

GOD'S NOT MAD AT YOU

- A. Introduction: Jesus warned that the years leading up to His return will be marked by false prophets and messiahs, and we are presently living in a time of increasing religious deception—even among people who profess to be Christians (Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24). We're taking time to examine the real Messiah—Jesus of the Bible—so that we are equipped to recognize false Christs and counterfeit gospels.
1. Recently, we've been discussing the fact that there's been a huge explosion in teaching about grace in Christian circles. Sincere men of God, motivated by a desire to relieve unnecessary guilt and fear among genuine Christians, proclaim that since God's wrath was poured out at the Cross, God is no longer mad at us anymore.
 - a. While some of the teaching is good, much of it is inaccurate and had lead to wrong conclusions being drawn by those unfamiliar with basic Bible doctrine. It's increasingly common to hear statements like the following being made.
 1. It doesn't matter if we sin because God has no more wrath for sin, and we're already forgiven because of the Cross.
 2. If you tell me that there are certain things I must do as a Christian (such as pray, read the Bible, or live according to a standard) you're putting me under law, and that's wrong because we're under grace now.
 - b. I realize that many people—including some of you—have been blessed this teaching that God's not mad anymore, and I don't want to take that blessing away from anyone. However, there really is a devil who really does come to try to steal the Word of God from us. And misquoting, misapplying, and twisting Bible truths are some of his most effective tactics. Matt 13:19-21
 1. The desire to relieve guilt and fear among committed Christians through teaching that God's not mad at us anymore, although admirable, is imprecise. And the imprecision leaves it open to misinterpretation which leads to error. And that has happened in some circles.
 2. If ever there was a time to be as precise as possible when teaching the Word of God, it is now, because the return of Jesus is very near and deception abounds.
 2. The statement that God's not mad anymore is imprecise in the sense that Bible doesn't speak in terms of God being mad at us or not being mad at us. Let's examine this in connection with the discussion we've been having in the last few lessons about grace, works, and law.
- B. God does have anger in regard to sin, but we tend to think of His anger in terms of the human anger. And this scares us because human anger can be capricious or subject to sudden change.
1. Human anger can get out of control and do real harm. It can be arbitrary or impulsive and more connected to how the one who is angry at us feels rather than to what we've actually done.
 - a. You don't really know what you're going to get from someone who is angry—what they might do to you. So, because we've all sinned and still struggle in areas, an angry God is a real issue for us.
 1. However, God's anger or God's wrath is not an emotional response to sin in the same way as is human anger. It is not capricious, arbitrary, or unpredictable. His wrath or anger is His just and righteous response to sin.
 2. I'm not saying that God doesn't have emotions or that He doesn't feel pleased or displeased with us. But God's emotions are above our in that they haven't been corrupted by sin and never drive Him to sin, like ours do. (God's emotions are a subject for another day.)
 - b. God doesn't punish sin because He blows up and loses control. He does so because it is right to punish sin. That's what justice is all about. To be true to His holy, righteous nature, God must express His wrath and punish sin. The just punishment for sin is eternal separation from God.
 1. If this penalty were enacted, God would lose His family. Remember, He created human

