



TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

September 2010

WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH ABOUT THE WRATH OF GOD?

“God’s *wrath*? Are you serious? I thought that the Bible says that ‘God is love.’” In fact, it does say that (1 John 4:8). If God is the God of love and the God of grace (1 Peter 5:10), as well as the God of patience, comfort, and hope (Romans 15:5,13), then surely we should not think of Him as the God of wrath, right? Let us take a closer look.

Students of the Bible properly observe that the Old Testament frequently makes reference to God’s wrath. Does the New Testament do the same? It does, indeed, but before we show that to be the case, consider this truth: the God of heaven does not change (Malachi 3:6). With Him “*there is no variation or shadow of turning*” (James 1:17). The Lord God that created the world spoke in the Old Testament era through the prophets. He is the same God that speaks to humanity in the Christian era through His Son Jesus (Hebrews 1:1,2). That is correct: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the God that Christians serve.

“But is it not true that in the Old Testament we see God portrayed as a God of wrath, whereas in the New Testament He is a God of love?” Many people certainly think that is an accurate assessment of what the Bible teaches. The truth is, the Old Testament also points out the love of God (Deuteronomy 7:7,8; Hosea 3:1; 14:4), while in several instances the New Testament mentions His wrath. So, both covenants refer to both of these aspects of God’s nature or character: love and wrath. The specific question into which we are looking, though, is what teaching does *the New Testament* set forth about the wrath of God?

First of all, in the New Testament there are a number of verses which make direct reference to “*the wrath of God*.” Jesus said that “*the wrath of God abides on*” one that does not believe in the Son (John 3:36). It is also written that “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*” (Romans 1:20). We further read that “*the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:6). While many might prefer to think of Jesus as a *loving* Lamb, the Bible also speaks about “*the wrath of the Lamb*” (Revelation 6:16). It is true, so we must accept it.

Second, the New Testament speaks of people who are “*the children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3). Just who are these folks? The Bible’s own answer is that

they are those who fulfil the desires of the flesh and mind (Ephesians 2:3). They are again portrayed as “*the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:6). So, those that are disobedient to God can expect to be on the receiving end of His wrath.

Third, the New Testament also refers to “*the wrath to come*.” In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 we read of “*Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come*.” And whose wrath would that be? The Lord’s.

Fourth, in connection with the wrath to come, the Holy Spirit speaks specifically of “*the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*” (Romans 2:5). That same context speaks of some who will receive eternal life, but for those who “*do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath*” (Romans 2:8). Jesus refers to such as “*everlasting punishment*” (Matthew 25:46).

Fifth, the Book of Acts records first-century demonstrations of God’s wrath. Yes, in comparison, the Old Testament records many more instances of the Divine wrath being poured out in the form of physical punishment of the wicked. However, that truth does not in any way minimize the fact that some first-century rebels were punished by the Lord. Here is a quick reminder of three such cases: (1) Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11); (2) King Herod Agrippa I died a horrific death when “*an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died*” (Acts 12:23); (3) Elymas, known also as Bar-Jesus, was struck blind by “*the hand of the Lord*” because of his deceit and fraud (Acts 13:10,11). In view of these plain incidents, one errs greatly who claims, “*We never see God’s wrath poured out in the New Testament*.”

How can one be spared from the wrath of God at judgment? In one word, the answer is “*Jesus*.” “*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*” (Romans 5:9). Through Jesus, Christians have the best life in this world (John 10:10). Through Him we can escape the horrors of hell, and, yes, it is through our Lord that we live in hope of heaven. While we recognize God’s wrath, we do not live our lives in trembling fear. Why? Because the Christ paid the ransom that sets us free from sin and delivers us from the wrath to come.

-- Roger D. Campbell

WHAT ABOUT EATING BLOOD?

People of various cultures enjoy different types of food. A food item that you and I consider as a delicious treat may be counted as disgusting by those of another culture, or vice versa. To me personally, the thought of consuming blood has absolutely no appeal. However, others count it as a tasty item. In Taiwan, it is not uncommon to see signs hanging in front of shops that read "Famous Pig Blood Soup." Such soup is not pure blood, but has cube-like drops of blood floating in it.

What does the Bible say about eating blood? In the first era of man's history, God spoke to Noah and his sons about consuming blood: "*Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood*" (Genesis 9:3,4). God restricted Noah and his family from eating the life of the flesh, that is, the blood. Remember that since Noah and his family (eight people in all) were the only survivors of the flood, God's charge not to eat blood was universal in nature, meaning that it was for every person in the whole world.

The second time we read about God's instructions to mankind relative to eating blood was a part of the Law of Moses, which the Lord gave to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai. There He told them, "*And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul . . . Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off*" (Leviticus 17:10,11,14). God was clear, was He not, in restricting the Israelites from consuming blood?

Third, consider the message of the New Testament. In Acts 15 we read that the apostles and some elders gathered in Jerusalem to discuss whether or not it was necessary to keep the Law of Moses, and in particular, whether or not God required a person to receive physical circumcision in order to be saved (Acts 15:1,5). At the conclusion of their gathering, they sent a written message to Gentile Christians (15:22,23). In part, that message read: "*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood,*

from things strangled, and from sexual immorality [fornication, KJV]. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well" (15:28,29).

