

Propitiation

by Tony Miano

Tony Miano's sermon on 'Propitiation' emphasizes the critical nature of understanding mankind's sinfulness and God's holiness to appreciate the significance of Jesus' sacrifice.

Duration: 1:11:15

Scripture: Romans 3:21-26

Topics: "Human Nature", "Gods Wrath"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the idea of having a video recording of every thought we have ever had in our lives. He suggests that if such a record were made public, it would reveal our true nature and thoughts. The speaker references a message by Paul Washer, who explains that children naturally learn negative behaviors such as lying, selfishness, and brutality without being taught. The speaker also shares personal experiences as a missionary and a crime investigator, highlighting the consequences of parents not disciplining their children. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the nature of mankind and God's wrath and holiness.

Transcript

Indirectly for closer to 8 or 9 years, Granada Hills Community Church parented a church plant that I pastored up in Valencia, back 7 or 8 years ago, called Pico Canyon Community Church. If anyone in my family was absent, the church attendance was about 10 people. But it was a blessed time, I learned a lot, and this family shepherded us through that process.

And then in 2002, when the Lord chose to bring that little church plant to a close, and we started 10-4 ministries, well, Granada Hills Community Church was right there to support us, and to hold our hand, and to make sure that needs for our family were met when we launched out to serve in that missionary work. Well, Granada Hills Community Church is going to be with us during another transition in life, beginning Wednesday. I've been offered and I've accepted a position with Living Waters Way of the Master on their full-time leadership staff to start a new aspect of their ministry to bring training to street evangelists and to network like-minded ministries and churches around the world.

And so with that, 10-4 Ministries does not draw to a close, and we're very thankful for that, because it was never our ministry to begin with. It was always the Lord's. He just allowed us to have stewardship over it for a time.

But there will be new leadership. A young man by the name of Travis Yates, a captain with the Tulsa Police Department who's on the advisory board for 10-4 Ministries, is going to assume leadership. I didn't think this would do this.

Is it going to assume leadership of 10-4 Ministries so that I can start this new work that the Lord would have me do? And so we covet your prayers, and we know we will continue to enjoy your love and support as we try to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world and to the law enforcement family. But I thought you should know that before anybody else. That won't be public knowledge for another couple of days, but I thought I owed it to my church family to let you know first what's happening in our lives and in our ministry, so we appreciate your prayers.

Do I need to turn this on, Chris? Open your Bibles, please. Open your Bibles. Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3. This morning, we're going to talk about the most important word in the Bible.

The most important word in the Bible. We're going to be reading verses 21 to 26 in chapter 3. We're going to be all over God's Word this morning. I'll be asking you to turn to some passages, others, I'll just ask you to sit and listen.

But we're going to cover quite a bit of ground this morning. God's Word tells us this. But now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe, for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed. For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Let's pray.

Father, I thank You for Your Word. Father, I'd ask that You'd be with me this morning and You would help me to rightly divide it before my family. Father, I will say much today that I hope will be an encouragement.

I hope it will give us all a greater sense of Your holiness and Your justice and Your love. Father, I'd ask that You'd remove as much of me as possible from this message. My opinion about You and about Your Word means nothing in comparison to the truth of Your Word, and we want to know Your truth.

Father, I pray that You would soften our hearts before Your Word this morning, that You would bring correction where it is needed, that You would bring encouragement where it is needed, that You would draw us closer to You by the power of Your Holy Spirit as we open and read and study Your Word together. Be glorified, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to begin by asking you a question. If I were to ask you this morning to tell me what you believe the most important word in the Bible is, what would your answer be? Now, don't start shouting things out, but I'm sure a number of different words come to mind. My answer might surprise some of you.

Others of you might nod your head in agreement. Still, others of you might not know what the word means, and that's okay. That's one of the reasons why we gather together corporately to open up God's Word and study it together.

But before I share my answer with you, and for some, before my answer will make sense, we must all come to terms with two great truths in God's Word. One is the truth about the nature of mankind, and the other is the truth about the nature of God's wrath and holiness. Now, these are weighty subjects, I know, subjects that might not leave you with a warm, fuzzy feeling, necessarily, but you're not here to get your ears tickled, right? That's not why you're here.

You want to dig deep into God's Word and to mine the precious truths of His Word that will draw us closer to our Lord and Savior. And in the time we have together this morning, we will likely only scratch the surface of these massive and critically important topics, but we must thoughtfully consider these things if we are to have any hope of understanding why a particular word in the Bible is the most important word. So let's begin by taking a look at the true nature of mankind.

Apart from genuine repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ, which is a gift of God, mankind is evil. Mankind is not evil occasionally. Mankind is not evil only when provoked.

