

The Christian and God: Loving or Wrathful?

Vital Topics for Today

Brooksville Summer Series

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The Christian and God: Loving or Wrathful?

- God is not loving OR wrathful; He is loving AND wrathful.
- “Most preachers ... today treat the biblical doctrine of the wrath of God very much as the Victorians treated sex. It is there, but it must never be alluded to because it is in an undefined way shameful. ...God is love; therefore we must not associate him with wrath. God is love; therefore he is indefinitely tolerant.” *(Tony Lane, Theological Essays on the Love of God; Eerdmans Pub.)*

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- **Gen. 6:5-8 - “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”**

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- **Ex. 34:6-7 - “And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.’”**

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- **John 15:2** - “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”
- **Rom. 11:22** - “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

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- “The whole course of history shows that the God of providence and the severe Jehovah of the Hebrews are one and the same.” (*J. W. von Goethe, Maximen und Reflexionen no. 1304, 1907*)
- We can only conclude from the scriptures that God is loving and wrathful.

Defining The Dilemma

- Our sense of fairness is offended
- Our understanding of love is disrupted
- Our view of grace and mercy is violated
- We don't understand what we are talking about
 - Job 42:3 - “You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”

Defining Deity

- **God is God, and God is loving and wrathful**
- **He is loving**
 - **John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**
 - **1John 4:16 - “And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”**

Defining Deity

- **He is wrathful**
 - **Heb. 12:28-29 - “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”**

Defining Deity

- What we often fail to realize is that God is love and that a function of that love is that He is passionately opposed to the things that cause His creation harm.
- He is passionately opposed to us destroying ourselves and others.
- “God’s love loves us unto purity.” (*George MacDonald*)

Defining Deity

- **God is holy and wills that humankind be holy.**
 - **Isa. 6:3 - “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”**
 - **Lev. 19:2 - “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’”**
 - **1Peter 2:9 - “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”**

Defining Deity

- **Because God is love, He wants to have a relationship with us; but, because He is holy, there are some things He must do. He must:**
 - Tell us of our sins,
 - Tell us not to sin,
 - Warn us of His Judgment on sins and sinners,
 - Judge and discipline us to keep us from sins,
 - Call us to repent and trust his faithful love and forgiveness when we have sinned.

Defining Deity

- **God sent His Holy Son to die in our place and take the punishment and wrath of God as our substitute to make us His holy people**
 - **Heb. 10:10, 14 - “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”**

Describing The Devoted Love Of God

- **1John 4:8-10 - “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”**
- **God is love; love is His defining characteristic**
- **God is the first cause of love; no one loved before Him or taught Him how to love**
- **He loved us without cause or merit from us**

Describing The Devoted Love Of God

- **God has proven His love in a perfect and absolute way.**
 - **Rom. 5:8 - “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**
 - **Rom. 4:7-8 - “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin”**

Describing The Devoted Love Of God

- **Our sins and God's holiness form a barrier between us that neither of us can cross**
- **God in His great love for us, created the means of abolishing that barrier through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.**
- **He loves us so much that He did not withhold the life of His only begotten Son to bring us close to Him**

Describing The Devoted Love Of God

- Eph. 2:1-6 - “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”
- Don't ever doubt the unfathomable love of God!

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- “One evangelical cliché has it that ‘God hates the sin but loves the sinner.’ There is a small element of truth in these words: God has nothing but hate for the sin, but this cannot be said with respect to how God sees all sinners. Nevertheless the cliché is false on the face of it, and should be abandoned. Fourteen times in the first fifty psalms alone, the psalmists state that God hates the sinner, that His wrath is on the liar, and so forth. In the Bible the wrath of God rests on both the sin (Rom. 1:18-23) and the sinner (1:24-32; 2:5; John 3:36).” *(D. A. Carson, The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God)*

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- **God's wrath is just. It is in proportion to human sinfulness**
 - Rom. 2:5 - **“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”**
- **“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.”** (*J. I. Packer, Knowing God, 151*)

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- **God's wrath is to be feared.**
 - **God's wrath is to be feared because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God - Rom. 3:23**
 - **God's wrath is to be feared because we are justly condemned sinners apart from Christ - Rom. 5:1**
 - **God's wrath is to be feared because He is powerful enough to do what He promises - Jer. 32:17**
 - **God's wrath is to be feared because God promises eternal punishment apart from Christ - Matt. 25:46**

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- God's wrath is His love in action against sin.
- "God's wrath is a function of his love. In order for God to be loving, He needs to be just. If God looked lovingly at human sin, He wouldn't be loving ... One of the reasons that we do not understand the wrath of God is that we do not understand the severity of sin." (*Evidence Unseen, 2019*)

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- **God's wrath is satisfied in Christ. In saving us from His own wrath, God has done what we could not do; He has done what we did not deserve.**
 - **1Tim. 1:15 - "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."**
 - **Rom. 3:24-26 - "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

**“And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain!
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
*(Charles Wesley)***

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- **God's wrath is as trustworthy as His love.**
- **God is omniscient, so He sees all of our sin and knows it completely.**
 - **We are finite and subjective in our judgment, so we don't always reason fairly.**
- **God knows our thoughts and hearts intimately.**
 - **We cannot discern the heart, so we often judge people without knowing or understanding enough.**

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- **God has never sinned, so all sin is abhorrent to Him.**
 - We are beset with sin, so sin often doesn't appear that bad to us.
- **God is patient in His wrath. He waits, allowing people to change (Gen. 15:13-16; Rom. 1:18, 2:5-6).**
 - We often react in haste with people for their sins, especially when it bothers us.

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

- **God is personally affected when we sin against anyone, because they are made in His image and are objects of His love (Prov. 14:31; Psalm 51:4; Acts 9:4; Matt. 25:31-46; Mark 2:1-13).**
 - **We are often unconcerned for the disadvantaged victims of sin if they are not friends or family.**
- **The greatest difference? God has supplied an unstoppable means of escaping His wrath**
 - **1John 2:1-2 - "...If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."**

Delineating The Deliberate Wrath Of God

In Christ Alone

**And on the cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live**

(Stuart Townend)

The Christian and God: Loving or Wrathful?

- The question is not the love or the wrath of God, but rather the love and the wrath of God; both are part of His glorious being.
- However, we encounter them depending on which side of God we are standing.
- On which side do you choose to stand?

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- **In God's love**
 - **John 15:9-10 - "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."**
- **Or, in God's wrath**
 - **Heb. 2:2-3 - "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"**