

## How Can a Just God Pardon Evil? – Romans 3:21-31

John Piper in his book *Desiring God* says that verses 25-26 may be the most important verses in the Bible. In His *Solid Joys* devotional he calls this the 'Best Passage Ever'. God is both Just and 'The Justifier' – how can this be possible? Because of Jesus Christ, because he was put forward as a 'propitiation by his blood', so that He may be seen as righteous and that we too might be declared righteous. This truth, is the greatest truth!

### 1) What is Propitiation?

"Propitiation is a sacrifice that bears God's wrath so that God becomes 'propitious' or favorably disposed toward us."

- Wayne Grudem.

"*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Verse 23). Jesus said "*No one is good except God alone*" (Mark 10:18). People don't like this statement as we want to consider ourselves good. For a person to be good or bad we need

- a. A standard for Good and Bad
- b. An assessment of someone's goodness compared to the standard
- c. A judge, someone to decide whether or not they pass.

Where do we get that standard from, who assesses and who gets to decide? Surely, it's only the person who has lived a perfect life. Who has never wronged anybody, who is utterly selfless, kind and without prejudice. And that person said 'no one is good, except God alone'.

There is still hope as Paul has just stated that this justification, this being acceptable, being judged as 'good' comes to all who believe. Problem with that is it makes us doubt the goodness of the judge. How can he be a good judge and pardon 'bad' people on the basis of belief and condemn 'good' people on that basis of unbelief. All that is required for you and I to be deemed 'good' is to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he took upon himself the wrath of God that was on us that might receive the love of God. That is propitiation.

**Q. "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" – Do you consider yourself a good person? How does this claim of Paul and Jesus affect you?**

### 2) Why is Propitiation Necessary?

It was never necessary for God to do this. It wasn't necessary for God to save the demons. God was a just God, and would still be just to not save anyone. Yet He chooses to save those who believe. Propitiation is where the judgement of God meets the mercy of God because '*God so loved the world*'. There was no other way, for a Just God to forgive sinners, than through propitiation (see Luke 24:25-26, Heb 9:25-26).

The suffering of Christ on our behalf is key to the Gospel. You can't have Christianity without the cross and you can't have the cross without Christ as a substitute, and you can't have him as your substitute without recognizing your own guilt, that you deserved that death. You need His atonement, if there were any other way Christ would have received it in the garden.

**Q. Propitiation was never necessary; it was a choice. How does God's choice display God's love?**

**Q. How does the suffering of Christ affect how we view our need for a saviour?**

### 3) What did Propitiation Mean for Christ?

Imagine the suffering of Christ. Crucifixion was barbaric. The beatings were brutal. But the spiritual turmoil was greater than we can imagine. At the Cross, Jesus took the weight of all of our sin. All the sins of all who believe. Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, bore our sins. All of our guilt, the times we have felt our worst. He took our shame, feeling unclean, dirty, sinful. He took the Wrath of God, the just anger of God for all the sins of the world. He bore it all – unparalleled suffering. Our boasting, our good deeds – nothing compared to the work of Christ.

**Q. Consider how Jesus would have felt at this moment. From knowing no sin, to bearing the weight of ALL sin. How serious do you think God deals with your sin? What about the actions against you?**

### 4) What Does Propitiation Mean for Us?

So what happens to those people who have done bad things? How can God allow a sinner to be saved? – Because propitiation has paid the price for them and for you. As a Christian, you will never have to face the wrath, the punishment, the anger of God. However, the pain you have suffered, the hurt you have experienced, does not go unpunished. It has all been paid.

We have a saviour who has experienced suffering, guilt and shame and can stand with us. Instead we receive all His goodness and blessings; favour upon favour. This is what propitiation means to us.

**Q. How does the idea of propitiation affect your view of judgement day when we meet God?**

**Q. How does the action that Jesus has made provide comfort in this world?**