

# CREDO

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2 | APRIL 2015

## THE FORGOTTEN GOD

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DIVINE ATTRIBUTES WE ARE ASHAMED OF...  
AND WHY WE SHOULDN'T BE

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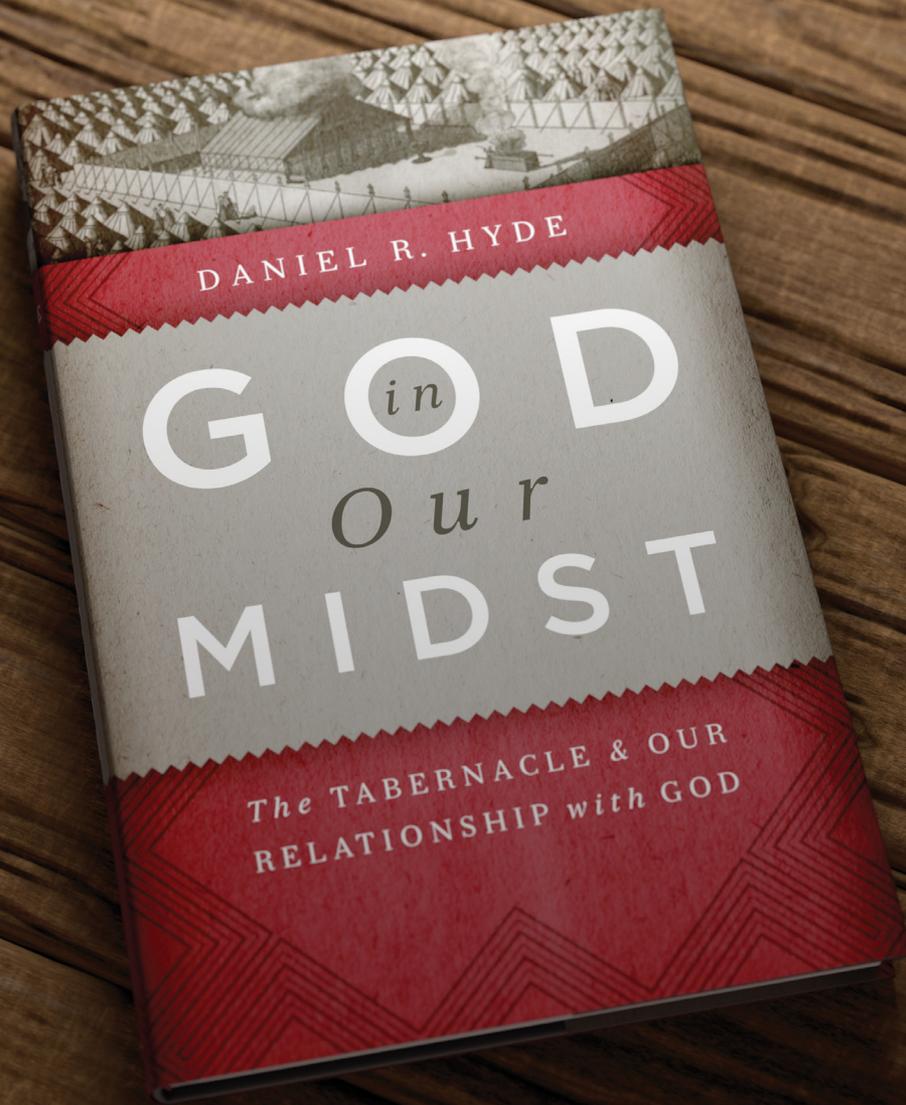
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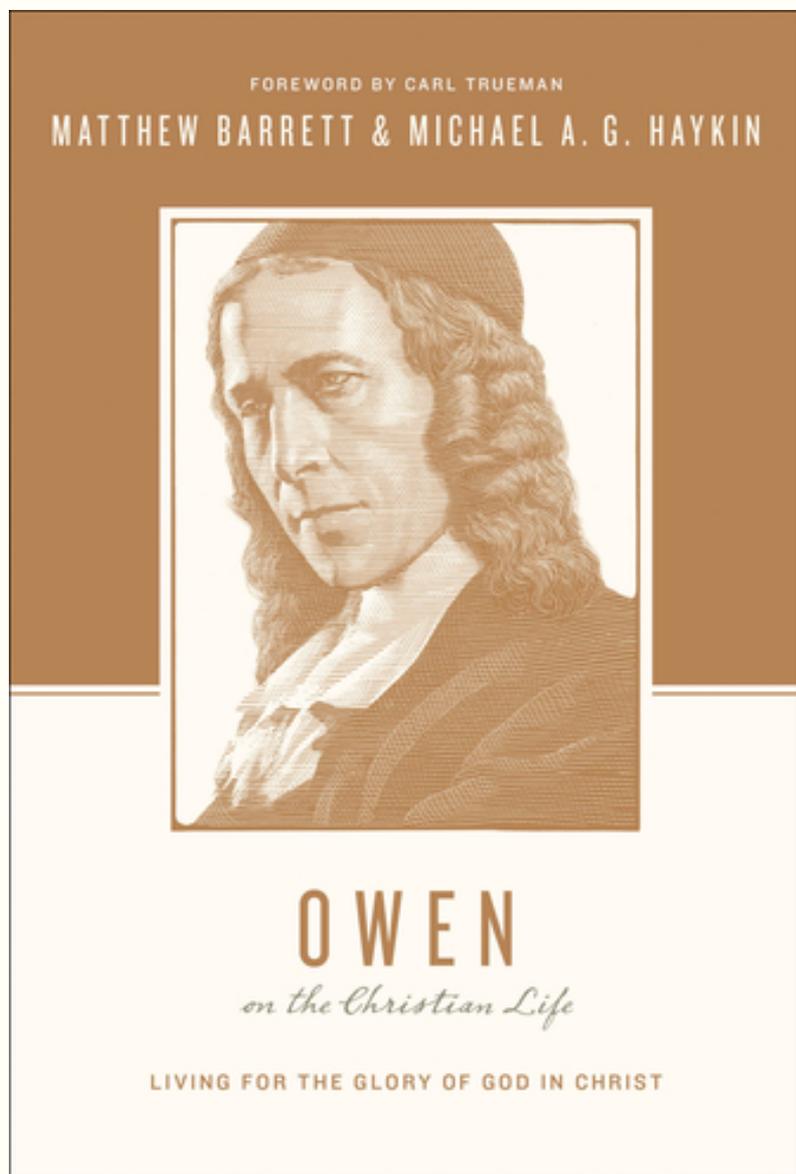
## GOD IS IN THE DETAILS

It happens to many committed Bible readers. They breeze through Genesis and the first half of Exodus. Then they get bogged down in details. Why are there are so many specifications for materials, measurements, and methods — all for a structure that no longer exists, the Tabernacle? Why is this important? In this book, Rev. Daniel R. Hyde illuminates how even the most obscure verses point to Christ and how the Tabernacle itself illustrates the presence of God with His people, a fact of utmost relevance today. **Now available in print and digital edition wherever books are sold.**



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# OWEN

*on the*

## CHRISTIAN LIFE

John Owen is widely hailed as one of the greatest theologians of all time. His many works—especially those encouraging Christians in their struggle against sin—continue to speak powerfully to readers today, offering much-needed spiritual guidance for following Christ and resisting temptation day in and day out. Starting with an overview of Owen’s life, ministry, and historical context, Michael Haykin and Matthew Barrett introduce readers to the pillars of Owen’s spiritual life. From exploring his understanding of believers’ fellowship with the triune God to highlighting his teaching on justification, this study invites us to learn about the Christian life from the greatest of the English Puritans.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Looking back on the first half of the twentieth century, H. Richard Niebuhr famously described liberal Christianity's understanding of the gospel like this: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross." Such a mentality has had its influence and still does today. There are certain Bible stories that you just don't talk about, not even in church. For many people today, Bible stories having to do with divine wrath, anger, or jealousy are embarrassing. And yet, no matter how uncomfortable they make you feel, it is nearly impossible to get through a book (sometimes a chapter!) of the Bible without coming face to face with these forgotten attributes of God. In a culture that capitalizes on tolerance and love, a focus on divine judgment is considered harsh, even primitive. Gordon Rupp's words still speak today when he said, "What it means to feel oneself under the Wrath of God is something that modern man can hardly understand."

Though unpopular to do so, this issue of *Credo Magazine* aims to make you, the modern reader, feel the weight of these biblical attributes of God. They are forgotten attributes of God, no doubt about it. But our desire is that by the end of this issue you will see just how important these attributes are to the story of redemption and for knowing God in a saving way. As has often been said, it is impossible to relish the grace of God in the cross of Christ unless you first understand the condemnation you sit under as a rebel. ◀

**Matthew Barrett**

Executive Editor

# 10 QUESTIONS WITH DAVID MURRAY

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*David Murray is Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. He was born in Glasgow, and he studied for the ministry at Glasgow University and the Free Church of Scotland College (Edinburgh). He is the author of several books, including The Happy Christian, Jesus on Every Page, and Christians Get Depressed Too.*

**What kind of family did you grow up in, when did you come to faith in Christ, and what has God done in your life since?**

I grew up in a Baptist church, where both of my parents were converted to Christ, but my family moved to a very conservative Scottish Presbyterian

church when I was about 10. I lived a worldly life in my late teens and early twenties, especially during my time working in the financial services industry. However, when I was 22 God had mercy upon my soul, convicted me deeply of my sin, and turned me to Jesus Christ. Shortly after that, I had to leave my job for reasons of conscience, and during a year spent working with persecuted Christians in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s I sensed an irresistible call to the ministry. That resulted in six years of theological training before pastoring two churches in the Scottish Highlands for 12 plus years. In 2007 I accepted a call to teach Old Testament and Pastoral Theology at Puritan Reformed Seminary in Grand Rapids. A couple of years ago I was able to start pastoring again in a

local church in addition to my seminary duties, a combination that I love.

**Who have been some of the more formative influences on your view of pastoral ministry and why?**

The primary influence in my early days was Pastor Al Martin. I was greatly influenced through his sermons and lectures on pastoral ministry. My father-in-law, Rev. Angus Smith, was also a tremendous inspiration on my view of and preaching of the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. My father, Allan Murray, who went into the ministry late in life (age 48) after a career in dentistry, has also taught me to be joyful in ministry even when there are few signs of encouragement. My mentor in the ministry when in Scotland was William Macleod, and over here it has been Joel Beeke. I've also learned a lot from the sermons of many American pastors.

**Having lived and ministered in Scotland, what are some of the more obvious differences between evangelical Christianity in Scotland and in the United States?**

Size is the most obvious difference. With a few happy exceptions, the churches in Scotland are much smaller and also much older in demographic. The American churches also have a much greater emphasis on Christian education, which Scotland has sadly lost. One blight Scotland is spared from is the “celebrity preacher” largely because there aren't enough Christians to make anyone famous enough, and also because the Scots are more cynical of all the marketing hype that often

surrounds well-known preachers in America.

**You've written and spoken much on the topic of depression. Why is this a particular concern of yours?**

I was forced into it when my usually vibrant and happy wife suffered with a depression that could not be explained by any particular sin. That blew all my seminary-presuppositions out of the water and I began to see depression, and mental illness in general, was a much more complex problem than I had simplistically thought. With hindsight, we can see that in my wife's case it was probably due partly to pregnancies, stress from a church-split, and also a genetic element. I started treating depression and mental illness more holistically both in diagnosis and cures—looking at the body, the soul, lifestyle, exercise, sleep, thinking patterns, etc.—and began to see significant growth in my counseling ministry and also much-improved results. My passion for the subject is partly to save the church and suffering people from a simplistic understanding of complex problems that only damages people further.

**What one piece of advice would you give to the Christian struggling with depression?**

I usually start with finding out if there have been any significant events in a person's life and then looking at lifestyle—sleep patterns, diet, exercise, rest, recreation, etc. I then want to talk about a person's thinking patterns and their spiritual lives. If I were to identify the biggest common factor in most people's depression that I have dealt with, it would be lack of sleep—that's an epidemic in

our society and it's seriously damaging people's mental and physical health.

**In your opinion, how important is biblical counseling to pastoral ministry and why?**

It's massive. I cannot conceive of pastoring without engaging in biblical counseling. Biblical counseling flows out of and into my pulpit ministry. However, I do want to distinguish biblical counseling (which is what I do) from Bible-only counseling (which is what I used to do). Again, I'm trying to do counseling as the Bible would guide us to do it—viewing people not in a dualistic way but in a holistic way.

**Speaking generally, what mistakes have you made in pastoral ministry that you'd caution others against?**

The biggest mistakes I've made come from a lack of training in peace-making. I so much wish that I'd read and studied Ken Sande's *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* at the very outset of my ministry, instead of some 15 years later. I'd encourage every pastor to read this and to have their whole congregation study it, too. The second biggest mistake has been working too much and praying too little. I'm still trying to get that balance much better in my life.

**Do you enjoy being a Sabbatarian? What practical benefits do you see from keeping the Sabbath in modern-day America?**

Yes, I love it! I and my family look forward to it

so much every week. It's our favorite day – great for family life, spiritual life, and for physical and emotional health, too. I know it's hard to introduce it to a family when it's not been done before, but I'd encourage families to start by maybe working gradually to reduce media, sports, and technology each Sunday and gradually increasing more family meal time, reading time, resting time, and worshipping time. I would hope that people would be pleasantly surprised by the benefits for everyone.

**Imagine you're speaking to young seminarians and aspiring pastors. What specific advice would you give them? What might you prepare them for, warn them against, etc.?**

First, take one full day of rest a week (not Sunday), sleep 7-8 hours every night at regular hours, and exercise vigorously at least three days a week.

Second, treat people holistically. As well as ministering to the soul, try to understand the physical, social, genetic, cognitive, and circumstantial influences in their lives.

Third, and above all, keep near to Jesus and make sure to preach Him in every sermon.

**Tell us about the last time you wore a kilt.**

Never worn one. Don't have the knees for it! I'll leave that to the American tourists! 

*A View from the Pew*

## SHOULD WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE WRATH OF GOD?

by Jessalyn Hutto

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**G**od's wrath can be one of his most intimidating attributes to share with our children. However, to ignore this aspect of God's character is to deny our children a full understanding of their holy Creator. More importantly, to gloss over the biblical doctrine of God's wrath against sin is to gloss over their very real need for a substitutionary Savior. Though often born out of good intentions, this kind of theological hopscotch can cultivate a dangerous blind spot in our growing children's understanding of salvation. Without a knowledge of God's wrath against sin, there's no need for a Savior.

