

## DELIVERED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD

- A. Introduction: We're living at a time when more and more people base their view of reality on how they feel rather than on objective, unchanging facts: Things are true if I feel that they are true. Absolute truth as a concept has largely been discarded in our culture: You have your truth and I have my truth. And, consequently, every man does what seems right in his own eyes. Judges 17:6; Judges 21:25
1. This state of affairs matters to us as Christians because such thinking has infiltrated Christian circles. Professing Christians are increasingly putting what they feel above what God says in His written Word—the Bible. It's becoming more common to hear people say: I just feel that a loving God would never send anyone to hell. I just feel that all sincere people are saved, no matter what they believe.
    - a. This development in the culture and in parts of the church is consistent with what Jesus told His apostles shortly before He was crucified. He said that the period leading up to His second coming would be marked by religious deception—specifically false prophets and false messiahs (Christs) with false messages. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24
    - b. We're seeing this happen right before our eyes as the Person of Jesus (Who He is), the work of Jesus (why He came), and the message He proclaimed (the gospel or good news) are being undermined—not just by unbelievers—but by those who claim to be Christians.
    - c. Therefore, we are taking time to look at what the Word of God says about Jesus—Who He is, why He came, and what message He preached. The Bible is our protection against deception because it is the Truth and it reveals Jesus Who is the Truth. Ps 91:4; John 17:17; John 14:6
  2. John 3:16 is one of the best known verses in the New Testament about why Jesus came and what He did.
    - a. It tells us that God, motivated by love, gave His only begotten (unique) Son (Jesus, the God-man) to be sacrificed for sin so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
    - b. To appreciate how good this news is, we must first understand the bad news. Jesus said that the one who believes on Him has everlasting (eternal) life. But Jesus also said that the one who doesn't believe on Him will not see life—and the wrath of God abides on Him. John 3:36
    - c. The bad news: All human beings have a moral obligation to obey their Creator. All have failed in this duty and are guilty of sin before a holy God (Eccl 12:13; Rom 3:23). Almighty God has wrath or anger at man's sin (Rom 1:18).
      1. This fact is difficult for us, since it's hard to understand how God could be loving and wrathful at the same time. And, it scares us because, even though we're saved, we sin occasionally.
      2. The Greek word translated wrath means passion, and by implication, punishment. The word is used for the punitive wrath of God, or the Divine judgments to be inflicted on the wicked (*Strong's Concordance*).
  3. In this lesson we're going to talk about the wrath of God as we continue to discuss the good news in terms of the bad news
- B. God's wrath is not an emotional explosion at us because of our sin. God's wrath is an expression of justice or an administering of justice. It is a righteous response to sin. God's wrath is eternal separation from God. Let's unpack these statements.
1. God is holy, righteous and just. The word holy means separate from all evil. The words justice and righteousness are often used synonymously in scripture. Righteousness comes from a word that means right or rightness. Justice means what is right or as it should be.
    - a. To say that God is righteous and just means He is right and He does what is right. Righteousness and justice the foundations of His throne. Gen 18:25; Ps 97: 2; Ps 89:14
      1. God expresses wrath, not because He is punitive or vengeful, but because it is right and just. Wrath is not an emotional response to sin. It is a righteous, just, response to sin.

