

**Intro:**

Is God righteous in forgiving sin?

Who do you suppose is the most wicked person in the world in the last century or so? Who would you say?

Hitler? Stalin?

What would you say if you arrived in heaven and saw Hitler there? Or Stalin?

What would you think about that?

There was a mass murderer a few years ago in the Mid-west somewhere. He was notorious for the fact that he killed and then ate his victims. Do you remember that?

Do you remember reading that he supposedly got saved in prison? He was later killed by another inmate. He *might* be in heaven today.

What do you think about that? Would that be right?

There was a mass murderer who operated in the Seattle area for a time. His name was Ted Bundy. He was captured in Florida, I think, and sent to the electric chair. Before he died, he, too, made a profession of salvation. Among others, James Dobson had visited and counseled with him.

What do you think about that? Would God be right to forgive him?

There is another mass murderer in New York. He is serving a life sentence. He is called the Son of Sam. He has 'gotten religion' also. He is currently busy in prison preaching the gospel. He expects to go to heaven when he dies.

What do you think about that? Would God be right to forgive him? And if God would be right to forgive any of these people, why would it be right for him to do so?

But now let's get personal. Think of yourself and the sins you know you have committed. What is the worst thing you have ever done? (Don't say it out loud!)

- What else have you done?
- How many lies have you told?
- How often have you cheated in some way?
- How many promises have you broken?  
(Don't answer, "none", that would be another lie!)

Here is the question for you: considering all your sins, would God be right to forgive *you*?

Our text today is Rm 3.25-26

Our subject: *The Rightness of God in Forgiving Your Sins*

**Proposition:** God is right to forgive sins because of the public propitiation he displayed on the cross of Calvary.

## I Review – propitiation: obtaining God’s favour publicly (25a)

- A. Christ, by the act of propitiation, cleansed the sanctuary, opened the way for sinners to approach God
- B. God, by the act of propitiation, is made favorable to receive sinners who come through Christ

This is that forgiveness we have been talking about. If a sinner is in Christ, God receives him.

- 1. Saving faith puts a man in Christ (‘through faith’)
- 2. God’s free grace then acts upon that man (‘justified freely by his grace’)
  - a. It imputes ‘without-law’ righteousness
  - b. It declares judicially (in the eyes of the court) that man to *be* righteous in Christ

So when a man acknowledges his sin (confession), turns from it and turns to Christ (repentance), and believes that Christ is his redemption and propitiation and salvation (faith), then God receives him and forgives him.

- C. **Remember this very significant point:** the act of propitiation is a *public* act – not hidden
  - 1. All done in plain view
  - 2. All done before witnesses

There are a number of reasons for this public display of God’s work for men, but one reason in particular is taught us by this passage, and it answers the questions with which we began our message.

## II. Propitiation: justifying God's forbearance permanently (25b)

### A. Understanding the structure of the passage

We are concluding a sentence begin in v. 21

1. The sentence is about the 'without law' righteousness from God – the new argument that satisfies the demands of God against sinners (21)
2. This righteousness is further described as that obtained through faith by all believers (22a)
  - a. Because of believing, there is no distinction even though believers are sinners who are sinning (22b-23)
  - b. Because of faith, the ones believing are also freely justified (declared righteous) through the redemption in Christ (24)

Note: in the Gk, there is a colon at the end of v. 24, the last two verses are therefore explaining something about the last noun mentioned, "Christ"

3. The power in Christ's work is behind all this saving work of God because of the public propitiation (25a)
  - a. Which demonstrates something about past sins (25b)
  - b. And demonstrates something about the present time (26)

### B. Understanding the issue under consideration

1. Righteousness = an attribute of God
  - a. Not the same as the righteousness from God
  - b. But instead the justice ('rightness') in the character of God
2. Sins that are past = sins committed prior to the cross
  - a. NAU = 'sins previously committed'
  - b. ESV = 'former sins'
3. Remission = overlooking, passing by, passing over
  - a. The word 'remission' occurs 10 times in the KJV NT
  - b. All but this one translate a Gk word meaning: 'dismissal, release, pardon'

c. Our word here occurs only here in the entire Bible, NT and LXX

d. Thayer: “*passing over, letting pass, neglecting, disregarding*”

4. Forbearance: tolerance, holding back, delaying (see Rm 2.4)

The issue: Is God really just? Why did he let unpunished sin go on and on and on?

