



The Work of Christ

Small Group Work Sheet
October 17, 2010

Part 1 - Ice Breaker (This is just for fun)

- **Who Am I?** - In this Ice breaker, have the group leader write the name of famous men and women from history on name tags. After small group members arrive, stick a name tag on their back without allowing them to see the name. Group members are to freely partner with one another. After viewing each others name, they can ask their partner three questions about their own identity (for example, I would ask my partner a question about myself in an attempt to figure out who I am). The only allowable answers are "Yes" or "No." After asking three questions, group members take a guess at their own identity. If they are wrong, they find another partner, ask three more questions and try again. If they are right, change the name tag from their back to their chest and serve as a partner for others.

Part 2 - Review the sermon

- When Pastor Kurt described crucifixion, in general and the crucifixion of Christ, in particular, did you think his description was over-the-top? How did it change the way you look at the cross?
- Define penal substitutionally atonement? Why is it important to understand?
- Pastor Kurt talked about two different kinds of "works of the law"; the *religious form* and the *vague spiritual form*. What are they and why are they dead-end roads? What do they lead to and how is righteousness from Christ different?
- What are the two graphic images the Bible uses to describe how God feels about our lists of righteous deeds? How did these make you feel?
- When we feel lonely and rejected, what is it about the cross that shows us how much we are loved?
- Do you ever try to atone for your sins by judging yourself? If so, how? When we do this, what are we saying about Christ's death?
- Have you ever wondered if God still punishes you from time to time? How does the teaching of justification help in defeating those thoughts?

Part 3 - Digg deeper ...get the rest of the story.

What is Propitiation?

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

The word propitiation appears four times in the New Testament. Many translations will not give you the full understanding of the word. They will translate it *sacrifice of atonement* or *expiation*. Those translations do not capture the full weight of what the Bible is teaching. While our sin is against one another, it is ultimately against God. How does God feel about our sin? The Bible tells us repeatedly, God is angry! God loves us but God hates sin. God hates those who are sinners.

This works itself out in what we call *the wrath of God*. This is not a very popular topic. Most of us want to hear about God's love instead. Truth be told, if you add up the number of times the Bible talks about the wrath of God and the number of times the Bible talks about the love of God, the wrath of God wins the tally.

You need to know God is very angry at sinners and their sin. His wrath burns against them. I tell you this not to be mean, but to be truthful. The truth is we are far worse than we think. God is far better than we think and the distance between the two of us is much greater than you comprehend. Why is the situation so bad? The reason is because of our sin and the just wrath of God we fully deserve. This separates us from him. The only way to God to bridge the gap between us is by something we call the doctrine of *propitiation*.

Propitiation means Jesus substituted himself and died in our place for our sins. Unlike the angry God's of paganism and Greek mythology, Jesus didn't demand we make a bloody sacrifice to appease him, he made the sacrifice for us in Jesus. Rather than giving us a mandate to shed our blood, he shed his own. This means the wrath of God was *propitiated*. That means it was literally diverted away from us and on to Jesus.

This is really important. Deep inside, we know God is angry at our sin. We try to punish ourselves for our sin. We feel if we suffer for our sin, we are getting only what we deserve. Read this slowly... **In Jesus, God is not angry with me. He loves me.** In Jesus, I know God is not punishing me when I sin. You need to know this. Some of you think that, as Christians, when you sin and suffer, God is punishing you for your sin. *You think he is paying you back for what you deserve.* Understand this, Jesus has propitiated the wrath of God. Jesus took *all* of the punishment for sin we deserve. God has already punished Jesus in my place. Now Hebrews and Proverbs does say God is a Father and he disciplines his kids, but he doesn't punish them. He's not angry at his children. He loves his children. He uses our sin as an opportunity to correct us and help us grow in holiness, not to punish us. Say this out loud, "God loves me!"

The propitiation of Jesus reminds us that when Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished." He was serious. It actually was finished! No more payment for sin needs to be made, no more punishment for the sin of God's children will be dished out.

The Difference Between the Active and Passive Wrath of God.

Some people, who don't know Christ, sin all the time and when you look at their life, you never see God punishing them for their sin. Why is that? God's wrath against sin comes in two forms, called the active and passive wrath of God.

The *active wrath of God* is when God strikes people. He kills them directly. He sends them to hell. The active wrath of God is clicking the download link for a pornographic web site and instantly a bolt of lightning fries you to ashes. That is the active wrath of God.

The *passive wrath of God* is described in Romans 1. This is where God hands people over to the sinful direction they are traveling. He withdraws his protection from the consequences of their own sin. They infect themselves with the lecherous inflictions of the sin they pursue. That doesn't mean God forgets his active wrath toward that sin. The Bible says he just stores it up. The Bible says God is patient with us, not giving us immediately what we deserve (thank goodness for that!) He wants us to come to repentance and trust in Jesus. Will justice be served in the end for those who don't know Jesus? Yes. It may not be served immediately with active wrath, because God is patient, but it will be served. In the mean time, the wrath of God stacks up against sinners as God withdraws his hand of protection from those who insist on running from him. Sin then has its way in our life and it begins to destroy us as it eats people from the inside out.

What is expiation?

The *propitiation* of Jesus means God's wrath towards our sin was diverted away from us and on to Jesus. More good news is the *expiation* of Jesus. This is another big word; but it is very important. When we sin, we are dirty. We feel unclean. Read the Old Testament, you find it filled with ceremonial washings as people figuratively dealt with their sin in the Old Testament sacrificial system. What were those ceremonial washing for? What were they teaching? They portray the cleansing from the effects of sin that comes with the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7 (ESV)

This is exceedingly important. Without an understanding of the expiation of Christ, we only understand half of the gospel. The first half of the gospel is Jesus died for our sins and when we trust him; we are forgiven of our sins. But what about the defiling affect of sin upon us? If you were abused as a child, what about the affects of the abuse upon you? If you were raped or betrayed or lied to or sinned against, what about the filthy stain sin has left upon you? Jesus literally takes it away!

Look how the Bible describes it.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

New creations have the shame of their sinful past taken away.

A picture of this is seen in the Old Testament on the day of Atonement. On that day, there were two goat used in the ritual sacrifice. The one goat was slaughtered for the sins of the people. This goat pictured Christ's *propitiation*, the just wrath of God was figuratively placed upon the goat who died for the sins of the people. The other goat, known as the scape goat, pictured the *expiation* of Christ. The sins of the people were confessed upon it, then it was run out of town, never to be seen again. This represents that through Christ, the shame and guilt of our sin is taken away. We are no longer the sinful person we once were.

For example, some single young women, that I have had the privilege of meeting, date some absolutely loser boyfriends. When I ask they why they are dating somebody who doesn't treat them right, who doesn't love them and who uses them, the answer they give is, "...because that is what I deserve." The tragic issue is that is a woman who is getting her identity either from the sinful life she lived in her past or the sinful act that was done against her, not from Jesus Christ.

In Christ, we are not what we were. We are a completely new creations. The expiation of Christ takes away all of the shame and guilt of our sin.