- beings to become His holy, righteous sons and daughters through faith in Christ. Eph 1:4-5
2. So Almighty God devised a plan to express His wrath toward sin and still be true to His holy, righteous nature without forever removing us from Himself. He took on flesh and went to the Cross to be punished for our sin. The wrath that should have gone to us went to Jesus, our Substitute. Isa 53:4-6
2. God's wrath was expressed at the Cross and Divine Justice was satisfied in regard to our sin. But you must accept what He has done in order for His wrath to be removed from you. You accept or receive it by acknowledging Jesus as your Savior and Lord. John 3:16-18
 - a. If a person has not received Christ and His sacrifice, then God's wrath abides or remains on them. John 3:36—God's displeasure remains on him; His indignation hangs over him continually (Amp); He lives under God's anger (Phillips).
 1. This doesn't mean that God now deals with them in wrath. It means that God's wrath awaits them when they die. They will experience eternal death or eternal separation from Him, first in Hell, then in the second death. Rev 20:11-15
 2. During their lifetime, God deals with men in mercy, giving them a witness of Himself so that they can come to faith in Christ. II Pet 3:9; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:16-17; Rom 1:20; etc.
 - A. God does not dole out wrath (or punishment for sin) on a sin-by-sin basis. Your car wreck is not punishment from God. In the first place, it's not enough to pay for your sin.
 - B. Secondly, God's wrath against sin was displayed at the Cross when Jesus was punished in our place for our sin, and He has delivered us from the wrath to come (Rom 5:9; I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9). You will face wrath when you die if you don't acknowledge Jesus.
 - b. Part of the reason we are confused is that people mistakenly believe that natural disasters and the trials and tragedies of life are expressions of God's anger or wrath. Trials, tribulation, killer storms, earthquakes, etc. aren't the work of God. They are part of life in a fallen world. (For a more detailed discussion of this read my book: *God Is Good and Good Means Good.*)
 1. This doesn't mean that there are no consequences for willful, persistent sin. Sin itself works death in our lives (Rom 6:23). Sin deceives and hardens us (Heb 3:13). I'm not afraid of what God will do to me. I'm afraid of what sin will do to me.
 2. This doesn't mean that God does not discipline His sons and daughters. But discipline and wrath are two different things.
 - A. Wrath is punitive or intended to inflict punishment as a penalty for a fault or crime. The punishment for sin is the ruin that comes from eternal separation from God. II Thess 1:9
 - B. Discipline is corrective or aimed at producing a correction or change. To correct means to set right. God disciplines His people through His Word by His Spirit, not with afflictive circumstances (lessons for another day). II Tim 3:16-17
 3. Through His death Jesus satisfied justice on our behalf in regard to sin. When we acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are justified or rendered innocent. All charges against us are dropped because there's no more evidence of wrong doing. Punishment for our sin is off the table. Rom 3:24; Col 2:14
 - a. Jesus didn't die to make it okay for us to sin. He died to abolish and remove sin. Once we are justified, God can deal with us as though we never sinned. We are so cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ that He can indwell us (our innermost being) by His Spirit and life. Heb 9:26; Rom 8:29-30
 1. The Holy Spirit transforms us inwardly from a sinner by nature to a son of God by nature through regeneration or new birth. This inward transformation is the beginning of a process that will ultimately cleanse and restore every part of our being so that we are fully conformed to the image of Christ—made like Him in character and power, holiness and love. John 1:12-13; John 3:3-5; I John 5:1; etc.
 2. Through the new birth we are united to the uncreated, eternal life in God, the life in Jesus. We

now are united to or in union with Jesus as truly as a branch is joined to a vine. This union is the basis of our identity. John 15:5; Eph 1:22-23; Eph 5:25-32

- b. Right now, we are finished works in progress—fully God’s holy, righteous sons and daughters by birth, but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ in every part of our being. I John 3:2
 - 1. God deals with us according to our new identity as sons. He deals with us on the basis of the part that is finished, because He is confident the entire process will be completed. Phil 1:6
 - 2. When you, as a holy, righteous son, sin (or commit an occasional act of unrighteousness), it does not change what you are any more than committing an occasional act of righteousness before you were saved made you righteous. Your sin does not undo the work of the Cross.
- c. All of this comes to us by God’s grace. There’s no action we can take, no work we can do that will save us from our sin and guilt. God, motivated by love, acted in grace and did for us what we can’t do for ourselves. Grace is His favor shown to us in saving us from sin through the Cross. Titus 3:5
 - 1. But now that we’re saved from sin by God’s grace through faith in Christ, works are supposed to be part of our lives, not as a means of earning or deserving God’s blessing or help, but as outward expressions of inward changes. Titus 2:14; Eph 2:10
 - 2. The word grace has many shades of meaning in Scripture. God’s grace not only gives us salvation from sin, it gives us transforming power. Grace empowers us to live righteously.
 - A. John 1:14; 16—Through union with Christ, we are now partakers of God’s grace. Grace is ability from God to live as He wants us to live. Grace is strength to live above sin.
 - B. v16--For of that which fills Him we all obtained, and grace for grace (Cont. Lit).