C. God’s just judgement of sin expounded by David (Ps 50)

1. The gathering into a great courtroom to see God’s righteousness in judgement (1-6)

2. The invitation to a right relationship with the faithful among his people (7-15)

a. They are not reprov'd for their religion – their outward forms

b. They may be reprov'd for failing to see the meaning of their religion – the outward forms, the sacrifices, demand an inward heart towards God who is approachable and ready to forgive

3. The warning of certain judgement of those who insist God is not just – he has not and will not judge sins, they say (16-21)

a. Men might claim to be ‘covenant-keepers’

b. But they hate righteousness

c. And they assume God is like them because they see no punishment of their unrighteousness (21a)

d. God promises to reprove them before their eyes (21b)

4. An additional warning to the wicked: I will show the salvation of God to those who are faithful (22-23)

D. The demonstration of God’s justice (‘to *declare his righteousness...*’ Rm 3.25)

1. Jesus publicly displayed as a propitiation (giving access to God)

2. Jesus publicly displayed as a propitiation-in-his-blood (demonstrating the justice of God in overlooking sins)

a. Sin will be judged, and judged publicly

b. The sins of the faithful in the past are judged in the cross, publicly

- 1) Sacrifices do not truly remove sin — so the faithful are depending on something more, which is...
- 2) Propitiation-in-his-blood truly and finally removes sin
- c. The sins of the wicked will likewise be thoroughly and publicly judged, so God now calls men to repent (Ac 17.30)

God is just (*i.e.*, holy) and as he has judged sin in his Son, so he will judge sin in sinners.

But this public propitiation-in-his-blood has much more to say to us...

### III. Propitiation: justifying God's justification presently (26)

- A. Not only is past forbearance justified, the righteousness of God is also justified 'in the now time'
  1. The 'now time' is the Gospel age
  2. The 'now time' is this period when the work of Christ is preached and proclaimed
- B. The propitiation-in-his-blood shows that God is just in justifying believers
  1. The penalty for sin is death

"the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek 18.4, 20)

2. The new covenant is one in which God simply justifies (declares righteous) people who believe in the gospel (see 3.22 – 'even the righteousness which is by faith ...unto all and upon all them that believe')
3. The propitiation-in-his-blood *demonstrates* that God is just in doing this – why?
  - a. Because the whole penalty for all sins is publicly judged in Jesus Christ in the cross (1 Jn 2.2 – not for our sins only, but the sins of the whole world)

- b. Since the penalty for all sin has justly and infinitely been paid, God is just in forgiving sinners ‘in the now time’

“When an executive pardons offenders, there is an abandonment of the principles of justice and law. The sentence is set aside; the threatenings of the law are departed from; and it is done without compensation. It is declared that in certain cases the law *may be* violated, and its penalty *not* inflicted. But not so with God. He shows no less regard to his law in pardoning than in punishing.”<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, God is just and justifier, *i.e.*, “just *even in* justifying”<sup>2</sup>

C. The propitiation-in-his-blood justifies the *one* who has faith in Jesus

1. ‘Whosoever believeth in him’ (Jn 3.16)
2. ‘Whosoever shall call’ (Rm 10.13)
3. ‘Whosoever will’ (Rev 22.17)

And if that whosoever is *you*, God is right to forgive *you* of your sins and give you eternal life.

## Conclusion:

**Proposition:** God is right to forgive sins because of the public propitiation he displayed on the cross of Calvary.

Back to our introduction:

Think of yourself and the sins you know you have committed. What is the worst thing you have ever done? (Don’t say it out loud!)

- What else have you done?
- How many lies have you told?
- How often have you cheated in some way?
- How many promises have you broken?

Considering all your sins, would God be right to forgive *you*?

If you are in Christ by faith, God would be right to forgive you.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnes, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 242.