

The Wrath of God

It may surprise us to find how frequently the Bible talks about the wrath of God. Yet if God loves all that is right and good, and all that conforms to His moral character, then it should not be surprising that He would hate everything that is opposed to these things.¹

- The clearest example of this is found in Paul's words in Rom. 1:18, where God's righteous anger is poured out in response to mankind's unrighteous godlessness.

A holy, righteous love must *also* be an angry, wrathful love. That is, God's righteous anger becomes a form and expression of His love.²

- Thus, if we have a wrong view of God's love, we will have a wrong view of His wrath (and vice versa).
 - Frame: When we see God's love not as a mere sentimental affection, but as a covenantal commitment, we see it as a *jealous* love that leads to wrath when abused.³

We should not be surprised that we who are made in God's own image have felt this kind of righteous anger against sin.

- If we love life, we will not only hate, but be angry with, murderers. Those who love babies will hate abortion.
- When someone slights a man's wife, it would be a sign of his lack of love for her to remain indifferent.

¹ Cf. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan: 1994), 205-206.

² Cf. John Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, P & R: 2013), 275.

³ *Ibid.*, 276.

- Prov. 6:34 (NET) – “For jealousy kindles a husband’s rage, and he will not show mercy when he takes revenge.”

Thus, it is not only acceptable, but entirely necessary, to see **God’s wrath as a form of His love**. That is, God’s wrath is but the *outworking* of His holy love for all that is good and right and true.

- Frame: God’s wrath *serves the purposes of His love*, and God’s love is the richer for it.⁴

In the Scriptures He Himself inspired and gave us, the Triune God is once called “love” (1 John 4:16) is five times described as a “consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Isa. 33:14; Lam. 2:3; Heb. 12:29).

- Like Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, God is good, but He is certainly not tame.
 - As Frame notes, “There is something wild, mysterious, and threatening about God’s wrath, which is not always easy to reconcile with what we know of God’s love.”⁵

God’s wrath is the settled disposition of His righteous character against sin and unrighteousness.

- Like a compass that always points north when functioning properly, God will always be angry at sin and sinners.

Or, in the language of Scripture, God’s wrath will be provoked:

- E.g. by idolatry (Deut. 4:25; 9:18; 32:21; 1 Kn. 16:33, etc.)

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

- In fact, in almost *every* verse where YHWH's wrath is provoked, it is in response to Israel's idolatry.

→ YHWH's jealous love cannot remain indifferent when He sees His people being harmed by their foolish actions.

- By rebellion and disobedience to His commands (Psa. 78:59; Jer. 25:7; 32:32; Eze. 8:17, etc.).
- Especially when His people are mistreated by their wicked and God-rejecting enemies.
 - E.g. of Israel's mistreatment by the Egyptians
 - E.g. of Israel's mistreatment by the Babylonians (e.g. Isa. 59:14-19)
- God is most provoked to wrath when His Son is rejected and reviled by men and women.
 - John 3:36; Heb. 6:6; 10:19-31

Why we ought to worship God for His wrath

As with the other attributes of God, this is an attribute for which we should thank and praise God. It may not immediately appear to us how this can be done, since wrath seems to be such a negative concept. Viewed alone, it would arouse only fear and dread. Yet it is helpful for us to ask what God would be like if He were a God that did not hate sin. He would then be a God who either delighted in sin or at least was not

troubled by it. Such a 'god' would not be worthy of our worship, for sin is hateful and is *worthy* of being hated.⁶

If it is in fact a virtue to hate evil and sin (cf. Heb. 1:9; Zech. 8:17, etc.), should we be surprised that God is the extreme and fullest and most perfect expression of this? Should we hold His holy and jealous and righteous love for all that is good and right and true against Him? Or should we worship Him for it?

- In Revelation, the saints repeatedly worship God for the pouring out of His righteous wrath on His wicked and impenitent enemies.
 - In fact, there would be no Hell if God's wrath were not eternal, infinite, and perfect. The 'bad guys' would ultimately get away with their sin, despite God's threats and pleas.

Because God's wrath is inseparable from His love, those who are His "beloved" ought to give great praise to Him for this.

- Isa. 48:9 – "For My name's sake I defer My anger, for the sake of My praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off."

Though we, like the rest of mankind, were by nature "children of wrath", God, being rich in mercy – because of His great and eternal and electing love – saved us by His grace (Eph. 2:1-10).

This salvation was possible, only because God provided a propitiatory substitute in our place. That is, He provided a Lamb to absorb all of the righteous wrath of God incurred against us because of our sins and rebellions against Him.

⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 206.

- Because of God's love for us, He has sent Jesus (cf. John 3:16) who has saved His people from God's coming wrath (1 Thes. 1:10; Rom. 5:10).

When we meditate upon the wrath of God, we will be amazed to think that Jesus Christ bore our wrath in Himself. That is, He drank the cup of God's wrath for our sin and was 'immersed' in God's wrath for our sins, all that we might be saved and reconciled to God (Rom. 3:25-26).

Beloved, the gospel doesn't make sense apart from God's wrath.

Praise God, that in His desire to save a great and sinful multitude, He is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Exo. 34:6; Psa. 103:8-9; cf. Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9-10).

God's wrath should also motivate our evangelism.

Finally, meditating upon God's wrath should make us long for the time when God will finally and decisively punish all wrongdoing and reign over a new heaven and earth, wherein only righteousness dwells.