Mankind is not evil only to a degree. Mankind is evil to the core, through and through, without a speck or hint of inherent goodness. Now, if you balk at what I just said, if you find yourself already offended and becoming angry, if you're ready to shout, I don't believe that! Your problem is not with me.

It's not. You simply do not believe what the Bible says about you, regarding either your present condition, if you're not saved, if you're not born again, or your previous condition, if you are now a born-again follower of Jesus Christ. Hear what the Word of God says about the pinnacle of His creation, the human race.

Genesis 6-5 says, Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Not only does God see the actions of people as wicked, He sees the thoughts and the intentions of man's heart the same way. Now, it's important we understand we're not looking at the condition of man through the lens of our own sinfulness, through our own fallible perception of what we see about one another.

Certainly, when we look out upon our own family, we see aspects of goodness, when we love each other, when we do things for one another. We certainly look at some people as more evil than others. We might see others as more good than others.

If we were asked, how would we define ourselves, we would probably say, Well, I'm better than some, and I'm not as good as others. But we're not looking at the goodness of man through the lens of man. We're looking at the goodness of man, or the lack of man's goodness, through the lens of a holy, righteous, perfect, and good God.

If you balk at what I'm saying, again, your argument is not with me. Now, I usually don't use visual aids when I preach. I just don't.

Ty has often made slide presentations for us, during worship, during the message. What if Ty flashed up on the screen, a new slide presentation, and the title is, Your Thought Life. Your Thought Life.

And for the next ten minutes, everything that flashes on that screen is every secret thought you've ever had over the course of your entire life. If this were indeed a CD that chronicled in video form, like a reality show, every thought you have ever thought during the course of your life, what would it show us? Would we see purity? Would we see that you are basically good? What would we see? If your thought life can be

in video form for the world to see, you know what we would see. And the thought of having such a record of your thought life made public probably frightens you, and it should.

It certainly would frighten me to have every thought I've ever thought on a screen for everybody to see. God weighs not only your actions against the perfect and holy standard of his law, he sees the total depravity of your thought life, too. Does anyone in this place of worship this morning honestly believe that you can stand before the creator of the universe, the one and only God, and declare your own righteousness and say to God, I am good? If you really believe that, then with love and care for you, I must tell you that although you may very well be sincere, you are living and believing a lie.

Genesis 6, 11, and 12 says, Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Let me ask you a question.

Do you believe that the world and the people in it are any less corrupt today than they were in the days of Noah? Anyone believe that? Anyone believe that the world has gotten better? Okay. I submit to you that not only is today's depraved society every bit as wicked as in the days of Noah, but it is even more so today, I would say. Why? Well, the world's population alone attests to the greater amount of wickedness in today's world.

There are so many people acting wickedly today, so many more today than in the days of Noah. Numbers alone makes this world a more wicked place. And we've become so sophisticated, and so intellectual, and so technologically advanced that we have many more ways to indulge our secret and public sins than the people did in Noah's day.

Genesis 8, 20-21. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The Lord smelled the soothing aroma, and the Lord said to himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth, and I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done.

Paul Washer is a name that many of you probably aren't familiar with, but he is a man who has discipled me to a great extent over the last couple of years from afar. I've never met the man. He's an itinerant preacher here in the United States and around the world, for many years served as a missionary in the Peruvian jungles.

And I recently heard a message by Paul Washer in which he explains what we just read in Genesis 8, 20-21, and he explains these verses with a series of rhetorical questions. He said, quote, Do you have to teach a child to lie? Do you have to teach a child to be self-centered? Do you have to teach a child to be selfish? Do you have to teach a child to be brutal to other children? They learn that on their own. Set them free, discipline them not, and see what you have in 10 years, a monster.

Why? Because what Scripture says is true, end quote. Now, I can affirm what Washer said. As a gang and juvenile crime investigator for a number of years, I saw firsthand the results of parents who never disciplined their children, who treated their children as peers instead of teaching their children their rightful place in the family structure.

Time after time, I would interview these young people, ranging in age from 10 to 20. In fact, on one occasion, I interviewed a 9-year-old who planned, who masterminded, and executed a residential burglary

with a bunch of his friends. Nine years old! There was a reoccurring theme in all those interviews over the years.

No remorse. Their only concern was how they would be affected by what they did. They had no concern whatsoever for their victims.

What they did was right in their own eyes and therefore completely justified in their little depraved minds. From before the time of your first memory, you dishonored your parents too. And so did I. We disobeyed our parents.

Even as toddlers, we harbored angriness and bitterness in our heart toward others because someone wouldn't immediately give us what we wanted. We coveted that which belonged to or was in the possession of another, and maybe we would try to steal it from them. Take it from them.

Today, we don't call this dishonoring your parents anymore. Today, we call this a tantrum. Today, we call this a phase.

Now, those of you who are parents can answer this question for me. Aside from mama and dada, what was one of the first words your child learned? Mine's a good one. That's not the one I'm thinking of.