Here are two simple ways to teach children about God's wrath (the bad news about sin)

while simultaneously teaching them about the gospel (the good news about Jesus).

### **GOD PROVIDES FOR FORGIVENESS**

When we speak about God's judgment against sin with our children, it should never be without also reminding them of the Father's willing and loving sacrifice of his beloved Son. A key Bible verse to share with children on this subject would be John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Yes, it is right to tell our children that God hates our sin and must judge our sin,

but it's crucial to convey his great love for them simultaneously. He sent his son, Jesus, to save them from the punishment their sin deserves because he loves them and does not want them to suffer eternal judgment (2 Pet. 3:9).

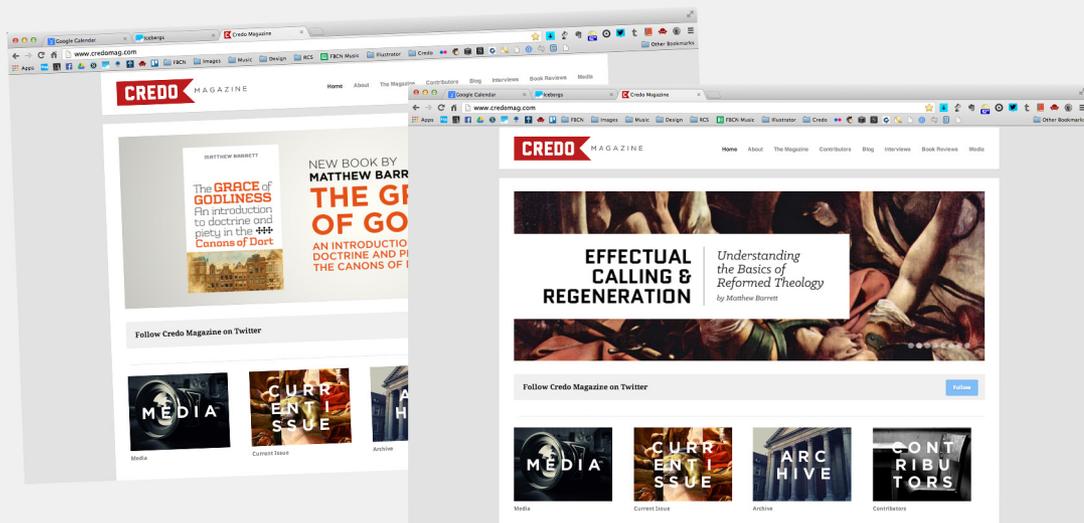
## JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

One of the most natural and common opportunities we have to talk to our children about God's judgment of sin is during times of discipline. When a child has disobeyed and is receiving punishment for that disobedience, we have the opportunity to remind them of the very real punishment all sin deserves from God (Rom. 6:23). But because of the gospel, there is good news for them. We have a good and loving Savior,

who took all of the punishment we deserve upon himself so that we would never have to experience God's wrath. As 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree," and thus we will never have to bear them ourselves.

Teaching our children about God's wrath needn't be something we fear. In teaching them about his wrath, we have the privilege of leading them to the wrath-bearer: Jesus Christ. ▶

**Jessalyn Hutto**  
*Desiring Virtue*



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# TOUGH QUESTIONS

## CAN A GOD OF LOVE ALSO BE A GOD OF WRATH?

by **Cornelius Tolsma**

**L**ove is an eternal attribute of the triune God (cf. John 17:24). Only after the appearance of created beings, and Satan's rebellion, was the wrath of God exercised. Wrath is the response of God to the destructive power of evil.

We must not think of God's wrath (jealousy and hate) in human terms. Sin corrupts our anger while divine wrath is always perfectly righteous. The jealous Lord in love hates all that comes between him and his own. Such deeds and sinners deserve his righteous anger. Love and anger exist in harmony in God.

### **GOD'S WRATH DOES NOT CANCEL OUT HIS LOVE**

His love is exquisitely demonstrated in the exercise of his anger. The Lord loved Moses but was angry with his servant when Moses broke God's law (Exod. 4:14). The Lord's anger reflected his desire of the best for Moses.

### **GOD'S WRATH IS JUST**

When the anger of God is mentioned in the Bible, good reason for his anger is mentioned, too. The Lord has a right to be angry. All are created in his image. Sinners know God and rebel against the very God who made them. What is remarkable is God's restraint in exercising his wrath. He worked with the Canaanites for four hundred years before he brought devastating judgment on them. Depths of evil corrupted the Canaanite nation. Such rebellion in the lives created in

his image must not be tolerated. Hence his anger and judgment.

### **GOD'S LOVE OVERCOMES HIS WRATH**

How God dealt with the individual lives of those who died in Israel's invasion under divine direction is known only to God. The Canaanite Rahab was spared. All have sinned and deserve the wrath of God, but a countless host is destined for heaven. When the Lord's indictment against sinful Israel was read, it sparked his love: "How can I give you up" (Hosea 11:8). In love, the Father sent his Son to bear divine wrath in our place. God's everlasting love is lavished on redeemed sinners.

Isaiah 54:8 led Geerhardus Vos to write, God "releases his anger" and does not take "the same intense personal delight in punishing as he does in exercising his love." He "cannot do otherwise." God loves "because the entire weight of His infinite Being inclines him to do so."

***Rev. Cornelius (Neil) Tolsma** has been a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for many years. He served churches in New Jersey and Florida before pastoring Falls Presbyterian Church in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, for nearly 30 years. Now retired, he is Pastor Emeritus of that church. He is the author of This Is Love: Tracing the Love of God Throughout the Biblical Story. *

*The Reformed Pastor*

## PLAYING WITH GOD IN WORSHIP

by Daniel R. Hyde

**N**o culture in the history of humanity has been so defined by games, sports, and recreation as ours. The sports industry in America is a \$400+ billion dollar industry, the video game industry is a \$50+ billion dollar industry, and the casino industry is a \$30+ billion dollar industry. To cite Loverboy, “Everybody’s working for the weekend.” We talk about weekend warriors. The motto is thrown around: “work hard, play harder.” We like to play as a culture. All this playing has taken a toll on how we view God. I thought I had seen it all with churches turning to glitz and glam, and then I recently saw a man standing on the street in front of a church with a sign, spinning it around and pointing those passing by into the parking lot. God is no longer a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29) but a product we consume.

In Leviticus 10 we read about two ancient priests playing with God at the altar of burnt offering in the tabernacle. In this account we have a stern exhortation and warning to the people of God about what true worship of the one true, holy God must be.

### **STRANGE FIRE: THE SELFISHNESS OF MAN**

The first thing God teaches us about true worship is what it is not. It is not rooted in the selfishness of man. The text immediately strikes us by focusing on Nadab and Abihu (v. 1), and the focus is upon what they brought to the Lord: “each took his censer” (v. 1). Their offerings were rooted in their own desire. Right from the outset there is an obvious point of application: Worship is not

about you. In fact, whenever we make worship about what we want, bad things happen. If you think divine worship can be improved, show it from Scripture. Don't tell your pastor you don't like it, or that you want something else. What's wrong with such statements? They're all focused on the self.

Nadab and Abihu's selfishness is seen in what they brought "before the Lord" (v. 1): They brought "unauthorized" or "strange fire" (*'esh zarah*; v. 1). What was so strange about it? Look in your Bible: "which [the Lord] had not commanded them" (v. 1). That doesn't sound right, does it? They are ordained priests. They took the censer the Lord prescribed. They used the incense in the tabernacle's courtyard, which must have been the same incense the Lord prescribed. So what was so "unauthorized" about it?

Earlier, in Exodus 30:9, we read of the golden altar of incense within the Holy Place, just before the Holy of Holies. There was to be no "unauthorized incense" offered on it. This is precisely what Nadab and Abihu did, but what exactly was unauthorized incense? In Leviticus 16:1–2 we read:

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat."

Notice the connection the Lord draws here between what Nadab and Abihu did and what Aaron was not to do. Just as Aaron was not to go

**I THOUGHT I HAD SEEN IT ALL WITH CHURCHES TURNING TO GLITZ AND GLAM, AND THEN I RECENTLY SAW A MAN STANDING ON THE STREET IN FRONT OF A CHURCH WITH A SIGN, SPINNING IT AROUND AND POINTING THOSE PASSING BY INTO THE PARKING LOT. GOD IS NO LONGER A CONSUMING FIRE (DEUT. 4:24; HEB. 12:29) BUT A PRODUCT WE CONSUME.**

into the Holy of Holies anytime he wanted, lest he die, the inference is that Nadab and Abihu had gone into the Holy Place from outside with their offering. Their sin was to take incense from the outside of the tabernacle and use it on the altar inside the tabernacle. In layman's terms, they tried to make God's worship better! There was incense offered outside on the bronze altar and there was incense offered inside on the golden altar. Nadab and Abihu wanted to improve upon what God had prescribed.

Oh, "But we are a Reformed church," we say to ourselves. Like the Pharisee we say, "God, I thank you that we are not like other churches, evangelicals, Pentecostals, mega-churches, or even Rome" (para. Luke 18:11). Let me make a not-so-obvious, unexpected application of this idea of selfishly wanting to improve on what God has prescribed. God wants congregations to begin

learning what it means to sanctify him by sanctifying the Lord's Day as a whole congregation. Some of us do this well, some of us are growing in sanctification, and some of us are stunting our growth by the choices we make. God wants us not just to rest from work, but he wants us to meet together for public worship. As a pastor, let me say this somewhat crassly for effect: The next time there is public worship God will be there meeting with his people in grace. He won't be on the soccer field, on the baseball diamond, at the mall, at a family gathering, in front of the TV, or in your bed or on your couch as you snooze. Let us not be selfish, but let us serve the Lord.

### **CONSUMING FIRE: THE SANCTITY OF GOD**

The second thing God teaches us about true worship is that we must have an understanding of the sanctity or holiness of God. How was this best illustrated and taught to the people of God in the OT? The Lord sent fire down from heaven to consume not the incense but Nadab and Abihu (v. 2). God then says, "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). What is interesting is this phrase "those near me." Throughout Scripture it is related to other ancient words that were used as a title for those who were officials in a king's royal court and who were permitted access to his presence (Esther 1:14; Ezek. 23:12).

The Lord is a holy God and any who would draw near to him must understand his sanctity.

### **THE LORD IS A HOLY GOD AND ANY WHO WOULD DRAW NEAR TO HIM MUST UNDERSTAND HIS SANCTITY.**

Incidentally, this is why there is a prohibition against the priests drinking alcohol before serving in the tabernacle in Leviticus 10:9. Their task as priests, besides sacrificing and praying, was to teach as well as to make wise distinctions between what was holy and what was unholy, what could come near to the Lord and what could not. They had to have their senses of judgment tuned in and not impaired at all.

"But this is all the Old Testament," you might be saying. Well, let me give just one New Testament verse that draws upon this story. Hebrews 12:28–29 calls upon us to be grateful that we are receiving an eternal kingdom, and because of that "let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe"—why?—"for our God is a consuming fire." The God of the Old Covenant is the same God now in the New Covenant—a holy fire!

### **AN APPLICATION: GOD'S SPECIAL PRESENCE IN WORSHIP**

So how are we to apply this knowledge of God's sanctity to our worship? In his treatise, *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God*, John Owen said it right: We need to have the attitude at the outset of our worship that sanctifying the name of God is our chief goal and delight. Is that your attitude? Do you want to bring God glory? If

**IN HIS TREATISE, A BRIEF INSTRUCTION IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD, JOHN OWEN SAID IT RIGHT: WE NEED TO HAVE THE ATTITUDE AT THE OUTSET OF OUR WORSHIP THAT SANCTIFYING THE NAME OF GOD IS OUR CHIEF GOAL AND DELIGHT.**

so, we must submit ourselves to the Lord's will in worship. He wants us to preach his Word, not entertain by tickling people's ears (2 Tim. 4:3). Be submissive to the fact that although this looks and feels foolish, by faith it is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18–31). He wants us to understand that in worship we find his special presence.

Although we don't have a smoking altar of incense or dead animals in front of us, by faith we come to church believing his promise that he will meet with us to forgive us and to send us out refreshed to serve him in the world. He wants us to delight in his worship. This delight is not selfish; instead, as Owen said, it is "a holy, soul-refreshing contemplation on the will, wisdom, grace, and condescension of God, in that he is pleased, of his own sovereign mere will and grace, so to manifest

himself unto poor sinful creatures as we are."

**CONCLUSION**

We like to play, but God likes to be served. We want to be entertained, but God wants to serve us. We want to improve what God has prescribed, but God wants us to be content. Let us resolve to be a people who sanctify the holy God by sanctifying his day as a day of holy rest and holy worship in his holy presence according to his holy Word.

