

The Wrath of God

Intro: “Give me that ‘old time’ religion” might need to be re-written to “give me that ‘feel good’ religion”. Today’ society no longer wants to hear about those features of God that challenge their sin and warn them of their consequences; and some churches are glad to accommodate them. We must resist the temptation to ignore a feature of God because it is distasteful to our audience. Because the Bible reveals it, we must also speak about the wrath of God.

God is a God of wrath

A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; the Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet. (Nahum 1:2-3)

God’s wrath is not a self-willed capricious anger; but a measured display of His holiness and justice.

O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; for the righteous God tries the hearts and minds. My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. (Psalm 7:9-12)

God’s wrath is the fitting complement to His love.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with the oil of joy above Thy fellows. (Psalm 45:7)

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Romans 11:22)

In the element of love is a corresponding hate. A doctor must not only love health; he must hate germs. A man who loves his wife and children will hate whatever might be harmful and destructive to them. God’s wrath is the balancing component of His love. Because He cares deeply for us, He also is made angry by what destroys us. To ignore either is to mislead people about God. It is not an either/or proposition.

It is backdrop for its expression in Christ.

You have heard me say that the gospel is “good news”; but cannot be appreciated until we know the “bad news”.

Only when we understand that God judges sin, all sin, our sin, will we truly appreciate the grace, mercy, and love of God that extends forgiveness. Neglect to preach the wrath of God and you likewise cheapen the love and grace of God!

To neglect to reveal God’s wrath is to ignore and seemingly disbelieve major segments of the Scripture because we do not like what they say about God. It is to offer to the world a false view of God that has serious consequences for those

who would believe in Him. My duty as a preacher and our duty as His church is not to apologize for a god who seems to us to have gotten overly worked up about man's misdeeds, but to present Him not only as the loving God but also the holy and just God that He is.

God's wrath is manifest in various ways:

Disciplinary wrath

The Scriptures reveal God's wrath against His people.

The prophet Joel announced that a devastating locust plague was intended to be a "wake up call" to Israel to repent of their neglect of God's will (Joel 2:12-13).

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." (Hebrews 12:5-6)

Abandonment wrath

When men insist upon neglecting God then God punishes them by letting them suffer the consequences of their actions.

"But My people did not listen to My voice; and Israel did not obey Me. So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own devices. (Psalm 81:11-12)

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; ...receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. (Romans 1:26-27)

Cataclysmic wrath

Toward individuals like Nadab and Abihu who flagrantly disobeyed God's instructions concerning their priestly duties

And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. (Leviticus 10:2)

Toward the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in their moral degradation
Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. (Genesis 19:24-25)

Toward nation of Israel in its rejection of the prophets and God's Son and toward empires like Rome in its opposition to God's kingdom and the persecution of His people

and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17)

Toward the whole world in its escalating wickedness

Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. (Genesis 7:23)

Toward sinners in eternal separation from God in hell
“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; (Matthew 25:41)

How We Respond to the Wrath of God

We need to learn from those texts that reveal God’s wrath

If at one time it appeared these verses might have even been overworked, it may be now that they are underused in portraying God to men. I understand why people don’t want to hear about the wrath of God. It is not a pleasant subject; but it is a necessary one. And we need to learn about God and our relationship to Him from these texts.

We need to fear and obey God

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:1-3)

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29)

We need to trust in the propitiation of Jesus

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Romans 5:9)

We need to thank God that His wrath is turned away from us in forgiveness and serve Him out of love.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us; nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:8-12)

Conclusion: There is one more kind of wrath we might discuss. God’s redemptive wrath. Last week in our lesson on God’s justice we showed how Jesus’ death reveals both God’s love and justice. Sin had to be punished and hence God’s wrath fell upon Jesus. Descriptions of His death reveal an element of wrath in His sacrifice. This wrath He endured for our sake so that we could be forgiven of sin.

How will you avoid the wrath of God at the judgment?