

The Wrath of God Lessons From Scripture

by William MacDonald

The sermon explores the wrath of God, his grace, and his generosity, highlighting the importance of understanding these attributes in order to appreciate the love and mercy of God.

Duration: 38:09

Scripture: Genesis 45:1, Psalm 68:19, Matthew 27:46

Topics: "Wrath Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the contemplation of the wrath of God as a means to develop compassion for the lost and to make unbelievers take notice. The speaker also highlights the consolations of the Lord during difficult times and the promise of an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ. The sermon emphasizes the generosity of God and encourages listeners to refrain from complaining. The speaker references biblical examples such as Joseph, David, Peter, and the prodigal son to illustrate the power of forgiveness and restoration.

Transcript

Well, as Joe said, we have been speaking about the excellencies and perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was the babe of Bethlehem, became the man of Calvary, and is the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There is one attribute of the Lord Jesus that people least like to think about. I wonder if you can think what it is.

The attribute of the Lord that people least like to think about. Well, it's his wrath. And it is, the wrath of God is one of his excellencies.

It's one of his perfections. The wrath of God is his indignation and anger against sin and against unrepentant sinners. What kind of a God would he be if he were all love? That would mean that he could overlook sin and wickedness and evil.

It would mean that he could condone those things and look the other way. And of course, then he wouldn't be a righteous God, and of course, he wouldn't be a God at all. So the wrath of God is one of his very necessary attributes.

And at various times in human history, the Lord has spoken very loudly from heaven to indicate his wrath against specific sins. You remember that the wickedness of man in the early days of civilization became

so great that God lashed out with the flood. There was a tremendous display of indignation when he destroyed all human life except eight persons.

And then, of course, you remember the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, when those two cities and other cities of the plain were utterly wiped out by fire and brimstone. This is the wrath of God. And then, of course, Korah, Dathan and Abiram, when God caused the earth to open and they were swallowed.

These are isolated exhibitions of the wrath of God, of the Lord. It's a good thing he doesn't do that every time there's an outbreak of sin, because then none of us would survive. None of us would be here today.

But he did that during the history of civilization in order to show his hatred of sin and his anger against God. Of course, God's wrath will be revealed during the tribulation period, after the church has been taken out of this world and the tribulation ensues. God's wrath is shown in the seal judgments, in the trumpet judgments and in the bowl judgments, as you read about in the book of Revelation.

Every time a seal is broken on the scroll, judgment is poured out, every time but once. Every time the trumpet is blown, another judgment comes from the throne of God. Every time a bowl is poured out.

And, of course, these judgments are increasing in intensity. So great that vast portions of the human race will be exterminated at that time. Marine life, waters will be turned to blood.

It will be a time of horrendous judgment, the last three and a half years, a time such as the world has never known or will ever know. Somebody has said this, and I think it's quite good. When God breaks his silence and pours out his wrath, it shall thunder with the force of offended righteousness, strike with lightning bolts upon the seared consciences, roar as the long-crouched lion upon dallying prey, leap upon, batter and destroy, utterly consume the vain reasonings of proud humankind, ring as the battle shout of a strong, triumphant, victory-tasting warrior, strike terror and gravity the souls more forcefully than tortured screams in the night.

Oh God, what shall be the first tones of that voice again on earth? Then God's wrath is revealed in the existence of Hades and hell. Hades, I'm sure you know, is kind of an intermediate place where it really speaks of the scene of disembodied spirits, and we read about the rich man that in Hades he lift up his eyes being in place of torment. Hell is the everlasting dwelling place of the wicked dead.

Hades is like the local jail, hell is like the federal penitentiary, and at the judgment of the great white stone, death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire which is the same as hell. Concerning this final abode of the wicked, Jesus said where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. John said the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.

But you know, there's another place where the wrath of God is revealed, and that's at the cross of Calvary. And that's amazing to think that 1900 years ago, when his beloved son took our sins upon himself, God poured out his wrath upon the son of his love. The Lord Jesus bore in his body in three hours of darkness on the cross the punishment that you and I should have borne for all eternity.