**Rev. Daniel R. Hyde** (*Th.M., Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary*) is the Pastor of the Oceanside United Reformed Church in Carlsbad/Oceanside, CA. He is also a Ph.D. candidate at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He is the author of many books, including *God in Our Midst*, *Welcome to a Reformed Church*, *Why Believe in God*, and *Jesus Loves the Little Children*. ■



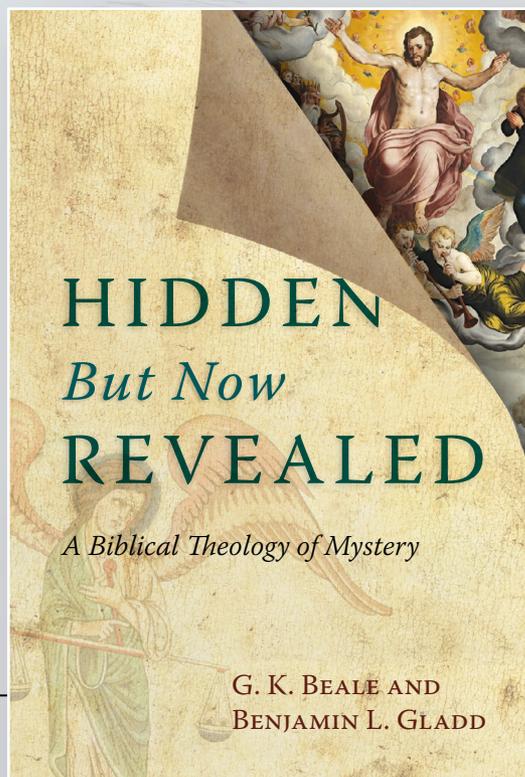
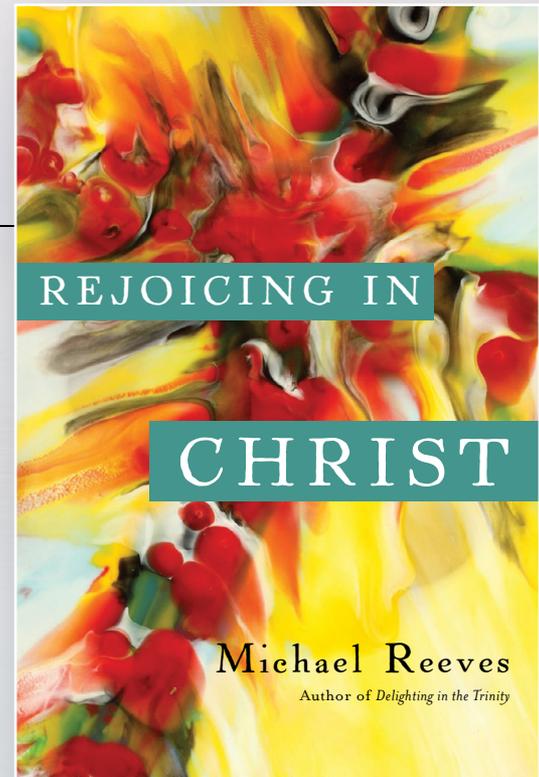
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**JOSH MOODY**, pastor of College Church, Wheaton, IL

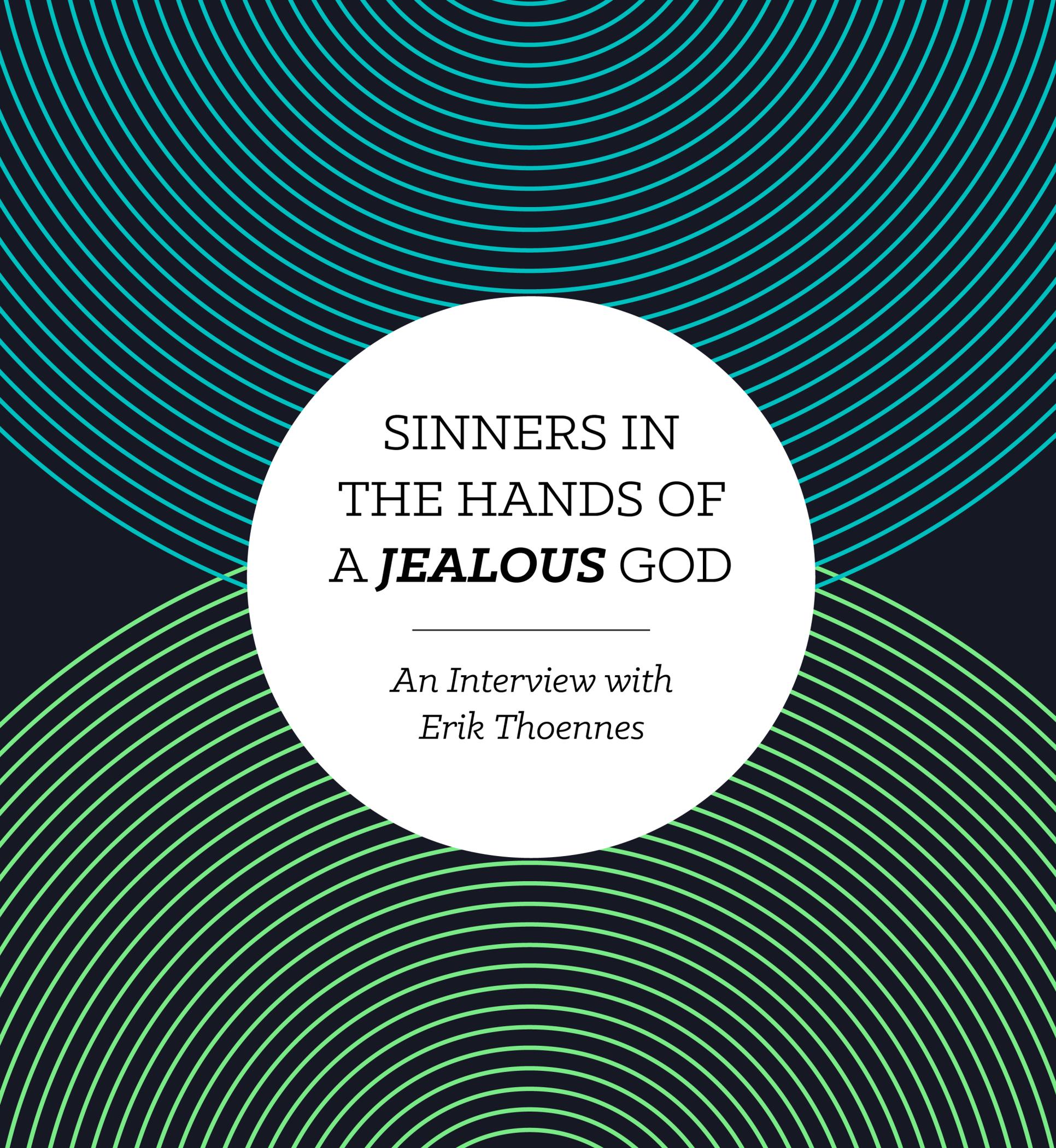


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*"In the realm of lay readers, I can hardly think of an area that is more misunderstood than the area of prophecy; in the realm of biblical scholars, I can hardly think of a topic more controverted than the relationship between the Old and the New. At the crosshairs of both discussions is Daniel's term 'mystery.' For the sake of both readerships, I'm grateful that we finally now have a book that reduces the mystery behind 'mystery.'"*

**NICHOLAS PERRIN**, Wheaton College Graduate School



SINNERS IN  
THE HANDS OF  
A **JEALOUS** GOD

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*An Interview with  
Erik Thoennes*

**T**he jealousy of God? Now that is not a divine attribute you hear about at church on Sunday! Yet, despite its neglect, the jealousy of God is an attribute that pervades the pages of Scripture. In this interview, Matthew Barrett, executive editor of Credo Magazine, talks to Erik Thoennes about what Scripture has to say about God's jealousy and what implications it has for the Christian life.

Erik Thoennes (Ph.D., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is Professor of Theology and Chair of Undergraduate Theology at Biola University/Talbot School of Theology, and a pastor at Grace Evangelical Free Church, La Mirada, California. He is the author of *Godly Jealousy: A Theology of Intolerant Love (Christian Focus)*, and *Life's Biggest Questions: What the Bible Says About the Things That Matter Most (Crossway)*.

**For many today, the word "jealousy" is always a bad one. For example, one thinks of the abusive boyfriend who frantically loses control because he is consumed with jealousy. However, you've written a whole book on "godly jealousy." Tell us, then, how is jealousy in God not only good but necessary and essential to who God is and what he does?**

In Exodus 34:14-15, it is written, "For you shall worship no other

god, for the LORD, *whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*" (emphasis added). To understand why God would call himself jealous, and even intensify this description by turning it into one of his divine names, we need to see Exodus 34:14-15 in its biblical context. This is also true for the hundreds of other times God declares or displays his jealousy in the Bible. While all human words are frail and limited in describing God, we need to allow God's verbal revelation to hold the power and meaning he intends for it to have.

"Jealous" is actually a very good English word to translate the Hebrew word *kana* in Exodus 34. Depending on the context, *kana* (as well as the Greek equivalent *zelos*) can also be translated "zeal" or "envy" in other places in the Bible. Zeal is a general strong feeling to see something come about. Envy is a desire to gain possession of something that does not belong to you, and

**GOD IS RIGHTEOUS AND LOVING WHEN HE DEMANDS EXCLUSIVE FAITHFULNESS FROM HIS COVENANT PEOPLE. BECAUSE GOD RIGHTLY LOVES HIS OWN GLORY, AND GRACIOUSLY LOVES US, HE DEMANDS THAT WE WORSHIP AND SERVE HIM ABOVE ALL. IN HUMAN HISTORY, GOD IS MOST GLORIFIED BY THE UNDIVIDED DEVOTION OF HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE, AND HIS ULTIMATE JEALOUSY FOR HIS GLORY DEMANDS THIS DEVOTION. IF HE DOES NOT CARE WHEN WE LOVE IDOLS MORE THAN HIM, HE WOULD ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE DISHONORED AND LET US SETTLE FOR SO MUCH LESS THAN WE ARE INTENDED TO HAVE FROM LIFE. GOD'S JEALOUS LOVE DEMANDS THE BEST OF US AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

it is always sinful. Jealousy is a strong desire to maintain relational faithfulness which you believe does belong to you. Jealousy can be sinful if it is unwarranted or expressed in wrong ways, but it can also be an entirely appropriate and righteous emotion. We don't usually make a distinction between envy and jealousy, which contributes to the public relations problem jealousy has. God is righteous and loving when he demands exclusive faithfulness from his covenant people. Because God rightly loves his own glory, and graciously loves us, he demands that we worship and serve him above all. *In human history, God is most glorified by the undivided devotion of his redeemed people, and his ultimate jealousy for his glory demands this devotion.* If he did not care when we love idols more than him, he would allow himself to be dishonored and let us settle for so much less than we are intended to have from life. God's jealous love demands the best of us and our relationships.

**What may be a surprise to our readers is to discover that not only is God a jealous God, but his people are to be jealous for his glory. Is there an example of godly human jealousy in the Old Testament that would shed light on what this type of jealousy looks like?**

Phinehas in Numbers 25, David taking on Goliath (1 Sam. 17; Ps. 69), and Elijah challenging the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18) are all clear examples of godly leaders who were intensely jealous for God's honor. The word for jealous (*kana*) is actually used to describe the motives of these men.

**ANY JEALOUS RESPONSE BY THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD REFLECT THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT PATIENTLY AWAITS GOD'S INTERVENTION IN HUMAN HISTORY. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, GOD'S JEALOUSY FOR HIS OWN HONOR CAUSED HIM TO TAKE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE [SEE ACTS 5:5-10; 12:23], BUT WE HAVE NO EXAMPLE OF GODLY MEN DOING THE SAME. THE GODLY CHRISTIAN SHOULD HATE IDOLATRY NO LESS THAN PHINEHAS, YET HE IS CALLED TO FIGHT WITH DIFFERENT WEAPONS. PHINEHAS' SPEAR HAS BEEN REPLACED BY PAUL'S EPISTLES. THE ENEMIES OF GOD SHOULD BE FOUGHT WITH THE SAME BOLD INDIGNATION OF DAVID, BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT HAVE REPLACED HIS STONES.**

Phinehas is not a well known OT figure but he should be. He killed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman who were flagrantly rebelling against God. God says that in doing so, Phinehas atoned for this sins of the people, stopped a plague, and saved many lives because he was jealous for God's honor in a way that reflected God's jealousy for his own honor. He stands as a Christ type when it is said that he is given a perpetual priesthood in addition to being a source of atonement.

I believe that Christians should feel the jealous anger and indignation that all of the godly leaders in the Bible (like Phinehas) experienced. However, in this day of ISIS killing in the name of God's honor, we must acknowledge that there are significant distinctions between the Old Testament saint, operating under the law-based theocracy, and the New Testament Christian, operating under the New Covenant and the lordship of Christ. In addition to their roles, the theocratic context of Phinehas, David, and Elijah was based on Old Testament law and direct commands of God. This makes the bloody expression of their jealousy limited to their historical situation. Phinehas' killing of Zimri and Cozbi, David's killing of Goliath, and Elijah's destruction of the prophets of Baal were appropriate manifestations of their godly jealousy for their contexts, but no longer represent God's methods under the New Covenant. The Christian views idolatry as no less offensive, but awaits the future judgment of Christ and does not take that judgment into his own hands.

Any jealous response by the Christian should reflect the eschatological perspective of the New Testament that patiently awaits God's intervention in human history. In the New Testament, God's jealousy for His own honor caused Him to take the lives of people (see Acts 5:5–10; 12:23), but we have no example of godly men doing the same. The godly Christian should hate idolatry no less than

Phinehas, yet he is called to fight with different weapons. Phinehas' spear has been replaced by Paul's epistles. The enemies of God should be fought with the same bold indignation of David, but righteousness, the gospel of peace, and the sword of the Spirit have replaced his stones.

**Jesus tends to be pictured as "meek and mild." Certainly in the Gospels, Jesus tells his listeners to turn the other cheek and love their enemies. But what do we make of Jesus flipping over tables in the Temple? That doesn't seem to be the Jesus most hear about on Sunday morning!**

The godly jealousy of Jesus stands behind his righteous indignation as he overturned the tables in his temple and drove out the money-changers with a whip. His disciples recognized this attitude as the same one that drove David. It is his words from Psalm 69 they recall after Jesus cleanses the temple: "His disciples remembered that it was written, 'jealousy (*zelos*) for your house will consume me.'"

**JESUS IS INDEED GRACIOUS AND LOVING BUT HIS GRACE AND LOVE IS ULTIMATELY DRIVEN BY GOD'S GLORY. HIS JEALOUS LOVE CAUSED HIM TO HATE SIN AND ALL THAT DISHONORS GOD SO MUCH THAT HE GAVE HIS LIFE TO VANQUISH EVIL AND IDOLATRY ONCE AND FOR ALL. JESUS' FINISHED WORK TO DEFEAT SIN THEN BECOMES THE ULTIMATE ACCOMPLISHMENT AND PRIMARY MEANS TO HONOR GOD. THEREFORE, THE ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL IS THE BEST AVENUE TO CHANNEL GODLY JEALOUSY.**

Jesus is often thought of as being all about grace and love and so unlike the jealous God of the Old Testament. But Jesus spoke often of hell, and one of the last images of him we get in the Bible is so terrifying that unrepentant people are crying out for rocks to fall on them rather than “face the wrath of the lamb” (Rev. 6:16). Jesus is indeed gracious and loving, but his grace and love are ultimately driven by God’s glory. His jealous love caused him to hate sin and all that dishonors God so much that he gave his life to vanquish evil and idolatry once and for all. Jesus’ finished work to defeat sin then becomes the ultimate accomplishment and primary means to honor God. Therefore, the advance of the gospel is the best avenue to channel godly jealousy.

