

“God’s Cup of Wrath”

and Other Culturally Unacceptable Doctrines

1 Thessalonians 2:16

“We must now look at the United States of America as missiologists once viewed nations that had never heard the gospel. We face a succession of generations who have transformed Christianity into something that bears no resemblance to the faith revealed in the Bible.”
Dr. Albert Mohler in the Article “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism – The New American Religion”

I. God’s Wrath – A Forgotten Doctrine?

A. List 3 truths about God’s wrath from the Bible with Scripture reference:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

B. Some people claim “God is a God of wrath in the Old Testament, but He is a God of love in the New Testament.” Is this true or false? It is false. List as many verses as you can that mention God’s wrath and/or judgment in the New Testament.

C. Why is it important that we see God’s wrath in the New Testament? Hint: It is a soteriological issue. What does “soteriology” mean? See John 3:36.

D. What does the Passover have to do with God’s wrath? With salvation? With the Church today? See Exodus 12:11-13; Matthew 26:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:7.

E. The biblical definition of God’s Wrath is: “God intensely _____ all _____ and is obligated by His Holy Nature to judge and _____ all sin.”

“If God loves all that is right and good, and all that conforms to His moral character, then it should not be surprising that He would hate everything that is opposed to His moral character. God’s wrath directed against sin is closely related to God’s holiness and justice. This is an attribute for which we should thank and praise God. It may not immediately appear to us how this can be done, since wrath seems to be such a negative concept. Viewed alone, it would arouse only fear and dread. Yet it is helpful for us to ask what God would be like if He were a God that did not hate sin. He would then be a God who either delighted in sin or

at least was not troubled by it. Such a God would not be worthy of our worship, for sin is hateful and it is worthy of being hated. Sin ought not to be. It is in fact a virtue to hate evil and sin (Hebrews 1:9; Zechariah 8:17), and we rightly imitate this attribute of God when we feel hatred against great evil, injustice, and sin" (Exodus 32:9-10; Deuteronomy 9:7-8; Romans 1:18; 5:9; 9:22; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; Hebrews 3:11; Revelation 6:16-17; 19:15). "Systematic Theology" by Wayne Grudem, page 205-206.

II. The New American Religion: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

A. In your own words, describe the "New American Religion."

B. Define these terms:

1. Moralism: _____
2. Therapeutic: _____
3. Deism: _____

C. In what ways do you find yourself incorrectly thinking about God and Christ in terms of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism? What are your wrong thoughts about God and Christ? What biblical new thoughts should you be thinking about God and Christ? See 2 Corinthians 10:5.

III. 1 Thessalonians 2:16 - "The full measure of God's wrath for their sins."

Adapted from MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 & 2 Thessalonians

A. Who is the Apostle Paul specifically talking about in 2:16? Why?

B. The unbelieving Jews were a people to be sad for (2:15-16):

1. They were the tragic antithesis of the believers in Thessaloniki. The Jews had a long-standing, persistent resentment, envy, and rage against Paul, the Gospel, and the Gentiles: Acts 9:20, 22; 13:40-50; 14:1-7, 19-20; 18:12-17; 19:8-10; 2 Corinthians 11:24.

"Five times I received 39 lashes from the Jews." - 2 Corinthians 11:24

"The Jews were filled with jealousy and began contradicting Paul and blaspheming. They instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district." - Acts 13:40-50

2. Paul rejoiced over the Thessalonians because they received God's Word (2:13), honored the other saints (2:14a), and persevered in suffering (2:14b).
3. Paul grieved over the unbelieving Jews because they killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets (2:15a), hindered the saints from missionary work among the Gentiles (2:15b-16a), and would suffer punishment under God's wrath (2:16b).

Reject Truth and Create Their Own Belief System

"For I testify about the Jews that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." – Romans 10:2-3; Matthew 23:13-30

C. Wrath of God in 1 Thessalonians 2:16

1. Wrath of God often symbolized in terms of a _____:
Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15-17, 27-29; Lamentations 4:21-22; Ezekiel 23:31-34; Habakkuk 2:16; Matthew 20:22; 26:39; John 18:11; Revelation 14:10; 16:19.
2. The Apostle Paul could be alluding to:
 - a. The Babylonian Exile in Ezekiel 8-11;
 - b. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem that came in 70 A.D.;
 - c. Christ's second coming in judgment in Revelation 19;
 - d. **Most probably** to God's _____ wrath on _____ as also mentioned by the Apostle John in his gospel (3:18, 36).
3. The Jews who rejected and hindered the Gospel "always fill up the measure of their sins" = "They always heap up their sins to the _____.

*There is a well-defined point set by God at which people reach the limit of their sins. See Genesis 6:3-6; 15:16; Matthew 23:32.

*It means God brings _____ only when sin has reached a certain limit. See Daniel 8:23; **Acts 17:30-31**; **Romans 2:5-6**; Hebrews 10:28-31.

"Wrath has come upon them to the utmost" – 1 Thessalonians 2:16 = *"has come"* – Greek aorist tense = coming is certain, for sure, done deal!

Those Jews had met all the prerequisites for future damnation. They had murdered their Messiah and His messengers; therefore, God's wrath would *"come upon them to the utmost"* = God will extend His wrath to the unbelieving to its extreme limit, or fullest expression. See 2 Kings 22:17; Psalm 78:59; Matthew 3:7; Romans 9:22.