It's tremendous, isn't it? It's almost too much to think about. We can never fathom in all eternity, we will never fathom the extent of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. One of the hymns in our worship hymn book, I think, says it very well.

The depths of all thy suffering no heart could e'er conceive. The cup of wrath o'erflowing for us thou didst receive, and O of God forsaken on the accursed tree, with joy and sorrow mingling, we would remember thee. We often hear that it would be impossible, improbable for a God of love to sustain an everlasting hell.

They say that the idea of everlasting punishment is incompatible with the mercy of God. But people who hold that view, it's really quite a bizarre view, and they should consider the following. First of all, the Bible says more about the wrath of God than it says about his love.

And the Lord Jesus spoke more about hell than he spoke about heaven. Not because he liked to speak about these things, but because he wanted to warn men against them. God never intended that any person would go to hell.

He created hell for the devil and his angels. And anyone who goes there, goes there by deliberate choice. God in his sovereignty has left choice to man.

He's given man a way of escape, and if man refuses the mercy of God, there's no alternative but the wrath of God. I don't think there's any question that God is the most maligned and misunderstood person in the universe. Let me tell you why.

God warns man, in his word, against certain actions. Man goes ahead and commits those actions, and suffers the penalty for those actions, and then rages against God. Now, that doesn't seem quite right, does it? When God has warned people against it, and in spite of his compassionate warnings, they go ahead and they commit it.

They commit what he has forbidden. God provides a way of salvation, man refuses it, and goes crashing over the precipice into hell, reviling God all the way. Doesn't make sense.

The wrath of God. Is it ever right for a Christian to be wrathful? Is it ever right for a Christian to be angry? Well, of course it is. Ephesians chapter 4, be angry and sin not.

When is it right for a Christian to be angry? When God's name is blasphemed, and God's cause is dragged in the mud. We should never be angry over people's treatment of ourselves, but over their treatment of the Lord. When the Lord Jesus went into the temple and saw a man making it a marketplace, he was angry.

He was angry because this was the house of God, the temple. And people were profaning it. He became angry.

And the disciples remembered that it was written of him, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. He was consumed with the honor of the house of God, and he wouldn't let them in. And we should be angry.

I think you and I, who are believers, should be angry in our daily work. When we hear the name of the Lord Jesus taken in vain, it's a good time to be angry. When we hear all this street language associated with sacred causes, it's a good time to be angry.

And yet the contemplation of the wrath of God should give us hearts of compassion for the lost, and a desire to see them fleeing to the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly the contemplation of the wrath of God should make unbelievers sit up and take notice. Years ago I came across this quote.

I've never forgotten it. The wrath of God, not his vengefulness, but that which makes him against sinful man to the point of giving up man. Think the supreme power in the universe against what you are doing.

Determine that you shall not fail, that you shall fail. The supreme power leaving you to yourself in silent scorn. Think of that.

Think the supreme power in the universe against what you are doing. Determine that you shall fail. The supreme power leaving you to yourself in silent scorn.

Well, that is one of God's perfections that men don't like to think about, but it's there, and as I said before, it's just as much one of his excellencies as any of the others. Last week we spoke of the love of God as the pearl of his perfections. But you know, there's another attribute of the Lord that I think is equally well loved, and that's the grace of God.

And I'd like to think with you for a few minutes about that, the grace of God. The grace of God means that God grants favor and acceptance to those who don't deserve it. Not only to those who don't deserve it, but those who deserve the very opposite.

It's God giving heaven's best for earth's worst. The grace of God. It's a sovereign grace.

It's something he never needed to have done, but he just did it out of the goodness of his heart. Grace is unmerited. I think it's important to remember that there's nothing in me to draw forth the grace of God.

It's not just that I have a total lack of merit, but it's that I've accumulated a vast mountain of demerit. Yet God wants to come out to me in grace. Grace is associated with the idea of gift in the Bible.

The idea of gift. It cannot be bought, it cannot be earned by character or by merit, by works of any kind, by church membership or religious observances. The Bible is very clear on that.

Now, to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. I like what Archbishop Temple said.

