

THE RATIONALE FOR WRATH

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A cartoon depicted Noah's ark surrounded by desperate people drowning in the water, begging for help. The rains were coming down hard while Noah and his family were safe inside. On the outside of the ark was a "smiley face" with the words, "Smile, God Loves You."

Are you sure God loves everybody? John the Baptist didn't think so. He said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn. 3:36). Why is God justified in having wrath toward you if you have not come to Christ on His terms?

Because you are a sinner by nature. The Bible affirms that all people are "by nature children of wrath even as the rest" (Eph. 2:3). "There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10). Like David, you were "brought forth in iniquity, and in sin [your] mother conceived [you]" (Ps. 51:5).

Because you have amassed a huge volume of sins. If you were only to commit 1 sin every day for 10 years, your total sins would be 36,500. But if you sinned at that rate for 60 years, the number would be 219,000. Yet you commit far more than 10 sins each day. And remember how many sins Adam committed before God judged him worthy of death.

Because you have committed the greatest crime possible, against the highest existing authority. The first and greatest command in the entire universe is this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk. 12:30). The qualifier "all" speaks loudly in this command. Only perfection will satisfy these terms. And the authority behind this law is not earthly; it is God Himself—the highest authority in the universe.

Because of your persistence in sinning against God. If a man steals once, he might be forgiven. But if he steals repeatedly and habitually over his lifetime, his crime attains a magnitude of offensiveness that demands far more punishment. You have been repeatedly and habitually committing a sin much worse than stealing, for your whole life!

Because you have spurned the greatest love gift ever. Christ's coming to the earth and dying for the sins of people like you is the most amazing act of love possible. But you have ignored it. You have just gone on your way as if it meant nothing.

Because you have spurned this gift even though you have knowledge of Christ and the way of salvation. The just judgment for sin is augmented when knowledge is involved. Jesus said that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida (Mt. 11:21-24). Sodom was full of immorality and would certainly be judged. But because these other three cities had knowledge (that is, Jesus has spoken and performed miracles in their streets, and

yet they still rejected Him), their judgment will be far more severe. *You* have much knowledge about Christ's offer of salvation. But like those cities, *you* have rejected Him too.

Because you have been unwilling to admit your desperate need. "And Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, 'Are we blind also?'" Jesus replied, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains." (Jn. 9:39-40). The very fact that you *think* you are without need of Christ *proves* your blindness and hardness of heart.

Because you have been proud of your good works, though dependence on them damns you. Paul said, ". . . for if righteousness comes through the Law [that is, by doing the commands], then Christ died needlessly" (Gal. 2:21). The Bible makes clear that we are saved by grace. Salvation is "the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Those who depend on law-keeping have no part of God's grace (Gal. 5:4).

Because you have not repented even though He has been kind to you. "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 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, who will render to each man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:4-5).

Because you have stubbornly refused to yield to God and His way of salvation in Jesus Christ to the last possible moment—now!

Can you say that it is unjust for God to be angry with *you*? Can you possibly imagine that you are a special case, different that all the rest? Certainly you cannot. But all is not lost if you will trust Christ for your salvation. Turning from the control of your life, you may depend or rest entirely on Him and what He has done on the cross to save sinful people like you. The first part of the verse we began with is as true as the second part. At this moment, God's wrath abides or rests on you. But you may place your trust in Christ *now* for "everlasting life." If you do not, you will once again demonstrate that God's wrath is just and reasonable.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn. 3:36).

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