In the New Testament we still see God himself taking drastic, physical action on those who dishonor him. But when it comes to humans, a shift takes place in the New Testament where jealousy for God’s honor is now channeled through gospel proclamation and is, in some measure, put on hold until God unleashes his final judgment. Jesus himself frowned upon violent reactions to behaviors that were dishonoring to God. He rebuked Peter when he cut off Malchus’ ear (Matt. 26:52). His response to James and John when they wanted to call down fire to consume the inhospitable Samaritans seems to teach the same idea. But he turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:55–56). Paul provides the same perspective: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the

destruction of fortresses” (2 Cor. 10:3–4). And again: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

**In an age where religious pluralism is the norm and Christians are called narrow-minded bigots, how does a biblical view of godly jealousy undergird a Christian’s stance for the exclusivity of the gospel?**

In Exodus 34 God gives Moses the central demands of relating to God as his covenant people—a covenant he compares repeatedly to a marriage. God is the husband of his people and we are his bride. This is a metaphor that only intensifies when we get to the New Testament. *To worship any God but the true God is spiritual adultery*, and any husband who does not care that his wife committed adultery *most certainly does not love her*.

Right at the heart of the laws of the covenant, God wants his people to know how *permanent* and *exclusive* is this covenant relationship. He wants them to realize that he is a personal God establishing a personal relationship with his people and should be related to as he is, not as a more user-friendly god of their own making.

What a staggering and wonderful truth—that the God who is perfectly self-sufficient (Psalm 50:12; Acts 17:24-25) has chosen to enter into an intimate relationship with his people to the point where he feels jealous anger if we are unfaithful to him! And what a blessed joy to know that by

faith in Christ, the only perfect covenant keeper, we can rest assured that one day we will be presented to our Lord pure and conformed to his image (1 John 3:2-3). Until that day, may the God whose name is Jealous be honored through the surprising faithfulness of his bride who is prone to wander. Again, as was mentioned already, if God did not care when we love idols more than him, he would allow himself to be dishonored and let us settle for so much less than we are intended to have from life.

**Scholars reading this interview may think godly jealousy has little to do with Christian scholarship. But you write, “Godly jealousy demands that Christian scholars abhor and denounce false teaching, even if they will be considered divisive, intolerant, and uncharitable.” Wow, you won’t hear that at an academic conference! In what ways are scholars tempted to suppress godly jealousy in their own scholarship?**

Any distortion of the truth of God’s Word among God’s people amounts to idolatry and spiritual adultery. In light of this, the jealousy of God has great implications for evangelical scholarship. A faithful Christian theologian will react with godly jealousy whenever the clear teaching of Scripture is violated. In a proper effort to be irenic, gracious,

**A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIAN WILL REACT WITH GODLY JEALOUSY WHENEVER THE CLEAR TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE IS VIOLATED. IN A PROPER EFFORT TO BE IRENIC, GRACIOUS, AND FAIR, IT WILL NEVERTHELESS BE IMPOSSIBLE TO REMAIN AMBIVALENT WHEN GOD’S WORD IS IGNORED OR DISTORTED. GODLY JEALOUSY DEMANDS THAT CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS ABHOR AND DENOUNCE FALSE TEACHING, EVEN IF THEY WILL BE CONSIDERED DIVISIVE, INTOLERANT, AND UNCHARITABLE. LEADERS OF THE CHURCH MUST HOLD TO THE EXCLUSIVE TRUTH CLAIMS OF THE CHURCH THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES.**

and fair, it will nevertheless be impossible to remain ambivalent when God’s Word is ignored or distorted. Godly jealousy demands that Christian scholars abhor and denounce false teaching, even if they will be considered divisive, intolerant, and uncharitable. Leaders of the church must hold to the exclusive truth claims of the church throughout the centuries. God, whose name is Jealous, demands that His people remain devoted to the true gospel without compromise. The church is to be a pillar and buttress of truth (1 Tim 3:15), and its leaders are to guard the good deposit entrusted to us (2 Tim 1:14), so its theological gatekeepers must remain vigilant in these efforts. ■

— BY BRUCE A. WARE —

JUDGMENT OF THE NON-ELECT  
AND THE CERTAINTY OF THE  
SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL

IS MINE

REVENGE

VENGEANCE

IS MINE

SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL  
AND THE CERTAINTY OF THE  
JUDGMENT OF THE NON-ELECT

— BY BRUCE A. WARE —

**S**hould the future suffering of the non-elect, particularly the future suffering of those who currently inflict suffering on the elect, play any part in a Christian's comfort, or hope, or in his understanding of his own unjust sufferings? Our intuitions, shaped so much by our contemporary culture, would lead us to answer, "no." How could our present comfort be based, even in part, on the recognition that those who currently inflict suffering on the godly will themselves be punished? This seems just plain wrong. It seems un-Christian. And it seems contrary to the teaching of Christ himself. After all, Jesus commanded his disciples, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). And Jesus himself, while enduring the infinite injustice of his death on the cross by the hands of wicked men (Acts 2:23) spoke not words of retribution but forgiveness, saying "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). So, surely a persecuted believer would be wrong to take comfort or hope in the realization that the wicked persecutors of the godly will themselves be punished.

### **THREE BIBLE VERSES YOU WON'T FORGET**

As intuitive as this may seem to us, look with me at three other passages (the last of which we'll explore in a bit more detail):

First, consider 1 Peter 2:21-24. Evidently Jesus himself—yes, the same Jesus who spoke the words we just considered in Matthew 5:44 and Luke 23:34—took comfort in knowing that God his Father would bring vengeance on those who persecuted him. Listen to 1 Peter 2:21-24:

## **SHOULD THE FUTURE SUFFERING OF THE NON-ELECT, PARTICULARLY THE FUTURE SUFFERING OF THOSE WHO CURRENTLY INFLECT SUFFERING ON THE ELECT, PLAY ANY PART IN A CHRISTIAN'S COMFORT, OR HOPE, OR IN HIS UNDERSTANDING OF HIS OWN UNJUST SUFFERINGS?**

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

The key verse, of course, is v. 23. Jesus did not retaliate when he was wronged, but what did he do instead? He "kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." This means that Jesus consciously considered as good and right that God his Father would deal with the injustices that were occurring in his persecution. He did not put this out of his mind; rather, he "kept entrusting" himself to the One who would "judge righteously," i.e., to the One who would, in the future, bring justice to bear on those practicing injustice now.

So we conclude that Jesus could simultaneously "love his enemies" and hence not retaliate when wronged, while also entrusting to God the future judgment of these perpetrators of injustice; he could

**PAUL ALSO ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS WHO ARE WRONGED NOT TO TAKE THEIR OWN REVENGE, BUT INSTEAD TO TRUST GOD WHO WILL EXECUTE HIS WRATH AND VENGEANCE UPON THESE UNGODLY WRONGDOERS.**

simultaneously pray forgiveness for these enemies, while consciously knowing that all who were not forgiven by the Father would face their day of reckoning. Both were true in the self-consciousness of Jesus, not just the former of the two (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

Second, Paul’s admonitions in Romans 12:19-20 are also instructive. He writes:

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

Notice two things about this text. To begin with, Paul also encourages believers who are wronged not to take their own revenge, but instead to trust God who will execute his wrath and vengeance upon these ungodly wrongdoers. So, as we saw with 1 Peter 2:23, the realization of the future judgment of God on those who now inflict unjust suffering is not meant to be resisted or squelched or dismissed as “ungodly” thinking; rather this realization is to be embraced as part of the very arsenal by which those unjustly persecuted may resist *personal* revenge. They shouldn’t take revenge because God will! And they should know this, contemplate it, and take strength and comfort in it in the midst of their own mistreatment.

Additionally, notice Paul’s juxtaposition of two OT passages: Deuteronomy 32:35, where Moses (speaking on behalf of God) reminds the children of Israel that God will take vengeance on those who turn from him and his ways, and Proverbs 25:21-22, where we are instructed to do good to our enemies, giving them food and drink instead of (implicitly) doing them harm.

This juxtaposition is very instructive. It shows that we can simultaneously “love our enemies” while also “leaving room for the wrath of God” to come upon them. One does not cancel out the other. As we saw with Jesus, above, we too can simultaneously show kindnesses to our enemies (“if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink”) and hence not retaliate against them when wronged, while we can also entrust to God the future display of his vengeance upon those who carry out injustice against us (“leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord”). Not only do these two not conflict, it is our confidence that God will repay that can contribute to freeing us up not to retaliate ourselves but rather to show kindness and love to our enemies.

Third, listen carefully to Paul’s words of comfort and hope to the Thessalonians as recorded in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10:

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your

persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

Consider a few observations from this text. In vv. 3-4 their faith is enlarged, and their love for one another grows ever greater, in the context of "all" the persecutions and afflictions they endure. The clear indication is that much harm is being brought to them, prolonged suffering in a number of ways, and yet this context of persecution provides the occasion for enlarged faith and love. Clearly this shows the good that God can bring out of affliction, and why in part, therefore, he may intend such suffering to come, or stay, rather than relieving us of it.

In v. 5 the persistence of suffering for the growth of these believers is not the only—nor the main—reason Paul gives for their continued affliction. Verse 5 begins in such a way as to imply an unstated question, viz., "Why is God allowing the continuance of this persecution and affliction?" And the answer of verse 5 is this: Your enduring of persecution will be the basis of God's evaluation,

on the Day of Judgment, that you are worthy to be considered his very people, citizens of his kingdom. You suffered for his name, and you did so gladly and with endurance, and this evidences that you truly are his people, living to his glory, submitting to his rule despite the hardship this invites.

In v. 6 the implicit question, "Why is God allowing the continuance of this persecution and affliction?" has another answer in verse 6. The subject is not the growth they are experiencing through their affliction (vv. 3-4), or their worthiness to stand before God truly as his people on the Day of Judgment (v. 5), but the answer is now instead directed toward those inflicting the persecution. Why does God allow the continuance of this persecution of his own people? Answer: to show his justice in repaying with affliction in the future those who are afflicting these believers in the present. Paul wants these believers to know that one day the tables will turn. Those currently afflicting others will themselves be afflicted. In other words, he wants believers to know now of the future punishment that their ungodly persecutors will endure. There must be something good and right about this that Paul wants them to see and embrace. Paul must be appealing to something deep within them that knows such injustices should not, and cannot, go unpunished. To this deep longing of heart for justice to be done, he comforts them by telling them God will bring forth such justice.

In v. 7 not only will the afflicters be afflicted, but those currently afflicted will be relieved. The comfort of these believers, then, is both truths: (a) their own affliction will be ended (v. 7) when (b) God will bring upon the ungodly the affliction they deserve (vv. 6, 8-9). Both are true, and both are given to strengthen and comfort a persecuted people.

**WHY DOES GOD ALLOW THE CONTINUANCE OF THIS PERSECUTION OF HIS OWN PEOPLE? ANSWER: TO SHOW HIS JUSTICE IN REPAYING WITH AFFLICTION IN THE FUTURE THOSE WHO ARE AFFLICHTING THESE BELIEVERS IN THE PRESENT. PAUL WANTS THESE BELIEVERS TO KNOW THAT ONE DAY THE TABLES WILL TURN. THOSE CURRENTLY AFFLICHTING OTHERS WILL THEMSELVES BE AFFLICHTED. IN OTHER WORDS, HE WANTS BELIEVERS TO KNOW NOW OF THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT THAT THEIR UNGODLY PERSECUTORS WILL ENDURE.**

We have, for the most part, had little problem with the first of these messages—yes, the day will come when the affliction of the righteous will be ended (no more tears, as in Rev. 21:4). Not all have accepted even this teaching, however. Liberation theologians have followed the thinking of Marx and Engels in seeing such promise of future relief as weakening the present resolve of the afflicted to stand up against their oppressors. While there is some modicum of truth to this idea, at its core it runs exactly contrary to the whole of biblical teaching that believers are to endure present suffering, particularly injustices and oppression, in the hope and confidence that their future day of full relief is certain and sure. Far from being an opiate to the peoples, this religious conviction provides strength and endurance to all who believe and trust in its truth.

But the second part of this comfort and hope, viz., that the unjust will face their day of reckoning, is harder for us to accept. How significant, then, it is that Paul does not gloss over this reality but rather develops it in graphic detail in the verses that follow.

In vv. 8-9 we see the extent of the punishment God will bring upon those who currently persecute his people. “Retribution” indicates this is the just judgment of God, and as such it is punitive, not corrective—retributive, not transformative. This is only confirmed by the nature of the punishment—“eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord” means that they will be forever separated from the joy, peace, beauty, goodness, wholeness, and glory of God, experiencing instead all that stands opposite to those qualities. Never-

ending conscious punishment—this is the destiny of all who “do not know God and ... do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

Some have no category for such divine punishment, i.e., for divine punitive judgment. Because God is love, they reason, all punishment by God must be corrective in nature. This text and many others (e.g., how was the flood corrective to all in the world who drowned? how was the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah corrective to these immoral persons?) show how misguided this pseudo-logic is. These who suffer God’s judgment are given the most severe form of punishment possible (“away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”), and the duration of this punishment is itself everlasting (“eternal destruction”). This latter phrase cannot refer to the annihilation of the ungodly, for the spatial reference that follows (“away from the presence of the Lord”) requires that they exist, and they exist separated from God. Instead, this is a reference to the never-ending destruction of all goodness, peace, and joy in their own experiences, as they live forever away from the God of all goodness, peace, and joy.

The punishment is punitive, it is severe, and it is everlasting.

In v. 10 the never-ending punishment of the ungodly will form the backdrop to the rich and glorious joy of the saints who enter into the reality of God's goodness, grace, love, and holiness in all their fullness. The coming of Christ brings both realities into view together, and at the same time. Horrid eternal suffering (vv. 8-9), and joyous endless bliss (v. 10) are juxtaposed forever.

So, it seems clear that Jesus, Peter, and Paul instruct us that a persecuted believer's present comfort, hope, and strength are grounded not only in the benefits they derive from their present suffering and the future relief they will experience at the coming of Christ, but the suffering believer is also strengthened and comforted by knowing the future reality of suffering and affliction that God will mete out on the ungodly on a coming day of judgment.

**BELIEVERS ARE TO ENDURE PRESENT SUFFERING, PARTICULARLY INJUSTICES AND OPPRESSION, IN THE HOPE AND CONFIDENCE THAT THEIR FUTURE DAY OF FULL RELIEF IS CERTAIN AND SURE. FAR FROM BEING AN OPIATE TO THE PEOPLES, THIS RELIGIOUS CONVICTION PROVIDES STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE TO ALL WHO BELIEVE AND TRUST IN ITS TRUTH.**

## **PRESENT COMFORT IN GOD'S FUTURE JUDGMENT OF THE UNGODLY**

The question we now must turn to is how it can be right, good, and wise for God to instruct suffering believers to take hope, in part, by the fact that God will bring vengeance upon the unjust and wicked. Another way to frame the issue is through asking two related questions, one of God and one of us:

How can a God of love and vengeance be understood as the same true and living God?

