

### **Study 3. The Wrath & Justice of God**

What was your initial reaction to the title of this study? Why?

What are some of the questions people often wrestle with when it comes to the issues of the justice and wrath of God?

- How can a good and loving God show wrath towards others?
- Is God's wrath toward man fair and just?
- What things will incur the wrath of God?
- Will believers come under the wrath of God?

*Quotable Quote:* "God's compassion flows out of His goodness, and goodness without justice is not goodness... He could not be good if He were not just." A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

#### **God's Justice Understood!**

The Hebrew word for justice is *sedeq* and is translated as...

*Just, justice, justly (9x's)*

*Fairly, accurately (6x's)*

*Right, righteous, righteousness (81x's)*

*Quotable Quote:* "In the inspired Scriptures justice and righteousness are scarcely to be distinguished from each other." A.W. Tozer

What do the Psalms below say to support Tozer's belief that God's justice and righteousness are inseparable?

Psalms 9:8 – "He will judge the world in *righteousness*, he will govern...with *justice*."

Psalms 11:7 – "For the Lord is *righteous*, he loves *justice*; upright men will see his face."

Psalms 36:6 – "Your *righteousness* is like the mighty mountains, your *justice* like the great deep."

Psalms 97:2 - "*Righteousness* and *justice* are the foundation of his throne.."

The Greek word for "justice" is *dikaio*s and is translated...

*just (8x's)*                      *justice (5x's)*                      *justified (19x's)*

*right (11x's)*                      *righteous (53x's)*

## **Small Group Activity**

**Group 1.** How is God's justice described in the following passages?

Deuteronomy 32:4 – “He is the Rock, his works are *perfect*, and all his ways are *just*. A *faithful* God who does *no* wrong, *upright*, and just is he.”

2 Chronicles 19:7 – “Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is *no injustice* or partiality or bribery.”

Psalms 99:4 – “The King is mighty, he *loves* justice – you have established *equity*; in Jacob (Israel) you have done what is *just* and *right*.”

**Group 2.** What other attributes of God are found in the context of God's justice in the passages below?

Isaiah 30:18 – “Yet the Lord longs to be *gracious* to you; he rises to show you *compassion*. For the Lord is a God of justice.”

Isaiah 42:3-4 – “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In *faithfulness* he will bring forth justice; he will *not falter* or be discouraged till he *establishes* justice on earth.”

Hosea 2:19 – “I will betroth you to me *forever*; I will betroth you in *righteousness* and justice, in *love* and *compassion*.”

**Group 3.** How do the passages listed below bear out the truth in Tozer's following quote?

“It is through the work of Christ in atonement, justice is not violated but satisfied when God spares the sinner.”

Romans 3:22-24 – “This righteousness from God comes *through* faith in *Jesus Christ* to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are *justified* freely by his grace *through* the redemption that came by *Christ Jesus*.”

1 John 1:7-9 - “The blood of *Jesus*, his son, *purifies* us from all sin...If we confess our sins, *he* is faithful and *just* and will forgive us our sin.”

Acts 13:38-39 – “*Through Jesus* the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. *Through him* everyone who believes is *justified* from everything...not justified...by the law.”

We can understand from the previous passages that God's justice is...

- displayed with complete ***equity*** and ***impartiality***;
- dispensed both ***freely*** and ***faithfully***!
- destined to come in judgment, ***ready*** or ***not***! Acts 17:30-31

## **God's Wrath Misunderstood!**

Nahum 1:2 states, "The Lord is a **jealous** and avenging God; the Lord takes **vengeance** and is filled with **wrath**."

What would you say to an unbeliever or another Christian who struggles with the idea that God is a God of wrath and vengeance?

Quotable Quote! "It is sad indeed to find so many professing Christians who appear to regard the wrath of God as something for which they need to make an apology, or at least wish there were no such thing...While some would not go so far as to openly admit that they consider it a blemish on the Divine Character...others harbor the delusion that God's wrath is not consistent with his goodness, and so seek to banish it from their thoughts. A. Pink, *The Attributes of God*

### **Statements of FICTION regarding God's wrath:**

1. God's wrath is **inconsistent** with the idea that God is **merciful** and good.

Quotable Quote: "The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions...the command to repent goes unregarded. As responsible moral beings we dare not trifle with our eternal future."

A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of The Holy*

John the Baptist warned, "Flee from the coming wrath." Mark 3:7

Paul declared, "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since *you* reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:46

2. God's wrath can never be fully **justified** or **deserved**.

Even Abraham questioned God when he was about to destroy Sodom, "Far be it from you to do such a thing – to kill the righteous and the wicked alike...Will not the *Judge* of all the earth do *right*?" Genesis 18:25

3. God's wrath can serve no **useful purpose**.

"The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But don't forget...The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise...He is patient with you." 2 Peter 3:7-9

## Statements of FACT regarding God's wrath:

1. God's attribute of wrath cannot be separated from any of his other attributes.

Nahum 1:6-7 states, "Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His *wrath* is poured out like fire...The Lord is *good*, a refuge in times of trouble. He *cares* for those who trust in him."

Exodus 34:6-7 proclaims, "The Lord...the *compassionate* and *gracious* God, *slow* to anger, abounding in *love* and *faithfulness*, maintaining love to thousands, and *forgiving* wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does *not* leave the guilty unpunished."

Quotable Quote: "Now the wrath of God is as much a Divine perfection as is his faithfulness, power, or mercy. It *must* be so, for there is no blemish whatever, not the slightest defect in the character of God...yet there *would be* if "wrath" were absent from him. Indifference to sin is a moral blemish." A. Pink

2. God's wrath is both infinitely just and righteous.

Nehemiah 9:33-34 argues, "In *all* that has happened to us, *you* have been just; *you* have acted faithfully, while *we* did *wrong*...*they* did not pay attention to your commands or the warnings you gave them."

