moses, Moses passed on to the experts who made the whole thing and put it together. And one of the things that they did is that to separate the two compartments in the framed tent, the holy one from the most holy one, they put a curtain, beautifully worked curtain, embroidered with purple and blue and silver and gold, and embroidered onto the curtain, would you believe it, with cherubim, the guardians of God's holiness, saying in picture language, you cannot come back into the presence of God.

You cannot come back. The way is not yet made manifest, if you will, it says in Hebrews. It says in Hebrews that God was saying this in Old Testament terms, while that old tabernacle was still standing, God was saying the way into the holiest of all is not yet made manifest.

No way, you cannot come back into God's presence. The other extraordinary thing, or maybe it's not extraordinary, is that they were taught not just how to put the thing together, but how to orientate it. Every time they pitched it, they had to pitch it in exactly the same direction.

Now let me, my sense of direction is appalling, but we'll see if we can work it out. East? East, look at that. I'm improving.

Okay, east. If you think about the Genesis thing we read, we read that when man was banished from the presence of God, the angel gods were put on the eastern gate to guard the way so that man couldn't come back. So which way has man gone? East.

East. He's got to go west to come back. So there's a picture language here that man has been banished eastward, God has put a guard on the eastern gate so he can't get back in.

But in the picture language of this, if man does want to approach God, if he wants to begin to come back, he has to turn around first, or he has to repent. He has to go to 180 degrees and start coming back in the other direction. He has to head west.

But this isn't a political statement, this is just a kind of biblical truth about west being the way to get back to God. It's picture language. But the thing was that God also built into the picture language that although man could begin to approach God, the ultimate presence of God, to see his face, to be with him was nothing between, that was not possible.

So you had this cherubim god in symbol. And there are indications in the scripture that Aaron had two of his sons who on one occasion decided that at their own will and in their own way they would take some incense and they would go through this curtain and the fire of God came out and destroyed them. The cherubim still wielding their fiery swords, still preventing anyone coming back.

It's picture language, but it's very powerful picture language. So how is man going to get back into the presence of God? Let me read you a verse from Hebrews. This is really where I want to set our eyes tonight, on Jesus.

And in Jesus in a particular role. This is chapter 2 and I'll begin to read, I'll begin to read verse 9. I'm jumping into the middle of it, but it'll be okay for this. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

For it became him. It was entirely appropriate for him. For whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering? For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.

For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church, will I sing praise unto thee. And again I will put my trust in him, and again behold I and the children whom God has given me. For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him that it was entirely fitting for him to be made light unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest. What it's telling us here is that part of the reason that Jesus became human is because he was going to have to fulfil the function of a priest.

And only a human being can fulfil the function of a priest for human beings. There is one mediator, says Paul to Timothy, between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus. Only a human being can be a priest between God and man.

So Jesus comes into our world and becomes a real man. He's not just God veiled in flesh, as the hymn says, he has God become flesh, the Word became flesh. He became a real flesh and blood person.

He didn't cease being God, but he became 100% human and remained 100% God. And it says here that it was necessary, because he was going to have to be a high priest, and it goes on to say this, but I'll go back to the beginning of verse 17. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made light unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation.

You've probably got reconciliation, it should be propitiation. To make propitiation for the sins of the people. I can remember, I don't know why it is, but I can remember quite distinctly that one of the first strange words I became conscious of in Christian things was this word propitiation.

But I've never heard anything like it, I've got no idea what it meant. I wasn't as well taught as you are. Shall I ask you what it meant? Well, it's one of these words with a history.

It's one of these words that God had been teaching the people of Israel for generations, just what its significance was. And one of the main ways he did it, in fact the very first time you'll find the word is way back in the book of Genesis, that's usually the case. Most things begin in Genesis, that's why it's called Genesis.

Beginnings. Turn with me please to Genesis chapter 32. This is a very familiar story and many have preached on it, me included.

Let me put you in the picture. Abraham's son Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. They were twins, but Esau was born just very shortly before his brother, and consequently Esau was the elder brother, he was the first born, and in the pattern of the day that meant that all kinds of benefits and responsibilities would have been his.

But Esau was pretty much indifferent to this realm of things. As long as he'd got his food, his porridge or whatever it was, that's all he wanted. He wasn't interested.

And on two separate occasions the other brother, Jacob, whose name really means crooked, Jacob twisted out of Esau the blessing, the birthright, the prayer for blessing. Esau was so furious at this that he determined that he would kill Jacob. And Jacob's, their mother, told Jacob about it and Jacob fled.

