



HOAW Newsletter

"Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off." Romans 11:22

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HELPING MEN LIVE LIVES OF INTEGRITY AND HONOR

Reconciling the Wrath of God

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Living in our hyper-sensitive, contemporary society so easily offended at the slightest indication of injustice makes many uneasy when reading about violence in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament. Such sensitivity can lead to a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the nature of God when the Old Testament is compared to the New Testament. The following refrain is often heard, "The God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath while the God of the New Testament is a God of love." Is that true? I believe a closer look is needed.

Throughout the Old Testament, God is depicted as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:6)...forgiving iniquity and transgression (Numbers 14:8)...who will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant (Deuteronomy

4:31)...ready to forgive, gracious and merciful (Nehemiah 9:17)...good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon [Him] (Psalm 86:5, 15)...your faithfulness reaches to the clouds (Psalm 108:4)...the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Psalm 145:8)...and He relents over disaster (Joel 2:13)."

In the New Testament, His loving and kindness reached new heights. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)." Yet, His wrath is still being revealed "from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness (Romans 1:18)." The book of Revelation is replete with examples of His righteous wrath against sin and the purveyors of sin. God's love in sacrificing His Son for the sins of mankind is all the more significant when set against the backdrop of His judgments. God's wrath and judgment is poured out against sin.

The Lord disciplines those whom He loves and chastens everyone He receives into His kingdom through the finished work of Christ on the cross (Hebrews 12:6).

One biblical scholar puts it this way. "As we read and study the Bible, it becomes clear that God is the same in the Old and New Testaments. Even though the Bible is 66 individual books written on two (or possibly three) continents, in three different languages, over a period of approximately 1500 years by more than 40 authors, it remains one unified book from beginning to end without contradiction. In it we see how a loving, merciful, and just God deals with sinful men in all kinds of situations. Truly, the Bible is God's love letter to mankind. God's love for His creation, especially for mankind, is evident all through Scripture. Throughout the Bible we see God lovingly and mercifully calling people into a special relationship with Himself, not because they deserve it, but because He is a gracious and

merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth. Yet we also see a holy and righteous God who is the Judge of all those who disobey His Word and refuse to worship Him, turning instead to worship gods of their own creation (Romans chapter 1). Both the Old and the New Testaments were given "to make us wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). When we study the Testaments closely, it is evident that God "does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17)."

So, how does one reconcile the violence perpetrated by God as presented so graphically in the Old Testament? How does a modern-day Christian come to terms with manifestation of anger against man, woman and child? The answer rests on an accurate understanding of the attributes and nature of God.

God's wrath is holy and always justified given the depths of depravity, arrogant disobedience, and open rebellion encountered during the patriarchal period of Israel's history (Romans 12:9) and certainly prevalent today. God is holy and cannot embrace sin. Only the blood of an innocent Lamb can cover sin in all its displays. He alone can judge the world of sin. When sin goes unabated, its shrill voice grows louder. Left unchecked, it can not only ruin a human being but destroy a culture, devastate a nation, and corrupt all creation. God's attributes justify His actions – He is holy, righteous, just, eternal, sovereign, unchanging, all powerful, and all knowing. His holiness alone separates Him from all moral defilement and abuse and in fact, is hostile to the immoral acts of mankind.

Because of His nature, especially His holiness and knowing all, past, present, and future, His judgment against nations and groups of people can be better understood. Let's not

jump too quickly on the bandwagon of atheists Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and other critics of Christianity who declared that God was a "a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser," that God deserves to be given an arrest warrant for 'indiscriminate massacre,' and accuse God of "crimes against humanity" and being a moral monster.

The destruction of the Canaanites is often cited as evidence of God's cruelty resulting in justification for abandoning the faith by some. Along with the Canaanites, other nations also received God's wrathful judgment (Leviticus 18:24-25; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 9:5; 18:9, 12; 20:16-18; 1 Samuel 15:2-3).

Are the critics right? How could a truly holy and loving God command and give instructions for a wholesale slaughter of an entire people?

Deuteronomy 20:16-18 *"But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God."* ESV

Leviticus 18:24-30 *"Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land*

became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So, keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God." ESV

Let's look at nation of Canaan more closely. God was indeed justified in His judgment and wrath for the following reasons. Bear in mind that God endured their abominable sins for 400 years before He acted against them.

- The Canaanite culture was inherently morally wicked, morally bankrupt, and morally culpable.
- They were a brutal and aggressive people, in constant rebellion.
- They practiced child sacrifice, incest, adultery, temple prostitution, and various other horrible acts.
- They willfully rejected God and purposely thwarted His will.
- They promoted their depravity among the nations and Israel was susceptible through acculturation.
- They were an idolatrous nation (Deuteronomy 7:3-5; 12:2-3).
- Canaanite women were seductive and immoral (cf Numbers 25:1-3).
- Canaanite children would have repeated the sins of their fathers and sympathetic to the religion of their parents.

What can we learn from this?

First, God sees all things, past, present and future. We need to remember that God has the capability to see 'down the road,' to know the outcomes of present practices, to see the future and its implications. Taking action when He did may have prevents

something far worse from happening in the future. God sees things from an eternal perspective.

Secondly, He knows far more than we do. He has declared "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9)." He knows best and can be trusted by faith.

Third, Paul tells us that God is both kind and severe. Romans 11:22 "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off." Not only is God gracious and merciful, He is also a God of holiness and wrath.

Fourth, God hates sin and knows the gravity of behaviors produced by sin when it is not delt with severely and completely. He has seen the devastation sin has wrought in the past, what it is producing in the present, and its consequences in the future. His patience and mercy have its limits. Judgments are coming – judgments of the tribulation period (Revelation 6-16), judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10), the judgment of nations (Matthew 25:31-36), judgment of angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3), and the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

Fifth, the God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New Testament. He is immutable, absolute and unchangeable. James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from

the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Sixth, both the Old AND New Testaments were given to make us wise. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

In summary, "God hates sin and will judge it. He may not do so right away, but judgment is inevitable. God told Moses that He "does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7). God is merciful and forgiving. God also told Moses that He was "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin (Exodus 34:6-7)."¹

OTHER NEWS



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The Compass (Phase I) calibrates a warrior's heart and tunes that heart to the heart of God. I am currently leading 45 at Calvary Church WBL Campus on this journey.

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If you would like to contact me directly, email me at Greg@HeartofaWarrior.org



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depends on the resources we can use to that end. Simply go to the donations tab on heartofawarrior.org. Thank you for being a subscriber.

¹ Longman III, Tremper. *Old Testament Essentials: Creation, Conquest, and Return*. IVP, Downers Grove, IL (p. 214 – 2014).

Check out *The Store* on our website (www.heartofawarrior.org). There are downloadable resources you can use to lead a group through Phases I, II, or III, Foundations of a Warrior, and Bible Study Guidelines.

Websites for Men

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