

Part 1 -IN THE HANDS OF A DREADFUL GOD

Aim: To teach about the wrath and anger of God that many will respond appropriately

A Full orbed view of God

It is no little thing to consider that you and I are not in hell at this very moment, only because of God's grace. It is this same grace of God that at this very moment prevents His wrath from consuming all wickedness upon earth.

Some of you will have a hard time thinking of God as an angry and wrathful God. However, the Bible gives us a very frightening picture of a God who is mighty in His wrath and whose is perfectly just in all He does. You see it is the culture and our own minds which have devised a God who is only love and nothing else. Spurgeon has said, "*Our business is not to think out our own idea of what God should be, but to find out, as far as we can, what God really is.*"

Heb 10:31 - it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The author here is speaking to those in the church who having held to a form of Christianity, were not at all genuinely born again believers. The author is stating to them that God's wrath will be born out against them every bit as much as it will against all who are unsaved.

Let us ask of the text, "why is it dreadful to fall into the hands of the living God?" The text would no doubt answer us, "because our God is a dreadful God!" He is perfect in his judgments and justice and will in no way overlook sin nor will he withhold punishment from the sinner. We should not think that living a moral life or a religious life will protect us from the wrath of God. There is only one way to be saved from God's wrath – Jesus Christ.

But men who have not liked the God they saw in the Bible have tried to explain away his hatred of sin. They have sought to deny his great wrath which will be meted out against those who have the knowledge of the truth but have done nothing with it. They often turn to scripture and point to verses that show God's love. They then say, "how could a God of love release His fury upon His children. No God of mine would do that." And they are right, their god wouldn't do that because their God doesn't exist except for in their mind.

We must understand two things here in response to such accusations. First, we are all children of Satan unless we have thrown ourselves upon the grace of God and looked unto His son Jesus Christ for salvation. Secondly, God is more than just a Father but the Bible declares that He is indeed a valiant and mighty judge. If he is a just judge, doesn't it seem natural that justice should be served through punishment? And what about God's punishment – it is no slap on the wrist. For as great and deep as his love is – so also is his wrath and anger which shall deal forth a just and horrible punishment.

You are beginning to see now what I call the full orbed view of God. For it is a true statement that if I told many who God really was they would not like Him. And those who do not like God are the same people who want to go to heaven but they really don't want God to be there. I tell you heaven is not heaven because the streets are made of Gold but rather heaven is because God is there. And Hell is hell, not because God is absent but because the severity of his wrath is present, being born out against the unrepentant sinner, of whom we all were once, except that some are saved from hell by the grace of God.

Biblical Accounts of God's Wrath and Anger

If still you cannot bear to think of God in terms of His wrath or anger then let me remind you of the great flood. What do you suppose happened on that day when the waters broke forth from the deep and covered over every creature? Do you not suppose that there was loud wailing and lamenting? When the last

swimmer was out of strength do not imagine the horror in his mind? And don't think that there is only a few people that suffered the fate of the flood. The best estimates of men today calculate that the population of mankind then was every bit as numerous as it is today – owing to the longevity of mankind where 800 yrs was not uncommon.

Who then would do all this? Again I quote Spurgeon who says, "It is God who so hates sin, that, though He is infinite love,-and we would never detract from that attribute,-He is also infinite justice, and will by no means spare the guilty."

His judgments at other times were also as equally severe. Let me remind you of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other surrounding cities that were filled with people living life as we also are. These people though found their happiness in sin. Having thus provoked God to anger he sent his judgment by raining down burning sulfur upon them. We only dare to imagine that the sky became like a sheet of fire consuming every creature and object until it no longer existed. What horror would ensue as the sulfur of God laid waste to all?

And what about Egypt who God slew the first born of every child and then went on to destroy the whole army of Egypt in the red sea? Or what of the Canaanites who God slaughtered before the Israelites - their god's were not enough to save them from the mighty wrath and justice of Jehovah.

What about the New Testament. Do not let us suppose that our God changes. For scripture declares that God does not change. He is from everlasting to everlasting, unchanged and steadfast. Thus let us look at Jesus Christ who being man was also God in the flesh.

Jesus Christ who was called the friend of sinners had much to say about God's wrath and justice. **"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt 10:28.** Jesus here is teaching the fear of God? Consider also Jesus words in **Matt 13:41-43 "The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

Or consider Christ's words in **Matt 25, "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."** There are those who are unwilling to believe such truth about God – that He is a dreadful God and that His punishments will likewise be dreadful. They have argued against this verse and others saying, "the Greek word for eternal means only an undefined age and certainly not forever. But we should notice that the words used to explain the duration of hell and punishment are the same words used for the duration of heaven. Further, what other words would the Bible use to be more clear about such teaching?"

There are many other words of Christ in which His warning is clearly the same as we have seen in **Heb 10:31 - it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.** Matt 22:13; Matt 18:8-9; Luke 16:24.