And then Jacob was off the scene for, how long, 20 years? Seven years he served for Rachel, seven years for Leah, then a few more years, a few more children, probably a gap of about 20 years, when God begins to speak to Jacob and tell Jacob that it's time to go back to the land that God had promised to his family. And Jacob obeyed, but as he begins to get back he begins to think of what things were like when he left. He begins to remember perhaps the look in Esau's face, a murderous look, and he's frightened.

So he sends some of his servants on a peace mission. He sends them to see how the land lines. And here it is in chapter 32, Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him.

And when Jacob saw them he said, this is God's host, and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. And Jacob sent messages before him to Esau his brother, to the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commended them saying, thus shall you speak to my lord Esau, thy servant Jacob says thus.

Can you see how servile this man is? This is the man who twisted his brother out of everything. Now he's coming home and he's sending a message to my lord Esau, and he's signing your servant Jacob. He just wants to be sure that Esau gets the message with all this.

My servant Jacob says thus, I have laboured and stayed there until now. I have oxen and asses, clocks and men's servants and women's servants, and I have sent to tell my lord that I might find grace in thy sight. Can you see this language again of sight? Grace in your eyes.

Grace, that I might find grace. He knows that what he did caused a breach between him and his brother. It opened up a great gap between them.

And he wants to know how things lie. He wants to send this message because he wants to be in his brother's favour, as we would say now. He wants to be in his brother's good books.

He doesn't want to be blacklisted. He doesn't want to be a constant source of pain. He wants to be on the right kind of terms with his brother.

So he sends these messages to see how the land lied. And he says this, verse 5, verse 6, And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he comes to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. And Jacob is terrified.

This is exactly what he feared. This is a brother with vengeance on his heart. This is a man coming with four hundred soldiers to carry out the thing that he'd promised twenty years ago.

But Jacob's the kind of man that never stops thinking even when he's in trouble. He always lands on his feet, this man. I remember hearing a preacher years and years ago saying Jacob was the kind of person that could stand behind a corkscrew and not cast a shadow.

He really was an oily character. He was a very nimble thinker. So he thinks.

The first thing he does is he divides his family into two parts. So if Esau hits one half, the other half can survive and they can start again. Originally here it is in the messengers, sorry, verse 7, Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.

And he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels into two bands, and said, If Esau comes to the one company and smites it, then the other company, which is left, shall escape. And he prayed. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said to me, Return to thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.

I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shown unto thy servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children.

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered from multitude. And he lodged there that same night, and he's still thinking, and he took that which came to his hand, a present for Esau, his brother. He is an amazing strategist, Jacob.

He knows the psychology of people. He's going to send a gift, just out of the generosity of heart, of course. He's going to send a gift, Esau.

And he's going to send it on the installment plan, so that it will slowly break down any resistance in his brother. And it's all here, all carefully spelled out. That's fourteen.

Two hundred she-goat, twenty he-goat, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, thirty milk camels. This is an amazing list. A camel would worth its weight in gold in these days.

This was a very, very costly gift. This was not cheap grace. This was a man who really feels he's blown it.

There's an enormous gulf opened up between him and his brother, and he feels the only way that he can possibly build a bridge across it is by this lavish gift. Two hundred she-goats, twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty kine, ten voles, twenty she-asses, ten poles. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves, and said to his servants, pass over before me, and put a space between which drove and drove.

And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau, my brother, meets thee, and asks thee, saying, Who art thou, and whither goest thou, and whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say, They are thy servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau, and behold, he is behind us. Oh, it amuses me.

You bet he's behind us, as far behind us as he can be. He's put this gift in between him, so he's a long way behind. So he commanded the second and the third and all that followed the drove, saying, On this mannish shall you speak to Esau when you find him.

So this is his plan, and as so often happens in the Bible, the Bible is very honest and actually tells us not only the plan, but it tells us what Jacob was thinking. And this is the way that Jacob is thinking. Look what he's thinking.

He says, verse 20, And say moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind me, for he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face. Can you see this language? I will appease him with the present, and afterward I shall see his face. Because appeasement is a word that's fallen on a hard time since the days of Mr. Chamberlain, but appeasement is a good word.

Listen to it, and you'll hear what's at the heart of it. Appeasement. Appeasement.

This gift will produce peace, and the consequence of there being peace is that we'll be able to look one another in the face. This man who fled from the face of his brother, this man who certainly wouldn't have dared look into me in the eye, now he's got this plan. He's got this plan that if he can find the right price, if he can pay the right amount, it will, I'm using my language very carefully here, it will remove the offence and make reconciliation possible.

It is an appeasement. It is in fact the very first Bible use of the word propitiation. Propitiation is a price paid to remove the offence so that reconciliation can be effective.