- C. Because we have a lot of inaccurate ideas about God and His anger (i.e. God must be mad at me and that’s why my prayer wasn’t answered, or, I can’t go to God for help because I’ve messed up too much and He’s surely mad at me), we struggle with believing that God hears our prayers and is willing to help us.
 - 1. This one reason that the statement—God’s not mad at you—is so comforting. But, that’s all based on feelings—I feel that God is angry with me. I feel better because the preacher says He’s not mad at me.
 - a. We need to take what we know and believe about God and the salvation that He has provided out of the emotional realm, and base what we believe on God’s Word. God’s Word never changes, no matter what you feel, no matter what you do. He is faithful to keep His Word.
 - 1. By the way, it is certainly okay to “feel” better because of information in the Bible. But when your emotions are screaming that God doesn’t love you, that He’s mad at you, and that you’re really gonna get it now, you have His Word.
 - 2. The unchanging Word of God tells you the way things really are—not just how they look and feel in the moment. You have a solid basis for faith and trust in Him and His grace.
 - b. The Bible reveals that not only are we saved by grace, and have received grace for grace, we also stand in grace. Rom 5:2—Through Him also we have [our] access (entrance, introduction) by faith into this grace—state of God’s favor—in which we [firmly and safely] stand (Amp).
 - 2. When you are wrestling with “God won’t help me because I’ve done or not done something”, you need to understand that you are actually approaching Him on the basis of your works.
 - a. Think about it. If He won’t help because you didn’t do something you should have done, the implication is that if you had done it, He would have helped you. In other words, your efforts (or works) would have earned you His help.
 - b. However, you can’t earn (work for) anything that has been given to us by grace. Through the Cross God, by His grace, has provided (said yes to) everything we need for this life and the life to come.
 - 1. The Cross opened the way for us to become sons and daughters of God. God is a good Father who takes care of His children. Jesus said that we don’t have to worry about the necessities of life because we have a good heavenly Father (Matt 6:25-26). That’s all because of grace.

2. II Pet 1:3—(Through knowledge of Jesus, God’s) divine power has given us everything we need for our physical and spiritual life. This has come through our getting to know Him who has called us to share His glory and virtue (Norlie). That’s all because of grace.
 3. Rom 5:17—Through God’s grace, when we believe on Jesus, we receive the gift of righteousness or right standing with God. He is now our Father and we are His holy, righteous sons and daughters. Everything that righteousness provides is a grace gift as opposed to something we must earn or deserve by our works. We could do several lessons on this topic. But for now, consider these points.
 - a. We have access to God our Father. Eph 3:12—In Whom, because of our faith in Him, we dare to have the boldness (courage and confidence) of free access—an unreserved approach to God with freedom and without fear (Amp); through union with him and through faith in him, we have courage to approach God with confidence (Goodspeed).
 - b. His ears are open to the prayers of the righteous. We’re instructed to come with confidence (boldly) to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need. I Pet 3:12; Heb 4:16
 1. Maybe you are thinking: I prayed and God didn’t help me. Well, it wasn’t because you were bad and He was mad. There are many reasons why prayers aren’t answer (lots of lessons for another day). Maybe you asked for something that God has not provided through the Cross. Maybe your motives were wrong. Maybe you asked for something contrary to His will.
 2. The secret to effective prayer is learning to pray in agreement with God’s will which is revealed in His written Word (His law, or His revealed will in regard to human conduct). Jesus said that if you abide in Him and His words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done (John 15:7, lessons for another day).
 - c. Matt 8:5-13—Note this example of grace versus works in obtaining help from God. A Roman centurion approached Jesus to request healing for his servant who was sick. Jesus said he would come to the man’s home and heal his servant. The centurion answered: I’m not worthy for you to come to my home. Just speak your word (issue your command) and my servant will be healed. What’s going on here?
 1. As a Roman centurion, this man would have been an idol worshipper, mostly with an altar in his home from which to worship idols. Jesus was a Jewish teacher initially sent to Old Covenant men and women. The centurion had no access (or right) to approach Jesus. He knew that, but he asked for help anyway.
 2. This centurion understood grace. He recognized that grace (expressed as healing in his situation) comes from something in God, something independent of us. And that gave him confidence to approach Jesus for help.
 3. This is completely opposite of how many of us approach God: I need help, but He won’t help me after all I’ve done. So we don’t ask. That is “works” in action.
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say about this next week, but consider one thought as we close. We need to learn to see God He truly is (according to the Bible) and ourselves as we truly are (according to the Bible).
1. God’s purpose is not to punish sin, but rather to remove it so that sinful men and women can be restored to their created purpose as holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.
 2. If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, you are now a holy, righteous son or daughter of God and a process is underway that will fully conform you to the image of Christ. And it’s all because of God’s grace.
 3. It isn’t a question of whether or not God is or isn’t mad at you. It’s a question of whether or not you have received God’s grace gift of righteousness. You’re saved from sin and its penalties by grace. You have received grace for grace so you can express outwardly the inward change that has taken place. And, when you fall, you stand in grace.