2. To be true to His holy, righteous, and just nature Almighty God must express wrath toward sin. If He overlooked or ignored sin, it would be tantamount to condoning it. It would be a denial of His nature—and God cannot deny Himself. II Tim 2:13
- b. This is hard for us to grasp because we think of God's anger in terms of what it means when a human is angry and wrathful: They have an emotional outburst. You bug me, so I let you have it!
  1. Certainly, God does express emotions and clearly, He is "not happy" about sin. But, when we are talking about God's emotions we are talking about something above and beyond our understanding at this point.
  2. We can only think in terms of human emotions which arise out of sinful motives, emotions which can get out of control, and emotions which can drive us to sin. But, God's anger at man's sin cannot be thought of in terms of human anger. God's wrath works righteousness. The wrath of man does not. James 1:20
2. Anger, wrath, and judgment are God's judicial responses to sin. Judicial means of or relating to the administration of justice (*Webster's Dictionary*). Think of it like this: The judicial response of civil government to lawbreakers is, in one sense, an expression of wrath. Rom 13:3-5
  - a. We all understand what justice is. It's doing what is right, giving people what they deserve.
    1. Every culture on earth since the creation of man has had a standard of right and wrong, an understanding that good is to be rewarded and evil is to be punished. It's part of the image of God that men still bear even in their fallen condition. Gen 9:6; James 3:9; Rom 2:14-15
    2. Granted, men's standards of right and wrong are skewed because they set the standards themselves instead of abiding by God's standard. Nonetheless, if someone commits a heinous crime according to the standard of the culture, no one is upset when appropriate punishment is meted out—because we know it is right.
  - b. The fact that God expresses wrath toward sin shows that He stays true to Himself, shows that He can be counted on to do what is right. What God is, you can expect Him to be. You may be thinking: How is that supposed to make me anything other than afraid of God? I've sinned and I deserve God's wrath and you're telling me that's a good thing!?
3. God did not make men to sin or for sin. He made us for relationship. His goal since the fall of man has not been to punish man but to remove the sin that separates us from Him. Eph 1:4-5; Heb 9:26
  - a. Even though God loves men, to be true to justice, to be true to His own righteous nature, He cannot let men off the hook for sin. However, the Lord came up with a plan to both express His wrath toward our sin and to remove it from us without destroying us.
    1. Jesus went to the Cross as the Last Adam, as the representative of the entire human race. Jesus went to the Cross for us as us. I Cor 15:45-47
    2. At the Cross Jesus united Himself with us in our fallen condition and took our sin on Himself. God then expressed His wrath for sin, our sin, on Jesus. The just, righteous wrath that should have come to you and me for our sin went to Jesus. Isa 53:4-6; II Cor 5:21; etc.
  - b. God's righteous wrath toward sin has been expressed but you must receive that expression in order for His wrath to be removed from you. You receive it by bowing your knee to Jesus. John 3:36
    1. If you haven't received Christ and His sacrifice then God's wrath abides or remains on you—God's displeasure remains on him; His indignation hangs over Him continually. (John 3:36, Amp)
      - A. This does not mean that God now deals with unsaved people in wrath. He deals with them in mercy. God gives men a lifetime to repent. II Pet 3:9
        1. During that lifetime God shows them kindness and gives them a witness of Himself. Luke 6:35; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:16-17; Rom 1:20
        2. And, God has given men an objective demonstration of His unconditional love for us.

While we were sinners Christ died for us. Rom 5:8; 10; I John 4:9-10

- B. If a person never believes on Jesus he will face the wrath of God when He leaves this earth. The penalty of sin is death which is separation from God who is life. Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23
  - 1. People who live separated from God in this life will continue in that separation in the life to come in a place called Hell. (lessons for another day)
  - 2. Death is more than physical. Death of the body is a consequence of another category of death—separation from God Who is Life. Separation from God is sometimes referred to as spiritual death. The ultimate expression of death is eternal separation from God and exclusion from His kingdom. This permanent separation is known as the second death. Rev 2:11; Rev 20:6; Rev 21:8
- 2. People who do not accept the sacrifice of Christ for their sins will never see life. They will experience the wrath of God or His just expression and righteous response to their sin.
- c. Jesus came into this world to save men and women, first and foremost from the wrath of God which is eternal death. He came to make it possible for us to have eternal life instead of eternal death.
  - 1. John 3:17—For God did not send the Son into the world in order to judge—to reject, condemn, to pass sentence on—the world; but that the world might find salvation and be made safe and sound through Him. (Amp)
  - 2. John 3:18—He who believes on Him...is not judged...never comes up for judgment, for there is no rejection, no condemnation, (he incurs no damnation). But he who does not believe...is judged already; (he has already been convicted; has already received his sentence) because he has not believed on and trusted in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (Amp)
    - A. The Greek word translated condemned means to decide judicially, to try, condemn, punish. A judicial decision is one that is pronounced by a court of law. Condemnation is the act of judicially condemning or pronouncing guilty, convicting, and sentencing.
    - B. God responded to your sin and carried out justice. God has acted righteously, acted justly, in regard to your sin. If you have accepted Jesus and His sacrifice on the Cross, you have been judged and found not guilty. Consequently, there is no more wrath against you for your sin. Rom 5:9; I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9
- d. Almighty God does not dole out “wrath” on a sin-by-sin basis. He poured out and exhausted His wrath against our sin on Jesus. The Lord was not “mad” at Jesus. He was carrying out justice.
  - 1. Through the Cross of Christ God satisfied His own justice and is now able to justify us or acquit us. Acquittal or justification is a judicial deliverance from a criminal charge. I Cor 6:11
  - 2. It means that all charges are dropped because there is no evidence of wrongdoing. Col 2:14—Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over his own head on the Cross. (Phillips)
- 4. When you have an accurate understanding of God’s wrath against sin (the bad news), it will make you even more appreciative of what God has done for us through the Cross of Christ (the good news).
  - a. We tend to assess our standing with God based on how we feel: I feel loved by God today because all is right in my world. I don’t feel His love today; in fact, I think He’s mad at me because I forgot to read my Bible or I kicked the cat.
  - b. But when you understand the judicial basis of the good news, you can see that you stand on solid legal ground before Almighty God, no matter how you feel.
    - 1. Rom 8:31—If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, then Almighty God, the just and righteous Judge, is no longer Someone to be afraid of because the Judge is on your side. He is for us.
    - 2. Rom 8:32—And, if He, in His love, went to these lengths to meet our greatest need by judicially acquitting us through the sacrifice of His Son, what would He not do for us now?

