

Lesson 11

God Is Wrath

The Bible teaches that God is wrath, for **Hebrews 12:29** says, ***“God is a consuming fire.”*** In this wicked and perverse generation in which God has appointed us to live, we hear little or nothing about the wrath of God. God’s wrath is minimized because man’s sinfulness is played down. We hear much on the love of God – and for sure God is love – but how often do we hear ministers and lay Christians speak on the wrath of God? A quick glance at a concordance will show that there are more references in the Scripture to the anger and wrath of God than there are to His love and tenderness. Almost all false teaching begins with a wrong concept of the God of Scripture. For instance, liberals and cultists, who deny the necessity of eternal punishment, took their first step into this heresy when they gave up the biblical concept that God is wrath.

Of all the messages I have given on the Person of God, this one has been the most difficult to prepare and preach. I have been in a battle for over six weeks as to whether I should even preach this message, for I know that God’s wrath and hatred of sin is not a popular subject among the unsaved and even among some professing Christians. I want you to know that I take no pleasure in preaching this message and the awesomeness of it frightens me. Nevertheless, this message must be preached because it is God’s Word. Our generation has been so brainwashed with the love of God that it is in rebellion to any teaching on the wrath of God. Men have formed concepts of God in their minds which are patterned after their own evil inclinations. We must let God tell us what kind of a God He is from the Bible. Our thoughts of God must come from the Bible or we will never know the true God. What we feel or think about God is irrelevant, but what He says about Himself in the Bible is all important.

THE DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF GOD’S WRATH

Wrath is God’s hot anger against sin and His wrath flows out from His holy nature which hates sin. God’s holiness and justice demand that He inflict penalties against men who are in rebellion to Him. Since God is perfect holiness and absolute justice, He must judge sin. All punishment flows from God’s perfect character and is an outward display of His displeasure with sin. When God’s holiness encounters sin, this arouses His wrath which always burns hot against sin. God, who is perfect, cannot be indifferent to sin. If God were indifferent to sin, He would not be God.

“See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever, when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me.” (Deut. 32:39-41)

“The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished . . .” (Nahum 1:2-3)

We can say, then, that it is God’s holy hatred of sin that precipitates His wrath. The Bible often speaks of God’s hatred of things that are sinful. Perhaps you find it hard to believe that God hates anything. I must confess that the whole idea of God hating is foreign to my natural reasoning, but I believe it because it is revealed in the Bible.

1. God hates sinful things.

“I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies.”
(Amos 5:21)

2. God hates sinful acts.

“Do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD. (Zech. 8:17)

3. God hates sinful men.

“You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong.” (Psa. 5:4-5)

“But Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals.” (Mal. 1:3)

“Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” (Rom. 9:13)

Perhaps you have accepted the truth that God hates sinful things and sinful acts but you are not ready to admit that God hates sinful men. This concept may be repugnant to your emotions, but you cannot deny that the Bible teaches it. Can you separate a sinner from his sin? Because of sin, men are sinners, and sin has made all men in their natural states enemies of God and rebels against the Almighty. God’s hatred extends even to the sinner because the sinner has stirred God’s wrath against him. The old cliché which says that “God loves the sinner and hates his sin” needs to be thought through, for God’s love for sinners is found only in Jesus Christ. We must remember that God is going to cast the sinner, not his sins, into hell. It makes a mockery of God to believe that He will tell all men outside of Christ He loves them and then cast them into eternal perdition. We often hear people say, “A loving God would not cast anyone into hell.” I

agree with this statement, for a God who is only love would not do such a thing, but the God of the Bible is more than love; He is holy, just, sovereign, and wrath, and He must judge sin and the sinner, or He would not be God.

Last week I took my family out to dinner. The family at the table next to us put down a tract which had only the words, "Smile, God loves you," on it. It said nothing else and I thought how misleading this tract was. I leaned over to my wife and said, "It would have been as biblical or even more biblical to put on that tract, "Frown, God hates you," for it would have not given some unbeliever a false security about God's love. God's love is for all sinners who are in Christ.

In the liberal circles of Christendom, we hear men say that the God of the Old Testament was a God of wrath but the God of the New Testament is a God of love. There is but one God in both Testaments and His character or nature never changes. The Old Testament is the basis for much of the New Testament teaching, and God is still presented as a God of wrath in the New Testament.

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3:36)

This verse states that the wrath of God is continually and forever against all those who do not believe in Christ as Lord and Savior. Notice carefully that this verse does not say that the wrath of God abides upon the person's sins but upon the person himself, so the New Testament never separates the sinner from his sins.

CHRIST AND GOD'S WRATH

The Bible says that Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice for sinners.

