

# The Glories of the Gospel –God’s Wrath & Righteousness

## 1. The Gospel of Grace

- a. Many denominations and people have thrown away the concept of hell and eternal judgment.
  - i. These have focused instead upon God’s goodness and love.
  - ii. Liberal theologians tell us we no longer need a savior.
  - iii. They have done away with the concept of a holy, just and wrathful God and substituted a god of their own creation, a god not found in the bible but in their own imaginations.
  - iv. H. Richard Niebuhr summarized the core of liberal theology in a single sentence: “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ with a cross.”
  - v. When we see God as One who simply exists to improve our lot as human beings we have a god of our own making...
    1. a god who exists to serve us,
    2. a god who we have created in our own image.
  - vi. That is **not** the God of the bible nor is it the God who revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.
- b. You see, the gospel IS a gospel of grace. But grace by its very nature is something undeserved, unmerited and totally unwarranted.
  - i. When you remove the concept of sin, damnation and eternal punishment from the gospel equation, you also remove the nature of grace.
  - ii. If we don’t deserve punishment for what we have done wrong, then we DO DESERVE God’s favor, goodness and love.
  - iii. And if we DO DESERVE God’s favor, goodness and love, then that means we are totally acceptable to Him and that we can earn His favor and that He can be bought and bribed by our actions.

## 2. Over the past 50 years, the gospel has been reduced from a message of saving necessity to a message of enhancement and life improvement.

- a. Ask a hundred people if they want forgiveness and 100 ppl will say “Yeah sure, and I will have fries and a pepsi with it to go.”
  - i. They have no great sense of NEEDING God’s forgiveness, but believe it would not hurt to have it in their pocket just in case.
  - ii. Religion to most is practiced to buy off God’s anger, to pay for a sin done, so that they can go on about in that very same sin.
  - iii. We conduct ourselves in church in the same way that a burglar might throw a bone to a watchdog to keep him at a safe distance<sup>1</sup>.
- b. It is as if we say...
  - i. Sure, I want something that will make my life better.
  - ii. I want something that will make my life easier.
  - iii. It is little wonder that we have nearly 100 million Americans claiming to be born again but their lives are no different from the unbelievers around them.
  - iv. They pack churches each week to hear an encouraging sermon on how God will make their life easier or better if they will apply this formula or that.
  - v. But the leave their churches each week the same way they went in.
- c. Folks, the gospel is a necessity for our lives and it is good news because it reveals the bad news about us.
  - i. The gospel tells us the truth about us, about God and it offers us hope.

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<sup>1</sup> The great work of the gospel, John Ensor  
Grace & Wrath

- ii. You may not want to hear the bad news.
    - 1. But denial will not change your condition.
    - 2. If your doctor refused to tell you had a life-threatening disease because he was afraid you wouldn't like to hear it or that it would offend you, you would sue him!
  - iii. It is likewise with the gospel.
    - 1. It contains some bad news about your current condition.
    - 2. But it also has some wonderful news as well about God's prescription and plan for your life.
3. Let's start off with understanding our need for the Gospel.
- a. Last week we spoke about how people are heading toward hell on a runaway train without hope of being saved, and how vital it is for us to rescue them. We talked about ways that we can engage them in conversations that might lead us to an open door to share the gospel.
  - b. Last week, we surveyed hundreds of people in Mentor at the fireworks display as well as at Geneva on the Lake.
  - c. Today, I am going to focus upon an aspect of God's nature... His Wrath, (anger) and tell you how that fits into the Gospel.
    - i. One of the questions we ask is, "Do you believe there is a heaven or a hell?"
    - ii. Surprisingly, quite a number said, "I believe in heaven but not hell."
      - 1. In fact, many people have an opinion that hell is a creation of religion to scare people into compliance.
    - iii. While that may be their opinion, it reveals a mindset that allows them to remain in their state of rebellion against God by denying that there is a price to pay for their sins or that God will someday call them to account for their actions.
    - iv. The bible tells us that there is in fact a judgment coming, that there is in fact a place where the wrath of God will be vented upon the wicked. In fact, the bible tells us many things about the wrath of God.
      - 1. Romans 1:18, "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven ...*"
      - 2. John 3:18 "*He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already.*"
      - 3. John 3:36 "*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey . . . the wrath of God remains on him*"
      - 4. Ephesians 2:3 We "*were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind*".
      - 5. Don't be deluded into thinking that "wrath" is a thing of the past.
        - a. Ephesians 5:6 tells us, "*let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the WRATH of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*"
    - v. Wrath is mentioned 183 times in the bible, almost always in the context of the just, proper, and natural expression of God's holiness and righteousness which must always, under all circumstances, and at all costs be maintained.<sup>2</sup>
      - 1. **Wrath is God's righteous indignation toward evil and is compatible with His holy and righteous nature.**
      - 2. God's righteousness will not permit any wickedness, any sin or any rebellion into His presence.
        - a. *For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You.* (Psalm 5:4)
        - b. "*Our God is a consuming fire*" (Hebrews 12:29);
        - c. God is perfectly holy, righteous and incompatible with anything that is otherwise.