How can we be called to love our enemies while also taking comfort in their future day of retribution?

There are at least four parts to our answer that we must consider, and as important as the first three elements are, they fall short of giving the depth of understanding we seek without also taking into account what is proposed in the fourth part.

How it can be right, good, and wise for God to instruct suffering believers to take hope, in part, by the fact that God will bring vengeance upon the unjust and wicked?

First, God is justified in bringing this future judgment upon the ungodly, and we are right to take comfort now in contemplating this future reality, because the ungodly will receive exactly what they deserve. Because God is just, and because his laws have been violated, it is right for God to bring upon the ungodly their deserved punishment. And, because God will be meting out the punishment, we can be assured that the punishment will be appropriate to the offenses, giving to each person according to [his] works. As Revelation 20:12-13 reminds us,

all those outside of Christ will be raised and will be judged “every one of them according to their deeds.” And speaking to ungodly and unrepentant sinners, Paul writes that each is “storing up wrath for [him]self in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5). Deserved judgment, just judgment, appropriate judgment, discriminate judgment — these qualities will mark God’s judgment of the ungodly on this final day.

Second, God is justified in bringing this future judgment upon the ungodly, and we are right to take comfort now in contemplating this future reality, because this judgment is necessary to uphold the moral framework and structure of the universe. For God to allow misconduct and wickedness to go unpunished would be, in effect, to tolerate such wickedness as acceptable. To show that wickedness is deplorable and morally wrong, as God knows perfectly and fully, he must bring the unrepentant wicked to their day of retribution. As Abraham said of God in relation to God’s threatened judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, “Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” (Gen. 18:25).

Third, God is justified in bringing this future judgment upon the ungodly, and we are right to take comfort now in contemplating this future reality, because only then is the righteousness of God and his ways fully vindicated. As Paul says, “let God be found true, though every man be found a liar” (Rom 3:4). There must be a day of reckoning in which the truthfulness and righteousness of God is put on display such that the lies and wickedness and disobedience of sinners will be shown for what they are. Deception will give way to clarity and truth,

and God will be shown to be right, good, holy, and faithful, though a multitude of sinners are shown guilty. The vindication of God is of the utmost importance in this future day of divine judgment, and believers now may take hope that God will be shown, in the end, to be right.

As important as these three reasons are, they do not give a fully satisfying answer to how God is justified in bringing this future judgment upon the ungodly, and how we are right to take comfort now in contemplating this future reality. Why? What’s missing? It is simply this: All three of these concerns, these elements in accounting for the future day of divine judgment, are also accounted for in Christ’s work on the cross in relation to those who by faith trust in Christ and receive his payment for their sins. In the case of believers, the judgment they deserved is paid fully by Christ (satisfying element #1), and the moral framework of the universe has been maintained as Christ satisfies God’s just case against these sinners (satisfying element #2), and God is vindicated as righteous (i.e., propitiated) in forgiving the sins of believers precisely because Christ has paid fully for their sin (satisfying element #3).

What does this tell us? Here is the sobering answer: It could be the case, then, that God could satisfy all of these concerns and account for all these elements if he had chosen to elect all people and hence save all people. In this case there would be no future judgment of human sin to account for these elements, since all would be brought to believe in Christ and hence all would have their sin’s penalty paid for and applied to their lives through faith in Christ. In short, universal election and universal salvation would satisfy all of these concerns and require no future judgment of sinners.

But, God has not done this. He has elected some, not all. He has chosen to satisfy the three concerns stated above in two ways—for the elect, these three concerns are satisfied in Christ’s payment for their sin, accepted by faith; for the non-elect, these three concerns are satisfied only in their own personal judgment before the throne of God’s wrath and retribution. Why? This brings us to our fourth element:

**THE HORRORS OF HELL  
MAGNIFY THE GLORIES  
OF HEAVEN**

Fourth, God is justified in bringing this future judgment upon the ungodly, and we are right to take comfort now in contemplating this future reality, ultimately, because God has deemed it wise and good to magnify the greatness of his gracious and merciful salvation of sinners whom he has elected from eternity past in Christ against the backdrop of his just judgment of unrepentant sinners who receive their just condemnation. In short, the staggering reality of divine judgment magnifies the greatness of gracious salvation; the horrors of hell magnify the glories of heaven.

Is this taught in the Bible? Consider with me several texts, beginning with 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10. Recall that Paul wrote, “These [unrepentant unbelievers] will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.” Notice the juxtaposition of the judgment of the lost at the same time Christ comes to be glorified in his saints. The horror of the former will show more of the greatness and wonder of the latter.

Even more explicit is Rom 9:22-23: “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory.” What was only implicit in 2

**SOME HAVE NO CATEGORY FOR SUCH DIVINE PUNISHMENT, I.E., FOR DIVINE PUNITIVE JUDGMENT. BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE, THEY REASON, ALL PUNISHMENT BY GOD MUST BE CORRECTIVE IN NATURE. THIS TEXT AND MANY OTHERS SHOW HOW MISGUIDED THIS PSEUDO-LOGIC IS. THESE WHO SUFFER GOD’S JUDGMENT ARE GIVEN THE MOST SEVERE FORM OF PUNISHMENT POSSIBLE [“AWAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER”], AND THE DURATION OF THIS PUNISHMENT IS ITSELF EVERLASTING [“ETERNAL DESTRUCTION”].**

Thessalonians 1:9-10 is here explicit. God endures with patience the vessels of wrath “to make known” (using *hina*, for this purpose) the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy. So, the judgment of the vessels of wrath serves the purpose of magnifying the gracious salvation of the vessels of mercy.

But one might wonder, wouldn't it magnify the extent of God's mercy if that mercy were extended to all people? Wouldn't Christ's salvation be even greater if his salvation extended to all people?

Consider Revelation 5:9: "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'" Most often, focus is placed on the second half of the verse, where Christ is said to be slain to purchase people from every tribe and nation to constitute those saved in Christ. But notice that the whole verse included another theme also—not Christ as Savior, but Christ as judge. How? What does it mean that this Lamb slain alone was worthy "to take the book and break its seals"? What happens when the seals of the book are broken? Answer: the unfolding of the culmination of history through the unleashing of God's wrath and judgment on the earth. So Revelation 5:9 presents the Lamb who was slain as achieving two roles in the end—Savior of the elect, and Judge of the non-elect. God intended his Son not only to be exalted as Savior but as Lord over all. The Father designed that the Son have this position of pre-eminence over all, as Psalm 2 also prophesied.

One last thought on this issue. Is this idea of God displaying the magnitude of his mercy on some guilty sinners against the backdrop of his judgment of other guilty sinners taught elsewhere in the Bible? Indeed, most of God's acts of salvation

**IN SHORT, THE STAGGERING REALITY OF DIVINE JUDGMENT MAGNIFIES THE GREATNESS OF GRACIOUS SALVATION; THE HORRORS OF HELL MAGNIFY THE GLORIES OF HEAVEN.**

through redemptive history manifest this same juxtaposition and pairing. To give one last example, consider with me the Exodus event.

God favored Israel while he brought judgment on Egypt. Israel was spared the plagues that came down upon Egypt, including (most importantly) the death of the first-born. God purposely told Israel what he (purposely) didn't tell Egypt, to kill a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts of their houses, so that when the angel of death came, he would "pass over" their homes. Israel then left Egypt, but Pharaoh's army pursued. You recall that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, and when the army of Egypt pursued, God commanded Moses to raise his staff and as a result all the armies of Egypt drowned. Clearly, God's salvation of Israel was intended by God to be placed against the backdrop of his just judgment of Egypt.

One more question we might have. Might it be the case that God favored Israel because they were, relatively speaking, a righteous people who didn't deserve judgment, while Egypt was idolatrous and deserved the judgment they got? If so, then God had to act as he did and you can't say that this parallels necessarily the reality of final salvation and final judgment. But the answer to this question is "no." Consider Ezekiel 20:4-11:

"Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Let them know the abominations of their fathers, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt; I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God. On that day I swore to them that I would bring them

out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands. And I said to them, Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. None of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

“Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live.

Did you see the answer to our question? No, Israel wasn't a righteous people; they were, in fact, so idolatrous God would have destroyed them were it not for his own pledge and commitment to them. So, even though Israel deserved the same judgment Egypt received, God intended to magnify this gracious salvation of Israel against the backdrop of the same judgment Israel deserved, but meted out against guilty Egypt.

## CONCLUSION

God is vindicated in the future judgment of unrepentant sinners and believers are right to take hope in the future day of God's retributive judgment on unrepentant sinners precisely, and ultimately,

because only in this way is God fully glorified, and because only in this way is his Son shown supreme not only as gracious Savior of the elect, but as righteous Judge of the non-elect.

Though we pray for our enemies, and we seek not to return evil for evil against them, and we pray for those who persecute us—in the end, we also delight in the fact that through their judgment, as through our salvation, the glory of God in Christ is shown forth in all of its brilliance. May God grant us grace to understand more of his greatness that will enable us to embrace his purposes for what they are—good, right, wise, and perfect.

To God be the glory, in his Son, by the power of the Spirit, forevermore.

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**T H E R E I S  
N O N E L I K E  
M E I N A L L  
T H E E A R T H**

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*The Exodus, the Fame of God's Name,  
and the Manifestation of God's  
Jealousy Through Divine Sovereignty*

**by Matthew Barrett**

**H**ave you ever wondered: What does God’s jealousy have to do with his sovereignty? Admittedly, this is not a question that typically comes to mind. After all, jealousy is a divine attribute few Christians dare to explore, and divine sovereignty tends to be an attribute we prefer be kept surreptitious. What is remarkable, however, is how these two attributes, when placed together, shed eye-opening light upon some of the most complicated and challenging doctrines in Scripture.

In what follows, we will take a journey back to one event in redemptive history—the Exodus—that we might grasp a deeper understanding of how these two attributes relate to one another. Along the way, we will also welcome help from the apostle Paul and allow his letter to the Romans to speak insight into our interpretation of the Exodus affair in order to figure out what these two attributes have to do with one another.

However, before we set out on this venture, we must start where any good theologian should start: namely, with a definition or two.

### **WHAT ARE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND DIVINE JEALOUSY?**

First, let’s begin with divine sovereignty. It will

come as no surprise that I affirm a Reformed understanding of divine sovereignty—not because it is Reformed *per se*, but precisely because I believe it is supported by Scripture itself. Though it is not my goal here to defend a Reformed view of divine sovereignty, I do believe it is crucial to understanding divine jealousy properly.

That said, what is divine sovereignty? Scripture teaches that God, as Creator and Lord, is sovereign, ruling and reigning over all things, including human beings. There are at least two key components of divine sovereignty. First, God’s sovereignty is meticulous, exhaustive, and universal. This means that God is not only sovereign over big things, but little things—in fact, even the smallest of details in life. Divine sovereignty means that God, as Lord, is in

control of *all* things, as Paul says in Ephesians 1:11, and he is at work to make sure that all things in time and space go according to his eternal plan, whereby before the foundation of the world he ordained exactly what would take place in order to bring about his plan of redemption.

Second, God’s sovereignty is efficacious. In other words, God does not fail to bring about his decree. While he has many who try to oppose him, God *will* accomplish his purposes. He is always successful in bringing about his preordained will. In short, we can bring on all opponents, but in the end God always wins. As king Nebuchadnezzar learned the

**WHILE THERE MAY BE TIMES WHEN GOD’S PLANS, FROM OUR HUMAN, LIMITED VANTAGE POINT, SEEM DEFEATED, GIVE HIM ENOUGH TIME AND WHAT WE DISCOVER IS THAT WHAT SEEMED TO BE DEFEAT TURNED OUT TO BE BUT ANOTHER STEP ON THE WAY TO VICTORY.**

**GOD IS IN CONTROL NOT ONLY OF EXTERNAL HUMAN ACTIONS, BUT EVERYTHING INTERNAL AS WELL, INCLUDING THE DESIRES, MOTIVES, AND AFFECTIONS OF THE HUMAN HEART. AS BOTH CREATOR AND LORD, HE NOT ONLY HAS THE ABILITY BUT THE RIGHT TO TURN THE HUMAN HEART HOWEVER AND WHEREVER HE PLEASES.**

hard way, God “does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’” (Dan. 4:35). While there may be times when God’s plans, from our human, limited vantage point, seem defeated, give him enough time and what we discover is that what seemed to be defeat turned out to be but another step on the way to victory. Certainly the crucifixion is the ultimate example of this. As the early Christ-followers prayed in Acts 4, “for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do *whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place (emphasis added)*” (4:27-28).

When we relate these two components of divine sovereignty to the human sphere, it means that God is in control not only of external human actions, but everything internal as well, including the desires, motives, and affections of the human heart. As both Creator and Lord, he not only has the ability but the right to turn the human heart however and wherever he pleases. As we read in Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord: he turns it wherever he will.” Therefore, the heart-desires

of no individual, not even the most powerful individual, like a king, are outside the Lord’s control. And should he decide to turn the heart in a certain direction, he is perfectly just in doing so.

I realize this raises a lot of questions that we cannot entertain at this juncture, but my purpose here is not to flesh out how such exhaustive, meticulous, efficacious sovereignty coincides with human responsibility, but merely to explore how such sovereignty corresponds to divine jealousy.

So let’s turn our attention now to divine jealousy. Erik Thoennes, in his book *Godly Jealousy: A Theology of Intolerant Love*, defines jealousy as the “ardent desire to maintain exclusive devotion within a relationship in the face of a challenge to that exclusive devotion.” Thoennes goes on to list several necessary requirements that must be present. These include: a lover, a beloved, a rival, infidelity expressed in some way by the beloved, and an emotional response to that infidelity. As we will see, these ingredients are present, more or less, in the Exodus event.

Thoennes also explains how in Scripture there are two aspects of divine jealousy: (1) God’s jealousy for his own glory, and (2) God’s jealousy for his people’s faithfulness to him as their God (we will focus mostly on the former). In God’s dealings with Pharaoh, God is jealous for his own glory, desiring to see his own name magnified not only by his people but by the nations. There is a rival who has opposed him, and therefore God,

by delivering his people through mighty acts, will make it known to all that he is the one true God. Thoennes and Wayne Grudem note how we see jealousy at work when God “responds to the abrogation of his exclusive right to be acknowledged as the only true God. ...When God is jealous, it means that he ‘continually seeks to protect his own honor.’” This is exactly what is taking place in the Exodus event, where Pharaoh has refused to acknowledge and obey the only true God, and God responds by protecting his own honor, leading to the glorification of his name not only in Israel but among the nations.