Our Response to God

It is a great thing to know God for his grace, mercy and love but it is also a fearful and great thing, to know God for his might, wrath and anger. To be warned that the God of the Bible is not a pushover and that indeed He does stand in judgment of His creation is sobering. For the child of God to recognize His power, wrath and holy anger, it should provoke reverence but also rejoicing for it is he who holds your salvation. For the unsaved person, need I tell you what it should provoke in you to know that one day you will stand before this God!

God is not unjust

If you are now thinking that we serve a violently horrible God, I wish to show you why God is just and holy in all his wrath, anger and dealings with man. We will be looking at two things from the Bible to do this. 1. The sovereignty of God - 2. The condition and state of man.

Sovereignty of God

It is my guess that many of you have no problem with God's fierceness dealt out against Satan, his demons and all wickedness; but rather the concern appears as it is dealt out against our fellow man. People get so bent out of shape when we talk about God's wrath and punishment because we think too much of our fellow man and too little of God.

The universe does not rotate around men – it rotates around God. You can be good to men but if you are not good to God nothing counts. So many forget this and sadly Christians even have begun to teach a social gospel where everything revolves around men and society. Have we so quickly forgotten that we were created for God and His glory, not for ourselves? We are guilty of not honoring God as he is to be honored. **We all fall short of his glory. (Rom 3:23).**

Rom 9:20-22 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? What are we compared to the almighty God? Just as we might step upon a bug because it is in our home, so it is God's right to step upon us or to carry us in his hands. We may breed dogs to sell them for profit or cattle to slaughter them for meat. Does the dog or the cow have a say in what we will do? In this very way do we have a say in what God chooses to do with us? We should consider ourselves fortunate that God is merciful and gracious beyond what we humans can fathom or else none of us would be able to stand before him.

God is sovereign and you have no right to questions his wrath, his justice or his dealings with man. What you don't understand you can talk to him about, but do not think yourself the authority. For God created you and you exist to bring glory to Him

The condition and state of man

We have already mentioned that we all fall short of God's glory and that alone seems cause enough to wipe us out. For if God created us to bring him glory and yet we fall short of doing that which he created us for then what good are we? What do you do with an object that doesn't do what it's supposed to do? You throw it away never to think of it again? And so God has every right to dispose of us but by grace he stays his hand at least for now.

Mankind has done a good enough job already condemning ourselves before a righteous and holy God. **John 3:18** States **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.** When we are born who do you suppose we belong to? Are we children of God? No – we are children of Satan. The Bible says that we are enemies of God. We are born God haters, filled to the brim with every wickedness and filth. **Isa 64:6** says that **all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.** Even putting our best foot forward we are so disease ridden with sin that what we consider to be good is like a filthy rag before God.

One of the greatest objections I hear from those who will not bow their knee to Jesus Christ concerns their own goodness. It is those unsaved people who consider themselves to be good people and who do good deeds that add to their own condemnation. In fact everything these people do is sin. But Dan, how can you say that because there are some unsaved people who have found cures for diseases, who are so benevolent and altruistic they put some Christians to shame. Well I can say what I did because scripture commands us in **1 Cor. 10:31, Everything you do, do as unto God (1 Cor 10:31)**. Thus everything these people do no matter how selfless, it is sin because they do it not as unto the glory of God. Whatever is done if it is not done unto the glory of God it is sin.

God is sovereign and we – to quote from star wars are, “a wretched hive of villainy and scum.” We have all rebelled against God, making ourselves out to be god’s sitting as judge even of our own creator. And yet God has extended his grace so that you and I are being held out of hell even as we speak.

What about tomorrow

Today God’s grace keeps us all from the everlasting flames of hell. Tomorrow though when you stand before God as judge – where will you be? God’s only answer for you and I, His only salvation is to repent of your sins – and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God is a Father full of grace, mercy and love. Yes He cares for sinners but He is also a judge who vehemently hates sin, and his wrath and anger are rivaled by none.

For those who are genuinely saved, our response is three fold.

1. Revere God and allow His discipline to serve as a deterrent, keeping us from walking in the way of the sinner.
2. Respond with a sense of urgency that your neighbors, friends and fellow man are going to face the wrath of God unless they repent of their sin and believe upon Jesus Christ.
3. We should have great joy that we won’t have to face God’s mighty wrath in judgment.

Rom 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God for all who will believe so that they would not have to bear it. See how great a salvation God offers us!

For those who have never embraced the salvation of Jesus Christ, your end will be to face the wrath of God.

If you are not sure your saved, then see me and I will stay and talk with you as long as is needed. Together we will discern from scripture the best we can if you are indeed saved.

If you know already that you do not belong to Jesus and your question is, “what must I do,” then I would be thrilled to talk with you also. There is great news for those who repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.