

Introduction

I have some good news for you today. Even though we all have times where we stumble. These are the times to remember that our relationship with God is based upon him and his perfect record, not us and our imperfect record. Let's learn how this can set us free.

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Many times, when we think of living a holy life, we think about what we must do. A role does exist for us, of course! We must believe and obey, but this role is always in response to God's role in making us holy. Anything we must do is always based upon the rock-solid foundation of what God has already done.

If you listened to our previous broadcast you will remember we focused on one of the greatest truths from one of the greatest passages in Scripture, Colossians 2:14-15 which says many wonderful things, but at the heart of these two verses is Paul's statement, "He forgave us all our sins." In the heart of that phrase is the word, *all*. He forgave us all our sins – not 50% of them, not 99% of them, but all of them which means we are not under any condemnation. Paul said in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." We have been set free from the Law of sin and death Paul says in Romans 8:2.

Do you know what the Law of Sin and Death is? It is this: you sin, you die. But Christ conquered sin and death by dying for all our sins. We are now dead to sin's guilty reach and are free from all condemnation. Even though we have remaining issues in our lives that must be addressed, we no longer face them as condemned criminals but as children of the Father. We bring them to the Father without condemnation, guilt and all the fear that accompanies that. We bring them to the Father for his grace and mercy to help us become whole and holy and therefore happy, joyful. God is for us, not against us.

God is this way towards us because of His magnificent work through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We must realize that before he created the first atom of this universe, fully knowing that we would sin and turn from him, and that we would break his heart, he provided a way back for us through Jesus. How God's heart must have been mixed with emotion when he saw His anointed one, Jesus dying on the cross. On the one hand, his heart sorrowed when he saw him pouring out his life-blood upon the earth for sinners, for mockers, for hardened torturers who nailed him to that piece of wood. How his heart must have sorrowed when he saw his Son, the King, enduring the punishment for us that we deserved. Yet, his heart was beating fast with anticipation of the fruit of that death, the forgiveness of all our sins, the wiping clean of our record, and setting us free from sin and death so that we could enter a relationship with him and find wholeness, holiness and therefore happiness and joy in him.

We must fix our eyes upon this same event. We must fix our eyes upon Jesus' death on the cross as the sufficient payment for our sins. We must fix our eyes upon the love of God poured out on us because of the cross. When we do, we will find the sure ground of walking forward and growing in

wholeness and holiness. The sure ground of holiness is certainly not in us. The sure ground of holiness is certainly not in our behavior – our behavior is mixed. We are not perfect, we are not consistent. We may do well for a while, but we all have times where we stumble. These are the times to remember that our relationship with God is based upon him, not us, upon his perfect record, not ours, upon his faithfulness, not ours.

This is the reason Scripture speaks of propitiation, redemption, justification, and reconciliation. I'm afraid one does not hear these words too much anymore, but they are crucial to understanding our salvation and in providing that sure foundation of holiness.

Propitiation is the truth that because our sin brings the penalty of death before a holy God, a sacrifice offered in place of a person will satisfy that penalty. In our case, it will appease the just judgment of God. Jesus Christ was that propitiatory sacrifice.

Listen to these verses:

Romans 3:25 – God presented Christ as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. (HCSB)

When Christ died on the cross he was that propitiatory sacrifice, the payment for our sins. God could not overlook our sin. God could not wink his eyes at our sin and say, “boys will be boys.” We don't want that kind of God, anyway. Even the idea of Santa Claus is better than that. Even Santa withholds gifts from naughty children! Yet somehow, we think that God will not judge sin?

We want the kind of God who is righteous and holy because sin is what brings misery. We want him to punish sin and do away with it all because we want to be done with this misery of sin and death. God did that when he offered Christ as the propitiation to demonstrate his righteousness.

1 John 4:10 - In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (NASB)

Because we know God offered Christ as the perfect payment to do away with his just wrath and because we know that God did this, not out of disgust, not out of anger, but out of love for us, as the passage says – in this is love – we can run to God and know we will find mercy and he will help us grow in wholeness and holiness. That is propitiation.

Redemption is the doctrine reminding us that Christ purchased us from the slavery of sin. We were slaves to sin, but because Christ offered Himself as our sacrifice, He can redeem (purchase) us from our slavery to condemnation.

Ephesians 1:7 – In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.

Here we have such a clear connection between the work of God and our pursuit of holiness. Paul had been exhorting the church to stay away from immorality. He gave many reasons for this in chapter 6, and when he gets to 19 he says we should not be immoral with our bodies because the Holy Spirit lives in us and our bodies belong to God, not us. We should not abuse what does not belong to us. Why do our bodies not belong to us? Because, as it says in verse 20, we, body-soul-spirit, have been bought with a price. We have been redeemed. Therefore, Paul says, “glorify God with your body.” Here we have a clear connection between what God has done for us and our pursuit of wholeness and holiness. If only our 18-29-year-olds would let that truth sink deeply into their hearts. Remember the survey I mentioned to you a few broadcasts ago that our young evangelical brothers and sisters between 18-29 are struggling with the area of immorality? If they could grasp the truth that their bodies don’t belong to them, but belong to God, that they have been redeemed, it would help immensely in this area.

Justification is the doctrine that God declares us to be in a righteous standing with him through faith in Jesus Christ. We were guilty. We were condemned. But because Christ took our sin upon Himself and offered Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice, God can justify ungodly people who place themselves at the mercy of God. Listen to Romans 3:24-25 and notice how the following passage connects these great truths of justification, redemption, and propitiation with grace.

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.

What a packed passage of Scripture! Here is another of my favorites on justification.

Romans 5:1-2 – Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have received our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

There are many important messages in those two verses. Let me draw out this truth. Justification, being declared righteous, brings us into a relationship of peace with God. There is no more wrath, there is no more judgment, there is no more condemnation, but our record is one of peace with God. This enables us to pursue God and holiness because we know that God has a disposition of peace towards us. I am reminded of Ephesians 2:17 which states that he came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. If we know that God’s favor is always upon us and his smile of peace is always there for us, we will come to him and let him work on our lives and make us whole and holy.

One more major doctrine to mention –reconciliation. As you know, reconciliation is the bringing together of two parties at odds with each other. We were at odds with God because of our sin, but once the propitiatory sacrifice was made, once we were purchased, once we were declared to be in a state of peace and righteous standing with God, then God could reconcile us to himself. He could restore us to his family as full members with all rights as his children.

Romans 5:10-11 – For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but

we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Paul uses his “if ... much more” way of presenting truth that he often uses in his writing. If this is true, in this condition, how much more will this be true! Paul says, if God put his own Son to death while we were in a state of hostility toward him, how much more will we be saved now that the hostility is gone, and we are in a state of peace and He lives for us!

This, my friends, is what gives us the sure ground of holiness and the ensuing happiness. God has made the payment, he has purchased us, he has justified and reconciled us. This is what God did to make us holy. Because of these things, let’s pursue wholeness and holiness in him.