

The background of the entire cover is a monochromatic, sepia-toned abstract image. It features intricate, swirling patterns that resemble smoke, ink, or perhaps tangled hair, creating a sense of movement and depth. Scattered throughout this background are numerous small, dark, circular dots of varying sizes, giving it a textured, almost particle-like appearance.

THE SAYINGS

vGroup Study

VINTAGE  PRESS

The Sayings: vGroup Study

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EXPIATION & PROPITIATION

Do you remember as a child when your parents would put you in some nice, brand new clothes and then you'd go outside and make a mess of your clothes. Maybe you played football and got grass stains on your new pants. Maybe you were in your new dress and you jumped in muddy puddles.

Two issues arose with dirtying your brand new clothes. First, you (or better yet, your parents) had to figure out how to remove the stain. If you were lucky Tide, OxiClean, or some other detergent got the stain out. Your clothes looked brand new again. Second, you had to figure out how to remove the anger and frustration of your parents. If you were lucky, the detergent would work and your clothes would be restored. You might have to apologize to your parents for disobeying or dirtying your clothes.

As we continue to look at the cross, this week we're going to look at what the cross did: expiation and propitiation. These two theological terms are interconnected. Expiation refers to the removal of sin whereas propitiation refers to the removal of God's wrath. Before we turn to the Bible, let's think about the clean/dirty clothes example we just discussed.

- Think back to a time when this happened to you. How did your parents respond when you dirtied your clothes? Why did they respond in such a way?
- Why was it so important for the stain to be removed? Do you think the removal of the stain helped remove the anger of your parents? Why?
- How did you respond to the stains and/or your parents' anger? Did your reaction affect your parents' anger? Why?

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul is defending his ministry to the Corinthians, who downplay Paul's ministry. In the midst of defending his ministry, he discusses what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ. This accomplishment serves as the source of Paul's ministry. While discussing all of this, Paul mentions what Christ did through the cross. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 5 and read.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us

to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:16–21

- How does Paul describe those "in Christ?" (Hint: Look at v. 17)
- How are those in Christ "new creations?" (Hint: Look at v. 18)
- Paul says, "Christ reconciled us to himself (i.e., God)." Why do we need to be reconciled to God? What is separating us from God? (Hint: What was humanity's relationship with God in the beginning? What has our relationship with God been like after Genesis 3?)
- How did the cross of Christ reconcile us to God? (Hint: Look at the middle of v. 19)
- Why are our trespasses no longer counted against us? (Hint: Because they've been removed and placed on Christ).

Those in Christ are new creations because they've been reconciled to God. On the cross, Jesus reconciled us to God through expiation—removing our sins and taking them upon himself. Because our sins are removed, our entire identity is changed. And because our identity is changed, how God views us is changed.

- According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, what is the identity of Jesus? If we become the righteousness of God, what were we before Jesus?

- Prior to Jesus we are sinners and therefore sinful. From Scripture, we also know that God is holy. Why is our sinfulness a problem in the face of God's holiness? (Hint: God is the opposite of sin, and therefore he cannot be in relationship with sinful people)
- What is God's reaction against sin? (Hint: Look at Romans 1:18)
- So, when Jesus removes our sin, what else does he remove? (Hint: Propitiation)
- Why is it so important for Jesus to not only remove our sin but also God's wrath against us? (Hint: The removal of God's wrath against us is a part of our reconciliation with God. We are no longer enemies but friends of God)

What an incredible reality to know that in Christ both our sin and God's wrath against us have been removed! This is not only an incredible reality to know, but it's also an incredible reality that is practical. As we close our discussion, let's reflect on the practical application of expiation and propitiation.

- With expiation and propitiation, how does your understanding of yourself change? How does your understanding of God change?
- Since we know that God's wrath burns against sin, how should we approach sin in our lives? What do you do to fight sin? How do you confess sin?
- In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul uses the work of Christ on the cross as a motivator for sharing the gospel? How does Christ's work of expiation and propitiation motivate you to share the gospel?

- Using 2 Corinthians 5:16–21, how would you share the gospel with someone?