



(10) The Wrath of God

God's wrath assures us of His thorough justice (2 Chronicles 34:21)

Christians vary widely on their views of God's anger, even with some insisting God's wrath is, or should be, nonexistent, while others wonder why God hasn't done more regarding injustice. This study on God's wrath gives us a clearer picture as to how God works in our world, churches and lives.

Let's start our inquiry from listing below what we can learn about God from the following verses.

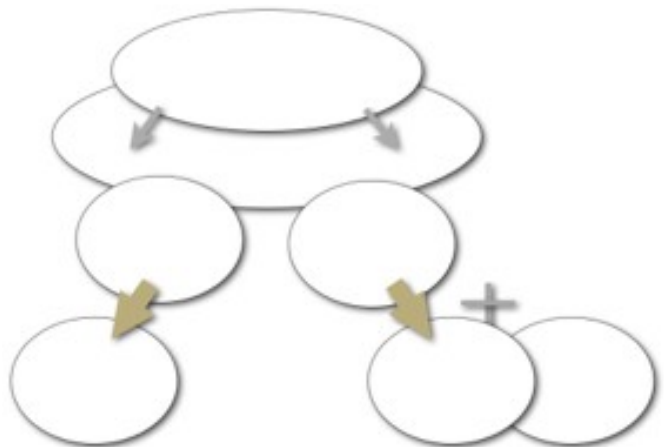
"Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.... They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father; thus they did all that the king commanded, and after that God was moved by prayer for the land" (2 Sam 21:1,14 NASB).

1) Definition and description of wrath

- **Definition:** Wrath is that stored up or released anger against those who dare to defy God's judgments. "So the **anger of the LORD burned** against them..." (Nu 12:9). "The wrath of God is the onslaught of the holy God asserting and establishing His absolute claim to dominion" (TDNT Vol 5, 407).

"All its (Israel's) land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath" (De 29:23). "And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the sons of Ammon" (Judges 10:7).

- **Biblical analysis:** The word 'wrath' is used 184 times while 'anger' is used 266 times (sometimes used of man).
- **Getting the connection:** "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for **great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD**, to do according to all that is written in this book" (2 Chronicles 34:21). Anger arises due to our resistance to carry out God's judgments, whether known through natural revelation or found in His Word.
- The attribute of God's wrath perfectly blends with His other characteristics like mercy. God's wrath starts when His righteousness judgments have been infringed upon. His wrath is that personal drive to pursue all offenders until full vengeance is paid out. God's mercy never discharges God's righteous anger but only diverts it. His wrath must always be satisfied. His wrath, at times, is put off (stored up) for a later and greater unleashing, or it can be otherwise perfectly satisfied through some atonement, but satisfied it must be. Jesus was the full propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1-2).
- God's wrath is not a characteristic of God as normally thought, but it does indeed describe how He pursues His holy Name. This wrath of His, its intensity, severity, unbiased, just and ongoing



nature reveals the righteousness of God, just as His love in its persevering, other-focused nature reveals God's lovingkindness.

2) God's anger against unbelievers

- God's justice makes sure all offenses against God's judgments are fully paid. We all suffer from God's wrath, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Ephesians 2:3).
- God's anger is constantly prompting Him to judge the sinner. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). We might dismiss our sin as being unimportant, trite or even a personal preference, but no matter what we think, God the Maker holds every sinner fully liable for his or her rebellious deeds and thoughts. This is the reason God's wrath 'abides' on us. It is constant and waiting for the execution time.
- God's greater plan. "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:22, 23).
- Regulation of God's anger. "The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations" (Nu 14:18).
- The Bible is not at all hesitant to speak of God's anger as if it is a defect. It is a necessary part of God to carry out His judgments. Unlike man, God's judgments are always true and deserving. It is for this reason, God says that vengeance is His. We are not to take revenge, in heart or otherwise.
- God's anger arises due to affront to His authority. He expects man to conduct himself in a way that pleases Him.
- God's anger, then, is a special response mechanism that makes sure no injustice or inappropriate conduct gets away. From our perspective, people get away with sin a lot. But it simply is not true. God is carefully exercising His complete plan to fully carry out His justice. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).



3) God's patience

Why does God delay execution of His wrath? Clearly God wants us to seek and discover His mercy. "But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, ... The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (1 Peter 3:7-9).



Three common misunderstandings of God's patience.

- 1) Some believe that God, in His great love, will overlook our sin.
- 2) Others believe that God has a problem executing judgment, perhaps, the Lord is weak, uninvolved or impotent.
- 3) Natural disasters are simple rumblings of 'mother earth.'

"Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

4) God's anger against believers

- There is a personal anger against those to whom God has revealed Himself. God got angry with Moses due to complaining the lack of good speech (Exodus 4:12-14). God got very angry with the Israelites to the degree that He did not allow them (the fathers) into the Land of Promise (Numbers 32:13). "But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem..." (2 Ch 32:25, 26).

- God does judge God's people – focuses on the present. “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?” (1 Peter 4:17-18).
- God regularly judges His people – we are expected to judge ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:29-32, 5:12, 13).

Summary & Assignment

Summary: Although believers deserve the full brunt of God's wrath upon their lives as unbelievers, Christ died to fully satisfy God's wrath so that we could become the children of God (1 Jn 2:1-2). God can still get angry with us, but like a parent, it's purpose is to improve our character, further display God's glory and so that He can more fully reward us.

- How does hell (***)* fit into this whole scheme of God's anger?
- Group assignment: What are some sins in our lives, churches and society that we need to repent from? Please humble your heart and pray together confessing and seeking God's forgiveness.

“Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come.”¹¹– Jonathan Edwards