And there could not be a more wonderful and simple definition. Don't worry too much about dictionary definitions of Bible words. What you want is Bible definitions of Bible words.

And in my studies I make a very definite kind of policy of this. Not even Bible dictionaries, I go to them last. First of all I see how the Bible uses the word.

This is the way we learn language. When you've begun to learn language, you didn't hear your mother say spoon the first time and immediately run for a dictionary. You waited to see what a spoon was.

And then later on maybe you saw another one that was plastic and you thought, oh well it isn't just silver in that shape, it can be plastic in this shape. And slowly, because of the way the word was used, you built up your own understanding of what the word meant. And that's why we need to read the Bible.

To build up an understanding of what the word means. So that when God puts his finger on the word, when he uses it, it isn't just a dictionary definition that comes to your mind, but it's a host of memories that flood up from the things that you've heard. Appeasement.

I will give my brother a present. It will remove the sense of the offense and afterwards I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me, it says here.

Just perhaps. Let's go back to that reference in Hebrews, now that we know what propitiation means. One of the things that a high priest of Israel had to do, certain times in his life, certain parts of the year, was because God was a holy God and he dwelt in the midst of a people who were not a holy people in the way that they ought to have been, their actions, their life was a constant source of offense to God and would have separated God from his people.

But what happened is once a year they had this thing called the Day of Atonement in which the blood of an animal, symbolizing life that had been lost, was taken and sprinkled within this most holy place to make propitiation. And the thing that we call the mercy seat, really the proper name for it is the propitiatory, it's

the place where propitiation was made. That's what it is.

We'll come back to that one in a minute. Let's see what he says here in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 17, "Wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto 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, to pay the price to remove the offense, so that there might be reconciliation.' Reconciliation is a wonderful word as well. Whatever context you use it in, it implies two people who were together and something has caused them to become separate.

And then something makes it possible for them to come back to that original oneness. And we call it reconciliation. You couldn't get a better definition of reconciliation than that.

That's exactly what Jesus came to effect. He came to pay, he came to be the price. He came to be the price that the Father paid so that the offense could be taken away, so that there could be reconciliation, so that sinners could look God in the face and know that all was well.

It really is amazing that God, not just in our language, but in our instincts, that our things instinctively, we knew these truths. Even if you didn't have the Bible, you would know some of these truths. It's an instinct that, you know, the child has it.

He's kicked up a fuss, he's done a tantrum or something, his mother shouted at him, so he goes into the garden and he picks some flowers and he brings them back and he gives them to her. He's making a payment. Instinctively, he is paying the price to remove the offense so that there can be reconciliation.

And how many boxes of chocolates and bouquets of flowers have been bought to effect exactly the same thing? Because there's a sense that something has gone wrong here, that whatever the cause, something has gone wrong here. If I pay the right price, then it will remove the offense and we can see one another face to face. So, you've got that much revelation already, instinctively.

But the thing is, without the Scriptures, you would never understand how great the price is that must be paid in order to remove the cause of the offense. As the old children continue to say, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gates of heaven and let us in.

We have nothing to offer. Or our righteousness, says Isaiah, is just like filthy rags. We have no gift that we can offer to God which is not His by right anyway.

So, there's no way we can get ourselves out of the debt. Because if we give everything to God that's His by right, we shall have nothing left to begin to hit at the principle, all we're doing is just keeping. It's like, you know, if you had been going along to your local butcher's for the last 10 years and hadn't paid a bill, then you went along next week and you said to him, I'd like to tell you from now on I'm going to pay all my bills.

And he said, I'm very pleased to hear it. But there's quite a list here that we've got in the past. Now, our list in the past, however great it is, we have no way of paying it off.

Because our requirement is, our normal rent for being a human being is that you love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind. So, when you've paid that, if you've got anything left you can start on the overdraft. But you won't.

There's no way. There's no way that we can make any contribution to remove this offence to effect reconciliation. No way.

This is how Paul expresses it in Romans chapter 3. I think it's Romans chapter 3. He's just spoken of the fact that whether you are from a background of being part of God's people, whether you are a Jew or whether you are a Gentile, in this it makes no difference because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Some have sinned in full knowledge of the law, some without it. It makes no difference.

And he uses this very language he says here in chapter 3 at the end of verse 22. There's no difference. There's no difference.

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And he says this, being freely, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus whom God has set forth to be a propitiation. Look who is providing the gift to remove the offence to make reconciliation possible.

Whom God set forth. It's God who paid the price. The price was His son.