3. Rom 8:33-34—Who will bring a charge against any of God’s people (20<sup>th</sup> Cent). Will God, who acquits them? (Weymouth); What judge can doom us? (Conyebear); Will Christ? No! For He is the One Who died for us (TLB).

- C. Conclusion: A lesson like this may not seem very practical. You may be thinking: I’ve got real problems and I need some immediate help. But, because of the times we’re living in, this information is vital.
1. The return of Jesus is near and the Bible has a lot to say about the condition of the world at that time. It describes a system of worldwide government, economy, and religion, presided over by a world leader who is hand-picked and empowered by Satan—his Anti (or in place of) Christ. Rev 13; II Thess 2:9-10;
    - a. This man will demand and receive worship from the world. He will lead his supporters in an attempt to stop Jesus from returning, as Satan attempts to hold on to his control in the earth (lessons for another day). Dan 8:23-25; II Thess 2:3-4; Rev 19:19
    - b. Presently, orthodox Christianity is being vilified at the same time a church is developing that claims to be a more “tolerant” version of Christianity—a church that will welcome this final world ruler. All of us will be tempted to join that church.
    - c. We said at the beginning of this lesson that more and more people are basing what they believe on how they feel rather than on objective facts.
      1. It’s quite common to hear people say: I just don’t believe that a loving God would send people to Hell. I just believe that all sincere people are saved, no matter what they believe.
      2. If anyone disputes those feelings they’re labeled a hater and a bigot who is way too judgmental. Since nobody wants to be known as a bigot and a hater, there’s a real pressure against us to back up on or water down the truth of God’s Word, the Bible.
  2. We are living in a time when accurate understanding of Who Jesus is, why He came, and what message He preached (according to the Bible) is more important than ever. This the only way that you and I will be able to resist the pressure to abandon the fundamentals of the Christian faith.
    - a. In some so-called “Christian” circles, people have reframed Christ’s death from a sacrificial, substitutionary death for sin to that of a martyr. They say that the idea of God the Father sacrificing His only Son on a bloody Cross is tantamount to cosmic child abuse.
    - b. This shows a complete misunderstanding of man’s true condition apart from God and what is needed to remedy that condition.
      1. All men are guilty of sin before a holy God and the just and righteous penalty for our sin is continued and eternal separation from God.
      2. Heb 9:22—Without the shedding of blood there is no remission or wiping out of sin. “There is neither release from sin and its guilt nor the remission of the due and merited penalty for sin” (Amp). There is no other way to reconcile a holy God with sinful men. The life in the sacrifice provides life for the one who puts faith in the sacrifice (Lev 17:11, lessons for another day).
        - A. God, in His love, devised a way to deal with our condition and remedy it through the Cross of Christ. Jesus is the only way to salvation because He is the only one qualified to make that kind of sacrifice—and He has made it, but you must accept it.
        - B. John 3:36—If you don’t, the wrath of God abides on you and you will face the wrath of God (eternal separation from Him) when you leave your body at death.
  3. God’s Word is objective fact and absolute truth. It isn’t dependent on how we feel or what we think. It is dependent on a historically verifiable truth—Jesus Christ rose from the dead and broke the power of sin and death over us (I Cor 15:55-57). By doing so, He has delivered us from the wrath to come. Lots more next week!