

May 11, 2015

The Wrath of God

Romans 1:18 (NASB), **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppresses the truth in unrighteousness...”**

The concept of a wrathful God goes against all of the pie in the sky and wishful thinking of our fallen human nature. The concept of a wrathful God is even a stumbling block for some Christians. Much of what passes for modern evangelism is consumed with the idea of the abundant life in Christ, with joy and the blessings of salvation, and the peace with God that faith in Christ brings. Make no mistake all of those benefits *do* result from true genuine faith, but they are not by any means the *entirety* of the picture of God’s plan for salvation. The corresponding truths of God judgment and man’s sin and those who participate in it must be heard.

For the apostle Paul there was no need in his mind to soften the message. The fear of eternal condemnation was the primary motivation that he offered for coming to Christ. He was determined that they understand the reality of being under God’s wrath before he offered them the way to escape it. That approach makes logical and theological sense. A person cannot appreciate the wonder of God’s grace until he or she knows about the perfect demands of God’s law, and he or she cannot appreciate the fullness of God’s love for him until he has an understanding of the fierce nature of God’s wrath and anger against his sinful nature to perfectly obey that law. The sinner cannot appreciate God’s forgiveness until he knows about the eternal consequences of the sins that require a penalty and need forgiving.

The Greek word that is used here for wrath is *orge*. This refers to a settled, determined indignation, not a temporary, emotional, and uncontrolled rage which we humans are often subject to.

All of God’s attributes are balanced and they are in divine perfection. What we often fail to recognize is that if He had no righteous anger and wrath, He would not be God, just as surely as He would not be God without His gracious love. God perfectly hates just as perfectly as He loves. He perfectly loves righteousness and He perfectly hates evil. Psalm 45:7 says, **“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness...”** One of the great crimes of the modern evangelical movement is the failure to preach and teach the wrath of God and the condemnation it brings upon all with unforgiven sin. The truncated, sentimental gospel that is frequently presented today falls far short of the gospel that Jesus and the apostle Paul preached.

Scripture, both the Old and New Testament consistently emphasizes the wrath of God, His righteous wrath. Psalm 2:5 says, **“Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury...”** Verse 12 of that same Psalm says, **“Do homage to the Son, that He not become**

angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled.” Asaph wrote in Psalm 76:6-7, **“At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep. You, even You, are to be feared; and who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?”** In Psalm 78:49-51 we are reminded of what God had done to the defiant Egyptians who refused to let His people leave: **“He sent upon them His burning anger, fury, and indignation, and trouble, a band of destroying angels. He leveled a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, but gave their life to the plague, and smote all the first-born in Egypt.”**

Isaiah declared in Isaiah 9:19, **“By the fury of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up, And the people are like fuel for the fire; No man spares his brother.”** Jeremiah 7:20 says, **“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and not be quenched.’”**

Many times in the Bible God’s wrath is expressed in many ways against sinful mankind. In Genesis 6-7 we see God destroy all but eight people in the great Flood. Several generations after Noah, He confused men’s language and scattered them around the earth for trying to build an idolatrous tower to heaven in Genesis 11:1-9. In the days of Abraham, He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, with only Lot and his family escaping in Genesis 18-19. God poured out His wrath against pagan kings such as Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18-19, Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 and Belshazzar in Daniel 5. He even poured out His wrath against some of His own people – against King Nadab in 1 Kings 15:25-26 for doing **“evil in the sight of the Lord, and [walking] in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin.”** And against Aaron and Miriam, Moses’ brother and sister, for questioning Moses’ revelations from Him in Number 12:1-10.

God’s wrath is just as clearly addressed in the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament. In John 3:16 which is probably one of the most well known passages in Scripture it says, **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”** These are some of the most comforting words in all of Scripture but then they are followed up with John 3:36 which says, **“He 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 in Him.”**

Later on in the Book of Romans, Paul focuses his attention once again on the wrath of God writing in Romans 9:22, **“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?”** In Ephesians 5:6 Paul wrote, **“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”** In Colossians 3:5-6 he warned the Colossians that because of **“immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry...the wrath of God will come.”**

You see friends a disease has to be identified and recognized before seeking a cure. In the same way and for the same reason, Scripture reveals the bad news before the good news. God’s righteous judgment against sin is proclaimed before His gracious forgiveness of sin is offered. A

person has no reason to seek salvation from sin if he or she does not know they are condemned by it. They have no reason to want spiritual life unless they realize they are spiritually dead.

Only Jesus Christ was not born condemned. When Adam and Eve fell, the divine sentence against all sinners was passed. Paul therefore declares to the Romans in Romans 3:23, **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** He reminds us and the Ephesians in Ephesians 2:1-3, **“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”**

Over the next week or so we will be looking at some features of God’s wrath. As we go through this study I pray that God’s Holy Spirit will work in our hearts and minds to bring you to a truer understanding of God and who He really is.