No. No. Mine is probably a close second.

No, the word was no. Now, did you sit with your child on your lap and playfully repeat the word over and over again so that you could impress your friends and family members with your child's intelligence? Come on, Johnny. You can say it.

Say no. Come on. Come on, Sally.

No. No. What a good girl! You didn't do that, right? Tell me you didn't do that.

If you did, you're one of the reasons why I had so much job security in law enforcement. Of course you didn't do that. Children do not need to be taught sinful disobedience.

They inherited that trait from Adam and Eve. No one had to teach it to them. Let's return to the Scriptures now and see what God thinks of this notion that man is basically good.

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm chapter 14. Psalm chapter 14. It's a passage that will be familiar to some of you, I am sure.

Psalm chapter 14. Verses 1 to 3. God's Word tells us this. The fool has said in his heart there is no God.

They are corrupt. They have committed abominable deeds. There is no one who does good.

The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside. Together they have become corrupt.

There is no one who does good. Not even one. Listen to these two passages from Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 7.20 says, Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Ecclesiastes 8.11. Because a sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. Jeremiah 17.9. The heart is more

deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.

Who can understand it? Now if you think these passages are all relegated to the Old Testament, Jesus said this in Matthew 15.17-18. Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. It's not uncommon when I take someone through the law of God, when I take someone through the Ten Commandments, whether or not they profess to be a Christian, that they quickly downplay their sins, saying something like, Well, God knows my heart. And when a person makes a comment like that, I smile, and I politely say, You're absolutely right.

God does know your heart, and that's your problem. That's your problem. Some Christians are uncomfortable with the idea of holding another person accountable for their sin, or going as far as to question another person's salvation.

They will often turn to and misinterpret Matthew 7.1, one of the verses that every unbeliever in the world seems to know. Do not judge so that you will not be judged. The verse is not a prohibition against all forms of judgment.

It's a prohibition against hypocritical and self-righteous forms of judgment. It's a prohibition against condemning forms of judgment, meaning that a person assigns another person to hell for a particular sin, but yet they exonerate someone else because their sin is acceptable to them, or because they commit the sin themselves, and they love to overlook that sin, and commit that sin more than they love God. Have you ever done that? Are you doing that right now? Do you think of certain sins, and you say, that person's going to hell because they committed that sin, but yet if you're wallowing in a certain kind of sin, and you see someone else doing it, guess what you want to do? You want to extend grace and mercy, and say, well, that's not that bad.

I've caught myself doing that. At times, I've done that. Now, the kind of judgment we are allowed to employ is a discerning kind of judgment, a loving kind of judgment.

And if you study the parables, you will see that very often the parables distinguish between true and false conversion. And Jesus, throughout the Gospels, is never shy about pointing out the hypocrisy of religious people. We are being no one's friend if we see habitual sin in a person's life, and we do nothing more than assign them the title of carnal or backslider.

They very well may be unregenerate. They very well may be living with a false faith, a false hope, and a false relationship with God. If we truly care about people, then we will speak the truth in love.

We will warn people about the reality of false conversion, and we will encourage them to examine themselves just as we are supposed to examine ourselves. And one of the best pieces of evidence about the true condition of a person's heart is what comes out of their mouth. So many times, I have had people strongly, even angrily defend their assertion that they are a Christian, while at the same time holding beliefs such as, I don't believe the Bible is true.

Or, I'm a Christian, I believe in evolution, not creation. Or, I'm a Christian, Jesus was a good man, but he wasn't God. Or, I'm a Christian, God's not a judge.

Or, I'm a Christian, homosexuality is not a sin. Or, I'm a Christian, and it's a woman's right to choose to murder her baby. Or, I'm a Christian, and there are many ways to heaven.

I've heard all of these things and more. Of course, they are quick to call me judgmental, which is a rather judgmental thing to say, when I dare to question the validity of their faith. But it's not me that's condemning them.

I'm merely pointing out the evidence against them that condemns them, the words coming out of their own mouth. And if you're here this morning, and you profess to be a follower of Jesus Christ, yet you do not believe what God says about Himself in His Word, and you do not believe what God says about His Word in His Word, and you do not believe what God says about you in His Word, and you do not believe what God says about the only way of salvation in His Word, then you are not a Christian. No, it's not according to me.

It's according to the truth of God's Word. You may be religious, you may be spiritual, but according to Scripture, you are not born again, you are not saved. Repent, turn from your sin, and believe the gospel while you still can.

1 John 5, 11-13 says, And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

These things I have written to you, who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. One more passage about man's condition, his fallen condition, and then we'll move on. Turn to Ephesians 2, 1-3.

Ephesians chapter 2, 1-3. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. When I was a young Christian, someone taught me, go eat popcorn or General Electric Power Company for those epistles.

