

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness... (1 Peter 2:24a, ESV)

He is the propitiation for our sins, (1 John 2:2a, ESV)

Here is what these verses mean: Because Jesus always obeyed God and was sinless (righteous), He was able to be the perfect substitute for sinners. How? While Jesus hung on the cross, God took the sins of all the people whom He specially loved and placed them on Jesus. (Think of taking a bunch of icky garbage and placing it in a clean plastic bag.) So there was Jesus, now carrying many, many sins. What does God feel toward sin? Wrath. (Remember that wrath is fierce anger.) [Romans 1:18.] What is the right punishment? Death. [Romans 6:23a.] So even though no one could see it with their eyes, while Jesus hung on the cross, God poured out all His fierce anger at sin on Jesus. God punished His own Son to death.

Feeling God's wrath and experiencing death was millions of times worse than all the mocking, whipping, beating, and nails that Jesus had suffered (the things people saw). But Jesus received God's punishment willingly so that His people would never, ever, ever have to receive it. That way, God's people would receive God's smile, instead of His wrathful frown. That's what the word propitiation means. Jesus received God's wrath so that we could receive His smile. That is the most wonderful news in the whole world!

Unseen to anyone, Jesus took away the sin of His people and was punished by God in their place. Now God's people could be completely forgiven, forever... [But when Jesus] died on the cross, He didn't just take away something from His people (their sin). He also gave them something. What is it? His perfect righteousness (perfect obedience). Now God's people would be able to live with God forever! From the very beginning, that is what God had wanted and planned all along!

—Excerpt from *God's Gospel* by Jill Nelson (Phillipsburgh, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2015), 103-104)