

Ro 3:21–26 (ESV) But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—⁽²²⁾ the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ⁽²³⁾ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ⁽²⁴⁾ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ⁽²⁵⁾ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ⁽²⁶⁾ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

1. Up to this point we’ve spent a lot of time talking about the justice of God

- A. How those who have broken his law – all of us – must be judged – no sin can be overlooked
- B. Last week we looked at *redemption* - God’s remedy for those who are guilty before him
 - 1). How Jesus died on the cross to remove that death sentence that was hanging over our head
 - 2). When we place our faith in him we are set free from the penalty of the law

2. This week we are going to move to the next benefit in this passage - Propitiation

- A. A great word telling us how God consistently views those who have been redeemed by faith
 - 1). Just because I’m redeemed doesn’t mean I’m going to be perfect – I will still fail
 - a). So how does God view his children when they fail?
Is he angry? Is his love diminished? Are they kicked out of the family?
 - 2). Doctrine of propitiation is where we find our answers to these important questions

Transition: This will be our last study in this section – then we’ll pick up that pace a bit

- A. We are laying a theological foundation our spiritual life is built upon
 - 1). These truths are the backbone of our faith that help us to stand

2. Outline: We could call this the legal aspects of salvation

- A. The Justice of God
- B. The Wrath of God
- C. Christ work of Propitiation

Transition: This is all out of the courtroom

I. THE JUSTICE OF GOD

1. Scripture tells us God is a just God

Dt 32:4 (ESV) “The Rock, his work is perfect, *for all his ways are justice*. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, *just and upright is he*.”

Isa 45:21 (NKJV) ...there is no other God besides Me, *A just God* and a Savior...

Question: When we say God is just what does that mean?

- A. We are speaking of a moral state = God is morally pure and blameless
- B. How that affects us: As our creator he wants us to live morally in a way that is like him
 - 1 Pe 1:16 (NIV)** for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”
 - 1). Because God is holy, pure, blameless he wants us to be the same way

2. Justice is a courtroom word – the truth is we are all on trial

- A. Justice is what determines our guilt or innocence before God
 - 1). How it does that is by evaluating our life with the God’s law
 - a). If the evidence of our life proves we have kept God’s law
Justice will be for us and declare us to be *not guilty*
 - b). But if the evidence of your life proves we have broken God’s law
Then justice will be against us pronouncing a verdict of *guilty*
- B. So justice is completely neutral – it’s decision is based solely on the evidence of our life

Transition: If that verdict is guilty – what happens next? How is the sentence justice demands applied?

II. THE WRATH OF GOD

INTRO: We seem to be embarrassed to speak of God’s wrath today – but the Bible isn’t!

1. Wrath is prevalent in the Scriptures

- A. OT – more than 580 references using more than 20 words to describe the wrath of God
- B. NT – Jesus spoke more about God’s wrath than his love

Example: Jn 3:36 (ESV) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, *but the wrath of God remains on him.*

Lk 12:5 (ESV) But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, *has authority to cast into hell.*

Point: So God’s wrath – whether we like it or not is very real – and very necessary

- A. The wrath of God is how the sentence the justice of God pronounces is enforced
- B. The process: Justice neutrally views the life measured against the law of God
 - If that person is not morally upright but has broken the law – justice declares them to be guilty
 - 1). The penalty that guilty sentence demands is applied through the wrath of God

2. Wrath defined

- A. It is God’s holy detestation and righteous anger against all that is unrighteous – all immorality
 - 1). Scripture says that all who reject God and choose their own way abide under this anger
 - 2). Unless there is repentance and a trust placed in Christ this anger will be eternal

3. But why is God so angry with sin anyway? Overreact much!

- A. It only seems over the top if we have a light view of sin
 - “No big deal. It was just a mistake. Hey nobody’s perfect right?”
- B. As long as we allow the world to influence us rather than the Bible we won’t view sin correctly

William Shakespeare: Some *rise by sin*, and some by virtue fall

Hunter S. Thompson: In a closed society where everybody’s guilty, *the only crime is getting caught.* In a world of thieves, the only final sin is stupidity.

Dolly Parton: I feel that sin and evil are the negative part of you, and I think it’s like a battery: you’ve got to have the negative and the positive in order to be a complete person.

- 1). According to Shakespeare sin isn’t so bad – it can actually elevate your life
 - Hunter S. Thompson says there really isn’t any sin if you don’t get caught
 - a). The Bible comes along and says – “Yeah but everybody gets caught”
- 2). Dolly Parton says you need sin to be a complete person – tell that to Jesus

Paula Poundstone: “The wages of sin are death, but by the time taxes are taken out, it’s just sort of a tired feeling.”

- 1). Got to admit that’s funny – but it takes the seriousness out of sin – we laugh at the subject instead

Problem: None of that takes God into consideration – it is man’s concept only

- A. As long as we’re doing that God’s response will seem heavy handed

Transition: So let’s see how God views sin – we’ll use three words from the OT

God Views Sin as Rebellion

Le 16:21 (ESV) Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and *all their transgressions*, all their sins.

