

THE WRATH
OF GOD

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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THE WRATH OF GOD

The wrath of God is a much misunderstood subject. It is a function of God's holy character and expresses itself through judgement.

EPHESIANS 5:5 For this you know, that no whoremonger (the sexually immoral), nor unclean (impure) person, nor covetous (greedy) man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. (Paul is speaking here to Believers, thus showing that Believers can forfeit their salvation through sin bringing them to a position of unbelief - and there is therefore no such thing as unconditional eternal security.)

EPHESIANS 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

One subject within scripture which is often neglected today is "the wrath of God." This phrase generally refers to the punishment of God - God's righteous judgement upon sinners. As we know, God is not only a God of great mercy, He is also a God of justice, and He will always fulfill His Word. Therefore those who engage in sin, remaining in a state of sin, will fall under God's judgement, His righteous wrath. God's wrath is defined by Jack Hayford as follows:

"WRATH - the personal manifestation of God's holy, moral character in exacting just judgement against sin. Wrath is neither an impersonal process nor is it irrational and fitful like anger. It is in no way vindictive or malicious. It is holy indignation - God's anger directed against sin because of its destructive power and the havoc it wreaks in ruining His benevolent intent for man.

God's wrath is an expression of His holy love. If God were incapable of wrath, His love would be no more than a frail, maudlin sentimentality; the concept of mercy would be meaningless; and the Cross would have been a cruel and unnecessary expense exacted of His Son.

The Bible reveals that all humankind is "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3) and that "the wrath of God is revealed from

heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). Thus, all people - either by nature or calculated enterprise - have earned judgement for sin. But there is promise, since Christ died. We can be “justified by His blood (and) be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:9). The magnitude of God’s love is manifested in the Cross, where God’s only Son experienced the wrath of God on sin by bearing it on our behalf.

Ultimately, “The day of the Lord’s wrath” (Zephaniah 1:18), identical with “the great day of the Lord” (Zephaniah 1:14), will come upon this world. “The wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:16) will be manifest through Jesus Christ, as it will fall on the ungodly at His Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).”¹ (underlines added)

**“ . . . WRATH - the personal
manifestation of God’s holy, moral
character in exacting just
judgement against sin. . . ”**

The wrath of God, or judgement according to His Word, remains upon all who have rejected or not bothered to seek His Word of deliverance, all who have rejected His Son, either knowingly or unknowingly. John 3:36 bears this out.

JOHN 3:36 *He who believes on the Son (His finished work at the Cross) has everlasting life: and he who believes not the Son (has not bothered to seek or accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord) shall not see life (for there is only one means of salvation); but the wrath of God (which constitutes His opposition to sin) abides on him.*

The Book of Romans also states:

ROMANS 1:18 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (God always opposes sin), who hold the truth in unrighteousness (refuse to recognize God for Who He is)*

A.W. Tozer says “God’s wrath is His utter intolerance for whatever degrades and destroys. Wherever the holiness of God confronts unholiness there is a conflict. God’s attitude and action in the conflict are His anger. To preserve His creation, God must destroy whatever would destroy it. Every wrathful judgement of God in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation. In His love and mercy He tells us ‘to flee the wrath to come.’” ²
(underlines added)

The “*wrath of God*” will be poured out not only in the Tribulation and at the Battle of Armageddon, but will descend upon all unrighteousness and those associated with it. Unless the Blood of Jesus washes our evil heart, we will face God’s wrath.

Men are born separated from God and so already lost. In deep darkness, many hear the Gospel and reject it because they want to continue in the darkness in which they were born, practising their evil deeds. Others don’t bother to seek their Creator and never hear the Gospel, being content and comfortable in their present darkness. They love sin more than God’s grace, more than the Light which is His presence.

JOHN 3:18 He who believes on Him is not condemned (to the Lake of Fire for eternity): but he who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.

JOHN 3:19 And this is the condemnation (verdict), that Light (Jesus as the Light of the world) is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light (from sin comes sinful desire and evil ways), because their deeds were evil.

JOHN 3:20 For every one who does evil hates the Light (the Light of the world), neither comes to the Light (Jesus - Who reveals sin for what it is), lest his deeds should be reprov'd (exposed).

Determined to self-rule and enjoy all manner of sinful desire, men reject Jesus Christ, God's only Son, the only means of deliverance from their position and condition of sin. However this rejection is a result of their condition. It is not the reason they are in this condition. In other words, we are not sinners because we sin, man sins because he is a sinner. Men love their evil ways and desire to remain in darkness. Because of this they either reject or do not even seek the Light that would reveal their sin and set them free.

***“. . . God's wrath is His utter intolerance
for whatever degrades and destroys.
Wherever the holiness of God confronts
unholiness there is a conflict. . .”***

Those who will not, or do not accept that the price for their sin has been paid by the Saviour, will have to pay the price themselves for their sin - that price being separation from God in eternal torment. God has done all He can to expunge the ravages of sin. The wrath of God will remain on those who do not or will not embrace the Cross and all that was accomplished for man through it.