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<sup>2</sup> Holman bible dictionary  
Grace & Wrath

4. Here is a very important and I hope shocking concept.

a. **“The wrath of God revealed in the bible is so terrible, so fierce, so awful, that it forces us to reach a shocking conclusion. Either our sin and guilt is far greater than we ever knew, or God’s punishment far exceeds the crime.”**

- i. If we make the 2<sup>nd</sup> conclusion, then we will resent God and say, “I could never love a God who uses threats to induce me to serve Him.”
- ii. But if we conclude that God is just and that His punishments ALWAYS fit the crime, then we will make the FRIGHTFUL discovery of the “exceeding sinfulness of sin.”<sup>3</sup>
- iii. The awful consequences of sin and rebellion tell us something very important about the perfection and holiness of God.
- iv. Most of us are willing to admit we *have sinned*, but few of us, if any, ever acknowledge that we are utterly wicked in all of our ways.

b. This leaves us with our ultimate problem.

i. **Our ultimate problem is the wrath of God against our personal sin.**

1. Romans 2:5, "*Because of your (1)stubbornness and (2)unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*"

2. Do you see the causes of wrath?

ii. God's wrath is a righteous judgment.

1. When we are unrighteous, God's righteousness blazes out with wrath and indignation. He is not to be trifled with.

2. This is the wrath is what we need saving from.

3. This is our ultimate problem: God's final wrath that separates us from himself and casts us into hell.

4. If you read the book of Romans, what do we need to be saved from, the answer comes back in several areas...

a. from sin;

b. from guilt

c. from disunity

d. from bad relationships;

e. from destructive habits and harmful ways;

5. But the ultimate answer is: We need to be saved from God's wrath.

a. Romans 5:9. "*Much more then, having now been justified by His [that is, Jesus'] blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*"

c. **God’s wrath is an awesome thing.**

i. The writers of the New Testament clearly understood God’s wrath, but I am not sure we understand it.

ii. If you have ever stood before God’s presence and not felt some fear, you probably haven’t really stood before His presence...or you have stood before a god of your own making.

iii. **Wrath is God’s strong and vigorous opposition to everything evil.**

1. The wrath of God is not like human wrath.

2. Humans get angry for different reasons, hurt pride, questioned authority, desires not met and so on, our sinful natures usually pollutes our anger.

3. This is why we shouldn’t push our idea of anger onto God.

4. **God’s wrath is pure because it is related to His holiness.**

iv. **A short distance from the Pentagon, on blocks of granite, the walls of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington proclaim the words of our third President,**

<sup>3</sup> The Great Work of the Gospel, John Ensor, pp 46.

1. “And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure, when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice can not sleep forever.”
  - v. In the end, it's all about escaping the wrath of God, or, having the wrath of God turned away from us.
- d. There are those who oppose the possibility of God’s wrath who say, “but God is a god of love...”
- i. The Bible speaks of His love in 280 verses
  - ii. The Bible speaks of His judgment in 285 verses
  - iii. The bible tells us that, “*God will not let the wicked go unpunished.*” (Prov. 11:21)
    1. This is illustrated by a statement by Ellie Wiesel, the great Nobel Prize winner and Jewish Survivor of Aushwitz,.
      - a. In 1995, he spoke at a ceremony at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp. He prayed, “*God, merciful God, do not have mercy on murderers of Jewish children. Do not have mercy on those who created this place. Do not forgive the people who murdered here.*”
    2. This great man understood that a just God cannot forgive such wickedness.
    3. Justice demands that that the murderers be cast into hell for their horrific crimes.
    4. But once it is established that God must punish the wicked, who can escape?
    5. The answer to Dr. Wiesel and others who posit this question is, “*Yes, God will judge these murderers with the same harshness He will judge all sinners and wicked people. He will judge them with the same harshness that He will judge your sins.*”
    6. **LET THIS SINK IN.**
  - iv. **It is only when we come to realize the deservedness of God’s wrath upon our sins, and that our sins are not any less offensive to God than anyone else’s, we begin to see our NEED.**
  - v. Last week when we showed an interview with Nate, he said, “well, we are all sinners, so on that basis, none of us deserve heaven.”
    1. He understood the need for someone to rescue him from the consequences that he deserved for his sin.
    2. He understood he could not save himself. He knew he needed a savior.
5. Seeing Our need for the Cross
- a. The love of God could not just sweep the unrighteousness of man and the wrath of God under the rug and pretend all is well.
    - i. The love of God is not a sentimental thing that says, "I love you, so you can do whatever you want to.”
    - ii. The love of God had to deal with man's unrighteousness and had to deal with God's wrath toward man’s sin.
    - iii. God cannot simply drop the charges against me for the wrongs I have done.
    - iv. What turns His wrath away from me?
    - v. The answer is that SOMEONE had to pay for my crimes.
      1. It cost him his Son.
      2. 2 Corinthians 5:21 is a verse that every believer should commit to memory for constant encouragement. It gives the basis for what is given and what is taken away in the gospel: “*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*”
      3. To put it as simply as possible, God imputed (transferred) to Jesus our sin and imputed (transferred) to us his righteousness.

