

The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

Lesson #20 – God’s Wrath²³²⁰

The wrath of God is not taught in proportion to its teaching in Scripture in today’s American evangelical churches. The gospel message has been “clipped” of its power because the wrath of God is not taught as found in Scripture regarding God’s wrath toward man’s sin. The fear of God is not taught and thus there is no wisdom amongst those who are presented with this weak and miserable “clipped” gospel message. **The glory of the gospel rests solidly on God’s righteous wrath concerning man’s sin!**

I. Definition of God’s Wrath

“Wrath – 1. Violent, resentful anger, rage, fury.” *The American Heritage Dictionary*

Wrath clearly involves an emotional response to sin which God hates. It is not a cold decision to punish sin, but rather it reflects a strong emphasis on God’s absolute, unmitigated hatred towards all sin which results in God’s judgement which is necessary to satisfy His holiness, His righteousness, and His justice.

God has graciously and patiently withheld judgment against sin and men take this grace and patience for granted.

God’s own redeemed people are often opposed to God’s wrath toward sin. This erroneous attitude is because we do not understand that God’s anger and wrath is a great virtue of our God. God would be wicked if He was uncaring about the presence and exercise of sin amongst men. Likewise, when we cease to hate sin, we reflect a sinful wickedness in our own being.

Categorical Discussions:

Is this an Existential or a Relational Category? God’s wrath is initiated by what His creatures (1/3 of the angels & all humans) have done. Therefore, this is a “relational” attribute.

Is this an Incommunicable or a Communicable Category? Wrath, well directed, is a communicable category. We cannot become practically holy in this life unless we learn to have wrath towards our own sin, towards wickedness in any area where we have stewardship responsibility. (our own family, our church, our neighborhood, our place of work, our nation, etc.)

We who are in Christ are expected to be salt and light to our world, illuminating the truth and preserving our world from the disastrous effects of sin.

Problem Statement: The logic of the gospel presentation is:

1. All men are sinful in all of their being. Mind, body, soul, emotions, intellect, behavior, etc.
2. All unredeemed men hate the God of Scripture because that God threatens their own autonomy.
3. All unredeemed men are at enmity with the God of Scripture and hate that God.
4. God is absolutely, completely, and perfectly holy, righteous, and just.
5. This divide between God and men is only bridged through the sacrificial blood atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross. A unredeemed natural man/woman will not, and cannot love and obey God.
6. This blood atonement of Jesus the Christ has been accepted by God to propitiate (satisfy) His wrath towards the commission of sin and of the sinners who commit these sinful offenses against God.
7. All men who seek forgiveness from God and lay down their feeble weapons previously raised up against God are forgiven by and through this blood atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ.

If these statements are true, then clearly if the presentation of a “gospel” that reduces or ignores any or all of steps #1, 2, 3, 4, & 6. is not the gospel at all and has no spiritual power to overcome man’s inherent sinful state.

CAUTION:

Gal 1:6-10 *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be*

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accursed! ¹⁰*For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

All Scriptures quoted from the NASU translation unless otherwise noted.

II. Logic and Importance of God's Wrath

To not acknowledge, or trust in the perfect, holy, righteous, just, immutable, wrath of God, is to not trust in God in all of His perfections. It is because of God's unmitigated, uncompromising wrath towards sin and towards those who sin without confession and agreement and repentance regarding their desperate state of enmity towards God and need for a redeemer, that we have a certain hope of freedom from the power of sin in this current life and finally, freedom from the presence of sin in the life to come, which is our home with Christ.

Consequences of God's Wrath – It is this holy and perfect wrath of God that will accomplish an eternal peace with God through salvation of a people for God's own gracious and loving purpose. Here is Paul's answer to the problem of evil:

Rom 9:22-24 & 30-33 *What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴*even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.* - - -*

³⁰*What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; ³¹but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. ³²Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*

Historicity of God's Wrath God's wrath has been clearly understood from the earliest times of man. (OT Saints) It is only in our modern age with the on-set of Theological Liberalism and the Biblical weakness of Evangelicalism that this issue has been confused and even denied in our churches.

This glorious gospel of love and grace is ignored in our churches. The gospel has been clipped of its power, a different gospel is now being preached, which is no gospel at all. We complain that the gospel no longer has the power to reach out to lost souls and a different approach must be used in our churches. But in this generation, the full gospel has not been broadly taught and preached amongst many Evangelical churches.