He said, The only thing of my own which I contribute to my salvation is the sin from which I need to be redeemed. Think of that. The only thing we contribute in the matter of personal salvation is the sin from which we need to be redeemed.

We've said before, and you've heard I'm sure, the church is the only society on earth where it's your demerit that makes you eligible. Your unworthiness is what makes you eligible. And I like what Mark Twain said.

I know I've said it before, but grace is not by merit. If it went by merit, your dog would go in and you'd stay out. That's absolutely true.

Grace is abounding. Paul tells us in Romans where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. It flows like a mighty tide from Calvary and it's sufficient for all mankind, but it's only efficient for those who avail themselves of it.

The reason God can show grace to man is because of what the Lord Jesus did at the cross of Calvary. The work of the Lord Jesus at the cross of Calvary was enough to pay for the debt of sin that all mankind

had accumulated. And God can righteously go out to the repentant sinner in grace, charging it all to Christ's account.

It's an interesting thing that left to himself, natural man does not like the grace of God. I mean, if you're here today and you're saved, you just revel in the thought of the grace of God. But if you're unsaved, you don't particularly like it because it strikes a death blow at your pride.

The grace of God tells you you can't do anything or accumulate merit through character in order to deserve God. And it makes sinful man feel that he's on welfare or something like that. He doesn't like to be on welfare.

It makes him feel he's on spiritual welfare. And that's why man in his natural condition hates the grace of God. And not only does he want the grace of God, he doesn't want God to show it to anybody else.

He resents God showing it to anybody else. But you know, the most wonderful scenes in the Bible, the most beautiful scenes in the Bible are not scenes where God is coming out and patting people on the shoulder and telling them they're such nice people. The most wonderful scenes in the word of God are scenes where men and women come repenting of their sins, confessing their sins and finding grace from God.

Think about that for a moment. Think about some of the most wonderful scenes in the Bible. Think of Joseph when his brothers came, finally came before him and acknowledged their sin.

And Joseph made himself. I think it's one of the most moving passages in all the Bible. Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Think of how David sinned and how Nathan came to him and said, you are the man. And David broke before the Lord. But he said, I have sinned.

And Nathan said, your sin has been forgiven you. A marvelous scene from the scriptures. Think of Peter who cursed the Lord with oaths and curses and yet was wonderfully restored.

Think of that woman who came and washed the Savior's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Think of the prodigal son coming back to the Father, acknowledging his sin and finding forgiveness from the Father. Think of that thief on the cross.

Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. These are all recipients of the grace of God. Not one of them had a thing to say in his own favor.

Recipients of the grace of God. No attribute of God is any greater than any other attribute. His love is not greater than his wrath.

His grace is not greater than his mercy. But some people really feel that the grace of God appeals to them and is the brightest star in the galaxy of God's excellence. That's what that hymn says, which you sing sometimes.

Great God of wonders. All thy ways display thine attributes divine, but the bright glory of thy grace above thine other wonders shine. Who is a pardoning God like thee? Or who has grace so rich and free? God has always been a God of grace.

To hear people talking, you'd think that the God of the Old Testament was a different God from the God of the New Testament. God has always been a God of grace in the Old Testament as well as in the New. But the reason we call this the age of grace is because God has revealed himself in a new and wonderful way as the God of grace.

That is at Calvary. Calvary was an exhibition of the grace of God such as you don't find in the Old Testament. Grace is our golden thread that goes all through the New Testament.

It was one of the favorite words in the vocabulary of the Apostle Paul. He began all his letters, Grace and peace be to you. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then he'd close his letters, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. That was a great theme of Paul's. It was God's grace that chose believers in Christ before the foundation of the world.

What wonderful grace. It was really wonderful grace that sent the Lord Jesus to this planet, wasn't it? To suffer, bleed and die. Wonderful grace that led him to Calvary's cross to make atonement for our sins.

A wonderful grace that redeemed us from the slave market of sin. Grace that justified us, sanctified us and will one day glorify us. Grace that gave us the indwelling Holy Spirit.