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1-3. The Apostle Paul wrote this, And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Apart from the regenerating, life-changing, life-saving work of Jesus Christ, every person on the face of the earth is not a child of God, but a child of wrath. That might rub some of you wrong too.

This brings us to the next important point. Yes, in order to truly understand the meaning of the most important word in the Bible, we must first understand the true nature of mankind, but we must also understand the truth about God's wrath and His holiness. Now you might be sitting there thinking, When is this going to end? I don't want to think about this.

Just get to the most important word of the Bible. I wanted to hear something today about a New Year's resolution. I want to make another New Year's resolution I'm not going to keep past February.

Talk about New Year's resolutions. Sorry. We're not ready yet to talk about that most important word in the Bible.

It's not enough that we realize that we are all sinful. Romans 3.23 does say, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We know that verse.

We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners. We sin because we are sinners, and because of our sin nature, we all fall short of the glory of God.

And because we fall short of the glory of God, if we are unsaved, if we are not born again, then the wrath of God abides on us. Apart from the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God alone, we are children of God's holy and just wrath. Apart from Christ, no person is a child of God, no matter how good they feel about themselves, and no matter how much we love them.

We need to tell people this truth. With love in our hearts, we need to tell people this truth. Sadly, the vast majority of people in the world run around claiming to be a child of God, while denying the reality of God in virtually every aspect of their lives.

And there are pastors and churches who feed such idolatry by pronouncing that everyone is a child of God. Now, it might be soothing to the unsaved ear, but it is a lie. It's a lie that only serves to lead people one step closer to the gates of hell.

If a person is not a born-again follower of Jesus Christ, then according to Scripture, not according to Tony, he or she is not a child of God, but a child of wrath. John 3.36 tells us this, He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Now, when we think about this word wrath, many things probably come to mind.

So let's define the word. Here's a definition that comes from the new Bible dictionary. Quote, It is the permanent attitude of the holy and just God when confronted by sin and evil that is designated His wrath.

It is a personal quality without which God would cease to be fully righteous and His love would degenerate into sentimentality. It is as permanent and as consistent an element of His nature as is His love. Scripture defines God's wrath as His righteous anger.

Numbers 32.10-13 says this, So the Lord's anger burned in that day, and He swore, saying, None of the men which came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, for they did not follow Me fully, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord fully. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of the Lord was destroyed. Scripture tells us that God's wrath is great.

Zechariah 7.12-14. They made their hearts like flints, so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. And just as He called, and they would not listen, so they called, and I would not listen, says the Lord of hosts.

But I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land is desolated behind them, so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate. Scripture tells us that God's wrath has been revealed and continues to be revealed.

Romans 1.18-19. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them. But God has yet to unleash the full fury of His wrath, Scripture tells us that His wrath is being stored up. Romans 2.5-8. But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath and

revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds.

To those who by perseverance in doing good seek the glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. And Scripture tells us that the wrath of God will be accomplished.

Revelation 6.15-17. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come and who is able to stand? And again, maybe you're even thinking more now, Tony, I don't want to hear this anymore.

My God is a God of love. My God is not angry. My God is not wrath filled.

My answer? You're absolutely right. You're right. Your God is not angry because your God is not the God of the Bible.

Yes, God is love. God is love. But if the God you worship is not also a God of perfect justice, then your God is a figment of your imagination.

Your God is not holy. And God is holy. If you say that God is not angry, then again, your argument is not with me.

It's with God. It's with Him. Not only is God angry, but God is hateful with a holy and righteous hatred.

Psalms 5.5 says this, The boastful shall not stand before your eyes. You hate all who do iniquity. What does that say? Psalm 11.5. The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence, his soul hates.

Turn with me to Proverbs 6.16-19. Proverbs 6.16-19. I want you to not only hear, but also see what this passage says. We have to deal with this. We're not going to fully understand the most important word of the Bible until we deal with these things.

Proverbs 6.16-19. God's Word tells us this, There are six things which the Lord hates, yet seven which are an abomination to Him. Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. Look at what it says.

Now we've all likely heard the adage, God hates the sin but loves the sinner. Right? We've heard that. We might have said that.

I've heard it countless times. That adage is not entirely true. At least not the way the adage is typically used by believer and unbeliever alike.

God is love. And I worry about some of you. I worry that as I talk about the judgment and wrath of God, and I talk about the sinfulness of man, that that's all you're going to hear.

And I emphasize every time I say that God is love, because I want you to hear that too. Have open ears. Have open hearts.

Don't have hearts of stone this morning, to what you're hearing. Have hearts of flesh. God is love.

But God is not love because he has shown you love. God is love because he is perfect, because he is holy. His character is absolutely perfect.

