

The Justice and Wrath of God

Wrath - orge; properly, desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy), violent passion, ire, or justifiable abhorrence; by implication punishment: — anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath.

J. I. Packer takes us to the dictionary for a definition of wrath:

‘Wrath’ is an old English word defined in my dictionary as ‘deep, intense anger and indignation’. ‘Anger’ is defined as ‘stirring of resentful displeasure and strong antagonism, by a sense of injury or insult’; ‘indignation’ as ‘righteous anger aroused by injustice and baseness’. Such is wrath. And wrath, the Bible tells us, is an attribute of God.

Sadly, this particular attribute of God has fallen out of fashion and some in the professing Christian church at attempting to eliminate it from our thinking. At “On the Square,” the web commentary of the conservative Christian journal First Things, evangelical historian Timothy George notes a recent dust-up in the Presbyterian Church (USA). George writes:

Sin, judgment, cross, even Christ have become problematic terms in much contemporary theological discourse, but nothing so irritates and confounds as the idea of divine wrath. Recently, the wrath of God became a point of controversy in the decision of the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song to exclude from its new hymnal the much-loved song “In Christ Alone” by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. The Committee wanted to include this song because it is being sung in many churches, Presbyterian and otherwise, but they could not abide this line from the third stanza: “Till on that cross as Jesus died/the wrath of God was satisfied.” For this they wanted to substitute: “...as Jesus died/the love of God was magnified.” The authors of the hymn insisted on the original wording, and the Committee voted nine to six that “In Christ Alone” would not be among the eight hundred or so items in their new hymnal.

<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2013/07/no-squishy-love/timothy-george>

Divine wrath is God's righteous anger and punishment, provoked by sin. Sin deserves punishment in all aspects.

God's judgment and wrath are inter-related with His righteousness and justice. Because God is holy and infinitely good, and because He is sovereign and completely in charge, He has the right to create a standard. And that standard will be met – whether by you personally or by your substitute. It is fair of God to give people what they deserve. That's what fairness is. Grace keeps some people from getting exactly what they deserve.

God's holiness and righteousness demand a just satisfaction. His justice will be exercised and displayed. And He is perfectly willing to demonstrate His wrath against His enemies.

As we read last week, Roman 9:22 says, "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

Or Proverbs 16:4 – "The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil."

The Justice of God

"And thinketh thou this, O man that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2:3)

Deut 32:1-4 (from the song of Moses) –

"Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

² "Let my teaching drop as the rain,

My speech distill as the dew,
As the droplets on the fresh grass
And as the showers on the herb.

³ "For I proclaim the name of the LORD;
Ascribe greatness to our God!

⁴ "The Rock! His work is perfect,

For all His ways are ^[a]just;
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
Righteous and upright is He.

Genesis 18:25 - That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

<http://www.brianauten.com/Apologetics/wayne-grudem/29-the-character-of-god-communicable-attributes-6-of-9.mp3>

Start at 15 minutes.

Read Romans 1:18-32

During Old Testament times God's wrath was openly displayed against evil-doers, notably at the Flood; in the destruction of Sodom and Gormorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven; on the Egyptians and their haughty king, when He visited their land with plagues, slew their first born and destroyed their armies at the Red Sea; and in His dealings with the Nation of Israel, in selling them into the hands of their enemies, sending them into captivity and destroying their beloved city. And God's wrath against sin was publicly manifested at the Cross.

Think about how Jesus travailed in His soul at the thought of God's wrath – “If were possible, take this cup away from me.” Praying until His sweat was like great drops of blood. Jesus, who knew what the wrath of God was, was Himself terrified by it. Yet we, foolish sinners, don't have the wisdom to be fearful. We flaunt our rebellion as if we were daring God to be just and holy in His judgment.

Examples of God's wrath:

28 And Moses said, “By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing. 29 If these men die the death of all men, or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. 30 But if the Lord brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its

mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the Lord.”

31 Then it came about as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground that was under them split open; 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah, with their possessions. 33 So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. 34 And all Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, “The earth may swallow us up!” 35 Fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense ([Numbers 16:28-35](#)).

God not only displayed His wrath toward rebellious Israelites, He also demonstrated His wrath against wicked pagans. He destroyed the inhabited earth by means of the flood ([Genesis 6-9](#)). He also destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah ([Genesis 19](#)).

6 Wail, **for the day of the Lord** is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man’s heart will melt. 8 And they will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. 9 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light. 11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. 12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, And mankind than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger. 14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle, Or like sheep with none to gather them, they will each turn to his own people, And each one flee to his own land. 15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through, and anyone who is captured will fall by the sword. 16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished ([Isaiah 13:6-16](#)).

The Day of the Lord is a reference to God's wrathful vengeance:

15 “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; 17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19 But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! 20 But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; 21 for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. 22 And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short” ([Matthew 24:15-22](#)).

48 “But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ 49 and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51 and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth” ([Matthew 24:48-51](#); see also chapter 25).

20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

25 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” ([Luke 21:20-28](#)).

When John the Baptist spoke of the coming Messiah, he spoke of His coming as the One who would execute divine wrath:

5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; 6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" ([Matthew 3:5-12](#)).

John 3:36 - He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6)

1 Thess. 1:10 -- and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. 22 Moses said, 'The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to

you. 23 And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people” ([Acts 3:18-23](#)).

12 And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 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; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” ([Revelation 6:12-17](#)).

1 And I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.” 2 And the first angel went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. 3 And the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. 4 And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” 7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.” 8 And the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent, so as to give Him glory. 10 And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds ([Revelation 16:1-11](#)).