### GET TO THE POINT

With these definitions in place, what then does divine sovereignty have to do with this understanding of divine jealousy? Put simply, God’s jealousy is manifested *through* the execution of his sovereignty. We will explore this argument through the Exodus event and discover that there is a pattern at play:

1. God’s name is not being regarded as great by man
2. God is jealous for his own glory
3. God exercises his sovereignty
4. God’s sovereign actions are the very means by which God’s name is once again glorified among man

The implication of this pattern is that divine jealousy and sovereignty go hand-in-hand, the latter being the channel through which the former is manifested. As we will see, *refusing to separate divine jealousy from divine sovereignty guards us from the accusation that God’s sovereignty*

**REFUSING TO SEPARATE DIVINE JEALOUSY FROM DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY GUARDS US FROM THE ACCUSATION THAT GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IS ARBITRARY, CAPRICIOUS, AND WITHOUT PURPOSE. TO THE CONTRARY, THE INTER-DEPENDENCY OF THE TWO DEMONSTRATES THAT GOD’S SOVEREIGN ACTIONS ARE WRAPPED UP IN GOD’S OWN INTENTION TO MAKE HIS OWN NAME GREAT AMONG HIS COVENANT PEOPLE.**

*is arbitrary, capricious, and without purpose. To the contrary, the inter-dependency of the two demonstrates that God’s sovereign actions are wrapped up in God’s own intention to make his own name great among his covenant people.*

That said, let’s look at the Exodus event.

### WHAT IS GOD’S PRIMARY PURPOSE IN THE EXODUS EVENT?

One might answer, to deliver his people because they are suffering. After all, in Exodus 3:7-9 we read that the Lord saw the affliction of his people in Egypt and so he came down to deliver them. True enough. However, I don’t think delivering Israel, as important as that is, is the *primary* or ultimate reason for God’s actions. My justification comes in Exodus 10:1-2:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and

the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, *that you may know that I am the LORD (emphasis added)*” (cf. Ps. 106:7-8).

That last phrase is crucial, for it tells us why God has gone to such great lengths, hardening Pharaoh’s heart, sending plague after plague. The primary purpose in God’s sovereign actions is that man might know that the God of Israel is the Lord. In other words, God desires to see his own name magnified, honored, and praised.

So, now that we see that God’s jealousy for his own glory is the primary motive and purpose behind God’s actions, the next question is, How exactly does God bring this about? And the answer is: through his divine sovereignty. So let’s look at the steps God takes.

Before Moses steps a foot back in Israel, God appears to him and tells him that he will harden Pharaoh’s heart (Exod. 4:22). Certainly it is difficult to think of a greater attestation to exhaustive, meticulous sovereignty than this. What is so curious, however, is the question, why? God could have delivered Israel immediately. In other words, he could have sent Moses and softened Pharaoh’s heart right away. But instead, God does the exact opposite: he intentionally hardens Pharaoh’s heart from the start and continues to harden Pharaoh’s heart in the midst of each plague so that Pharaoh will not do the very thing God, through Moses and Aaron, has told Pharaoh to do. As God says

to Moses in Exodus 4:22, prior to Moses going to Pharaoh, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.” In hardening Pharaoh’s heart, God is then able to put his sovereignty on display through the many plagues he brings down on Egypt. It is sort of like a play in which the plot continues to thicken as the story progresses, until everything reaches a climax and the central question becomes: Who is going to win, God or Pharaoh? When we find out how the story ends, it is evident whose name is greater: Yahweh’s.

The point is that it is precisely through God exercising his sovereignty over Pharaoh (as seen in God hardening Pharaoh’s heart, sending the plagues, and then destroying the Egyptians in the Red Sea) that his name is made great. In other words, through God’s sovereign actions over the most powerful ruler on earth, God is glorified among his people. Stated otherwise, it is God’s jealousy for his own glory that drives him to act in a sovereign way over Pharaoh and Egypt.

### **THERE IS NONE LIKE ME IN ALL THE EARTH**

We see such a point throughout the narrative. In Exodus 5, Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh only for Pharaoh to reject them and their God and increase the workload of Israel. When Moses cries out to the Lord in despair, the Lord, in Exodus 6, reminds Moses that he is the Lord, the one who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as “God Almighty” (6:3), and he will not let his covenant promises fail. In Exodus 7, God tells Moses he is sending

him and Aaron before Pharaoh once again, but he will harden Pharaoh's heart (7:3). Though God will multiply his signs and wonders, Pharaoh will not listen (7:3-4). God will then lay his hand on Egypt, delivering his people "by great acts of judgment" (7:4). Again, we see this emphasis on God hardening Pharaoh's heart so that he can perform "great acts of judgment" (cf. Exod. 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10).

In Exodus 9, we see God's sovereignty and jealousy for his own glory connected once again. The Lord is about to send the seventh plague (hail) upon Egypt. He says to Pharaoh,

Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, *so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.* For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. *But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth* (9:13-16).

In my estimation, Exodus 9:13-16 is one of the most powerful passages that proves our point (cf. 10:1-2; 11:9). God could have accomplished his will immediately, he says. But instead he draws out the process through mighty acts of divine

## **IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF GOD'S JEALOUSY FOR HIS OWN GLORY, WHICH IS BEING OPPOSED BY PHARAOH, THAT GOD USING HIS SOVEREIGNTY TO ACCOMPLISH MIGHTY ACTS IS JUSTIFIED.**

sovereignty in order that Pharaoh and his people will know that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth. Verse 16 is especially important. Why does Pharaoh exist? God has raised him up for the very purpose of displaying Gods mighty

power so that God's name will be proclaimed in all the earth.

We see this point reiterated when Israel is about to cross the Red Sea. God says to Moses, "For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord" (Exod. 14:3-4). Again, God is going to make his own name great among the nations by means of hardening Pharaoh's heart and thereby getting glory over Egypt.

## **IS THERE INJUSTICE ON GOD'S PART?**

Now, the objection that often comes at this point is: How can God be justified in hardening Pharaoh's heart, then bringing Pharaoh and his Egyptian army to destruction? Isn't this an example of God's sovereignty being arbitrary and whimsical? The answer to these objections might have some weight if it weren't for the context of the story that we just painted; specifically the fact that God is wielding his sovereign hand for the very purpose of bringing glory to himself. In other words, *it is*

*precisely because of God's jealousy for his own glory, which is being opposed by Pharaoh, that God using his sovereignty to accomplish mighty acts is justified.*

The apostle Paul, in Romans 9, makes this clear. Paul highlights God's sovereign choice in predestining his elect, not on the basis of something he foresees in them, but unconditionally. Turning to the figures of Jacob and Esau, Paul writes, "when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'" (Rom. 9:10-13).

If Paul is teaching that election is unconditional, you would expect the very objection Paul encounters next: "What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part?" Paul answers, "By no means!" In order to show that there is no injustice on God's part, Paul turns to Pharaoh:

For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For

**SO, GOD HARDENS WHOMEVER HE WILLS AND HE HAS MERCY ON WHOMEVER HE WILLS, AND BOTH ARE DESIGNED TO BRING GLORY TO GOD, THOUGH IN VERY DIFFERENT WAYS.**

the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. (Rom. 9:15-18)

Paul is quoting from Exodus 9:16. But again, Paul encounters an objection, "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?'" (9:19). What Paul says next gets to the heart of our argument:

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory. (Rom. 9:20-23)

Here we learn from Paul that God, as the potter, has the right to make one vessel for destruction and another for glory. But what we cannot miss is his purpose in doing so. Desiring to make known his wrath and power, God has patiently endured vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, so that he might also make known his glory by saving vessels of mercy.

**THE “JEALOUSY OF GOD IS VITAL TO THE ESSENCE OF HIS MORAL CHARACTER, A MAJOR CAUSE FOR WORSHIP AND CONFIDENCE ON THE PART OF HIS PEOPLE, AND A GROUND FOR FEAR ON THE PART OF HIS ENEMIES.”**

Pharaoh is a case in point of this very principle at work. And Paul applies this truth to the non-elect, in contrast to God’s elect. God’s hardening work upon the heart is far from arbitrary, for in this work God is glorifying himself by making his power evident in pouring out his wrath, as seen with Pharaoh.

Of course, there is a positive side as well. God not only shows his power in the destruction of the wicked but the riches of his glory in the redemption of his elect. Undoubtedly this truth was also on display, as God not only destroyed Pharaoh but redeemed his chosen people, Israel. So, God hardens whomever he wills and he has mercy on whomever he wills, and both are designed to bring glory to God, though in very different ways. Like the book of Exodus, Paul teaches us that God is jealous for his own glory, and he chooses to bring glory to his name through his divine sovereignty. In Romans 9, that sovereignty is evident in election and reprobation. Far from arbitrary acts, these sovereign acts are motivated by God’s jealousy for his glory.

**SOVEREIGNTY,  
JEALOUSY, AND WORSHIP**

I realize that rarely do discussions on such attributes as divine sovereignty and jealousy draw out practical implications, but it is important to do

so if we are going to do good systematic theology and thereby guard ourselves from the temptation to divorce doctrine from doxology.

Thoennes says in his study that the “jealousy of God is vital to the essence of his moral character, a major cause for worship and confidence on the part of his people, and a ground for fear on the part of his enemies.” I couldn’t agree more. And I think Israel would have agreed as well, for after they are delivered and cross the Red Sea, which God had parted for them only to let down the waters on their enemies, the Israelites sing this song to the Lord:

I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? (Exod. 15:1, 2, 11)

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SINNERS  
IN THE  
HANDS  
OF AN  
ANGRY  
GOD

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JONATHAN EDWARDS

PART 1

**F**ew sermons in the history of America have been as famous (or notorious!) as “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” by Jonathan Edwards. Preaching on the anger, judgment, and wrath of God is strange, very strange, to our contemporary ears, ears that demand to be tickled not convicted. Sure, we love to hear about the love of God, but we do not want to hear about our sin and the danger of condemnation we face apart from Christ. Yet, it is for this very reason that this classic sermon, delivered in the eighteenth century, must be revisited. We have lost the biblical teaching of divine anger and wrath, and as a consequence we can make little sense of God’s grace and mercy. Therefore, while Edwards preached this sermon centuries ago (July 8, 1741, Enfield, Connecticut), his message is more relevant than ever.

*Their foot shall slide in due time. —  
Deuteronomy 32:35*

In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God’s visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, notwithstanding all God’s wonderful works towards them, remained (as verse 28) void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses next preceding the text. —The expression I have chosen for my text, their foot shall slide in due time, seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed.

1. That they were always exposed to destruction; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed, Psalm 73:18: “*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction.*”
2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning: Which is also expressed in Psalm 73:18, 19: “*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: How are they brought into desolation as in a moment!*”
3. Another thing implied is, that they are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.
4. That the reason why they are not fallen already and do not fall now is only that God’s appointed time is not come. For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time comes, their foot shall slide. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that

stands on such slippery declining ground, on the edge of a pit, he cannot stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this. — “There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.” — By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God’s mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment. — The truth of this observation may appear by the following consideration.

1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men’s hands cannot be strong when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands. — He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defence from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God’s enemies combine and associate themselves, they are

easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by: thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God’s using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, “*Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*” Luke 13:7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God’s mere will, that holds it back.
3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John 3:18: “*He that believeth not*

**“THERE IS NOTHING THAT KEEPS WICKED MEN AT ANY ONE MOMENT OUT OF HELL, BUT THE MERE PLEASURE OF GOD.”**

*is condemned already.”*

So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is, John 8:23: “*Ye are from beneath.*” And thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God’s word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them; as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth: yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such an one as themselves, though they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and

**THE WRATH OF GOD BURNS AGAINST THEM, THEIR DAMNATION DOES NOT SLUMBER; THE PIT IS PREPARED, THE FIRE IS MADE READY, THE FURNACE IS NOW HOT, READY TO RECEIVE THEM; THE FLAMES DO NOW RAGE AND GLOW. THE GLITTERING SWORD IS WHET, AND HELD OVER THEM, AND THE PIT HATH OPENED ITS MOUTH UNDER THEM.**

held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The scripture represents them as his goods, Luke 11:21. The devils watch them; they are ever by them at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.
6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God’s restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles,

in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in scripture compared to the troubled sea, Isa. 57:20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he

**UNCONVERTED MEN WALK OVER THE PIT OF HELL ON A ROTTEN COVERING, AND THERE ARE INNUMERABLE PLACES IN THIS COVERING SO WEAK THAT THEY WILL NOT BEAR THEIR WEIGHT, AND THESE PLACES ARE NOT SEEN. THE ARROWS OF DEATH FLY UNSEEN AT NOON-DAY; THE SHARPEST SIGHT CANNOT DISCERN THEM.**

does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, *“Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;”* but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God’s restraints,

whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world in all ages, shows this is no evidence, that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought-of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear, that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God’s hands, and

so universally and absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience do also bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death; that if it were otherwise we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world, and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death: but how is it in fact? Eccles. 2:16: *"How dieth the wise man? even as the fool."*
9. All wicked men's pains and contrivance which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. Every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he

**"NO, I NEVER INTENDED TO COME HERE: I HAD LAID OUT MATTERS OTHERWISE IN MY MIND; I THOUGHT I SHOULD CONTRIVE WELL FOR MYSELF — I THOUGHT MY SCHEME GOOD. I INTENDED TO TAKE EFFECTUAL CARE; BUT IT CAME UPON ME UNEXPECTED; I DID NOT LOOK FOR IT AT THAT TIME, AND IN THAT MANNER; IT CAME AS A THIEF — DEATH OUTWITTED ME: GOD'S WRATH WAS TOO QUICK FOR ME. OH, MY CURSED FOOLISHNESS! I WAS FLATTERING MYSELF, AND PLEASING MYSELF WITH VAIN DREAMS OF WHAT I WOULD DO HEREAFTER; AND WHEN I WAS SAYING, PEACE AND SAFETY, THEN SUDDEN DESTRUCTION CAME UPON ME."**

lays out matters better for his own escape than others have done. He does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to

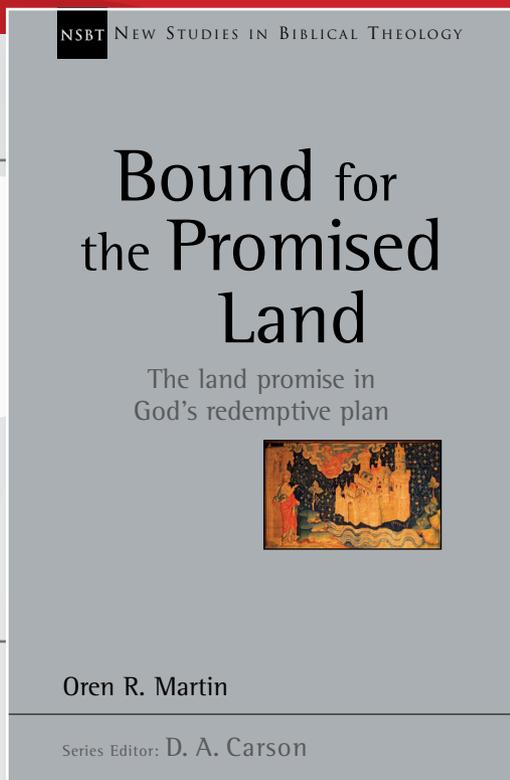
hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive: it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell, ever to be the subjects of misery: we doubtless, should hear one and another reply, “No, I never intended to come here: I had laid out matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself — I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpected; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief — Death outwitted me: God’s wrath was too quick for me. Oh, my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me.”