God's love is perfect, and so is his hatred perfect. The only conflict between God's love and God's hatred is found within the confines of our fallible sinful minds, because we struggle to see hatred through any other lens than the lens of our own sin, because our hatred is often so very, very sinful. And so then we assign all hatred as sinful.

But God is not sinful. God is holy. God is holy.

Look again at the passage. Look at it closely. Look at it honestly.

Look at it, if you can, without the influence of the American church's tradition that have so infected much of our thinking. Look at what it says. God does not simply hate what haughty eyes do.

God hates haughty eyes. God doesn't simply hate the lies we utter. He hates the tongue that lies.

God doesn't simply abhor evil, violence. He hates the hands that shed innocent blood. God doesn't simply hate the wicked plans of our hearts.

He hates the heart that devises wicked plans. God doesn't simply hate the evil toward which our feet run. He hates the feet that run toward evil.

God doesn't simply hate the lies people utter. He hates the false witness. God doesn't simply hate strife among brethren.

He hates the person who spreads strife among brethren. It doesn't matter whether or not you agree with me. What matters is whether or not what I am telling you is true.

And if I were merely sharing with you my opinions, what I am saying would mean absolutely nothing. What matters is whether or not what I am telling you is the truth of God's Word. What matters is what the Bible actually says, not what we want it to say.

Truth matters. Truth matters. Now you might think that if God is love, He cannot hate.

But scripture makes it clear that because God is holy, He must hate. And because God is holy, He hates everything that is not in perfect, direct compliance and perfect alignment with His holy, holy, holy character and nature. And God's holy hatred in no way whatsoever minimizes or overshadows His holy and perfect love.

There's no disparity with God. There's no inconsistency with God. He is holy.

Now what we have here is called the divine dilemma by some. If God is holy, righteous and just, and He is, then He cannot simply forgive your sins against Him. In order to remain perfectly consistent with His nature and character, He must punish sin.

But at the same time, we know this is true. That God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. We know that is true.

The word of God is true. God is love. But if God sets aside His holiness, if God sets aside any portion of His justice, if God diminishes His wrath against any form of evil in order to extend to you His grace, mercy and love, then His grace, His mercy and love would be unjust.

And if His grace, mercy and love are unjust, then God is less than holy. And if God is less than holy, then He ceases to be God, may it never be. May it never be.

Being holy, God's justice is therefore holy. Turn to Proverbs 17. Proverbs 17, verse 15.

I love you, by the way. This isn't easy to do. This isn't easy.

Please don't think I get off talking this way. I didn't sleep last night. All I could think of was you.

All I could picture is you sitting in the chairs you always sit in. And my heart trembled before God because this is hard. I love you.

God's word tells us this. He who justifies the wicked and He who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. An unjust judge is an abomination to Almighty God.

How do you react when you turn on the news or you turn on the radio or you read a newspaper and you read about a judge letting a pedophile go? With probation. How do you react? How do you respond? Do you not demand justice? Have you ever been the victim of a crime? I've met all too many victims of crimes. They expect and they demand justice.

An unjust judge is an abomination to God. So does it not make sense that God would never do anything He considers to be an abomination? If He did just once, then He too would be an abomination and instantly cease from being God. And we know that could never happen.

Because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He always has been. He always is.

He always will be. God. God cannot forgive sin committed against Him simply because we ask.

Just like a righteous judge cannot let a guilty criminal go just because he asks to be let go. God cannot forgive sin against Him just because perfect love is an aspect of His perfect character and nature. God must punish sin.

Listen to the words of the theologian Francis Schaeffer. Quote, The problem is not how little or how much we have sinned, but against whom we have sinned. We have sinned against an infinitely holy God who really exists.

And in sinning against an infinitely holy God who really exists, our sin is infinite. It is as though there were opening at our feet an infinite chasm of guilt. Suppose we brought our little buckets of righteousness, if we could even find any little buckets of righteousness, how many finite buckets of righteousness would it take to dump into an infinite chasm of infinite guilt? It's impossible.

And having once sinned against an infinite God, the chasm is infinite, and nothing we can dump in this chasm can ever fill it up. End quote. So is there no hope? Is there no hope? Some of you might be thinking right now, Tony has no hope.

Well, there is no hope in you. You will not find your hope in you or in anything you can do. But there is so much hope.

There is great and glorious hope. And this brings us to the most important word in the Bible. Turn back to Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3, verses 24 to 26.

I pray that you understand why we have spent so much time doing what we just did. I pray you will come to understand. God's word tells us this.

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness. Because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time.

So that He would be just. And the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Now we don't have the time this morning, I wish we did, but we don't have the time to mine all of the deep and rich truths of this passage.

But we will talk about the most important word of the Bible. Did you see it? It's found in verse 25. It's the word propitiation.

Propitiation. Now that word may be foreign to some of you. I understand.

