

The Wrath of God

1 Thessalonians 1:9,10

Paul talks more about the return of Jesus Christ in 1st & 2nd Thessalonians than in any of his 14 letters written to Christians-Jews & Gentiles. This book is believed to be the earliest of any NT writings in the bible. Written to young believers--one year old in the faith.

And yet these Christians were on fire for Christ, sharing their faith, living holy lives, worthy of imitation (**vs 6 mimic**). Why so zealous? Why such holy living? They believed the Lord could return at any time & they wanted to be ready when he did come.

Anticipating the soon return of Christ has a purifying effect on believers. We live our lives w/ the expectation of one day being face to face w/ Him—**why not today?** As Paul says **2 Cor 5:8-9** *we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.*

Heb 9:28 *so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (NIV)* **What about those who aren't waiting? The passage this morning tells the story.**

1Thes 1:9-10 *For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

The wrath to come includes the Great Tribulation as well as eternal separation. It's not a popular message but it's a necessary one. This world is heading for a **show down**. System of government, man ruling man, is coming to a end. And in its place 1000 year reign of Christ at His coming.

But before that time of **bliss**, a time of **wrath**. The good news is you don't have to be there. To be fore warned is to be fore armed. **:10 'Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come'**

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250 years ago a sermon was preached that has become one of the most famous sermons ever preached. *'Sinners in the hands of an angry God'* by *Jonathan Edwards preached in Northampton Mass.* 1741 catalyst for revival known as 1st Great Spiritual Awakening. A vivid picture of sinners eternal torment in burning fires of hell.

It would do Christians well to read it every so often

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.

It was reported the audience moaned & groaned & cried out *'What shall I do to be saved?'* *'Oh I am going to Hell.'* Shrieks & cries interrupted Edwards to where he scolded the congregation to be silent & let him finish.

The woke church today is in need of Edwards kind of message, warning sinners to repent or be lost forever. Those in his day as in ours today were characterized by *'stubborn to the gospel, thoughtless and vain, unconcerned w/ revival.'* And yet revival broke out in the form of the Great Awakening. *Not a popular message but a needed one.*

Jesus tells of His coming--Bliss for some, Wrath for others, will be just like two events which have already come & gone; Noah's flood & Sodom's fire.

Matt 24:37-39 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, & they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Business as usual until Noah taken in the ark & lifted up above floods wrath

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Gen 6 – 1. Population explosion 2. Demonic activity 3. Stubbornness in mans heart-grieving Gods spirit 4. Wickedness was great on the earth 5. Every intent of the thoughts of mans heart was only evil continually 6. Earth was corrupt & filled w/ violence 7. God was saddened in His heart over man's condition 8. All flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. **So God sent a flood in judgment.** Yet Noah was a preacher of righteousness for over 100 years was mocked. **Ark a testimony to wrath to come.**

2 Pet 3:3-10 *Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come w/ their mocking, following after their own lusts, & saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago & the earth was formed out of water & by water, thru which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded w/ water. But the present heavens & earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment & destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that e/ the Lord one day is as a thousand years, & a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away w/ a roar & the elements will be destroyed w/ intense heat, & the earth & its works will be burned up.*

Uniformitarianism – closed system – nothing new introduced -- everything that will happen has already happened – all continues as it has from the beginning. And so they mock at a flood or at the fact that the elements will burn up (nuclear fission—splitting of the atom) which is no laughing matter.

Luke 17:28-30 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. **Again business as usual, no seeming warning, except righteous Lot.**

Gen 19 Society typified by corrupted morals & militant homosexuality, young & old. Lot's warnings were ignored except for his daughter's & wife (who turned to look in longing & turned to pillar of salt).

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But before the wrath, came the rescue. Gen 19:22 "Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." (NKJ) **So w/ the Church, until we arrive in heaven wrath on earth cannot be poured out.**

1Thes 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **Luke 21:36** "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

When Jesus began His ministry, He went into the synagogue in Nazareth, as was the custom, He read from the scroll--the daily reading happened to be *Is 61:1,2* 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.....

He closed it, handed it back to the attendant & said *today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*. He had just declared Himself Messiah. Those hearing this were filled w/ rage & tried to throw Him off a cliff. **Noteworthy is what He left out....and the day of vengeance of our God....**because it was yet future. First He came to save next he comes to judge.

In Rev 6 the Church is gone & wrath has come :15-17 *Then the kings of the earth & the great men & the commanders & the rich & the strong & every slave & free man hid themselves in the caves & among the rocks of the mountains; & they said to the mountains & to the rocks, 'Fall on us & hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne & from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, & who is able to stand? Hearts are so hard they'd rather die than repent.'*

Oxymoron—wrath/Lamb – **John the apostle** saw a Lamb as if slain, bearing the marks of crucifixion. **John the Baptist** said '*behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world*'. Lamb slain who takes away sin is also the Lamb risen who visits w/ wrath.

Wrath – *orge* – not vindictive, irrational outburst like *road rage* but holy indignation—God's anger against sin. Wrath is the counterpart to love.

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'Without wrath love is worthless sentimentality' Wm Evans (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia). You can't say to a spouse *"I love you"* then let others abuse her w/o wrath rising up inside of you. *If I didn't then divorce* God's wrath is God's divorce of the human race that He created, cared for, loved & died for but who **rejected Him**. God is no victim of mans sin or approving of it. The cross proves Gods **love**, wrath shows Gods **justice** & His holiness & righteous indignation against unrequited sin (*sin not paid for*).

Heb 9:28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal w/ sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. RSV

Thessalonian believers were waiting, abiding, enduring & understanding God who is righteous & so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son to die on the cross for sinful man also will judge the world in righteous wrath on hard hearted sinners who reject Gods offer of salvation. I pray you not be one of those.

Mouth of slanders dealt w/ *'known by fruits'* & blessing of believers realized.

Ps 15:1-4