1. Word used for transgressions = means *rebellion* against authority

- A. God views every sin regardless of how small we think it is as a rebellion against his authority

- B. We could say – sin is man’s declaration of independence from God – it is a self-coronation

God Views Sin as A Despising of Him And His Word

1. After David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband

God speaks through Nathan the prophet

2 Sa 12:9–10 (ESV) Why have you *despised the word of the LORD*, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have *despised me* and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’

- A. Despise = to treat with contempt

Point: God says when you sin against him you’re treating him and his word with contempt

God Views Sin as An Act of Defiance

1 Ki 13:21 (NIV) He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have *defied* the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you.

1. God has given us His Word - when we choose to go against it - we defy Him

2. Summary: Three words God uses to paint a picture of how He views sin

- A. It is *rebellion* against His authority - it is *despising* Him and His word

It is more than just an act of disobedience it is as an act of *defiance*

John Piper: What is sin? It is the glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved. That is sin.

- B. Now we see what sin (every sin) is - and why divine wrath is an appropriate response

A. W. Tozer: Not only is it right for God to display anger against sin, I find it impossible to understand how he could do otherwise.

Summary: So God is a just God who evaluates every life

1. His justice looks at the moral state of how we lived

- A. If he finds the evidence of rebellion and defiance towards him = sin
Then justice demands a sentence of guilty to be pronounced
- B. The penalty that GUILTY sentence demands is enforced with WRATH
- 1). A wrath that will carry on for all of eternity

Transition: So once again we are in trouble – we haven’t lived that morally blameless life

- A. And once again God has a solution – the Good News of the Gospel
- 1). To see the beauty of Christ’s work of redemption we must tie him into the wrath of God

III. JESUS AND THE WRATH OF GOD

1. Night before his crucifixion he had this wrath on his mind

His Prayer: Mt 26:39 (ESV) And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, *let this cup pass from me*; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

- A. Later when they come to arrest him – he brings up the subject again
Peter draws out his sword to defend Jesus when he is being arrested -

Jesus replies: Jn 18:11 (ESV) So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; *shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?*”

Transition: Why was Jesus thinking so much about this cup as he looked towards the cross? What was it?

2. The cup of God = Speaks of the wrath of God

OT: Je 25:15 (ESV) Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand *this cup of the wine of wrath*, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

NT: Re 14:9–10 (ESV) And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ⁽¹⁰⁾ he also will *drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger*, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

A. Psalm 75 shows the extent of wrath the sinner will receive

Ps 75:8 (ESV) For in the hand of the LORD there is a *cup with foaming wine*, (God’s wrath) well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all *the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs*.

- 1). When God pours out His anger on the wicked - there will be no mercy - no let up
 - a). They will drink it down to the dregs - every last bit will be poured out on them
 - b). Not temporarily but for all of eternity

B. To see the beauty of the Gospel we need to see what Jesus meant when he said

Jn 18:11 (ESV) ... *shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?*”

3. The cup is the wrath of God – where Jesus drinks that cup is on the cross

A. God transferred our sin to him and he bore the wrath we deserved

Transition: But to see the extent Jesus drank that cup must move to the idea of *propitiation*

IV. PROPITIATION

Ro 3:24–25 (ESV) and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ⁽²⁵⁾ whom God put forward as a *propitiation by his blood*, to be received by faith...

1. Great word that speaks of the extent of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross

A. Be careful because this word is being replaced with more user-friendly terms = *appease or placate*

- 1). Problem: These suggest a mere soothing or softening of the wrath of an offended deity
 “He’s still mad at me but not as mad as He used to be...”
 “Thankfully I’ve been able to appease Him for a while”
- 2). But what happens when I fail again – will that anger return?
 Does every failure upset him and affect his love for me?
 - a). If he’s merely placated then probably “Yes” – why we need *propitiation*
 Which tells us that isn’t true

2. Biblical concept of Propitiation = to exhaust

A. Christ didn’t just appease an angry God – calm him down – but the anger is still there
 He didn’t just deflect his wrath away from us – but it might return if we fail

B. On the cross Christ *exhausted* the wrath we deserved to the extent that *no anger remains*

- 1). Remember what we saw in the section before – the sinners experience of wrath
Re 14:10 (ESV) he (the sinner) will also drink the wine of God’s wrath, *poured full strength into the cup of his anger...*

Ps 75:8 (ESV) For in the hand of the LORD there is a *cup with foaming wine*, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all *the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs*.

- 2). The sinner will experience the full strength of the wrath of God = no mercy
 But for the believer Jesus became our substitute – he experienced what we should have

John Gertsner: When Christ gave His cheek to the betrayer’s kiss He knew that He was putting the cup of wrath to His lips, the full dregs of which He would not taste until the morrow when He would cry out, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” [That is,] “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

- a). On that cross God poured out the full fury of His wrath upon Christ
- b). He held nothing back – no mercy – the cup of his wrath was turned upside down
Jesus drank it all until there was nothing left – he emptied that cup for us
- C. When it was finally over Jesus cried out “It is finished”
 - 1). Believer you need to make this personal – hear him on the cross speaking to you
“Bill, God’s wrath against you is finished. You’re guilt before Him is finished. Condemnation and hell is finished. Everything that blocked access to the Father - FINISHED.” *“God’s anger against your sin is finished!”*
The truth is: Christ exhausted God’s wrath. For all who trust in Him there is nothing more in the cup. It is empty.