So let's define the word. Let's find out what it means. Wayne Grudem gives us this definition.

Quote, Propitiation is a sacrifice that bears God's wrath to the end, and in so doing, changes God's wrath toward us into favor. God has not simply forgiven sin and forgotten about the punishment in generations past. He had forgiven sins and stored up His righteous anger against those sins.

But at the cross, the fury of all that stored up wrath against sin was unleashed against God's own Son. End quote. Some of you might think I'm losing my mind today.

This word has changed me. The holiness of God is changing me. I pray it changes you too.

The men in my discipleship group on Sunday morning, we are all being changed by the holiness of God. It's a gift none of us deserve. John MacArthur wrote this about propitiation.

Quote, It carries the basic idea of appeasement or satisfaction in ancient pagan religions, as in many religions today, the idea of man's appeasing a deity by various gifts or sacrifices was common. But in the New Testament, propitiation always refers to the work of God, not to the work of man. Man is utterly incapable of satisfying God's justice except by spending eternity in hell.

The only satisfaction or propitiation that could be acceptable to God and that could reconcile Him to man had to be made by God. For that reason, God in human flesh, Jesus Christ, gave Himself as a ransom for all. Without propitiation, without the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we all stand condemned because of our sins against God.

We stand condemned because we have broken God's law. And there is nothing we can do to pay the just and holy ransom God requires as payment for our sins against Him. Our sins are infinite against an infinitely holy God.

You've heard me take you through the commandments before. We're going to again. We've lied.

We bear false witness in all the usual ways. And we tell lies every time we embellish a story in order to elevate ourselves in the eyes with the person with whom we're speaking. I'm guilty of that.

We've stolen. Do you realize that stealing an answer on a test in junior high school, as you copy another student's work, and committing an armed robbery of a bank, while these acts certainly carry different consequences and punishments in this life, they both carry a death sentence in the eternal supreme court. And it matters not how long ago you transgressed the law.

Time does not forgive sin. If someone commits a murder, and they run away from the law, and they're able to stay on the lam for 20 years, or even the rest of their life, they're still a murderer. They're still a murderer.

We have blasphemed the holy name of God, the Father, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, when we've uttered His name with anything less than the reverence and worship His name deserves. Guess what? Cows are not holy. So stop saying holy cow.

Cows are not holy. And the movie you just watched is not awesome. For only God is awesome.

Only God should fill us with a sense of awe. We blaspheme the name of God every time we use our tongue to praise Him, only to turn around moments later and use the same tongue to curse family, friend, or stranger, or gossip, or do anything else that would be vile in the sight of God with our tongue. We've committed adultery in either thought or action, whether such an act is committed with another person, or a book, or a computer screen, or in our own vile thoughts.

We have murdered our fellow man every time we have been angry without cause, and every time we have sinfully harbored bitterness, resentment, or hatred toward another person. Some of you may have committed murder in your heart this morning in this place of worship as you listen to me preach. I hope not.

We've all coveted, haven't we? Every time we refuse to find our contentment in Christ, and instead prefer the riches of the world, which never seem to be enough to satisfy the lusts of our eyes and the sinful pride of life. We have dishonored our parents from infancy, every time we've disobeyed our parents, by committing any of the acts we've already talked about and a whole host of others. Every time you lie, steal, commit adultery in your heart, you're dishonoring your parents doing that too.

We have failed to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy, not by working on Sunday, or by not having perfect attendance in church, but by failing to find and enjoy rest and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, every day of our lives. We have not glorified, honored, esteemed, and worshipped God as King by seeing Him above and before literally everything else in our lives. We have not given Him the place of supreme glory, supreme attention, supreme affection in every area of our lives.

I say we, I hope you're with me, I'm guilty. I'm guilty before God of breaking His law. We talk about Him as if He is on the throne, because we have elected Him, or allowed Him to be on the throne of our lives, when in fact He has always been on the throne.

He always is on the throne. He always will be on the throne, whether or not we in this life bow our knee before His throne. And the throne is not the throne of our lives.

His throne is the throne of the King of glory, the King who rules over the entire created universe, which includes you and me. He is no less the King of glory, He is no less the sovereign of the universe, because you sinfully do not acknowledge Him as Lord, if this describes you. A day is coming, a great and terrible day, when every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ as Lord, some as they are being ushered into the joyous presence of the Lord, and sadly others who will begin serving their eternal sentence in hell.

But every knee will bow. And we have been guilty of idolatry. Every time we fashion a God in our imagination that looks at our sin with indifference, we fashion a God in our imagination every time we overlook or minimize any aspect of God's perfect character by making one of His holy attributes or character traits, such as love, more important or more glorious than any other.

If God is holy, if He is perfect, then every one of His holy attributes are perfect and consistent. They are all co-equal. He is holy.