Regarding this written message that came out of the discussions held in Jerusalem, note first of all that it was not the opinion of men. No, they plainly stated that such a message "*seemed good to the Holy Spirit.*" In other words, the Holy Spirit was the author of what they wrote, making it a divine message. And just what did the Spirit say about blood? That the Christians were to abstain from it. The reference is to abstaining from *eating* it, just as they were to refrain from *eating* foods offered to idols and *eating* animals that had been killed by strangling.

"But if God does not allow us to eat blood, that would mean that we are not even allowed to eat meat, because any time you eat meat, you are bound to eat some blood with it, even if it is already dried up." The restriction is on eating blood, not on eating meat. Think about this. The Law of Moses required the Israelites to eat the meat of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:4-9). At the same time, God forbid them to eat blood. Obviously, it was possible for them to eat meat without violating the Lord's command not to eat blood. Jesus perfectly kept the Law of Moses, including the injunction to eat the Passover lamb. By eating the meat of that lamb, He did not violate the command not to eat blood. If He and the other Jews could eat meat, and in the process not transgress the specific instruction not to eat blood, then people today can do the same thing: eat meat, but not be guilty of eating blood.

So, what about eating blood today? It is forbidden by the instruction of Acts 15:28,29. As we have seen, the biblical record shows that in every era of man's existence, God has commanded men not to eat blood. Eating blood was not allowed under the Patriarchal scheme, under the Law of Moses, or under the new covenant of the Christ. God even gave this reason for the prohibition: it is because of the fact that life is in the blood.

Some people have grown up in an environment in which eating blood was a common, acceptable thing to do. Those that have been blood-eaters or blood-drinkers will have to sacrifice such a habit if they want to serve the Lord faithfully. As far as Western food goes, I personally am not a steak-eater, but if I were, in view of the fact that God does not want us to eat blood, I would not want to eat my meat "swimming" in blood.

-- Roger D. Campbell

WE NEED CHRISTIAN MOTHERS THAT CARE

In a recent article we emphasized the need for Christian *fathers* to care about their children. This time around, we are considering the need for Christian *mothers* to show that they really care, too. A number of things that are true about the responsibilities of Christian fathers are equally true for Christian mothers as well.

We need Christian mothers that care enough about their kids to **be the best possible role model that they can be** for them. Many people who are faithful members of the church today will quickly point out that their mother, more than anyone else, set the example of Christianity that influenced them the most. Ahaziah, king of Judah, was wicked because “*his mother [Athaliah, rdc] counseled him to do wickedly*” (2 Chronicles 22:3). On the other hand, we read of a brother in the Christ by the name of Timothy who was a strong servant of the Lord. From what spiritual background did he come? From a mother and grandmother who possessed genuine faith (2 Timothy 1:5). Young Christian mothers need to be discreet, chaste, and good. The Bible says so (Titus 2:4,5). Moms, you are setting an example for your children to imitate. What are they seeing in you? You only have them in your home for a limited period of time, so make sure that you devote yourself to being the right kind of model for them to imitate at every step of their development. There are no second chances!

We need Christian mothers that care enough about their kids to **make the commitment to be the strongest female influence in their lives**. Not long ago I was listening to a program on a local Mandarin-language radio station. A guest on the show was discussing the different aspects of a school environment to which kids must adjust. In the midst of his comments, he observed that if a child goes to some type of “school,” then between the ages of two and six, the child’s greatest influence in his life is not his mother, but rather his teacher(s). That reality should not shock us. After all, in a pre-school, kindergarten, or primary school arrangement, a child spends much more time with his teacher(s) than he does with any of his family members, including his mother.

Christian moms, when your kids are still young, they need *you* in their lives more than any other woman. Your most important role in life is the one that you play in the home! That means that Christian mothers must put their role in the home as mother and wife above any other pursuits or interests that they might have. When God said

that young women need to be taught to be “homemakers” (Titus 2:4,5), was He serious? If not, why did He say it?

We need sisters in the Lord that **really love their children**. That same passage in Titus plainly says that women need “*to love their children*” (Titus 2:4,5). We sometimes hear horrifying accounts of mothers throwing their babies into a trash dumpster or beating them so severely that they suffer serious injury or even death. In contrast to that, Christian mothers should cherish the joy that their kids bring to them (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

We need Christian mothers that care enough to **support their husband’s role as head of the family**. God has determined that headship in the home is to be the role played by the husband/father (Ephesians 5:22-24). Christian mothers that want to please God accept and relish their own role, and show their kids what it means to submit to God and His arrangement of authority.

Christian moms, you should care enough to **know what your children are doing**. Who are their close friends? What music do they listen to? What movies do they go see? What internet sites do they visit regularly? For a virtuous woman, a portion of her watching over the affairs of her household (Proverbs 31:10,27) is to pay close attention to her children’s behavior. Do not be passive. Be actively involved in their lives. Set guidelines, and do not be afraid to enforce them – for the ultimate good of your kids!

