

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical and Southern Studies

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SBSS

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Adore and tremble, for our God
Is a consuming fire!
His jealous eyes his wrath inflame,
And raise his vengeance higher.

Almighty vengeance, how it burns!
How bright his fury glows!
Vast magazines of plagues and storms
Lie treasured for his foes.

Those heaps of wrath, by slow degrees,
Are forced into a flame;
But kindled, oh! how fierce they blaze!
And rend all nature's frame.

At his approach the mountains flee,
And seek a wat'ry grave;
The frightened sea makes haste away,
And shrinks up every wave.

Through the wide air the weighty rocks
Are swift as hailstones hurled;
Who dares engage his fiery rage
That shakes the solid world?

Yet, mighty God, thy sovereign grace
Sits regent on the throne;
The refuge of thy chosen race
When wrath comes rushing down.

Thy hand shall on rebellious kings
A fiery tempest pour,
While we beneath thy shelt'ring wings
Thy just revenge adore.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

The Majesty of God's Wrath

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

John 3:36

The majesty of God's wrath is evident when a person has God's Son as his atoning substitute; that Son who suffered the wrath of that undeserving sinner. Being saved by

grace means the wrath of God has been satisfied on behalf of that person being saved. Those who see no majesty in the wrath of God are those who have never come to know the righteous holy God in forgiveness. The wrath of God is His holy displeasure at sin. It is only through the Lord Jesus taking one's sin debt upon Himself and bearing the wrath of God for that debt that forgiveness of sin is realized. To one who is justified by grace the wrath of God is majestic and a glorious relic of His holy character that was satisfied with Christ's work of imputation. To be justified by Christ is to receive His imputed righteousness. Once this righteousness is received God declares that person just. This is called justification.

God is a righteous and holy God, and since there is sin in the world the only way it can be properly handled is through the satisfaction of the wrath of God. Being holy He must be against sin which anticipates His wrath. One has said that "God's wrath" is "His settled determination to punish sin." God's Son treaded "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:15). Robertson said, "Literally, 'the winepress of the wine of the wrath of the anger of God the Almighty.'" The picture here is one of God doling out His wrath against the ungodly who are pictured as clusters of ripe grapes being crushed and pressed by being trampled down. Christ is pictured as having a garment covered in blood. Those who will not have God's Son as their Saviour are said to be treasuring up wrath to themselves for the day of wrath (Rom. 2:5). Jesus warned the religious leaders of His day to "flee from the wrath to come." God's wrath is so certain that He takes an oath by it (Ps. 95:11).

God's wrath is a pure divine perfection. He is bound by His perfect nature. God detests anything that is not holy for it is in conflict with His righteousness. He is perfectly consistent with His nature. God's wrath is His holiness revolting against sin without vindictiveness for He is just. Sin is insurrection against the holy God. There is a great question that has been posed, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Gen. 18:25)? We could say it is impossible for God to do wrong without ceasing to be God. "No law is higher than the internal character of God. God Himself is the *summum bonum*. He is the canon of all perfection, the norm of all ethics, the fountainhead of all goodness. There is nothing higher than God, because there can be nothing higher than God" [R. C. Sproul]. God is the perfect Judge as the perfect person!

Our text says that Christ rejectors have the wrath of God remaining on them. This is the last thing mentioned in the chapter, it is a warning. The alternative to believing in Christ who is life eternal is eternal death under the abiding wrath of God. Again, what is the wrath of God? It is the external revelation or manifestation of God's judicial anger against sin. Unbelievers demonstrate that they are children of wrath for the wrath of God is upon the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:3; 5:6). Jesus is the deliverer from the wrath to come

(1 Thess. 1:10). “‘The wrath of God!’ No words can ever fully explain this expression. Holy Whitfield, when he was preaching, would often hold up his hands, and, with tears streaming down ... exclaim, ‘Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!’ Then would he pause because his emotions checked his utterance. The wrath of God! I confess I feel uneasy if anybody is angry with me, and yet one can bear the anger of foolish, hot-tempered people with some equanimity. But the wrath of God is the anger of one who is never angry without a cause, one who is very patient and longsuffering. It takes much to bring the choler into Jehovah’s face, yet is he wroth with unbelievers. He is never wroth with anything because it is feeble and little, but only because it is wrong. *His anger is only His holiness set on fire*. He cannot bear sin; who would wish that He should? What right-minded man would desire God to be pleased with evil? That were to make a devil of God. Because He is God, He must be angry with sin wherever it is. This makes the sting of it, that His wrath is just and holy anger” [Spurgeon].

It is easy for us to see sin in others, and to join in general confessions of sin, in which we seem to include ourselves. But it is very hard to acknowledge it penitently before God. There is, in every man’s heart, a subtle element of self-flattery, which leads him to extenuate or deny his own offences, while yet he is very forward to condemn the iniquities of his neighbors. When Robert Haldane read to Merle D’Aubigne a chapter from the Epistle of Romans concerning the natural corruption of man, he said, “Now I do, indeed, see it in the Bible.” “Yes,” replied Haldane, “but do you see it in your heart?”—a home thrust which awakened a sense of sin, and led to his conversion. Thus, Paul proceeds in Romans 2:5 to bring home to every man’s conscience the terrible charge advanced against the world at large; those who will not have God’s Son as their Saviour are said to be treasuring up wrath to themselves for the day of wrath.