The price was Himself become man, given entirely to declare through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that have passed through the forbearance of God. That's referring to maybe a question that would rise up in the minds of people who are listening and say well, how is it that God did not visit retribution on the sinner? How is it that God didn't punish people for what they've done? How is it that God could possibly be, as it says here, just? And the language that's being expressed here is this. He's saying well, it was because God was setting forth the price paid to remove the offence to make reconciliation possible that God was able to look over to, as it says here, the sins that have passed.

To look over them. To not pay attention to them. Not to have to immediately map God's judgement to that particular sin.

Let me illustrate it for you like this. Maybe you haven't done this before. You know that we had a large family and for a father in a large family it's really sort of like you spend most of your life at the end of a queue.

Then Margaret and the younger ones behind as well. And they had one of these turnstile things. And of course, at a turnstile you pay your money and the child turns and that's the way it works.

But the amazing thing is, you know, that woman let four of my children in without paying a penny. Because she could see me coming with the money in my hand. And that's why God could look over the sins of the people.

He could see the man coming with the money in his hand. That's why God was able to do it. It was all based on this.

Every time that God ever entered into a relationship with man, of any kind or woman, it was always on the basis of this. It was always because he saw the man coming with the money in his hand. Always.

So the death of Jesus goes in both directions. It goes backwards in time right up to the city of Adam. If those of you know what I'm talking about, I'll leave some of the experts to explain it.

It goes right the way back to Adam. No father doesn't go back to the angel host. It goes right the way back to Adam.

And it goes all the way back in the other direction as long as it needs to go. This one price paid that never needs anything to be added to it. The perfect price to effect reconciliation with God.

Okay, let me link this in now quickly with the kind of things I was saying this morning. If we do discover that in spite of all that God's done for us, in spite of the fact that he's given us a new clean heart, in spite of the fact that he's given us a new start, that all things have passed away and become new, suppose we discover, because God speaks to us, that somehow the inward part of it has become filled with filthiness again. If you weren't here this morning, I'm using the language that I was using this morning.

Something has filled up this place that ought to have been holy and entirely for God. Something had filled it, cluttered it. What happens if that happens when God has cleansed it? Does that mean that if we mess it all up again, that's the end of it? Well, God is so wonderful in the way that he works.

There's a wonderful thing in John's letter here. And every time I read it, I always think of this English phrase about belt and braces. Do you know what that means? It means, if you wear belt and braces, it means that nothing can go wrong, because if one gives way, the other one will look after you.

And the amazing thing is that if you read John's letter, it's a wonderful letter. Well, for me it's wonderful because it's so absolute. John is a real black and white.

You're in or you're out. It's life or death of Satan or your God. It's ever so simple.

It's all absolutely black and white. And he's making his statement and he's showing what God has done. And then you come to chapter three and he makes this statement, and we need to take heed to this if we haven't already done it.

He says, My little children, these things I write to you that ye sin not. In other words, John believes that the truth that's been revealed, not just in the gospel, in the scriptures and the power of that in the power of the Holy Spirit is sufficient that we need never sin. These things have I written to you so that you do not sin.

It's like Peter writes in his letter when he says, God has given to us all things that pertain to life and Godliness. God has given us everything we need. We have absolutely no excuse for sinning.

Touch here, whoops. It doesn't make you feel bad. This is one of my favourite silly story I think is of a farmer who rolled an ostrich egg into a chicken coop and said, that's just to encourage you.

And sometimes preachers are like that. They say, well, you absolutely got no excuse of any kind for sinning, then I want to encourage you. But we have no excuse because he has given to us all things that pertain to life and Godliness and he has written to us and informed us, instructed us, given us the revelation in our hearts so that we do not sin.

And, it says here. I love this little and, because that's not the end of the story. And, I'm reading from John's first letter, chapter two, this one.

My little children, these things I write unto you that you sin not. And if any man sins, we have an advocate for the Father. Jesus Christ, the righteous one, and He, I'm going to remove the offence to effect reconciliation.

There's nothing that you can add to make your reconciliation possible. It's done. Absolutely done.

If you try to add anything to it, what you're actually doing is you're saying, I don't think it's done. Jesus, when He'd done this, He sat down. You'll be glad to know that soon I shall finish and I shall sit down.

And, you'll know then that that's it. I've got nothing more to do. I've sat down.

Now, when Jesus had got nothing more to do, He sat down at His Father's right. There's nothing more to do. It's all done.

And, although He's given us everything so that we need not sin and do not sin if we sin, that's not the end of the story. Because if we sin, we have an advocate. We have we have a middleman.

We have our representative before God's face, Jesus Christ, who Himself is the price paid to remove the offence so that we can be reconciled to God. This is very wonderful. It is so wonderful.