God is giving people warning in His Word of what will result from the sin of rejecting Jesus as Lord. The Book of Revelation tells us of the place where all those who have rejected God's love will go.

***REVELATION 21:8 . . . the fearful, and unbelieving,
and the abominable, and murderers, and
whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all
liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with
fire and brimstone: which is the second death (from
which there is no escape).***

***REVELATION 20:15 And whosoever was not found
written in the Book of Life (the written heavenly record
of all the Redeemed) was cast into the Lake of Fire.***

However God has given a promise, in His Covenant, of eternal life with Him to all who fulfill the conditions of the Covenant.

All who reject His Covenant are cursed, as Deuteronomy 28:14-68 states, but all who accept (reverence) His Covenant will live in the promises of it, provided they live by faith (Deuteronomy 28:1-13).

In modern preaching today, the message of God's wrath is almost entirely missing. The reason for this is because of the strategy of "positiveness at all costs." Indeed how could they, our modern ministers, present the truth about God's wrath to an unbelieving sinner in an "optimistic" way?

Contemporary preachers need to read and consider the definition Trench gave concerning "*the wrath of God*" as found in Matthew 3:7 as "*a wrath of God who would not love good unless He hated evil, the two being inseparable, that He must do both or neither.*"³

God's strategy in the writing of scripture was to balance His message of love with that of judgement (which is an expression of God's wrath e.g. John 3:36, 3:16). Only God, being perfect, can bring judgement to His free-willed creation. Therefore God's wrath, as revealed in His Word, is not a secondary or even a third theme. Rather it stands side by side with the message of love as a primary message - that being the warning "*to flee the wrath to come.*"

The Cross was God's plan to deal with His righteous wrath. Christ, on behalf of man, took sin's punishment, and in this way, God's wrath was satisfied. So all those "in Christ" are now free from sin's penalty because Christ died for us and on our behalf.

“ . . . The wrath of God will remain on those who do not or will not embrace the Cross and all that was accomplished for man through it . . . ”

Therefore concerning our salvation, we who remain in Christ are free from Divine judgement. Harper's Bible Dictionary defines God's wrath in these terms:

“WRATH, a word denoting the active feeling of God against sin, expressing in human categories an important attribute of God: that he is holy and righteous and rejects everything that is not. This rejection is real, manifesting itself in actual situations such as the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Deuteronomy 29:23), the chastisement of Moses for his reluctance to obey (Exodus 4:14), and even the death of Uzzah for touching with profane hand the Ark of God (2 Samuel 6:7). The wrath of God is thus a divine reaction to human provocation, not an arbitrary passion or animosity. Even in this reaction God is 'slow to anger'; the OT emphasizes that he is 'merciful and gracious...abounding in steadfast love' (Psalm 103:8; Joel 2:13). In the NT, the angry reaction of Jesus against those who desecrated the Temple (John 2:13-17) bears the characteristics of divine wrath. Wrath is also an essential part of Paul's theology: he often mentions that human disobedience and transgression result in the coming of the wrath of God (Romans 1:18; 2:5; 2:8; 5:9; 9:22; Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). The overpowering theme of the NT, however, is the love of God, not his anger. The NT can say that 'God is love' (1 John 4:8); the mission of Jesus was to take the wrath of God upon himself. That is the meaning of salvation in the NT: since the time when Jesus was sent into the world, only those who do not believe and do not obey have to worry about the wrath of God." ⁴

(underline added)

Yes the overpowering theme of the New Testament is love, but without the theme of judgement being placed alongside the teaching of God's love, the message will be unbalanced and therefore incomplete. The judgement that Christ suffered on our behalf is every bit as important as the message of God's love. In fact the two cannot be separated. Both belong to the Gospel and need to be preached together, side by side. Sadly, however, as we have said, the modern day church with its obsession regarding "numerical increase" and "prosperity" tailors its sermons/messages so that they are relevant, contemporary and positive - with no trace of any so-called negative component or nuance. This results in very little being required of the hearers in terms of changing their lifestyles. In other words, very little is preached that would cause any real conviction of sin.

Christians then believe, to some extent, that the day they repented of their sin and accepted Jesus as Lord was the only time that the Blood of Calvary needed to be applied to their sin. This is true in terms of salvation. However the Blood needs to be applied to ongoing sin after salvation if this sin is to be dealt with. And this

must also be done through repentance (1 John 1:9) so that God's grace will not be frustrated. It is a matter of walking in the Light as Jesus was and is in the Light (1 John 1:17). When sin is not repented of, and so not touched by this precious Blood, hell has a little mortgage on some aspect of the Christian's life. Another name for this "mortgage" is a bondage or a curse.

“. . .Yes the overpowering theme of the New Testament is love, but without the theme of judgement being placed along side of it the message will be unbalanced and therefore incomplete. . .”

Sin which is not repented of in a Christian's life frustrates the grace of God by keeping God's influence and empowering grace at bay. The Blood must be applied to our sin through repentance if we are to walk in the light of God's will.