III. Scriptural Basis of God's Wrath

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Updated version (NASU) Some verses pertinent to this goal of knowing of God's Wrath:

Ps 2:10-12 *Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. ¹¹Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling. ¹²Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!*

Ps 5:4-7 *For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. ⁵The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. ⁶You destroy those who speak falsehood; the Lord abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit. ⁷But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, at Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.*

Ps 34:15-16 *The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. ¹⁶The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.*

Isa 1:12-15 *"When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? ¹³Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. ¹⁴I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing*

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them. ¹⁵So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

Ezek 20:33-38 "As I live," declares the Lord God, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. ³⁴I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; ³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you," declares the Lord God. ³⁷"I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord."

Hos 9:15-17 All their evil is at Gilgal; indeed, I came to hate them there! Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house! I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels. ¹⁶Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they will bear no fruit. Even though they bear children, I will slay the precious ones of their womb. ¹⁷My God will cast them away because they have not listened to Him; and they will be wanderers among the nations.

John 3:35-36 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Rom 1:18-32 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

²⁸And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³²and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Eph 5:3-12 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them; ⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness

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and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹²for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

IV. Important Points About God's Wrath

1st How God's Wrath Relates to Other Attributes

God's wrath is the response of God's holiness, righteousness, love, and justice, towards the presence of wickedness and unrighteousness throughout His creation that must be resolved, destroyed, and replaced with perfect peace and righteousness in order for God to be the faithful God that His righteousness demands.

2nd Why God's Wrath is Important to Our Faith

If we don't understand God's righteous wrath, then we cannot understand God's great grace and love towards His redeemed.

3rd Confessions or Creeds that Address God's Wrath

1689 London Baptist Confession; Chapter 5; Article 3. They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free. (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 49; Psalms 51:5; Job 14:4; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 6:20 Romans 5:12; Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 Thessalonians 1:10)

4th Errors/Heresies that Deny God's Wrath

Theological Liberalism and modern Evangelicalism has ignored and/or denied the fullness of God's righteousness, love of His redeemed, justice, and the action of God's wrath in remaining faithful to Himself and to His people.

Important Quotes About God's Wrath

We must recapture some of the holy terror that comes with a right understanding of God's righteous anger. We need to remember that God's wrath does burn against impenitent sinners (Ps 38:1-3). That reality is the very thing that makes His love so amazing. We must therefore proclaim these truths with the same sense of conviction and fervency we employ when we declare the love of God. It is only against this backdrop of divine wrath that the full significance of God's love can be truly understood. That is precisely the message of the cross of Christ. After all, it was on the cross that God's love and His wrath converged in all their majestic fullness.

John MacArthur; *The God Who Loves*; p. 11

Now the wrath of God is as much a Divine perfection as is His faithfulness, power, or mercy. It must be so, for there is no blemish whatever, not the slightest defect in the character of God; yet there would be if "wrath" were absent from Him! Indifference to sin is a moral blemish, and he who hates it not is a moral leper. How could He who is the sum of all excellency look with equal satisfaction upon virtue and vice, wisdom and folly? How could He who is infinitely holy disregard sin and refuse to manifest His severity" (Rom 9:22) toward it? How could He, who delights only in that which is pure and lovely, not loathe and hate that which is impure and vile? The very nature of God makes Hell as real a necessity, as imperatively and eternally requisite, as Heaven is. Not only is there no imperfection in God, but there is no perfection in Him that is less perfect than another.

Arthur W. Pink; from *The Attributes of God*; p. 106

Thus God's love, as the Bible views it, never leads Him to foolish, impulsive, immoral actions in the way that its human counterpart too often leads us. And in the same way, God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is instead, a right and necessary reaction to object to moral evil. God is only angry where anger is called for. Even among humans, there is such a thing as righteous indignation, though it is, perhaps, rarely found. But all God's indignation is righteous. Would a God who took as much pleasure in evil as he did in good be a good God? Would a God who did not react adversely to evil in his world be morally perfect? Surely not. But it is precisely this adverse reaction to evil, which is a necessary part of moral perfection, that the Bible has in view when it speaks of God's wrath.

J. I. Packer; *Knowing God*; p. 151