3. How “propitiation” interacts with the “justice” of God

Let’s see how “In Christ” the justice of God becomes our friend and NOT our foe

- A. Remember that justice evaluates the life to see the moral state of every person
 - 1). For the unbeliever it finds immorality and sin - rebellion and defiance
 - a). Therefore Justice **MUST** declare that person to be guilty
And wrath **MUST** be exerted to enforce that penalty that justice declared
- B. But when justice examines the believer’s life – it finds the evidence of Christ’s morality
 - 1). That righteousness of Christ placed into our account – his perfect obedience given to us
 - 2). Therefore God’s justice declares me to be *not guilty*
 - a). Legally “In Christ” the law can find nothing to condemn me over

Thought: This is how we answer the accusations of the devil

- A. He will take the law of God and begin to point out one sin after another
OR point out that **ONE SIN** you can’t forgive yourself over
“If God is just like you say he is, then how is somebody like you going to get into heaven?”
- B. What is the answer to that?

Jesus satisfied the justice of God by exhausting all the debt my guilt deserved

“So Satan - this is a legal matter - right out of the courtroom - *you know that*. The evidence of my life has been weighed carefully and NOTHING has been found that is against me. My Savior satisfied the justice of God. He drained the cup of God’s wrath that I deserved. My moral state has been changed. And I am seen as blameless. The Bible tells me that God has declared me to be “Not guilty.” So “Case closed.’ I’m sure you know that! It’s all over the Bible. Clear off, you have nothing to say to me!”

4. Let me speak to you who feel God’s always upset with you – always angry

“Well, it’s because I’m not perfect. I wish I were but I still fail.”

- A. That’s the problem isn’t it? We are saved but not perfect – we still fall short
 - 1). Therefore we feel guilty – we feel like God is angry with us a lot – need to work this out
- B. If you’re in Christ – trusted him for salvation – what would God be mad about?
 - 1). Didn’t Jesus pay for all your sins, past, present, and future? Yes!
Then doesn’t that mean he exhausted (propitiated) the anger of God for that sin? Yes!
Then if God’s anger is exhausted for that sin – why do you think he’s still mad at you?
 - a). The anger for that sin was exhausted by Jesus on the cross

Point: Now listen – this means that *every thought* God has towards you is a thought of love!

Objection: So I can just sin and it doesn’t matter! I didn’t say that.

- A. If you choose sin and refuse to repent - God will still respond to that sin by disciplining you
Why? Because he loves you – so he does what is necessary to turn you from that sin
But that discipline is always out of love and NEVER out of anger!

Heb 12:5-7 (NIV) And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, (6) because the Lord disciplines *those he loves*, and he punishes *everyone he accepts as a son.*" (7) Endure hardship as discipline; *God is treating you as sons.* For what son is not disciplined by his father?

Steve Swartz: If you have come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, having repented of your sin and come humbly to Christ, not one tiny bit of your suffering is because of the judicial punishment for your sin. It may be for your sanctification and your loving discipline, but not for punishment. Christ is the one who bore the wrath of God against sin on your behalf.

1). I know his discipline can feel like anger – the devil will tell you it is
Why we MUST know scripture – “No. I’m being disciplined out of love. God wants the best for me, so as a loving parent he is turning me from those things that would destroy me”

2). That is why we can kiss the divine hand that is striking us.
We KNOW it is done out of love and is always for our good

a). He is stopping you from walking into destruction

Thought: You don’t live under the frown of a disappointed judge

You live under the smile of a loving Father – Let’s look how God looks at you

A. Remember what the Father said at Jesus baptism?

Mt 3:17 (ESV) and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

1). Now God sees us “In Christ” in his righteousness given to us – his perfect law keeping

a). So God looks upon us and says “This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased”

B. Remember what Jesus said in his prayer to the Father

John 17:23 (NLT) I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you sent me and will understand *that you love them as much as you love me.*

1). The Father loves us as much as he loves Jesus!!!

Thought: For some of you I pray this will be the day you start to rest – glory in who you are in Christ

A. If you are in Christ there is no more anger left – every thought towards you is one of love

A.W. Tozer: The cross is the lightning rod of grace that short-circuits God’s wrath to Christ so that only the light of His love remains for believers.

CONCLUSION

1. Justice evaluates every life – looking for evidence – holy or sinful

A. Based on the evidence it will declare us to be guilty or not guilty

B. For those justice determines to be guilty – the wrath of God applies the eternal penalty

C. But for the believer when justice scans our life it seems the perfect morality of Christ

1). Therefore we are declared to be not guilty – and not subject to God’s wrath

D. But while we are declared to be not guilty – we still fail – how does God react

1). He never becomes angry at us – that anger was exhausted

Every thought towards us now is a thought of love

a). But because he loves us he will discipline us to turn us from sin

He’s a loving parent who wants what’s best for us – and protects us from what will destroy