Now does anyone here truly believe they can stand before the King of glory and declare themselves innocent or declare themselves justified in violating the law of God? I can't. Like a criminal who stands guilty and convicted before an earthly judge, there is nothing we can do to justify ourselves before God. No denial of our guilt will appease the wrath of God.

No minimization of our guilt by giving self-serving explanations and excuses for our sins against God will appease the just and holy wrath of God. There is absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves. If you look in the mirror and you ask yourself what God sees in you or what God saw in you that He would choose to save you from the just punishment for your sins against Him, you should immediately answer the question with a single word.

Nothing. Nothing. And that is why the justification of the believer, the declaration of God that those who have repented of their sins against Him and by faith have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are righteous, that is why the justification of the believer is a judicial act of God and not an act of commerce between God and man.

We bring nothing of value to the table. We are completely at the mercy of God, deserving nothing good from Him. God is love.

Did you hear me? God is love. Not because He loves us the way we want Him to or the way we think He should love us, but because He is love in its purest and holiest form. We can only love God as the scriptures tell us because He first loved us.

God can love us because God is love, not because we are lovable. And because God is love, He has done what only God can do, satisfy His holy and just wrath with the perfect loving and holing offer of His own life to satisfy His perfect requirements for justice. Romans 5, 6 But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God made propitiation to God and for God and by God in the person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God's perfect requirements for His satisfaction and appeasement can only come from a sacrifice who is both fully God and fully man. For only God can satisfy God's wrath and only man can pay the penalty for the sins of mankind.

The sacrifice had to be fully God and fully man. And He was. And we know what God did to accomplish this divine, sovereign, judicial, eternal, loving, and holy act.

Turn with me to Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53. Bear with me for a little longer, please.

Isaiah 53, 10 and 11. God's Word tells us this. But the Lord was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief.

If he would render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand. As a result of the anguish of his soul, he will see it and be satisfied. By his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant, will justify the many, as he will bear their iniquities.

Do you realize that the Jews who accused Jesus of blasphemy and demanded that He be crucified, and the Roman soldiers who carried out the act, driving the nails in His hands and feet and the spear in His side, were merely instruments in the hands of the one who killed Jesus? Do you understand that? God the Father killed God the Son. Killed God the Son. God the Father literally crushed God the Son under the full weight of His furious and just wrath, and it pleased Him to do so.

It pleased God to take upon Himself the full fury of the punishment we deserve for our sins against Him. It pleased Him. It pleased Him because He is holy, holy, holy.

He is the Lord God Almighty. He is just and He is love. One day long ago, under the direction of an inobedience to God, a man named Abraham made a trek to the top of a mountain in a land called Moriah.

And with him he took his son, his only son Isaac, and wood for a fire. A fire upon which he would present a burnt offering unto the Lord. Abraham's son Isaac carried the wood for the fire, just as Jesus carried His own wooden cross.

Isaac followed his father up the mountain to the place where they would perform the sacrifice and worship, just as Jesus made His way to the top of a hill called Golgotha, the place of the skull. Abraham carried the fire and the knife, the instruments to be used in the sacrifice, much the same way the Jews and the Romans served as instruments in the mighty hand of God the day Jesus was crucified. Isaac called out to his father and asked him where the lamb for the sacrifice was.

Abraham assured his son that God would provide the lamb. And on that hill outside of Jerusalem, that place of punishment and death, all those hundreds of years later and 2,000 years ago, God provided His own precious and spotless lamb, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham laid His Son atop the altar of wood and tied Him to it.

And Jesus was nailed to the cross. Isaac trusted his father implicitly. He did not struggle.

He did not fight. And on the cross, Jesus could do nothing less than the perfect will of His Father in heaven, submitting to His Father in perfect obedience. And this is where the analogy stops.

For on Mount Moriah, as Abraham laid his hand on his son, maybe placing his hand on his son's forehead and covering his eyes, and raised his knife to slaughter his son, the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham from heaven, saying, Do not stretch out your hand against the lamb. And do nothing to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me. Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his thorns.

And Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. On Calvary, God the Father could not provide a substitute for His Son, Jesus Christ, for any other sacrifice. Any created being would not satisfy the just requirements of God's holy wrath.

Jesus Christ was and is the perfect substitute, the perfect sacrifice, the perfect propitiation. On Calvary, as the God-Man, the sinless Lamb of God, hung battered and bloody on the cross, God the Father laid His holy hand upon the brow of His Son, and He raised the knife of His judgment, which burned with the full fury of His holy wrath, and He killed His Son. He crushed His Son.

He slaughtered His Son as a propitiation. Nothing less than the innocent blood of the God-Man would appease the wrath of God. God did not hold back the knife of His judgment and wrath.

