



PHILIPPIANS

BASICS FOR BELIEVERS

Lesson Two:

Focus on the Cross (Part 1)

Philippians 1:27 – 2:18

(emphasis on 2:5-11)

Outline for Lesson Two (Focus on the Cross)

What Does the Cross Achieve?

Five Perspectives on the Cross:

1. God's Perspective
2. Christ's Perspective
3. Satan's Perspective
4. Sin's Perspective
5. Our Perspective



What does the cross look like to God?

To answer this question, we need to have a biblical understanding of:

- Propitiation and Expiation
- God's Wrath

The Son's Self-Denial (2:5-8)

The Son's Vindication (2:9-11)

God's Perspective on the Cross

1 John 2:1-2a (ESV)

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the **propitiation** for our sins ...*

Questions:

1. Who does John present as the solution to our problem of sin?
2. How is He described, and why does it matter?

We need to understand what the Bible says about the problem that Christ came to solve.

God's Perspective on the Cross

The Problem: God's Wrath Against Sin!

The Bible consistently teaches that God's **wrath** is real, righteous, and directed against sin

New Testament

- Romans 1:18; 2:5; 5:9
- Ephesians 2:3
- 1 Thessalonians 1:10
- Revelation 6:16–17

Old Testament

- Exodus 32:10–14
- Numbers 16:46–48
- Psalm 7:11

God's Perspective on the Cross

The Problem: God's Wrath Against Sin!

The Bible consistently teaches that God's **wrath** is real, righteous, and directed against sin

Key points:

- God's wrath is not explosive or arbitrary; it is His **settled, holy opposition to sin**.
- If God's wrath is real, then the **atonement** must address it.
- This sets the stage for why propitiation is a necessary biblical truth/doctrine.

God's Perspective on the Cross

“Propitiation” – the turning away of God’s wrath by means of a sacrifice

- Romans 3:25
- Hebrews 2:17
- 1 John 2:2; 4:10

Key points:

- Propitiation is **relational**: it restores fellowship with God
- Propitiation is **substitutionary**: Christ bears what we deserve
- Propitiation is rooted in God’s **love**:
(1 John 4:10 – *In this is love... that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*)

God's Perspective on the Cross

The 20th-Century Debate: Propitiation vs. Expiation

- Propitiation – addresses God's wrath
- Expiation – addresses human sin by cleansing or removing guilt

Why the Debate Arose:

- Early-20th-century liberal theology was **uncomfortable with divine wrath**
- Scholars like C. H. Dodd argued that the Greek terms meant only *expiation*
- Bible translations (especially the RSV, 1952) replaced *propitiation* with *expiation*
- Evangelical scholars like Leon Morris responded, showing:
 - The Old Testament sacrificial system includes **wrath-turning elements**
 - The New Testament context of these verses includes **divine wrath**
 - The Greek terms can include both **cleansing** and **appeasement**

God's Perspective on the Cross

Why the Debate Matters:

- Removing *propitiation* removes the personal dimension of atonement.
- It shifts the gospel from “Christ bore God’s wrath for us” to “Christ removes our sin problem.”
- It changes how we understand God’s holiness, justice, and love.

God's Perspective on the Cross

Why Propitiation Matters for the Gospel:

1. It preserves the unity of God's **love** and **justice**

- God's love does not cancel His justice; it fulfills it in Christ
- Romans 3:26 — God is “just and the justifier”

2. It upholds **substitutionary atonement**

- Christ stands in our place under judgment
- Isaiah 53:5–6 — The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him

God's Perspective on the Cross

Why Propitiation Matters for the Gospel (continued):

3. It gives believers **assurance**

- If Christ bore God's **wrath**, none remains for us
- Romans 8:1 — No condemnation for those in Christ

4. It magnifies God's **love**

- Propitiation is not God being convinced to love us
- It is the expression of His love
- 1 John 4:10 — Love is defined by propitiation

God's Perspective on the Cross

What is God's perspective on the cross? What does the cross look like to God?

Romans 3:23-26 – *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a **propitiation** [atonement] by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to **show God's righteousness** [justice], because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to **show His righteousness** [justice] at the present time, so that He might be **just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

It is the cross that unites God's **love** and His perfect **holiness**.

GRACE CHURCH
WILLIAMSBURG