Psalms 51:4 declares, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are *proved right* when you speak and *justified* when you judge."

3. The wrath of God is useful in bringing people to repentance or righteousness.

Micah 7:9 says, "Because I have *sinned* against him, I will bear the Lord's wrath...He will bring me out *into* the light; I will see his *righteousness*."

2 Cor. 7:10-11 explains, "Godly sorrow *brings repentance* and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness...what alarm, what *longing*, what *concern*, what *readiness* to see justice done."

A Godly Perspective...Requires understanding the relationship of God's justice, righteousness, & holiness as seen in...

Psalms 45:6-7 - "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness."

Habakkuk 1:12-13 - "O Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy one...Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you *cannot tolerate* wrong."

Psalms 5:4 - "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell."

Quotable Quote: "In the Bible, the idea of God's righteousness is closely related to His Holiness and justice. **Righteousness. Holiness. Justice.** These three key words are so closely linked an extra sharp razor is required to distinguish them...The *holiness* of God is linked to the *righteousness* of God...God's righteousness is linked, too, to the biblical concept of *justice*. God is at once righteous and just...For unbelievers nothing is more dreadful than the thought of being completely known by God...The pagan does not want God to look at him; he wants God to overlook him." R.C. Sproul, *The Character of God – Discovering the God Who Is*

### **An Important Distinction**

Two Greek words used for "wrath" are:

1. *Thumos* (Revelations 12:12) which means... *to enrage, hot anger, idea of unrestrained anger*

This word is used *only* in reference to **man** or **Satan**.

2. *Orge* (John 3:36) which implies... *an abhorrence of evil, righteous indignation, and proper vengeance*

This word is used *primarily* and often of **God**.

Quotable Quote: J.I. Packer, in *Knowing God*, writes, "God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. God is only angry where anger is called for...Would a God who did not react adversely to evil in His world be morally perfect? Surely not. But it is precisely this adverse reaction to evil, which is a necessary part of moral perfection, that the Bible has in view when it speaks of God's wrath."

### **Key Questions About God's Wrath**

1. Towards whom is God's wrath directed?

Romans 2:5 states, "But because of your *stubbornness* and your *unrepentant* heart, you are storing up *wrath* against yourself for the day of God's *wrath* when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done."

Ephesians 5:6 explains, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things (immorality, impurity, greed, idolatry, vs. 5) God's *wrath* comes on those who are *disobedient*."

"Romans 1:18 states, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven *against* all the *godlessness* and *wickedness* of men who *suppress* the truth by *their* wickedness."

Quotable Quote: "The decisive act of judgment upon the lost is the judgment which they pass upon themselves, by rejecting the light that comes to them in and through Jesus Christ....The unbeliever has preferred to be by himself without God... and he shall have his preference. Nobody stands under the wrath of God save those who have chosen to do so." J.I. Packer

## Key Questions About God's Wrath (cont.)

### 2. Will Christians experience God's wrath?

Romans 5:9 tell us, "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be *saved* from God's wrath *through* him."

1 Thessalonians declares, "Jesus...*rescues us* from the coming wrath." (1:10)

"For God did *not* appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation *through*...Jesus Christ." (5:9)

*Quotable Quote:* But above all, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven when the Son of God came...and when the wrath was displayed in His suffering and death." Robert Haldane

### 3. Why is God's Wrath Justified?

According to Daniel 9:4-11, why is God's wrath justified? List what the passage says about...

#### Man's actions

sinned, done wrong

been wicked

rebelled

turned from commands

have not listened

covered with shame

unfaithfulness to God

transgressed law

refused to obey

#### God's actions/attributes

great, awesome

kept covenant of love

righteous

merciful

forgiving

made sworn judgments

provided the written law

fulfilled His words spoken to rulers

poured out curses/judgment on man

*Quotable Quote:* "The essence of God's actions in wrath is to give men what they choose, in all its implications... God's readiness to respect human choice to this extent may appear disconcerting and even terrifying, but it is plain that His attitude is supremely just."

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

How Should One Respond to God's Justice & Wrath?

Give **warning & hope** to man!

Hebrews 10:26-27 says, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the *knowledge* of the *truth*, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only the fearful expectation of *judgment* and raging fire that will consume the *enemies* of God."

We need to share both the warnings in God's word and the hope we have in Christ.

Give **worship & praise** to God!

Revelations 5 says, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals (of God's wrath) because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God." (vs. 9)

"Then I heard *every* creature in heaven and on earth...singing, 'To him who sits on the throne...be *praise* and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!' Then...the living creatures said 'Amen' and the elders fell down and *worshiped*." (vs. 13-14)

*Quotable Quote:*

"A man who is angry on the right grounds, against the right persons, in the right manner, at the right moment, and for the right length of time deserves great praise." Aristotle

Only God can *always* respond this way and so only He is *worthy* of our praise!

### **Making it Personal**

Refer to the following passages:

James 1:19-21 – "Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly *accept* the word planted in you, which can *save* you."

1 Timothy 2:3-4 - "This is good and pleases our Savior, who wants *all* men to be *saved* and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

2 Peter 3:9-11 – "The Lord is...patient with you, not wanting *anyone* to perish, but *everyone* to come to repentance...But the day of the Lord will come."

In the space below, write out your own apologetic for the truth of God's appropriate justice and rightful wrath.