11 And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" ([Revelation 19:11-16](#)).

Even the concept of propitiation refers to God's wrath – propitiation is more than just the expiation of sin, it is an appeasement and satisfaction of God's wrath.

"Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee" (Job. 36:18)

A.W. Pink – The Attributes of God (edited)

It is sad to find so many professing Christians who appear to regard the wrath of God as something for which they need to make an apology, or at least they wish there were no such thing. While some would not go so far as to openly admit that they consider it a blemish on the Divine character, yet they are far from regarding it with delight, they like not to think about it, and they rarely hear it mentioned without a secret resentment rising up in their hearts against it. Even with those who are more sober in their judgment, not a few seem to imagine that there is a severity about the Divine wrath which is too terrifying to form a theme for profitable contemplation. Others harbor

the delusion that God's wrath is not consistent with His goodness, and so seek to banish it from their thoughts.

... But what saith the Scriptures? As we turn to them we find that God has made no attempt to conceal the fact of His wrath. He is not ashamed to make it known that vengeance and fury belong unto Him. His own challenge is, "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live forever, If I whet My glittering sword, and Mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me" (Deut. 32:39-41). A study of the concordance will show that there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God, than there are to His love and tenderness. Because God is holy, He hates all sin; And because He hates all sin, His anger burns against the sinner: Psalm 7:11.

... 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. 9:12) toward it? How could He who delights only in that which is pure and lovely, loathe and hate not 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.

... God is angry against sin because it is a rebelling against His authority, a wrong done to His inviolable sovereignty. Insurrectionists against God's government shall be made to know that God is the Lord. They shall be made to feel how great that Majesty is which they despise, and how dreadful is that threatened wrath which they so little regarded. Not that God's anger is a malignant and malicious retaliation,

inflicting injury for the sake of it, or in return for injury received. No; while God will vindicate His dominion as the Governor of the universe, He will not be vindictive.

That Divine wrath is one of the perfections of God is not only evident from the considerations presented above, but is also clearly established by the express declarations of His own Word. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (Rom. 1:18).

...

Again; that the wrath of God is a Divine perfection is plainly demonstrated by what we read of in Psalm 95:11, "Unto whom I swear in My wrath." There are two occasions of God "swearing": in making promises (Gen. 22:16), and in denouncing threatening (Deut. 1:34). In the former, He swears in mercy to His children; in the latter, He swears to terrify the wicked. An oath is for solemn confirmation: Hebrews 6:16. In Genesis 22:16 God said, "By Myself have I sworn." In Psalm 89:35 He declares, "Once have I sworn by My holiness." While in Psalm 95:11 He affirmed, "I swear in My wrath." Thus the great Jehovah Himself appeals to His "wrath" as a perfection equal to His "holiness": He swears by the one as much as by the other! Again; as in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), and as all the Divine perfections are illustriously displayed by Him (John 1:18), therefore do we read of "the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16).

The wrath of God is a perfection of the Divine character upon which we need to frequently meditate. First, that our hearts may be duly impressed by God's detestation of sin. We are ever prone to regard sin lightly, to gloss over its hideousness, to make excuses for it. But the more we study and ponder God's abhorrence of sin and His frightful vengeance upon it, the more likely are we to realize its heinousness. Second, to beget a true fear in our souls for

God: "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28,29). We cannot serve Him "acceptably" unless there is due "reverence" for His awful Majesty and "godly fear" of His righteous anger, and these are best promoted by frequently calling to mind that "our God is a consuming fire." Third, to draw out our souls in fervent praise for having delivered us from "the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10).

...

"Rejoice, O ye nations (Gentiles) His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries" (Deut. 32:43). And again we read, "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; For true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said Alleluia." (Rev. 19:13). Great will be the rejoicing of the saints in that day when the Lord shall vindicate His majesty, exercise His awful dominion, magnify His justice, and overthrow the proud rebels who have dared to defy Him.

...

When I consider how the goodness of God is abused by the greatest part of mankind, I cannot but be of his mind that said, The greatest miracle in the world is God's patience and bounty to an ungrateful world. If a prince hath an enemy got into one of his towns, he doth not send them in provision, but lays close siege to the place, and doth what he can to starve them. But the great God, that could wink all His enemies into destruction, bears with them, and is at daily cost to maintain them. Well may He command us to bless them that curse us, who Himself does good to the evil and

unthankful. But think not, sinners, that you shall escape thus; God's mill goes slow, but grinds small; the more admirable His patience and bounty now is, the more dreadful and unsupportable will that fury be which ariseth out of His abused goodness.

...

Then flee, my reader, flee to Christ; "flee from the wrath to come" (Matt. 3:7) ere it be too late. Do not, we earnestly beseech you, suppose that this message is intended for somebody else. It is to you! Do not be contented by thinking you have already fled to Christ. Make certain! Beg the Lord to search your heart and show you yourself.

A Word to Preachers. Brethren, do we in our oral ministry, preach on this solemn subject as much as we ought? The Old Testament prophets frequently told their hearers that their wicked lives provoked the Holy One of Israel, and that they were treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. And conditions in the world are no better now than they were then! Nothing is so calculated to arouse the careless and cause carnal professors to search their hearts, as to enlarge upon the fact that "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11). The forerunner of Christ warned his hearers to "flee from the wrath to come" (Matt. 3:7). The Saviour bade His auditors "Fear Him, which after He hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you. Fear Him" (Luke 12:5). The apostle Paul said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11). Faithfulness demands that we speak as plainly about Hell as about Heaven.