

**DELIVERED FROM DIVINE WRATH:
THE DISPLAY OF DIVINE LOVE IN CHRIST'S DEATH (1 JOHN 4:10)**

Sovereign Joy Baptist Church, Good Friday, April 3, 2026

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Tonight we'll meditate on a single verse of Christian Scripture, and I invite you to find 1 John 4:10 in your Bible or in a Bible from under a chair in front of you. You can find the page number for 1 John in the table of contents in the opening pages of the printed text. We'll consider several passages, but we will keep coming back to 1 John 4:10. It reads, "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." Pray with me....

Hell is a concept few people think about much. Many individuals irrationally think that if God exists and is good, then he could never send people to eternal torment in hell. I say that hell *must* exist *because* God is good. The very presence of hell declares that God is fully just in his dealings, giving people what they deserve. He is a good judge who shows no partiality but instead assesses guilt in accordance with the offense.

We glorify what we revere, and a being of infinite worth deserves maximum glory. Yet all of us "fall short of the glory of God," failing to give him his due. Justice is about giving to others what they are due, so in not honoring the supreme Lord of the universe as we should, we show that we are unjust in our dealings. Yet in his directing wrath towards us, he shows that he is just in his. Any offense against an infinitely glorious God demands an equally infinite punishment, and this is why hell exists and is right and proper.

A potential injustice exists, therefore, in the fact that God would, in love, pardon anyone. How can he remain just and yet forgive sin? Love is no longer good if it counters what is right, and God will not—cannot—love in an unrighteous way.

In Exodus 33:6–7, God speaks about himself, declaring, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty." How is it, then, that God can lovingly forgive "iniquity and transgression and sin" and yet "by no means clear the guilty?" How can both be true? How can God remain just and yet justify the ungodly (Rom 4:5)? To answer this question leads us to a central reason that God sent Jesus to earth with a mission to die, and this brings us to our verse.

1 John 4:10 provides a vital component to all Christian teaching by using the language of *propitiation*, which relates to the appeasing of God's wrath, in this instance, by means of a substitute sacrifice. We read, "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.” How do we know true love? This verse says it is not seen in how we have acted toward God; indeed, we have all failed to love him as we ought. Instead, it is seen in God’s own remarkable, costly grace in sending his own Son to earth “to be the propitiation for our sins.” God’s just and necessary wrath against our sins gets redirected toward Christ at the cross. Christ’s act, thus, propitiates God’s wrath, allowing it to be satisfied on him so that we can know God’s love.

Proverbs 17:5 declares, “He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.” God cannot work against his own character. For him to be a good judge requires that he must affirm, denounce, and punish sin, and we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Indeed, “the wages of sin is death” (6:23), and all of us “were dead in our trespasses and sins” and “by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:1, 3).

Nevertheless, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). That is, he died in our stead, taking the wrath upon himself that we deserved. “For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). God counts our sins to Jesus and counts his righteousness to us. As we read in 1 John 3:5, Jesus came “to take away sins, and in him there is no sin” (cf. Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22–23). Jesus was able to operate as our substitute sacrifice, because he himself was unblemished. Every mere human in this world deserves God’s curse “for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them’” (Gal 3:10). Yet “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (3:13; cf. John 3:14–15).

At the cross, God offered Jesus “to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:28; cf. John 11:51–52). Jesus was our substitute wrath-bearer, our propitiation. And therefore, the apostle says earlier in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And now, continuing in 1 John 2:1–2, if any Christian “does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

We cannot do enough to please God. Because he is supremely worthy of all loyalty and praise, failure to honor him even in one matter is worthy of eternal damnation (Jas 2:10). Nevertheless, “To the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted righteousness” (Rom 4:5).

With the awareness that propitiation refers to how a substitute bears the wrath that was due another, hear Paul’s words in Romans 3:23–26:

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 by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

God's saving love is not cheap. Indeed, it was amazingly costly, requiring the life of his own Son. Yet God "loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). If you will believe in Jesus, confessing your sins and turning from them to embrace Jesus as Lord, God will count your sins to Jesus and count his righteousness to you. This is the good news. This is love.

Good Friday reminds us of this good news of God's love that allows him to justify the ungodly because his Son bears the wrath that we deserve. Jesus being our propitiation is the only justifiable reason that God can simultaneously forgive "iniquity and transgression and sin" and yet "by no means clear the guilty" (Exod 34:7). Thus, Jesus says, "I am *the* way and *the* truth and *the* life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Because Jesus propitiates God's wrath, you and I can be saved from hell. This makes this day that recalls Jesus's sacrifice *Good Friday*.

Hell exists because God is good; forgiveness exists because God is love. I urge you today to receive the love of God today. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). John continues, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (3:46). There is only one way to the Father. Jesus must stand as the propitiation for your sins, and this is accomplished only by believing in him.

Tonight, to all in this room, God is proclaiming the means for enjoying his mercy. If you believe in God's Son, you will have eternal life. But if you do not believe but disobey the Son, God's wrath remains on you. I urge you, before the eternal judge, that you turn from your sins and trust God's provision of a substitute wrath bearer in Jesus. He is our only hope in life and death.

Hell exists because God is good; forgiveness exists because God in love sent Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins. Do you receive God's love today? Good Friday is only good for you if you do. Otherwise, God's wrath remains on you. You can enjoy salvation from this wrath today by embracing Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

If God is dealing with you as you hear this message, I invite you to talk with me after the service. Let us pray....