

God's Wrath in Counseling

By Wendy Wood



God's wrath is defined as his consistent anger toward and punishment of wickedness.

Wayne Grudem says "God's wrath means that He intensely hates all sin."

The Dictionary of Theological Terms" says the wrath of God "describes the settled opposition of God's nature against evil, His holy displeasure against sinners, and the punishment He justly metes out to them on account of their sins."

Here's where the fact that God is all of His attributes completely and wholly really matters. God's wrath is pure because it is who He is as a Holy and Just and Good God. God's wrath and anger are not like ours.

Human anger is usually because of our sinful pride. We get angry when we don't get our way or we don't like what someone is doing. Anger is an emotion that expresses we are against something. Anger is a negative evaluation of a situation.

David Powlison defines anger as "an active displeasure toward something that's important enough to care about."

Our anger is self-focused because we are sinners. Even when we are angry about the right things, our sinful nature taints our anger.

God's anger and punishment of the wicked is untainted by sin. It is perfect. A good and just God must deal with sin. To ignore sin and wickedness would not be good or just. God displays active displeasure toward wickedness when He demonstrates wrath.

Let's look at some scriptures:

Isaiah 13:9 "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it."

Nahum 1:2-3, 6 "The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will be no means clear the guilty. His way is in the whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.
Verse 6 "Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him."

Romans 2:5 "But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."

The Object of God's Wrath

God's wrath is revealed "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men".

Romans 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

So God's wrath is against sin. It's not uncontrolled or irrational. God's wrath is carefully pointed at sinners who are unrepentant.

Ungodliness means someone lacks reverence, devotion, and worship which is idolatry.

Unrighteousness is how ungodliness people deal with other people. Someone who does not have a right relationship with God through Christ will not do right with others - that is unrighteousness.

We are all born under God's wrath. **Romans 3:10-12** says "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless, no one does good, not even one."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

This is key in counseling. All our counselees must understand that they are born under the curse of sin, that they are enemies of God and dead in their sins. (Eph 2). It is only through faith by grace that through Christ's atoning work on the cross, God's wrath is removed from a believer's life. God chose to put His wrath on Christ and thereby "justly" deal with sin in extending us grace. Christ is our substitution in taking God's wrath in our place for our sins.

Romans 3:23-26 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

A **believer** is free of God's wrath only because Christ's atoning work on the cross satisfied God's wrath. An **unbeliever** needs to understand that he/she is still under the wrath of God.

Another application to counseling is: we must trust God's wrath and not seek to administer vengeance of our own.

Romans 12:17-19 says "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

This verse also has implications for counselees. The command is for us not to exercise wrath against others. Our concept of justice is not holy and perfect. Our anger is tainted by our sin nature and we will not execute justice perfectly. God's command is for us to live peaceably with people and to avoid vengeance.

God's judgment is perfect. We are to leave room for it. God promises to repay evil. Our counselees who have been sinned against can trust God's perfect judgment and

that He will be just against unrepentant sin and display his wrath against it. God cares about the evil in this world and God will punish evildoers in His wrath. God who is both good and just and wrathful, will deal perfectly with all sin.