10. God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men’s earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that, 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. ■

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## A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A ROMAN CENTURION



GARY M. BURGE

SINNERS  
IN THE  
HANDS  
OF AN  
ANGRY  
GOD

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JONATHAN EDWARDS

PART 2

## APPLICATION

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. — That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as

lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the

**THE USE OF THIS AWFUL SUBJECT MAY BE FOR AWAKENING UNCONVERTED PERSONS IN THIS CONGREGATION. THIS THAT YOU HAVE HEARD IS THE CASE OF EVERY ONE OF YOU THAT ARE OUT OF CHRIST. — THAT WORLD OF MISERY, THAT LAKE OF BURNING BRIMSTONE, IS EXTENDED ABROAD UNDER YOU. THERE IS THE DREADFUL PIT OF THE GLOWING FLAMES OF THE WRATH OF GOD; THERE IS HELL'S WIDE GAPING MOUTH OPEN; AND YOU HAVE NOTHING TO STAND UPON, NOR ANY THING TO TAKE HOLD OF; THERE IS NOTHING BETWEEN YOU AND HELL BUT THE AIR; IT IS ONLY THE POWER AND MERE PLEASURE OF GOD THAT HOLDS YOU UP.**

sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff on the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the

arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

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

**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.**

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.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and

bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. — And consider here more particularly,

1. Whose wrath it is: it is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. 20:2: "*The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: Whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul.*" The subject that very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust,

**CONSIDER THIS, YOU THAT ARE HERE PRESENT, THAT YET REMAIN IN AN UNREGENERATE STATE. THAT GOD WILL EXECUTE THE FIERCENESS OF HIS ANGER, IMPLIES, THAT HE WILL INFLICT WRATH WITHOUT ANY PITY. WHEN GOD BEHOLDS THE INEFFABLE EXTREMITY OF YOUR CASE, AND SEES YOUR TORMENT TO BE SO VASTLY DISPROPORTIONED TO YOUR STRENGTH, AND SEES HOW YOUR POOR SOUL IS CRUSHED, AND SINKS DOWN, AS IT WERE, INTO AN INFINITE GLOOM; HE WILL HAVE NO COMPASSION UPON YOU, HE WILL NOT FORBEAR THE EXECUTIONS OF HIS WRATH, OR IN THE LEAST LIGHTEN HIS HAND; THERE SHALL BE NO MODERATION OR MERCY, NOR WILL GOD THEN AT ALL STAY HIS ROUGH WIND; HE WILL HAVE NO REGARD TO YOUR WELFARE, NOR BE AT ALL CAREFUL LEST YOU SHOULD SUFFER TOO MUCH IN ANY OTHER SENSE, THAN ONLY THAT YOU SHALL NOT SUFFER BEYOND WHAT STRICT JUSTICE REQUIRES.**

in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs,

as his majesty is greater. Luke 12:4, 5: *“And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”*

2. It is the fierceness of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isa. 59:18: *“According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries.”* So Isa. 66:15: *“For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.”* And in many other places. So, Rev. 19:15, we read of *“the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”* The words are exceeding terrible. If it had only been said, *“the wrath of God,”* the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but it is *“the fierceness and wrath of God.”* The fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! Oh, how dreadful that must be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them! But it is also *“the fierceness and wrath of almighty God.”* As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict, as though omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. Oh! then, what will be the consequence! What will become of the

poor worms that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong? And whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires. Nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. Ezek. 8:18. *“Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them.”* Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare.

God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only *“laugh and mock,”* Prov. 1:25, 26, etc.

How awful are those words, Isa. 63:3, which are the words of the great God. *“I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.”* It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz. contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot. And though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt: no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict to that end, that he might show what that wrath of Jehovah is. God

hath had it on his heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that would provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath when enraged with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave orders that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to show his wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. Rom. 9:22: *“What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?”* And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, even to show how terrible the unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. Isa. 33:12-14: *“And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut*

*up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites,”* etc.

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness of the omnipotent God shall be magnified upon you, in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. Isa. 66:23, 24: *“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”*

4. It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long for ever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your

soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: For “*who knows the power of God’s anger?*”

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. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might

**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? ARE NOT YOUR SOULS AS PRECIOUS AS THE SOULS OF THE PEOPLE AT SUFFIELD, WHERE THEY ARE FLOCKING FROM DAY TO DAY TO CHRIST?**

all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell? And it would be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a very short time, even before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons, that now sit here, in some seats of this meeting-house, in health, quiet and secure, should be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you that finally continue in a natural condition, that shall keep out of hell longest will be there in a little time! your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in the land of the living and in the house of God, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!

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

**NOW UNDOUBTEDLY IT IS, AS IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE AXE IS IN AN EXTRAORDINARY MANNER LAID AT THE ROOT OF THE TREES, THAT EVERY TREE WHICH BRINGS NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT, MAY BE HEWN DOWN AND CAST INTO THE FIRE. 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."**

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? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of the people at Suffield, where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Are there not many here who have lived long in the world, and are not to this day born again? and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? Oh, sirs, your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart is extremely great. Do you not see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the present remarkable and wonderful dispensation of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and awake thoroughly out of sleep. You cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God. — And you, young men, and young women, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an extraordinary opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness. — And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of such great favour to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and

their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls; and never was there so great danger of such persons being given up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. God seems now to be hastily gathering in his elect in all parts of the land; and probably the greater part of adult persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little time, and that it will be as it was on the great out-pouring of the Spirit upon the Jews in the apostles' days; the election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. If this should be the case with you, you will eternally curse this day, and will curse the day that ever you was born, to see such a season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, and will wish that you had died and gone to hell before you had seen it. Now undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is in an extraordinary manner laid at the root of the trees, that every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down and cast into the fire.

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." ■



THE WRATH OF  
GOD AND  
THE GOSPEL

*by Fred G. Zaspel*

**P**reachers today often complain that the concept of sin is so foreign to today's postmodern mind that it seems nearly impossible to get across. Indeed. But if this is so (perhaps we should say, *because* this is so), the concept of divine wrath is still more difficult. How could God be angry—much less *very* angry—with *us*?

But of course the notions of sin and wrath are inseparably linked, and Scripture never loses sight of them as such. The biblical writers do not present divine wrath as a necessary attribute of God as he is in himself but as *the necessary outworking of God's holiness in reference to sin*. Wrath is the inevitable response of God to all that is contrary to him and therefore in rebellion against him.

### THE NATURE OF DIVINE WRATH

The righteousness that God requires of us is not abstract or theoretical. What he requires is that we, creatures made in his image, reflect him faithfully—that we display (“image”) in our own persons and behavior the moral and ethical uprightness that is characteristic of him. Because (1) we are God's image-bearers, and because (2) his law is reflective and expressive of him, he cannot but require that we conform. It is one function of his righteousness that he require the same righteousness of us.

It is because of this connection that God has a deep interest in our ethical and moral conduct. For example, measuring scales and all devices for determining honest dealings with others are said,

ultimately, to have been issued by God. “Honest scales and balances belong to the LORD; all the weights in the bag are of his making” (Prov. 16:11). Whether we speak in terms of inches, centimeters, pounds, grams, bushels, or ounces, all such “truth” scales are reflective of God's justice and the justice he requires of us. They all

**WE CHRISTIANS INSIST THAT WE HAVE “GOOD NEWS” FOR THE WORLD. BUT NOT FOR A MOMENT CAN WE THINK THAT THE NEWS IS GOOD BECAUSE IT HAS SOMEHOW DONE AWAY WITH NOTIONS OF AN ANGRY, WRATHFUL GOD.**

are “from him” in that sense. Accordingly, a just weight delights him, reflecting as it does his own justice. And by the same token, a false balance is repugnant and abhorrent to him as a personal affront and violation of his justice.

All of this figures into the biblical presentation of God's wrath. Sin is a treacherous refusal of his righteous reign, and given this, God is not indifferent to it. It angers him. In every sin, every transgression of his law, the sinner sets himself in opposition against the lawgiver and thus, inevitably, becomes the object of his holy wrath.

### WRATH AND LOVE

We Christians insist that we have “good news” for the world. But not for a moment can we think that the news is good because it has somehow done away with notions of an angry, wrathful God. Wrath is the necessary outworking of God's holiness in reference to sin. “God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day”

(Ps. 7:11), and Scripture is replete with reminders and demonstrations of it. From the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of the Canaanites, and the exile of his own chosen people Israel, to the eschatological battles and the horrors of hell, God has gone to lengths to impress us with the fact of his wrath toward sin.

Moreover, the good news is not that God has side-stepped his justice in order to save us – that he has just let bygones be bygones and overlooked our sin as though it didn't matter. No, just as his righteousness demands righteousness, so also his righteousness demands punishment for all *un*righteousness. “If you eat of that tree you will die” (Gen. 2:17). “The one who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Sin is an outrage, rebellion against the infinitely righteous rule of our Creator, and as such it requires the ultimate penalty.

No, the good news we proclaim and revel in is this: The God who is wrathful against us because of our rebellion against him nevertheless *loves* us and has made a way to save us *on the ground of a full satisfaction of all his righteous demands upon us*.

The epistle to the Romans is of course widely recognized as Paul's fullest exposition of the gospel, and it is significant that this gospel exposition (Rom. 3-8) is given in direct answer to the problem of human sin and consequent divine wrath (Rom. 1-

3). There are many further provisions graciously bestowed in salvation, but until God's righteous wrath is answered, no further saving blessing is possible. There is good news – and lots of it! But as it has been said so many times, we cannot begin to understand this good news until we first come to grips with the bad news of divine wrath.

## MERCY THROUGH JUDGMENT

In the old covenant system of worship God rivets our attention on his wrath in a very dramatic way. Israel is God's chosen people. He has taken them to himself in grace and has promised to dwell with them. But the outstanding question is, how can a holy God dwell in the midst of a sinful people? He cannot surrender his righteousness. And sin still demands condemnation. So how will God dwell among them?

God draws out the answer at length in the Levitical sacrifices, the whole point of which was to offer a substitute who, in place of the offerer, would bear the punishment of sin. In this way “atonement” was made for the people (see especially Lev. 16 and the rituals of the Day of Atonement).

Of particular interest is the expression, “a pleasing aroma to the LORD” (e.g., Lev. 1:9,

13, 17). The point here, of course, is not that God enjoys the smell of barbeque. The point is that the sacrifice was *accepted* by God, “pleasing” to him in that sense. That is to say, the sacrifice *satisfied*

**NO, THE GOOD NEWS WE PROCLAIM AND REVEL IN IS THIS: THE GOD WHO IS WRATHFUL AGAINST US BECAUSE OF OUR REBELLION AGAINST HIM NEVERTHELESS LOVES US AND HAS MADE A WAY TO SAVE US ON THE GROUND OF A FULL SATISFACTION OF ALL HIS RIGHTEOUS DEMANDS UPON US.**

God. Its leading purpose was to appease God with reference to sin. Here is how God could dwell with a sinful people: a substitute was offered who, standing in place of the people, bore the punishment of their sin, thus making satisfaction to God. Mercy *through* judgment.

Now of course no mere animal could satisfactorily bear the sin of men and women created in God's image. But these centuries of sacrifice were intended by God to establish the structure, a picture, by which we are made to think that *if an adequate substitute could be found sinful humanity would have hope*.

### **“CHRIST ... A FRAGRANT OFFERING TO GOD”**

It is in this light that we are brought to understand the death of Christ. The New Testament writers regularly present Jesus' death in these sacrificial categories. Expressions such as “the blood of his cross,” “by his blood,” “sacrifice for us,” “the lamb of God who takes away sin,” “a lamb without blemish,” and so on, all reflect an understanding of Christ's death as sacrifice for sin. “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2).

Some biblical and theological vocabulary is important here. First, as we have seen, *sacrifice*. Christ's death was that of a sacrifice offered to God to make atonement for sin.

Next, *substitute*. Christ “gave his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). He “was made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). “He who knew no sin was made sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). He “bore the sin of many” (Isa. 53:12). The biblical statements are seemingly

endless in affirming that Christ, the sinless one from heaven, died in place of sinners, taking their sin to himself and bearing their curse.

Next, *propitiation*. Christ died as a sacrificial substitute, bearing our sin, in order to appease God and satisfy his wrath against us. “Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

The good news is not that God is not angry. The good news is that we have a Substitute who, standing in our place, took the judgment of sin that we had incurred, thus appeasing God's wrath against us. Endless blessings come to us “in Christ”—forgiveness of sins, transformation of heart and life, familial and loving fellowship with God. But these all come to us because, first, the Lord Jesus overcame the obstacle of our sin by enduring the wrath of God in our place.

### **GOD THE PROPITIATOR AND THE PROPITIATED**

We are not done until we notice clearly that it was this very wrathful God who in love sent his Son to endure his wrath against us. In his death Jesus did not force the hand of an unwilling Judge but carried out the mission of love to which he had sent him. This is love like no other. And this is good news indeed.