And grace that will never be fully satisfied until we're home in heaven with the Lord Jesus. I tell you, that's grace, isn't it? And is it so I shall be like thy son? Is this the grace that he for me has won? Father of glory. Fought beyond all thought in glory to his own blessed likeness.

That's a staggering thought, isn't it? That you and I will one day be revealed in glory. Believers in the Lord Jesus revealed in glory just like his own beloved son. It's the grace of God that enables believers to have assurance of salvation.

If I were saved by any other way, I'd never know whether I was saved or not. Because I'd never know whether I had lived a good enough life. But when I know that I'm saved by God's grace, that I didn't deserve it, but he freely gave it to me and the beloved, then I can know I'm saved.

It's the grace of God that enables me to have eternal security. If I were saved in any other way, I would never know whether I was saved eternally. I might feel, well, I could be saved until I got to the door of heaven, but I might stumble at the door.

Might not get over the threshold. It's the grace of God that enables me to enjoy eternal security. If God had saved us by law-keeping, none would have ever been saved, actually, because the law doesn't give us the power to keep it.

But God saves us by his grace and teaches us to live a life that's comparable to it. The charge is often made that the teaching of grace encourages people to sin. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If a person is really grounded in the grace of God, that's the most powerful incentive in the world to live a holy life. Thou hast bled and died for me, henceforth I will live for thee. It's the remembrance of Calvary that makes us want to avoid sin.

There's another attribute of God I'd like to think with you this morning that is very thrilling to me. It's an attribute you don't hear very much about, but our God is a generous God. Not only a God of wrath, not only a God of grace, he's a generous God too.

He's incredibly generous. Too often we take his generosity for granted, and I think we need to be constantly reminded that he gives us richly all things to enjoy. Not niggardly, richly all things to enjoy.

First of all, think of God's generosity in the natural realm. God has provided us with 250,000 different kinds of seed-bearing plants, of which 50,000 are trees. Imagine that, 50,000 trees.

Not just pines and redwoods, and just think, if he hadn't provided us with all those plants and trees, this would be like a lunar landscape, wouldn't it? It would be like a desert where we are living. But he's given us evergreens, oaks, maples, birches, willows and a host of others. God provided 8,600 different kinds of flowers for our enjoyment.

Take orchids, for instance. There are over 2,000 varieties of orchids. Think of the enjoyment that people have received from orchids.

The Lord Jesus told us that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the wild anemones that grows in Israel. It's a wild flower. I don't think there's any way to measure the enjoyment that people derive from roses and lilies and carnations and daisies and begonias and African violets and all the others.

Some will have to be going to the nursery soon to buy more as a result of the cold. Don't forget the fruit trees and the berry bushes. God has provided us liberally all things to enjoy.

Think of apples. What a joy they are. I wonder how many homes there were here at Christmas time that didn't have some apples in it.

Think of the joy of a tree-ripened Bartlett pear. You bite into it and the juice runs down on your chin, reveling in its incredible flavor. Not to mention peaches or bananas, oranges, grapes, plums and cherries.

Who can resist a piece of freshly baked blueberry pie with the juice still there in the bottom of the pan? Even the mention of raspberries and strawberries evokes pleasurable sensations in our minds. God is a generous God, isn't he? Providing all of these for us. There are 10,000 species of birds, and every one of them is a wonderful creation of God, really.

I'm absolutely amazed at that little hummingbird that can fly across the Gulf of Mexico without refueling. It's marvelous, really. And that chirpy little English sparrow flitting around the yard, scratching around for its daily food and leaving the future to its Creator.

And not one of them falls to the ground without your Heavenly Father. How wonderful, isn't it? Think of the marvel of the migratory instinct of the birds. How we enjoy that.

I do. And the homing pigeon. When I was a boy, we used to take them off and see if we could fox them.

But we never foxed them. They always found their way home. Nothing we could do to confuse those birds.

It's estimated there are 20,000 different kinds of bony fish and an additional 10,000 other kinds. And many of these fish are just paragons of beauty and grace as they swim through the water, to say nothing of the delectable meals that come from them. Vegetables.

Vegetables add variety, color, and flavor to the ordinary meal. Dr. Ironside, when he'd be visiting the homes, he'd often be asked to give thanks for the food. And he would kind of peek when everybody's head was bowed.

