

## The Wrath of God 9-14-00

Over the past couple of months we have been considering the attributes of God. I think our human tendency is to leave the wrath of God until the very last possible lesson. It is as if we want to ignore it or downplay it. But the wrath of God is just as holy as all the other attributes. Man acts as if the wrath or anger of God was some blemish on his perfection, or an old doctrine we have outgrown. But the Word of God does not flinch or apologize when it declares the wrath of God. In fact there are more references to God's wrath than there are to his love. That makes us uncomfortable. What child is comfortable when the paddle is displayed? The holiness of God and the wrath of God **should** make our flesh fear and tremble.

Too often when we think of God and his attributes we think of them as man expresses them and so they become corrupted in our thoughts. But the character of God is all holy – and therefore beautiful, including his wrath. Man's wrath is mixed with selfishness, impure motives, limited knowledge, but God's wrath can never have these factors. It is always selfless, with pure motives, with full knowledge of the heart of those upon whom his wrath is displayed. This attribute needs to be seen exactly as the word of God declares it. We must quit thinking like unregenerate man and see the reality of God with a renewed mind. Too often excuses are made for the anger or wrath of God. We must return to the faithfulness of Scripture. The Hebrew word is the same as nose. Perhaps it is because of the nostrils flaring when one becomes angry. It is an emotion that is expressed in discipline that is often severe. Old and New Testament both describe this discipline as scourging. Man's distaste for this type of punishment was seen in Indonesia when an American boy was caned for vandalism. The outcry was that the punishment was backward and too brutal – not up to the sophisticated times in which we live. Yet the Biblical description of God's wrath is very similar to caning.

We tend to think of the wrath of God as it's unbridled expression on the great Day of His wrath that is to come. But His wrath is expressed daily.<sup>11</sup> God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day. Psalms 7:11 (NIV) What kind of a judge would not carry out the sentence He handed down? Every expression of the anger of God in Scripture is because of sin. His wrath is always just, and it is always consistent with his love. You parents can relate with how you feel toward your children. If at the age of four they run out into the street without looking, and you have told them again and again not to, a car swerves and just misses them. Do you say, "now, now dear, musn't run in front of big cars or you get a boo boo. No way! You are so mad out of love for that child that your emotions flare up and the child thinks twice before doing it again.

His wrath is never impure but always a holy wrath. In fact, his purity and justice demand wrath be expressed against rebellion. We see children whose parents do not carry out the sentence they warn will come to pass, and how it encourages the children to be more rebellious. One thing the Lord showed me very clearly when we were raising our children was that Mariko and I had to be united on what was ok and what we would discipline for. If we did not carry out what we warned would be the consequences of disobedience, our children would not only be confused, but they would also take advantage of us being unclear.

But God is not unclear in his demands or the punishment. His very nature demands purity from his creation, that He created in goodness. He is the Creator and has a right to demand from us whatever He wills. When we rebel against our Creator the just sentence is death. In

his mercy He restrains that wrath, and displays enough of it to let us know He is serious and uncompromising. <sup>38</sup> Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he *restrained* his anger and did not stir up his *full* wrath. Psalms 78:38

As the descendants of fallen Adam we have to recognize that we are born rebels against our Creator. We owe everything to God, receive everything from Him and yet we refuse to even listen to what He would tell us in His love. We seek only to please ourselves and could care less about Him or those made in his image. In His faithfulness and love He warns us patiently, trying to get us just to listen for our own good. But like arrogant fools we turn our backs on Him and declare ourselves God, ruler of our own wills, seeking pleasure in things that will destroy.

And so the justice of God warns us: <sup>8</sup> I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you; I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices. Ezek 7:8 (NIV) <sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.<sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.<sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.<sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things *God's wrath* comes on those who are disobedient. Eph 5:3-6 (NIV)

You can see the wrath of God in the consequences of sin. Don't let our political correctness nullify the testimony of the wrath of God on 'aids' among other things. Those most likely to contract the disease are drug addicts that share needles and homosexuals. The word of God declares both sin and the disease is an expression of the wrath of God, to bring them to repentance. You might ask what about the innocent that contracted it through an accident. They are victims of the sins of others. The consequences of sin hurt those uninvolved and the punishment for that is reserved for the one that donated the blood for another fix.

The political agenda of many in the US is to stand against the declarations of a loving God who tells us what is right based on his own perfect character. He tells us that because as we deviate from truth we hurt ourselves and those who we come in contact with. As our political system goes deeper into compromise of humanism, we will see more and more burden on our system due to society condoning sin. If you have health insurance you are sharing the cost already. When we pay taxes we share the cost of sin incurred through Medicare, the cost of our culture condoning sin and paying the consequences of the wrath of God.

Please understand God would rather the sinner turned and found life in surrender to their Creator. But if that person will not turn – they are demanding justice, and God's attributes demand that they receive it. <sup>18</sup> According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due. Isaiah 59:18 (NIV)

The wrath of God is seen in the mental turmoil that guilt brings. Psychiatry is too often about getting people to deal with life without having to surrender to God. It teaches to deaden yourself to guilt or place it on others. It prescribes drugs to lift us out the depression that the disobedience to God brings. There are genuine needs for people who are dealing with the sin of mankind's fallen condition versus personal rebellion. But I believe even in those cases medicine is a bandage, but the Word of God is the solution.