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## ADDICTED TO THE GOSPEL

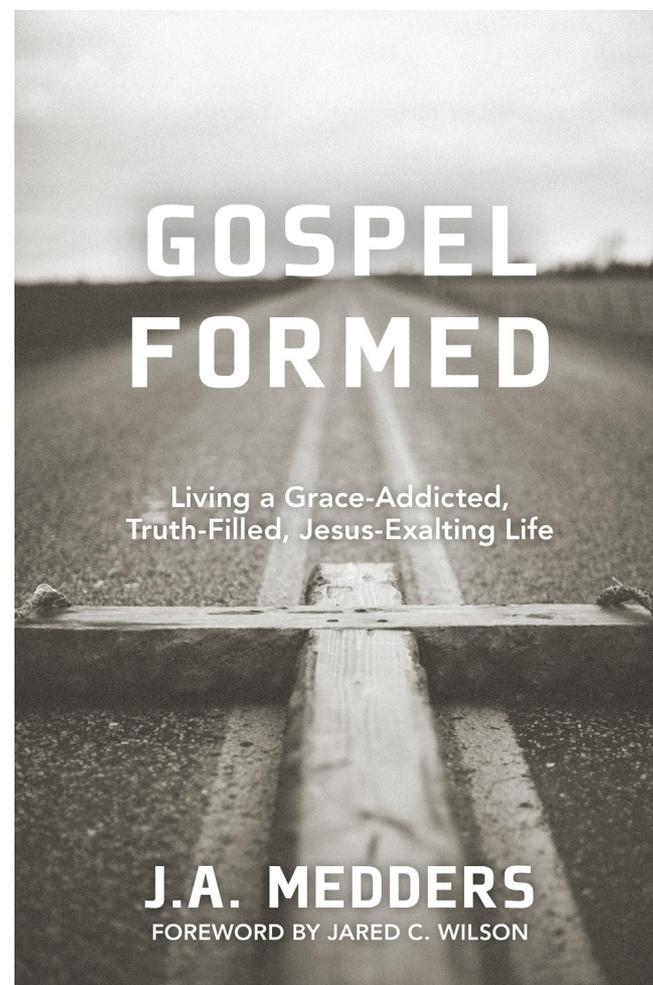
*J.A. Medders Says We  
Cannot Get Enough*

by Jessalyn Hutto

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**A**s Christians, we have no greater joy than to gaze upon the beauty of Christ. For this reason, meditating on the Word of God has been a long-standing tradition of our faith. Unlike other worldly forms of meditation that seek to empty the mind, Christian meditation seeks to fill the mind with the glorious truths of the gospel. It is an active meditation that takes thought, patience, and effort.

This ruminating process has often been likened to a cow chewing its cud because we do not simply read about the gospel, assimilate its message into our lives, and then move away from it. No, we chew on it, over and over again. And just when



we think we have mined the depths of the riches of God's grace, we joyously realize that we haven't even scratched the surface. And so we begin chewing again, with each new encounter unleashing valuable nutrition that our souls depend upon. This is the picture that comes to mind as I attempt to review J.A. Medders' first book, *Gospel Formed: Living a Grace-Addicted, Truth-Filled, Jesus-Exalting Life* (Kregel, 2014). And though most authors would probably gag at the thought of their book being likened to cow cud, I have a feeling that Medders would be all too happy with the comparison. The message of his book is unabashedly simple: chew on (and savor!) the glorious message of the gospel. It is only by ru-

minating on the gospel, after all, that we will be transformed into “grace-addicted, truth-filled, Jesus-exalting” people.

*Gospel Formed* is written as a devotional. It is made up of 27 short chapters that each focuses on a different aspect of the gospel-centered life. While it might be tempting to devour the entire book in one sitting, this book is best read a chapter a day. This is because each short chapter is absolutely jam-packed with Scripture, helpful metaphors, and biblical counsel. Their blissfully bloated pages demand that readers stop in their tracks to slowly digest the depth of truth Medders desires to communicate.

Each of its 27 chapters can easily stand on its own for daily reading, but that doesn’t mean that there isn’t a purpose to the structure and flow of the book. It is divided into five parts: The Gospel Starting Block, Gospel Worship, Gospel Identity, Gospel Community, and Gospel Mission. The organization of these five sections reveals how the truths of the gospel trickle down into every nook and cranny of the Christian life. In so doing, they provide a practical blueprint for what it truly means to be “gospel-centered”—a concept that is constantly emphasized in the Christian community, but too often in a cliché and nebulous fashion.

Upon first glance, *Gospel Formed* might appear to be riding the wave of the “gospel-centered” movement. You may wonder what need there is for yet another book that claims to teach you what it means to be gospel-focused. This is where I believe Medders truly shines as an author. While it is true that the topics and information shared in *Gospel Formed* are anything but new, they are

presented in a way that allows you to see them afresh.

By using a constant stream of metaphors and illustrations, Medders’ playful wording encourages his readers to view familiar topics from a new perspective. Like a jeweler studying a diamond from every different angle, he often frames the same topic in several different ways within a single paragraph. Again, I would emphasize the importance of slowly sifting through each chapter, so as to truly marinate in the word pictures Medders skillfully employs. If you do, you are sure to come away with some truly helpful perspective on doctrines and practices you may have taken for granted.

Also worth mentioning is that *Gospel Formed* is written in a style that the unchurched would be able to understand. Though dealing with deep and glorious biblical truths, Medders manages to do so without employing too much “Christianese.” This makes his book very accessible to new believers who might be put off by a book written in a more traditional, formal style.

Somehow Medders was able to make me sit back and ponder the deep and marvelous treasures of the gospel as well as laugh out loud at creative word-plays in the same chapter. His book succeeds in being fresh, while at the same time faithfully heralding the historic, biblical, world-altering truths of the gospel. ■

**Jessalyn Hutto**

*Desiring Virtue*

*First Principles*

## THE MAKING OF A GREAT THEOLOGIAN: REMEMBERING ANDREW FULLER

by Michael A.G. Haykin

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Why should we remember Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) two centuries after his death in Kettering in the English Midlands? Well, near the beginning of the funeral sermon that the Calvinistic Baptist John Ryland, Jr., preached for Andrew Fuller in 1815, Ryland described Fuller as “perhaps the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to our denomination.” Although Fuller was one of Ryland’s closest friends, his judgment is by no means a biased one. For instance, Joseph Belcher, the editor of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American edition of Fuller’s collected works, believed that Fuller’s works would “go down to posterity side by side with the immortal works of the elder president Edwards [i.e., Jonathan Edwards, Sr.]” And Charles Haddon Spurgeon, at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, described Fuller as “the

greatest theologian” of his century, while A.C. Underwood, a Baptist historian writing in the middle of the next century, was of the opinion that he was the soundest and most useful theologian that the English Calvinistic Baptists had ever had. What reasons did these men, in different times and places, have for so highly valuing Fuller and his works?

### CONVERSION

The youngest son of Robert Fuller, a farmer, and Philippa Gunton, Andrew was born on February 6, 1754, at Wicken, a small agricultural village in Cambridgeshire in East Anglia. It is noteworthy that numbered among both his paternal and

maternal ancestors were men and women who were Puritans by conviction. His parents regularly attended the Baptist cause at Soham, about two and a half miles from Wicken. The pastor of this small work was John Eve (d.1782), who had been a sieve-maker before becoming the pastor of Soham Baptist Church in 1752. Eve was a High Calvinist, and, according to Fuller, he “had little or nothing to say to the unconverted.” Not surprisingly, Fuller later noted: “I...never considered myself as any way concerned in what I heard from the pulpit.”

Nevertheless, in the late 1760s Fuller began to experience strong conviction of sin, which happily issued in his conversion in the autumn of 1769. After being baptized the following spring, he joined the Soham church. Over the course of the next few years, it became very evident to the church that Fuller possessed definite ministerial gifts. Eve had left the church in 1771 for another pastorate, and Fuller, after ministering in the church for a couple of years, was formally invited to become pastor in 1775.

## REFUTING HIGH CALVINISM

Fuller’s pastorate at Soham, which lasted till 1782, when he moved to Kettering in Northamptonshire, was a decisive period for the shaping of Fuller’s theological outlook. It was during these seven years that Fuller began a lifelong study of the works of the New England divine Jonathan Edwards, his chief theological mentor after the Scriptures. He also made the acquaintance of Robert Hall, Sr., John Ryland, Jr., and John Sutcliff, who would later become his closest friends and colleagues. And he decisively rejected High Calvinism and drew up a defence of his own theological position

in *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, though this book would not be published until 1785.

This epoch-making book sought to be faithful to the central emphases of historic Calvinism while at the same time attempting to leave “ministers with no alternative but to impress upon their hearers the universal obligation of repentance and faith.” With regard to Fuller’s own ministry, this book was a key factor in determining the shape of that ministry in the years to come. For instance, it led directly to Fuller’s whole-hearted commitment to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and his role as secretary of this missionary body till his death in 1815.

On the other hand, the book involved Fuller in much unwanted controversy. Not long after the publication of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, Fuller was assailed in print by two London High Calvinists, William Button and John Martin. In the midst of this controversy, Fuller emphasized that he had “a high esteem” for Button and “many others of his sentiments.” He continued: “I do not account them as adversaries, but as brethren in Christ, as fellow labourers in the gospel; and could rejoice...to spend my days in cordial fellowship with them.”

Fuller was to describe his own theological position as “strict Calvinism,” differentiating it from High Calvinism, which was “more Calvinistic than Calvin” and “bordering on Antinomianism,” and from moderate Calvinism, which was essentially the theological perspective of the Puritan Richard Baxter whom Fuller considered a “half Arminian.” Strict Calvinism Fuller reckoned to be “the system of Calvin.” In a letter written to a Josiah Lewis

**CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON, AT THE CLOSE OF THE 19TH CENTURY, DESCRIBED FULLER AS “THE GREATEST THEOLOGIAN” OF HIS CENTURY.**

in 1793, Fuller made the following distinction between High Calvinism and his own position. He was commenting on the strength of the Baptist cause in Northamptonshire in 1793. He wrote:

Amongst the Baptists, there are 4 or 5 churches who embrace what is called the High Calvinist Scheme, disapproving of unconverted sinners being exhorted to the performance of any thing spiritually good. But the greater part of the Baptists, while they imbibe [*sic*] the Doctrines of grace, consider them as Calvin, and all the Reformers did, as being consistent with the obligations of men to repent from sin and believe in Christ, and therefore make no scruple of exhorting them to these duties.

**A PASTORAL HEART**

The critical role played by Fuller in this controversy did not preclude his engaging in other vital areas of theological debate. In 1792 he issued an extensive refutation of Socinianism and in 1799 published the definitive eighteenth-century Baptist response to Deism. Alongside these literary endeavours, Fuller exercised a significant pastoral ministry at Kettering. During his thirty-three years at Kettering, from 1782 to 1815, the membership of the church doubled and the number

of “hearers” grew to over a thousand, necessitating several additions to the church building. Fuller was first and foremost a pastor, and constantly sought to ensure that his many other responsibilities did not encroach upon those related to the pastorate.

Two examples well display his pastoral heart. After Fuller died, there was found among his possessions a small book entitled “Families who attend at the Meeting, August, 1788.” In it he wrote: “A Review of these may assist me in praying and preaching.” Then, among his letters there is one dated February 8, 1812, written to a wayward member of his flock, of which the following is an excerpt: “When a parent loses... a child nothing but the recovery of that child can heal the wound. If he could have many other children, that would not do it... Thus it is with me towards you. Nothing but your return to God and the Church can heal the wound.” Doyle L. Young has rightly commented that one may find the key to Fuller’s pastoral concern in “the intense attention which he gave to his own spiritual life.”

**DEVOTION TO A SOVEREIGN GOD OF GRACE**

When Fuller died on May 7, 1815, his funeral was attended by an immense crowd. The wife of John Keen Hall (d.1829), Fuller’s successor, wrote of this event in a letter: “The rush of people was astonishing; it was supposed there must be 2,000 persons. The galleries were propped in several

places to prevent any accident.” At Fuller’s request, his old friend, John Ryland, preached the funeral sermon. Based on Romans 8:10, it included not only an insightful exposition of this Pauline text, but also a brief account of Fuller’s final days.

Noteworthy is the following declaration made by Fuller in his last letter to Ryland, which the latter read at the end of his funeral sermon:

I have preached and written much against the abuse of the doctrine of grace, but that doctrine is all my salvation and all my desire. I have no other hope than from salvation by mere sovereign, efficacious grace through the atonement of my Lord and Saviour. With this hope I can go into eternity with composure.

Here we see the heart of Fuller’s theology and affections: his devotion to the sovereign God of all grace who loved sinners to the extent of giving his own Son, the Lord Jesus, to save them by the cross. It was a theology that enabled him to be a doughty defender of the gospel during his life, and to face death with deep assurance of salvation.

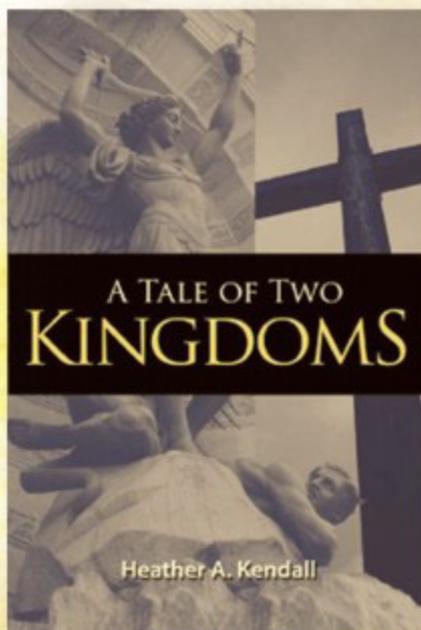
**Michael A.G. Haykin**

*Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality*

*The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* 



# Discovering The Big Picture in the Bible



We live in a day when it is vital for Christians to communicate the big picture of what our faith is all about...A Tale of Two Kingdoms is a helpful tool in doing just this. It sets forth this big picture, with God at it centre, in a non-technical way but one that is faithful to the Bible.

*Dr. Michael A.G. Haykin, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.*

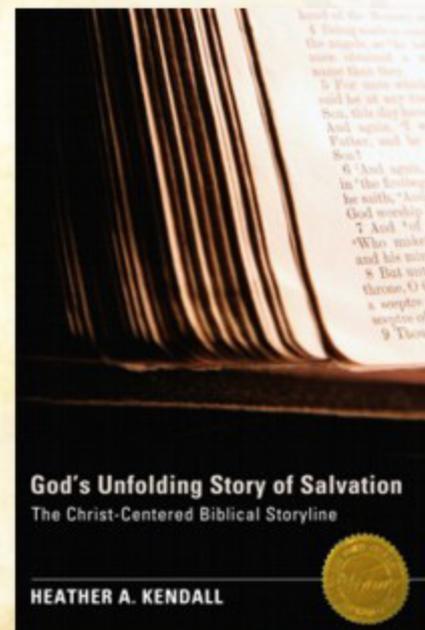
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