It pleased the Father to crush the Son so that those who would turn from their sin and place their trust in the Son of God alone for their salvation will not receive the wrath of God, but the gracious mercy and loving kindness of God. They will be declared justified by God. Through the sacrifice of God, they will receive a full and complete pardon, not because they have been deemed worthy, but because their death sentence was carried out upon the propitiation, the sinless, perfect, and holy sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what does the love of God look like to you? When you consider who you really are or were apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ, when you consider the holiness of God, what does His love look like to you? What do you see when you close your eyes and you see the cross? You've heard the verse, John 3.16, so many times. You've heard it already this morning. Most of you, whether you're saved or unsaved, you can probably recite the verse, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What does that verse say to you now? Does it not mean more? Does it bring you to the verge of tears? Not with shallow sentimentalities, but with brokenness over your sin and thankfulness in your heart for the precious gift of God's Son. When you think of Jesus Christ crying out on the cross, it is finished. What comes to your mind? What comes to your mind when you think of His glorious resurrection? What comes to mind when you think that Jesus did what only God could do, namely withstand the full weight of God's crushing wrath and then completely defeat death when He rose from the grave? What comes to mind when you think of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, now seated next to His Father at the right hand of power? Do you really think that you put Him on the throne? If so, I pray you never again cheapen the throne of God this way.

It should drive us to our knees in repentance and faith to picture Jesus Christ on the throne. It should drive you to your knees in worship. It should drive you to your knees in praise and thanksgiving.

It should drive you to your knees in love for the God who first loved you. You should never again think that Jesus is simply all you need, that He somehow completes you, as if you came into a relationship with Christ as a semi-completed work, just needing a tune-up. Instead, you should understand that Jesus is all you have.

Apart from Him, you have nothing. Apart from Him, you are nothing. Apart from Him, I am nothing.

Apart from Christ. For you who profess to be a Christian, if what you've heard this morning not from me, not my emotion, but from the Word of God, if it has no more impact on you than a movie you've seen a

hundred times, or a book that you've read a hundred times, if your mind, heart, and soul are not stirred by the most important word in the Bible and its eternal meaning, then you should examine yourself. You should test yourself.

You should see if you are really in the faith. The words of the great old hymns are true today. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to the cross I cling.

Naked come to Thee for dress. Helpless look to Thee for grace. Foul I to the fountain fly.

Wash me, Savior, or I die. If you're here this morning and you realize that you do not have a relationship with God, please understand that there is only one thing that can wash away your sins that you have committed against Almighty God, and that's the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross as a propitiation. The only payment that appeased the just wrath of God.

Please understand that there's nothing you can bring that will merit God's forgiveness, neither your good works, your money, nor your church attendance. Nothing. God cannot and will not be bribed.

Your only hope is to by faith turn from your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior. If you don't, then one day you will stand before Him naked, clothed only in your sin, and He will sentence you to hell as the just penalty for your sins against Him. But if you repent and believe the gospel, God's wrath will no longer abide on you.

You will no longer be a child of wrath, but an adopted child of God. My nieces and nephews are here today. Three of them are adopted children.

And every time I look at them, and every time I put my arms around them, it reminds me that God has adopted me as one of His sons, that He loved me that much. You will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ if you turn from your sin and put your trust in Him. Clothed in the righteousness of Christ, purchased with His blood.

You will be justified by God through faith. He will declare you innocent. Innocent! Because of the propitiation of His Son.

And you will begin to enjoy the most precious of all gifts, a right relationship with Him in this life and in the life to come for all eternity. If God is drawing you to Himself, cry out to Him now. Cry out to Him.

Ask for His forgiveness. Ask for Him to help you to turn from your sins. Repent.

He will be faithful and righteous to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Receive Him as your Lord and your Savior, your King and your Master. Receive the free gift of eternal life that only He can give.

I do not want you to go to hell. I want you to enjoy the personal relationship I enjoy with the Creator of the universe through and with Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Savior. God is love.

How awesome is God's love! How holy is God's love that He would kill His only Son, God in the flesh, so that He could extend to us His love. Father, I love you. Father, I love my family here.

Oh, God. I pray that what I said today was true according to Your Word. I believe it was.

But I am a fallible, sinful man in need of Your grace, in need of Your mercy. I have sinned against You, God. You are just when You judge.

I thank You that You are holy. I thank You that You are teaching me what Your holiness means. I pray, Father, for my family here, that we would all come to You on bended knee and cry out to You, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

And Father, if there is anyone here this morning who does not know You, I pray that Your Word, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, was able to pierce their stony heart. And that by the power of Your Holy Spirit, You are drawing them to repentance and faith. May they cry out to You today, Father.

And may the propitiation apply to them. Father, be glorified in our lives. May we never look again at Your holiness, or Your wrath, or Your justice, or Your love the same way again.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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