Christian mothers that care **show their children how to act like children of light and not like children of darkness**. That would include training them how to dress modestly (Genesis 3:21; 1 Timothy 2:9), having strict guidelines for behavior with those of the opposite gender (1 Timothy 5:2), and keeping their speech both pure and kind (Ephesians 4:29,31,32).

Would we not also conclude that Christian moms who really care **work with their husbands in teaching their kids the word of God**? When a Christian mother’s husband is not a member of the church, she may have to do all of the spiritual instruction. Such a scenario will be a challenge, but do not lose heart, dear sisters. Other Christian mothers have faced the same circumstances and done a wonderful job. You can do the same.

Christian mothers, you have the potential to be a great force for good in society, in the home, and in the church. Please care enough about your own soul and your kids’ to take your role seriously.

-- Roger D. Campbell

2 Corinthians 8:9 – RICH THROUGH THE POVERTY OF JESUS

2 Corinthians 8:9 reads, "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*" What a compelling message! Let us examine this great verse together.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." This statement is in a context that deals with the apostle Paul exhorting the saints in Corinth to get moving and prepare their promised contribution. The churches of Macedonia, which were made up of brethren in "*deep poverty*" (8:2), had given liberally (8:1-5). Now, Paul by the Holy Spirit uses another wonderful example to spur the Corinthian Christians on to action: the example of Jesus. By His grace – His kindness or favor that humanity did not deserve and could never earn, Jesus made an amazing sacrifice so that all people could become rich. While we may often think of the grace of our heavenly Father, the New Testament also speaks of the grace of the Christ, as we again read in 2 Corinthians 13:14, "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*"

"He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." Do you see the two facts contained in this statement? Fact #1: Jesus "*was rich.*" When was that? Not when He lived in the home of Joseph and Mary. Every indication is that they were not people of great wealth in terms of material riches. When they dedicated Jesus to the Lord, they offered birds instead of a lamb (Luke 2:22-24; Leviticus 12:6-8). Those that could afford it, would offer a lamb. Those that could not, offered fowl like Joseph and Mary did. When was the Christ rich? Not during the years of His preaching. Jesus Himself said, "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head*" (Luke 9:58). Before He began His public ministry, He worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3), and during His short ministry He was dependent upon those that loved Him and "*provided for Him from their substance*" (Luke 8:3). So, when was our Lord rich? He was wealthy before He came into the world in terms of the relationship that He enjoyed in heaven with the Father.

Fact #2: "*He became poor.*" When? When He came to this world of sorrow and sin, humbling Himself and taking on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7,8). By coming to this earth, He willingly took a position in the flesh that made Him temporarily lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:9). While in the flesh, He went through every form of temptation (Hebrews 4:14,15) and, as all people must, passed through physical death (Hebrews 9:27). Did Jesus do all of this for Self? Did He come to earth for His own personal glory? Absolutely not. Our text indicates that He did it for someone else. He had others in mind when He

forfeited temporarily the glory and riches of heaven and intentionally became poor instead. Just for whom would He take such a great step? Answer: For you and me, but not for us only. Yea, "*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world*" (1 John 2:2).

"That you through His poverty might be rich." Here again we see the motivation for our Lord's coming to earth and offering Himself as a sacrifice. All that He did, He did for us. Why? Because He wants us to be rich! The Rich One became the Poor One in order that poor ones might become rich ones. Let that thought sink deep down in your heart. The Rich One became the Poor One, that poor ones (spiritually bankrupt people – that describes you and me without Jesus!) might be blessed in a spiritual sense. And, what blessings we have in and through our Redeemer!

Each of us that is in the Lord should count himself as rich. Why? Because through Him we receive the benefits of God's rich love (Ephesians 2:4; 1:3). In Him we are part of the wonderful family of God (1 Timothy 3:15), the great brotherhood of God's people (1 Peter 2:17). And, through Him we are people of hope, anticipating the inheritance that the Lord has reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:3,4).

In the first century, the church in the city of Smyrna faced some tough times. However, Jesus' words of comfort must have meant a lot to them: "*I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich) . . .*" (Revelation 2:9). So, which were the saints in Smyrna: poor, or wealthy? From a financial standpoint, they were poor; but from a spiritual point of view, they were wealthy beyond measure. Why? Because they had all spiritual blessings in the Lord! Brothers and sisters, from time to time we may wonder how we are going to have enough money to pay our bills and provide for our loved ones. There may never come a time in our whole lives that we will count ourselves as being rich in this world's goods. But, if we walk faithfully with the Lord and have Him as our advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1), we are rich indeed!

Thanks be to the Godhead for the wonderful scheme of redemption. Thanks be to the Father for sending His Son to die for our sins. Thanks be to the Son for His willingness to give up His wealthy state in order to make us rich. Thanks be to the Spirit for revealing the gospel of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13). We are so blessed! And not because we deserve it or because God is in debt to us. It is by God's grace we are rich through the poverty of Jesus. May we never take for granted all that had to be done and sacrificed in order to make possible our spiritual wealth in the Christ.

-- Roger D. Campbell

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