

Wrath

Romans 5:6–11

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

The ultimate sin is to tell God how He ought to be. New interpretations now tell us that God does not have anger. “He has only anguish,” some say. Not so! God is heartbroken over sin, to be sure, but He also possesses wrath. This is expressed in Hebrews 10:26–31 and 12:28, 29, and it is demonstrated throughout the entire Bible.

A holy God is a God of wrath. The word “wrath” appears 189 times in the Scriptures. The word “wrath” is used in the Bible even more than is “grace.” People today may cringe at the word, but without wrath there would be no need for grace. To lessen judgment is to minimize sin. God has wrath, fierce wrath, great wrath, and a day of wrath. Love demands wrath, but wrath is appeased by love. Wrath and love go together. They must not be separated. Love restrains wrath but does not destroy it. God has made promises. Some are positive; some are negative. God keeps *both!*

Modern interpretations also maintain that Jesus had no temper, that Christianity condemns *all* anger. Read the

Gospel Accounts. Jesus had a righteous temper! As Jesus cleansed the temple, He was not laughing and singing devotional songs of happiness. God has a righteous indignation. Ask Adam and Eve, Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon, and Ananias and Sapphira!¹ Romans is about grace, but it is even more about God's wrath. (The word "wrath" appears twelve times in Romans.) Paul, an inspired advocate of grace, used the word "wrath" twenty-one times in his epistles. "Wrath" is used more often than any other word in relation to God's judicial anger concerning the guilt of sin.

WHY?

Why wrath? *Sin!* Wrath is severe, righteous anger. Can God be angry? The real question is "Why isn't God *more* angry than He is?" Why does God put up with us? If you were in His place, would you? Why are we still alive? Sin is what God hates (Psalm 119:104). Every time we sin, we do what God hates. Sin is enmity against God, a mutiny, an insult to God. God gave man an incredible universe. Man treats it with contempt. Satan called God a liar (Genesis 3:3–5), and Eve believed Satan. What God hates, we bring into our lives when we live in sin.

With man, anger is a passion; with God, it is a principle. To some degree we know what sin does to man; we have no clue what it has done to God. God is the "Chief-

¹In His righteous wrath, God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden after they sinned (Genesis 3:1–24). Noah and his family were the only survivors of the great flood God sent to destroy the sinful world (Genesis 6:11–7:23). Because of their grievous sins, God likewise destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20–19:25) and the idolatrous nation of Babylon (see Isaiah 21:9). In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying to God (Acts 5:1–10).

Sufferer” in the universe. Sin nailed Jesus to the cross. God had reason for severe, righteous anger! If God could allow Jesus to be crucified, imagine what He can do to vile sinners! Man has anger toward anyone and anything that threatens or destroys what He loves. God is infinitely greater in law, justice, wrath, holiness, mercy, and goodness than we are. The more we sin, the less we seem to know about it. Sin is against God (Psalm 51:4) and, in one sense, only against God.

However, “wrath” is not God’s final word. “Forgiveness” is. The unpardonable sin is to refuse to be forgiven, for we may reach a point where we cannot repent.

REPENTANCE

God is “slow” to wrath (Proverbs 14:29; Nehemiah 9:17; James 1:19). However, every impenitent sinner and every sin will be punished. All that sinners can do is repent. Sin is radical. Repentance must be radical also. Guilt matters. By sinning, man casts out God. By repenting, man casts himself out. Sinners must be delivered from sin and self. Therefore, the gospel message first tells us of our sinfulness and then tells us of our salvation. Repentance is a difficult command to obey, but we must obey it.

All the preachers in the Bible continually discussed one topic: “repentance.” John the Baptist wore out one sermon outline: “Repent or Else.” Jesus began His ministry by saying, “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15b). Forgiveness is impossible without repentance. John told flawed churches to repent (Revelation 2; 3). Even God cannot save sinners until they let Him. The world is disoriented concerning repentance. Religious groups try to offer salvation without truth, knowledge, repentance, or

obedience. Sinners are under the wrath of God. The world wants a Christianity that has low demands and no commands. Do not equate unmerited love with unconditional forgiveness.

Who wants to repent? “Repentance” (Gk.: *metanoia*) is a second mind, a new mind, or a changed mind. Beliefs must be changed before behavior is changed. Changed lives are the fruit of repentance (Matthew 3:8).

Repentance is a response of faith to grace (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10; Romans 2:4). The prodigal returned home seeking to become an employee. The father’s love changed his heart and his life (Luke 15:17–24). Sinners must hate sin as God does. Christians are to live in faith and in repentance.

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*