4. **Jesus is the basis of our justification.** (being made right with God)
  5. Romans 5:9 says that it was Jesus' death that provided the basis of our justification: *"Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."*
  6. And Romans 5:19 says *"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous."*
  7. *"The blood of Christ stands not simply for the sting of sin on God but the scourge of God on sin, not simply for God's sorrow over sin, but for God's wrath on sin."*  
Forsyth, P.T.
6. Our central, hub passage this morning is Romans 1:16-18. It says something that is revolutionary, it should astound us as we gloss over its words: *"the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes because "in it [that is, in the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*
- a. In other words, **the gospel REVEALS the very righteousness of God.**
    - i. God's RIGHTEOUSNESS is revealed in the gospel.
    - ii. His wrath, His judgment, His right-ness is revealed in the gospel.
      1. God demands righteousness. He demands holiness. He demands that we right with Him.
      2. And the way that God meets that problem is that **He provides for us the righteousness that we don't have, the righteousness we cannot ever attain by our own efforts.**
      3. **That** is GOOD NEWS!
      4. **What is revealed in the gospel is the righteousness of God for us that he demands from us.**
      5. What we had to have, but could not create or supply or perform, God gives us freely, namely, his own righteousness.
      6. *He came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay. – Anonymous*
    - iii. This is how the gospel saves us from the wrath of God
      1. God intervenes and provides us a righteousness that is not our own.
      2. He gives us the righteousness that He demands from us.
      3. He reveals as a gift in Christ Jesus what was once only a demand.
      4. This is how he saves: in the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection God gives to us the righteousness that he demands from us.
    - iv. In Christ, we now have a right standing with God.
      1. God imputes to us his own righteousness even while we are still ungodly.
      2. He counts us as having **his** righteousness.
      3. Romans 8:3-4 *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*
    - v. In the gospel, it is revealed that God gives to us what he demands from us, He gives us His own righteousness.
      1. He declares believers to be righteous with his own righteousness.
      2. He counts us as righteous with a perfect righteousness, his own righteousness found in His Son, Jesus Christ.
      3. He forgives us, acquits us, justifies us by our faith.
      4. And this is how the gospel saves us.
    - vi. **The gospel reveals these truths for us to see and believe.** In so believing we are saved!

**1. Believing this good news possesses transformational power for our lives!**

2. What does this mean to you?

- a. It means if you are a Christian, God will never be ANGRY with you again.
- b. God has turned away His wrath from you (and placed it upon Jesus), and has taken the righteousness of Christ and given it to you.
- c. How can God be angry at perfection? When we read that “**There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**” (Romans 8:1) we need to see that it means you.
  - i. Fear of condemnation no longer holds you. You are free. You are forgiven. You are righteous in God’s sight even though you are still a work in progress.

7. John Ensor in his book “The Great Work of the Gospel” says of grace:

- a. The grace of God that forgives us also changes us.
  - i. It changes us not just initially but continuously.
  - ii. It convicts us and troubles our conscience.
  - iii. Later it comforts us.
  - iv. Soon after it unleashes irrepressible shouts of praise.
- b. The grace of God revealed in the gospel, wounds our pride but then increases our confidence.
  - i. When God forgives, he exposes the most shameful things only to then cleanse them all from our conscience.
  - ii. And that is just the EARLY work of the gospel of grace.

