

## A Simple Guide to Big Words

**Text:** 1 John 3:5; Romans 3:25

**Topic:** Expiation

**Big Idea:** Expiation is Christ's work to remove our sins, guilt, and punishment.

**Application Point:** Through Christ's work of expiation, the believer can freely meet with God, knowing that their sin has been taken away and they are no longer guilty before him.

### Talking Points:

1. What do we think of when we think about an "ex-" anything? This is a clue to defining expiation. Expiation is the removal of something. It is the cancellation of our sin. First John 3:5, gives us a clear and concise understanding: Jesus removed our sins, and with that our guilt and rightful punishment. Christ's atonement is an act of expiation.
2. Expiation and propitiation (next week), help bring understanding and unity to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. In the Old Testament, sacrifice was a common practice, often performed by a priest who would present a sacrifice on behalf of the whole nation. In Exodus 25, we find the description of the tabernacle, and specifically the ark of the covenant. The lid of the ark is the "mercy seat" (Exodus 25:17). It is here that God meets his people (Exodus 25:22). This is important because of what we find in Romans 3:25. [Many translations use the word propitiation, but a better understanding of the original language should lead us to use expiation]. The same word is used to describe the cover of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies. It was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice (expiatory victim) on the annual day of atonement. This ceremony signified that the life of the people was offered to God in the blood as the life of the victim, and that God by this ceremony was appeased and their sins expiated. So, the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant is also known as the Lid of Expiation. By using this word, Paul tells us that it was Jesus's blood that served to remove our sins, similarly to the Old Testament sacrifices upon the mercy seat. Jesus is our mercy seat, and it was his blood that expiated (removed) our sin, so that we could meet God through him. We no longer need a priest, tabernacle, or sacrificial animal; because of Christ, we can meet with God whenever we want. Our sin is gone, and our God is always near. *[I'm glad that got simpler toward the end...]*
3. Sacrifice sounds gruesome, bloody, and messy. It is no longer a part of everyday life in most developed nations. We rarely deal with any sort of bleeding that isn't remedied by a quick Band-Aid or a few stitches. Blood is almost always synonymous with pain, suffering, or death. To a surgeon, blood is the emblem of life. This is not just conceptual. Blood is life. (Christianity Today, March 4, 1983). Believers recognize that Jesus's blood is the only means to true life.
4. Have you ever written something down with a pencil, then erased it, but it didn't come all the way off? What about those commercials that show the world how effective the product is at removing stains? Jesus's blood is effective. His work removed every stain that sin had left in our lives. It dealt with our sin so effectively that in God's eyes, there is nothing left, but instead we are a new creation in Christ.
5. Even though Christ has expiated our sin, in God's eyes, it doesn't mean we will never sin again. His sacrifice atoned for our sins—past, present, and future. We can be confident that our scars do not define us, and we do not have to be ashamed. We can live with a clear conscience. The believer, motivated by gratitude and love for God, should try to live a life of obedience to God. However, short of total regeneration through our bodily resurrection to come, we will not live perfectly. Because of expiation, we can, however, approach God with boldness, knowing that he will forgive us when we ask him, because the work has already been done.