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (propitiation) for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

The word "propitiation" means to satisfy or to appease. Christ, in His death, appeased the wrath of God against sinners and satisfied His holy, righteous demand against sin.

God poured out His wrath on Christ instead of sinners, so now sinful men can be saved from the eternal wrath of God. Because of Christ's death, God can be just and judge sinful men, and He can be justifier, for now all who come to Christ through faith can be declared righteous before God and escape His eternal wrath.

THE UNSAVED AND GOD'S WRATH

God's wrath burns hot against all sin, and every person outside of Christ is hanging over the pit of hell. God is angry with all sinners every day and every night.

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18)

For the sinner outside of Christ, there is only the certainty of eternal perdition. Those who have no Savior should tremble at the thought of facing an angry God.

“You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry?” (Psa. 76:7)

Did you know there are objects of mercy and objects of wrath in God’s plan of salvation?

“What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory.” (Rom. 9:22-23)

A wrathful God is angry with unbelievers because they are objects of wrath. Every person in this world is either an object of mercy or an object of wrath. Those who have trusted Christ are objects of mercy and those who do not have Christ as Lord and Savior are objects of wrath and their eternal destruction is certain. Are you an object of wrath prepared for destruction or a object of mercy prepared for glory?

The Bible says that those who trust Christ escape the wrath of God in time and eternity. For you without Christ, I warn you of the judgment to come. The Bible says that you must be converted by God or you shall abide under the wrath of God for all eternity. How can you be converted? Change your mind about Christ and trust Him as your Savior and Lord. No preacher can believe for you. You must believe for yourself as you are prompted by God’s Spirit. Now is the time of salvation. There is no believing, no repenting and no conversion beyond the grave, but only the face of an angry God!

You may be saying, “Dr. Arnold, you are trying to scare us into salvation.” I most certainly am, and it is the solemn duty of every minister of the gospel to warn men of the certain judgment to come. Men who do not teach and preach the wrath of God are unfaithful servants. There is a legitimate place for preaching the wrath of a holy God and the sure consequences of it to those who bypass Jesus Christ, who is God’s only answer to the sin problem.

Sinner, if it were in my power to save you, I would. But salvation is of God and I advise you and exhort you, with all love and tenderness, to make Jesus Christ your refuge. Flee to Him for relief. Jesus died to save sinners. He is full of mercy and compassion, if you go to Him as a poor, lost, unworthy sinner, He will forgive you and grant you eternal life.

THE PROFESSING CHRISTIAN AND GOD’S WRATH

There are many professing Christians who have gone through some external ritual, causing them to think they are saved, but there is no real desire to do the will of God. They have only a superficial profession with no real possession of Christ. Perhaps they have had some emotional religious experience, or they have given some kind of intellectual assent to facts but have really never committed themselves to Jesus Christ. They have a false security and have been deluded into thinking they are saved. These professing Christians have not been born of the Spirit and their end is as certain as the rank unbeliever. Eternal torment is their destiny.

The author of the Book of Hebrews gives a warning to professing Christians:

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Heb. 10:26-31)

THE SAVED AND GOD’S WRATH

The Christian who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and who has genuinely trusted in Christ does not have to fear the wrath of God, for Christ has died for every Christian’s sins. God has judged Christ instead of the believing sinner. What a comfort to know that there is no eternal wrath for those who are secure in Christ.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1)

The Christian is free from the wrath of God, for he has been appointed to salvation.

“For God did not appoint us (Christians) to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:9)

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” (1 Thess. 1:10)

Christian, while you are free forever from the eternal wrath of God, you are not free from the anger of your Heavenly Father when you sin as His child. In His loving anger, God disciplines you so that you will be partakers of His holiness. Every Christian should fear God as well as love Him, for His discipline can be severe.

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:28-29)

Christian, while you are done with God’s wrath forever, every person outside of Christ still stands under His wrath. There is an urgency to the gospel message, for men without Christ have only God’s wrath to look forward to. You must get the gospel out to all men, for only in Christ will men be saved. It is your solemn duty to get Christ to men and men to Christ.

“Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men . . .” (2 Cor. 5:11)

CONCLUSION

For you here without Christ, you must turn to Christ or face a wrathful God in eternity. You must heed the warnings of Scripture. John the Baptist said, ***“Flee from the coming wrath.”*** (Matt. 3:7) The Apostle Peter said, ***“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”*** (1 Pet. 4:18) Even Christ said, ***“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”*** (Luke 12:5)

How can you escape the wrath of God? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God is ready to forgive sinners and free them from the wrath to come.

“. . . But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.” (Neh. 9:17)

“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Psa. 103:8)

“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.” (Psa. 145:8)

Remember, God delights to save poor, miserable sinners who turn to Jesus Christ through faith.