And he would thank God for the color of the carrots and the contrasting color of the peas. And he took notice of these things, recognizing that we have a generous God. The list of vegetables is almost endless.

And think of the flavors and fragrances. Do you ever think that God is the one who gave the chocolate flavor and the aroma of the star jasmine? And we can do that as we are Christians. We can really see our God and our Creator in the things around us and rejoice in them.

It's wonderful, of course, to think of God as being the one who spangled the heavens with the stars. And as I've often said, it wouldn't have made much difference to us if he had included a few billion less. He's a generous God, giving us richly all things to enjoy.

What about the beauty of a sunset or the grandeur of the mountains and the expanse of the sea? I don't think any human mind can begin to take in the wonder of God's natural creation. But he's generous not only in his natural creation, he's generous in the spiritual creation as well. Psalms reminds us that his thoughts to us are more numerous than the sands of the sea.

I might have mentioned this before this month, but if that verse had just said, God's thoughts to me are more numerous than a handful of sand, it would have left me breathless, you know, because it's a handful of sand. You don't know how many grains of sand in there, but don't say that. It's just all the sands of all the seas of all the world.

What a wonderful God he is. God gives wisdom liberally, James says, to all who ask for it. And in reading the Bible, I suggest you look for adverbs like that, liberally, and adjectives describing plenitude and verbs expressing lavishness.

The psalmist says that the Lord daily loads us with benefits. Daily loads us with benefits. I remember somebody asking Peter Pell, How are you, Brother Pell? He said, Oh, I'm under a burden.

And what's a burden? He said, He daily loads me with benefits. Wonderful burden. And, of course, the greatest display of God's generosity was when he gave his beloved son to die for us on the cross.

Everything leads us back to Calvary eventually. Have you noticed that? It seems that almost all the attributes, even his wrath, leads us to Calvary, whereas wrath was displayed in an unprecedented way. That was the greatest display of God's generosity when he emptied heaven and sent his beloved son to die for me there on the cross of Calvary.

And it was generosity that led the Lord Jesus to die for us. In that verse, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus. Grace there is a synonym for generosity.

You know the generosity of the Lord Jesus, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, you through his poverty might be rich. God is generous in grace, where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. He is generous in mercy, his love and compassion towards his creatures.

And when men are born again, he pours out on them the Holy Spirit abundantly. The scripture uses that word. Even when we are called to go through trials and tribulations and sorrows, it says the consolations abound.

That's true. We know the consolations of the Lord at a time of difficulty that we would never know otherwise. And then finally, at the end of the journey, what is it? An abundant entrance into the everlasting

kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Human language is inadequate to describe the generosity of the Lord. It is really too awesome to picture. What we know of it should cause us to refrain from ever complaining.

Did I tell you that when I was in Scotland the last time, there was a very aged man there, Mr. Waddle. As a young man, he had run with Eric Little, the Olympic champ. And I said to him one day, How are you, Brother Waddle? He said, Should a living man complain? I said, Is that in the Bible? He said, Yes, that's in the Bible.

I never knew it was in the Bible. Should a living man complain? It's in Jeremiah. There was a lady in prison, a prisoner, and she wrote this, More sky than man can see, more sea than he can sail, more sun than he can bear to watch, more stars than he can scale, more breath than he can breathe, more yield than he can sow, more grace than he can comprehend, more love than he can know.

God is a generous God. Shall we pray? Father, we just worship and adore you today in the Son of your love, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we contemplate these excellencies, these perfections, these attributes of your being, and we just bow low and worship, what can we do? What can we say? We find human language completely inadequate to tell it forth.

But we thank you that at the end of another year, we can just sit and meditate on your greatness and on your goodness. As we look forward to another year, we do pray with renewed zeal that this might be the year when we will see the man of Calvary, when we shall see the one with the nail prints in his hands, feet and side, and fall at his feet. Let the story repeat and the lover of sinners adore.

We would say this morning, even so, come, Lord Jesus, we ask it in your worthy name. Amen.

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