

Theology
Lesson 9: wrath, righteousness, and justice

Wrath/Anger

Pink (82) 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 who 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, yet they are far from regarding it with delight; they like not to think about it, and they rarely hear it mentioned without a secret resentment rising up in their hearts against it.

Pink (82) there are more references to God’s anger, fury and wrath than they are to His love and tenderness.

Rea Sea: *"In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea"* (Exodus 15:7-8).
 Colorful words!

Anger occurs in 266 verses in the Bible and God is the one getting angry in those verses 219 times. In other words, of the times in the Bible where somebody gets mad, God is the subject over 82% of the times. Think about it. Four out of every five times someone gets angry in the Bible, God is the one who is indignant.

Golden calf: *"Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation"* (Exodus 32:10).

Food supply: *"But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague"* (Numbers 11:33).

Continual sin in the land: *"The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years"* (Judges 3:8).

Achan: Josh 7:1

Uzzah: 2 Sam 6:7

Fierce anger	Deut 13:17; 29:23; Psa 4:26; 85:3; Isa 13:9; Jer 4:8,26; 12:13; 25:37,38; 30:24; 44:6; 49:37; Lam 1:12; 2:3,6; 4:11; Hos 11:9; Jonah 3:9; Nah 1:6; Zeph 2:2; 3:8
Furious anger	Deut 29:28; Jer 32:37
Jealous anger	1 Kings 14:22; Ezek 16:38,42
Unquenched anger	2 Kings 22:17
Hot anger	Psa 78:49
Smoldering anger	Psa 80:4
Powerful anger	Psa 90:11
Fiery anger	Ezek 21:31; 22:31
Raging anger	Amos 1:11
Great anger	2 Kings 22:13; 2 Chron 34:21; Ezra 8:22

Aroused anger	Numb 11:1; Job 32:5; Jer 32:31
---------------	--------------------------------

Word pictures:

Unleash anger Exodus 15:7-8; Ezek 7:3

Filled cup Ezek 22:31; Nah 1:6; 2 Chron 34:21,25; Psa 69:24; Isa 42:25; Jer 7:20; 42:18; 44:6; Lam 4:11; Ezek 7:8; 20:8,21; 21:31; 22:31; Nah 1:6; Zeph 3:8

Stored up wrath (banking image) Ezek 20:21

Restrained anger 1 Chron 15:13

"The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." (Numbers 14:18)

"They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them," (Nehemiah 9:17)

"But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." (Psalm 86:15)

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." (Psalm 103:8)

"The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love." (Psalm 145:8)

"Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity." (Joel 2:13)

"He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity." (Jonah 4:2)

"The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet." (Nahum 1:3)

We can provoke His anger:

"I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their foes, because they have done evil in my eyes and have provoked me to anger from the day their forefathers came out of Egypt until this day." (2 Kings 21:14-15; see also Deut 4:25; 9:7,18; 31:29; Judg 2:12; 1 Kgs 14:9,15; 15:30; 16:2,7,13,26,33; 21:22,53; 2 Kgs 17:11,17; 21:6; 22:17; 23:19; 2 Chron 33:6; 34:25; Psa 106:29; Jer 8:19; 11:17; 25:6; 32:29; 44:3; Ezek 8:17; 16:26; Hos 12:14).

On July 8, 1741 a man named Jonathon Edwards dared to bring that truth back to America with a sermon that is now immortalized in our minds, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God."

Thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out: and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in the danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity...And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition?...Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."

Why does God demonstrate His wrath (Psalm 76):

Vv 1-3 to make the greatness of His name known

Vv 4-10 to lead men to worship Him for His wonderful character - Psa 76:10 – relation between His wrath and praise; if there were no hell we would go for an eternity without ever seeing the wrath of God displayed

Vv 11-12 to bring us to obedience

Deut 28:63 it pleases Him to exercise His wrath

Psa 79:6 Do I ever pray this way?

Final word to preachers and teachers in Pink, 87.

Righteousness

Ryrie (Basic Theology, 48) "Holiness relates to God's separateness; righteousness, to His justice...In relation to Himself, God is righteous; i.e., there is no law, either within His own being or of His own making, that is violated by anything in His nature. In relation to His creatures He is also righteous; i.e., there is no action He takes that violates any code of morality or justice." These are sometimes called His absolute (in relation to His being) and relative (in relation to His Creation) righteousness.

Gen 18:25

Isa 45:21,24

Psa 7:9

Psa 111:3

Psa 119:142, 172

Rom 3:21-24

1 Cor 6:9-11

Titus 3:5-7

Erickson, *Theology* (286) Righteousness is God's holiness applied to other beings. His law is righteous, as perfect as He is and a direct reflection of His character (Psalm 19:7-9). Truth Project, God's Word tells us what is right and wrong to do based on the objective standard of the holiness of God. God didn't arbitrarily decide to make stealing wrong and giving to the poor right. They are right and wrong based on the reality of who God is. God is also righteous in how He deals with mankind: "He is the expression in action of what He requires."

Justice

Systematic Theology, "God's righteousness [or justice] means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right."¹

Erickson (288) The righteousness described in the previous section is God's personal or individual righteousness. His justice is his official righteousness, his requirement that other moral agents adhere to his standards as well. God is, in other words, like a judge who as a private individual adheres to the law of society, and in his official capacity, administers that same law, applying it to others.

Deut 32:4

Luke 18:1-8 the widow, the Lord, and justice

Tozer (86) It is sometimes said, "Justice requires God to do this," referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error in thinking as well as speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way... The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree. All God's reasons come from within His uncreated being... Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more, and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation.

¹ Grudem, *Theology*, 203.