It just reminds me of the old hymn, Who is a pardoning God like Thee? Oh, who has grace so rich and free? God knows us through and through. He knows every twist and turn of our nature. He knows every step that we shall take.

He knows when we shall fall, when we sin. I would encourage you when you sin to call it sin. I was taught that as a very young Christian.

Call sin by God's name. Don't call it faults and slips and mistakes and didn't quite appreciate it or negative responses. Call it sin.

Call it sin. You see what John says here earlier on in his letter. It's coming back exactly to what we said this morning about honesty.

John says this, and it's a lovely statement. He says, if we confess our sin. Do you know that's the end of your responsibility? The rest of that verse belongs to God.

Do you know the rest of the verse? If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us all of our sins. But your responsibility ended when you confessed it. It isn't counting your tears.

It isn't asking you how sorry you feel. You just got to be honest. If we confess our sin, if we own up to it, if we acknowledge it, if we say, yes, I'm putting my hand up.

I did this. I saw that God was kind. It's illustrated in the story, I suppose the best known story of all, the story of the prodigal.

You know this story. He takes his inheritance. He goes off into the far country.

He squanders it, blows the lock, and ends up in an experience where he's just about up to his armpits or elbows at least, and the pigs are ready to eat what the pigs are eating, when, as the scripture says, he came to himself. There's just this brief second or two of sanity that comes in. God is so good to us.

He gives us these little respites, just to say, the sentence is all you need if you'll use it. He came to himself and he said, how many of my father's servants at home? I've got enough to eat and I'm starving to death here. This is what I'll do.

I will arise. I'll go to my father and I'll say to him, father, I've sinned against heaven and before you. I'm no more worthy to be called your son.

Make me as one of your hired servants. So, in his mind, he's practiced what he's going to do, and now he begins to act it out. He arose and he went to his father, and you know this wonderful story of how the father was watching for him and sees him, and the father runs to him and embraces him.

Wonderful, wonderful picture. He doesn't wait for him to have a shower and to get all the stench of the sty off him. He just wraps him in his arm.

And then the son begins this thing that he's already rehearsed in his mind, and he gets this far. He says, father, I've sinned against heaven and before you. I'm no more worthy to be called your son.

And that's as far as he got. That's as far as he got, because the father said, bring forth the best robe, put a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet, killed the packet car, this is my son. He was dead, he's alive.

He was lost and he's found. It's an amazing thing. I want to put it like this.

God will constantly talk to you about your sin until you begin to talk to God about your sin, and then he won't mention it. He'll talk to you constantly about your sin until you acknowledge it, and as soon as you begin to talk about it, he won't mention it. And it's better still, because when the older brother comes home, the older brother says, it's not fair.

This younger brother, he's taken the family fortune, he's squandered it, he's spent it on harlots. The father won't have anything to do with it. The father won't enter into discussion about this sin at all.

He just simply says, this is your brother, he was lost and he's found. He was dead and he's alive again. I hope you've found that in God.

That when you're dodging, when you're ducking and weaving, his finger's on you all the time, and you will not get away. But the moment you acknowledge your sin, you'll find he won't mention it again. There's nothing more to say.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Is that fair? Well, yes it is, because the price has been paid already, ahead of time. If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

He is the propitiation for our sins. To make it really as simple as we possibly can, we lost the right to look God in the face. We lost the right to be in his presence.

To know any joys that are in his presence, we lost the right. But Jesus has paid a price to remove the offense, to make reconciliation possible. And it's not just a vague hope, as it was for Jacob.

Perhaps, I'll see his face, perhaps he will accept me. It's an absolute certainty. God raising of Jesus from the dead is the absolute guarantee that this sacrifice was enough.

It was sufficient. It was all that God required. It cannot be added to.

There's that lovely hymn, I can't remember quite how it begins, but it talks about being in heaven, but it refers to it as Emmanuel's land, and it says, but even then I know no other stand. Maybe we could sing it. I

know no other basis.

And it doesn't matter how holy we become, if there are degrees in it. It doesn't matter how mature we become. It doesn't matter how much we achieve of what God wants us.

It will never alter the basis of our acceptance of God. I think that it's so important for people who preach holiness to preach this too. I preach holiness, I believe in holiness passionately.

I also believe passionately that holiness is not the condition upon which God accepts me. The condition upon which he accepts me is what Jesus Christ has done for me. I do not preach justification by sanctification.

I preach justification by faith. That is to say, I trust God for what he's done. Having been reconciled, then we learn to live.

And God requires it, but it's not part of the initial qualification.

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