When such spiritual truths are not taught in the churches, being the standard set out in God's Word, and Christians do wrong, there is very little to both convict them of their sin and encourage them to deal with their sin in any real way. Therefore we have fornicators and drunkards in the Church who think they are still saved from "*the wrath to come*" because they made a decision for Christ a number of years ago. Yes, all this because of the demonic doctrine of "once saved always saved." How foolish this is, when scripture declares so clearly that we can have our names blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life:

EXODUS 32:33 And the Lord said unto Moses, "Whosoever has sinned (one who has turned their back on God and refuses to repent) against Me, him will I blot out of My book."

Sin must be dealt with in our lives by applying the Blood of the Lamb to our sin in an attitude of true, heartfelt repentance. There is

no other way. We are saved from sin, not saved so that we can continue in sin (Romans 6:15).

“. . . Sin which is not repented of in a Christian’s life frustrates the grace of God by keeping God’s influence and empowering grace at bay. . .”

The Charismatic Churches (with Pentecostal badges) operate according to the “seeker sensitive” philosophy which aims at giving people what they think they need rather than that which the true Gospel proclaims. How foolish it is to let man, without any direction or empowerment of a Divine order, set the agenda for church life!

All this does is turn whatever faith the people may have had into a cold, formalized fleshy religion. In this cold and darkened environment, there is nothing of God that would cause progression - only spiritual regression and frozen, stoney hearts.

Within its teaching the Church needs to preach the message of Romans 5:9 which states: *“Much more then, being now justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from (God’s) wrath through Him!”*

By His Blood we are saved from the wrath of God.

By His Blood we have had our names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

By His Blood we will enter heaven’s gates, not to come under judgement but to experience a welcome and a blessing that will last for eternity.

By His Blood we will walk in the Light of God’s will.

All this by the Blood of the Lamb Who has taken away our sins! God’s blessing now rests upon all those who have put their sins under the Blood of Calvary. The curse of sin is removed because the Blood has satisfied the justice of God. Hallelujah.

All this needs to be declared, proclaimed and preached in the churches of God until Jesus returns for those “in Him.” Let our sins therefore be nailed to the Cross through our repentance, and the mercy and grace of God.

“. . .In this cold and darkened environment. . .of the “seeker sensitive” philosophy. . .there is nothing of God that would cause progression - only spiritual regression and frozen, stoney hearts. . .”

It is only “in Christ” that the wrath of God is satisfied, for God’s holy judgement against us sinners has been dealt with. The Lamb of God stood in our place so that all those who have identified with Him can be identified in His Resurrection, being raised up with Him into “*newness of life.*”

ROMANS 6:3 Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ (this refers to the baptism of regeneration, not water baptism: 1 Corinthians 12:13) were baptized into His death?

ROMANS 6:4 Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (we died with Him, we were buried with Him, and His resurrection was our Resurrection to a “Newness of Life”: E.S.B.).

Divine justice and Divine anger are satisfied forever as we remain in Christ - the risen Saviour. All spiritual darkness, including sinners and sin, will eventually be banished from God’s Kingdom at the time the earth is renovated, and death and hell are cast into the Lake of Fire (2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 21:1). At this time God will be able to fellowship with His creation in all righteousness, goodness and holiness - on man’s part as well as God’s.

Prior to this time, sin will be contained to some extent when the curse is dealt with in the Millennial Kingdom. Scripture shows us that nature awaits this great event, the time when the sons of God will be revealed. Even nature awaits the revelation of the sons of God and the removal of the curse.

ROMANS 8:19 *For the earnest expectation of the creature (should have been translated “creation”) waits for the manifestation of the sons of God (nature, burdened with the curse, waits in a metaphorical sense for the curse to be lifted - this will be when the Saints are glorified, which is really the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom - when Christ’s presence causes the curse to be removed, giving honour to Him as the King of kings).*

ROMANS 8:22 *For we know that the whole Creation (everything has been affected by Satan’s rebellion and Adam’s Fall) groans and travails in pain together until now (refers to the common longing of the elements of the Creation to be brought back to their original perfection). (E.S.B.)*

ROMANS 8:23 *And not only they (the Creation, and all it entails), but ourselves also (refers to Believers), which have the Firstfruits of the Spirit (even though Jesus addressed every single thing lost in the Fall at the Cross, we only have a part of that possession now, with the balance coming at the Resurrection), even we ourselves groan within ourselves (proclaims the obvious fact that all Jesus paid for in the Atonement has not yet been fully realized), waiting for the Adoption (should be translated, “waiting for the fulfillment of the process, which Adoption into the Family of God guarantees”), to wit, the Redemption of our body (the glorifying of our physical body that will take place at the Resurrection). (E.S.B.)*

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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crossroadsministries.org.au

NOTES

NOTES

- 1 Hayford, J. W., Hayford's Bible Handbook.
- 2 A.W. Tozer
- 3 Wuest K.S., Word Studies From The Greek New Testament.
- 4 Achtemeier, P. J., Harper's Bible Dictionary.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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