The wrath of God is seen in natural calamity (acts of God). Through out the Scriptures weather is used as a blessing or wrath. Why do you think the world is seeing an increase in weather related disasters? We don't want to think God allowed them to turn us out of our unresponsiveness to Him. We don't want to think that we are punished with our nation that has turned its back on Him. But if you look at the record of Israel you will see that is how God works. The drought affected the righteous as well as the wicked, just as rains of blessing fall on the just and unjust. We place such a priority on the physical we can't imagine God would take it all away if it brought us closer to Him. He's concerned more with our eternity than our temporal happiness.

The wrath of God should remind man of his place – created for God's glory. <sup>10</sup> Surely your wrath against men brings you praise, and the survivors of your wrath are restrained. Psalms 76:10 (NIV) When we see his wrath it should bring praise for two reasons. It is always displayed in righteousness never selfishly. And secondly, He is expressing restrained wrath that we might turn from our ways. Unfortunately for us the response to the wrath of God is often a hardening of the heart against God. We don't want to give him credit for the good we enjoy but when we experience wrath we are all too ready to blame Him as though it were unjust of Him. Instead, it should restrain evil, in that men should see it and fear to rebel against God. <sup>11</sup> Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. Psalms 90:11 (NIV)

As a culture, we have altogether lost the fear of God. Even the church waters down the fear of a holy God. It is often fashioned into respect. Of course we should respect God. But we should also fear Him. <sup>1</sup> An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. Psalms 36:1 (NIV) It is a lack of the fear of God and his wrath that allows man to go on declaring himself God. Does the New Age have any fear of God? None, for their god is really self enthroned, and they will not punish themselves. If they imagine a god he is the benign impersonal universe. Disaster is some karma unrelated to their present life and actions. See how this frees them from any responsibility to change?

<sup>19</sup> God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them and afflict them-- Selah men who never change their ways and have no fear of God. Psalms 55:19 (NIV) It is only the fear of God and his wrath that causes us to change, to repent and seek a right relationship with Him. Then his love becomes the motivation and his life in us the power that transforms. But first it is a fleeing from the wrath to come. ...through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil. Prov 16:6b

Five times the books of wisdom tell us that the fear of the Lord is real wisdom. No wonder there is such a lack of true wisdom today. <sup>17</sup> Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD. Prov 23:17 (NIV) Be zealous for a fear of the LORD. I thank God He deals with me swiftly when I step out of line. I praise Him that my conscience bothers me when I let something slide until I do something about it. I want to be zealous for the fear of God!

Jonathan Edward's famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" caused people to shake and tremble in the pews. Sometimes the wailing in the congregation would get so loud they couldn't hear him preach. We flinch when we hear that, but remember through the fear of the LORD men change their ways. How can there be repentance unless we see our sin and the abhorrence of God toward it. Those people were shaking because the HS exposed sin in

their heart and how much all-powerful holy God hates that sin. Do we need that today! The rejection of that fear is one reason the church is so like the world.

Perhaps there was an excess of hell fire and damnation in the 50s, but we have swung to the opposite extreme and the lack of fear of God has caused rampant rebellion against God – hedonism – a life lived for carnal pleasure. "Don't you dare suggest anything is wrong with my life! I choose what is right and wrong for me." God responds, "...because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." Ro 2:8

NO! there is right and wrong but it is not determined by you, it is determined by the perfect character of Almighty God. Amazing how the study in James has gone along with these messages. Do remember? "The Judge is at the door." If that doesn't cause you to examine your heart, to be zealous for the fear of God, your revelation of his wrath is incomplete. Your view of his hatred for evil is inadequate. Your understanding of his Holiness all too limited. The wrath we have talked about to this point is restrained wrath but there is a day coming in which the wrath of the Lamb will be **poured** out. Justice will be served to those who God has been patient with not willing that any should perish.

But thanks be to God we are saved from the wrath to come through Jesus, on whom fell the wrath of God against sin. If you want sense of the hatred of God upon sin look at the price Christ paid for you – the passion of the crucifixion. The suffering and death there was proportional to the justice sin deserves, and we cannot see those three hours of darkness, or you would be shaking right now! But that wrath on sin gives you an opportunity to escape wrath and choose life. <sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for *God's wrath* remains on him." John 3:36 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

<sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.<sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. Eph 2:1-3 (NIV) <sup>9</sup>

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be *saved from God's wrath* through him! Romans 5:9 (NIV) They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, *who rescues us from the coming wrath*. 1 Thess 1:10 (NIV) We are moving in a river of time from which none escape, toward that inevitable day. In that day all will be judged by a holy God as to what they did with Jesus.

Have you fled from the wrath to come through faith in Jesus' blood? Good! Is the fear of the LORD causing you to continue to change into his image? <sup>19</sup> When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. Deut 29:19 (NIV) Remember James says, "I want to see your faith expressed in a transformed life." That was the same thing God was saying to the children of Israel. If you are still going your own way, you will still face the anger of God. Your house of perishable things will be consumed in his wrath though you may be saved yet so as by fire. His way is Jesus' Lordship in your life. That is the only way to avoid the wrath to come. Don't think "I will be safe in going my own way." Let the life of Christ in you be the way you choose. Choose life.