8. So, how do we experience this gospel of grace?

- a. **We receive the gospel by faith.**
  - i. By believing in it. By putting the weight of our trust in the good news. We express that belief in how we respond to what God has done.
- b. When you cease to trust yourself for goodness and believe what God has said, you experience the very power of God unto salvation!
- c. Commenting on Barabbas, Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote, “He was the only man in the world who could say that Jesus Christ took his physical place. But I can say that Jesus Christ took my spiritual place. For it was I who deserved to die. It was I who deserved that the wrath of God should be poured on me. I deserved the eternal punishment of the lake of fire. He was delivered up for my offenses. He was handed over to judgment because of my sins.... Christ was my substitute. He was satisfying the debt of divine justice and holiness. That is why I say that Christianity can be expressed in the three phrases: I deserved hell; Jesus took my hell; there is nothing left for me but His heaven.”  
- D. C. E
- d. Sinning is not what damns us, it is sinning and not caring that we offend a holy God who has provided a solution and a possibility of change for us.
- e. Let me tell you a story of despair...**Magalie’s dilemma.**
  - i. Magalie was illegally brought from Haiti to Boston by her father, through Canada when she was 13 years old. She graduated from high school 5 years later. Then her father abandoned her to take up with a new wife.
  - ii. She went to a pastor and asked for help when she found out she was pregnant. Unable to secure her a green card, a so called “friend” got her falsified papers claiming falsely that she was here under the guise of political asylum. Although she signed the falsified papers, she didn’t show up for the court date and a date was set for a deportation hearing.
  - iii. After she met with the pastor again, she agreed to let the court know that she had misled the court initially by signing false documents. They walked into the courtroom and sat down. Microphones and recorders noted every word spoken for the record. She trembled in her seat. The judge asked long, memorized questions. With each question, Magalie moved

- closer and closer to deportation. Then, in a moment of desperation, Magalie interrupted the judge and confessed that the document he had before him was false and that she had written out her true story and wanted to present it to him. The judge stopped the hearings and went off the record to consider the new information.
- iv. Here was a judge who was used to being lied to, not confessed to. Although he appeared principled, he did not seem cold hearted. He let both the pastor and Magalie state their cases. A question seemed to hang in the air...how could justice and mercy both be upheld?
  - v. Then the judge swung into action. He gave Magalie several new forms and ordered her to fill them out. He advised her to get a lawyer, to which she replied that she had no money for a lawyer and had been turned down by every free legal aid society. The judge shook his head. He looked as if he was considering what else, if anything that he could do.
  - vi. Suddenly he turned to the clerk and instructed her to go immediately to his office and retrieve a phone number of a personal friend of his. Then he turned to Magalie, "Call him and tell him *I* told you to call. He will help you." Then he told her that if she failed to call this man and follow his instructions and return to his court with the properly filled out forms he would summarily deport her.
  - vii. Here is what is interesting: The judge wanted to show kindness to Magalie, but to ensure that it would not compromise the law (and his integrity as one sworn to uphold it) he sent his own personal friend to help bring Magalie into conformity with the law.
    1. He was working to win her the right to live here lawfully.
    2. If she rejected his offer, he would apply the law without mercy and deport her.
  - viii. This case is like us before God.
    1. As lawbreakers, we stand before Him who is sworn to uphold His righteousness. God's instructions on keeping the law aren't sufficient. We like Magalie also lack the means to bring OURSELVES into compliance. But because of His lovingkindness, god made a way for his mercy to be JUSTLY given to us who would otherwise DESERVE eternal deportation from His kingdom. He sent His own Son to do the work that we could not do, to meet the just requirements of the law...and He did it PRO BONO...that is, free of charge.
    2. He calls us to trust Him to acquit us. We call upon Jesus "for he will save his people from their sins" Mt. 1:21.<sup>4</sup>
9. The question for you today is..
- a. Have you realized the sinfulness of sin and the holiness of God today? Have you been taking sin lightly? Do you recognize what you deserve? Do you now recognize the costliness of your forgiveness?
  - b. I invite you today to receive from God, the righteousness you cannot obtain on your own, that is a free gift from God himself.
    - i. When Romans 1: 6 says, "The gospel is the power of God for salvation," it means that the gospel is God's power to rescue believers from the "wrath of God," or from "the righteous judgment of God"
    - ii. 1 Thessalonians says that Jesus "rescues us from the wrath that is coming." (1 Thessalonians 1:10 NRSV)
    - iii. Will you receive this good news today? Will you receive the forgiveness of God and accept the grace that can change your life?

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<sup>4</sup> John Ensor, the Great work of the gospel, p 77-80.