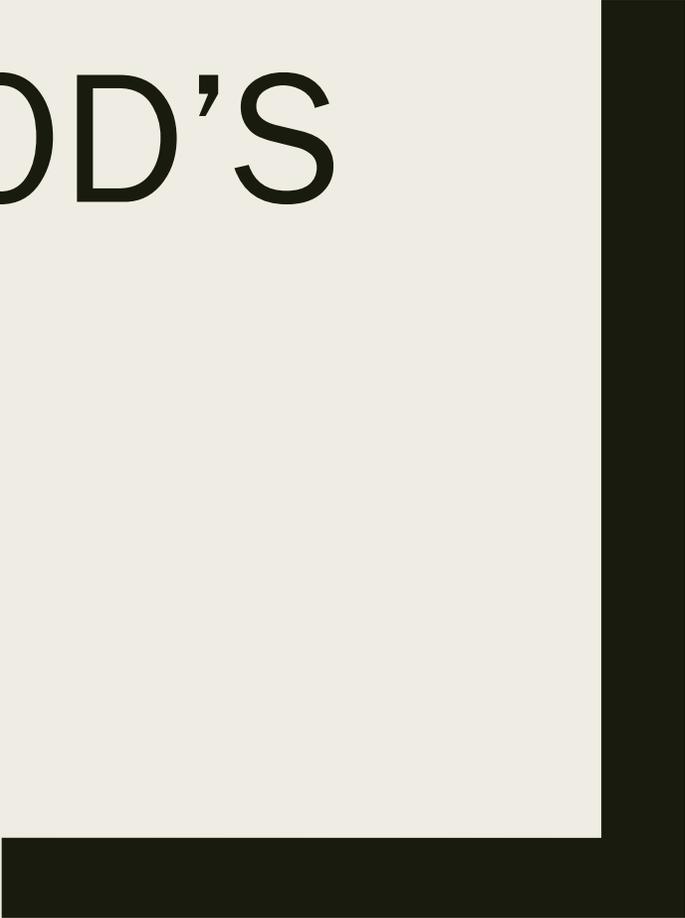
IV. Jesus Took the Cup of God's Wrath for You

- A. He suffered for His whole life: Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 5:8; 12:3-4; John 11:35; Isaiah 53:3, *"...a man of sorrows acquainted with grief."*
- B. His suffering climaxed at the cross in physical pain and death, in the pain of bearing sin (Isaiah 53:6, 12; John 1:29; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24), and in abandonment (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:34). Matthew 27:46, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* Jesus was finally cut off from the sweet fellowship He had always known with His heavenly Father; the unfailing source of His inward strength and greatest joy in a life filled with sorrows. Jesus faced the weight of the guilt of trillions of sins alone because God is *"of purer eyes than to behold evil"* (Habakkuk 1:13).
- C. He suffered by becoming the object of God's full wrath against our sin. Jesus became the object of God's intense hatred of sin and His vengeance and fury against all sin that had been stored up since the beginning of the world.
- D. Jesus was our "propitiation" (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). "Propitiation" means "a sacrifice that bears God's wrath to the very end and in so doing changes God's wrath toward us into favor (propitious)."
- E. We can thank and praise God for His wrath because in Christ we no longer have to fear or dread His wrath (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 5:10). God's wrath should also remind us of His great patience toward sinners so that many can be saved (Psalm 103:8-9; Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9-10). God's wrath should motivate us toward evangelism. And God's wrath should stir thanks because we know that one day He will finally punish all wrongdoing, and will reign over a new heavens and a new earth in which there will be no unrighteousness.



THE CUP OF GOD'S WRATH

1 Thessalonians 2:16



DEFINITION

“God intensely *hates* all *sin* and is obliged by His Holy Nature to judge and *punish* all sin.”

The New American Religion

Moralistic = being nice and good

Therapeutic = feeling good about self

Deism = God exists but is impersonal

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

God exists and is Creator; watches over human life; God wants people to be good, nice, fair as taught in the Bible and in most world religions...

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about one's self; God doesn't need to be particularly involved in my life except if I need Him to solve a problem; good people go to heaven.

A Form of Relativism

“Whatever” is just fine; ethical truth depends upon the person holding those truths;

individualism is king.

John 17:17; 18:37-38

M.T.D. and Relativism

Religious views are vague, limited and at variance with actual biblical teaching; being non-judgmental is stressed; reluctance to declare right and wrong; violated by assertions of strong theological convictions.

What's Going On?

American “Christians” either do not really comprehend their own religious traditions, or they do and they don’t care to believe it; vast emptiness at the heart of understanding; lack of serious thinking; absence of intentional faith.

American Religion Today

Central to living a good and happy life is being good, moral person; being nice, kind, pleasant, respectable, responsible, working on self-improvement, and being successful. Religion is centered in being nice = no strong theological convictions.

Therapeutic Religion

Must have therapeutic benefits; not a religion of sin, repentance, grace, service, prayer, suffering, gratitude; about feeling good, happy, secure, subjective well-being, resolving problems, getting along with others.

Deism

A unique understanding of God; He exists, created the world, defines the general moral order, but He is not particularly, personally involved in one's affairs, especially affairs I'd prefer Him not to get involved in. He is a God who keeps a safe distance.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

This is not a God who thunders from the heavens, nor serves as Judge. He is an undemanding deity interested in solving our problems and making us happy and feel good about ourselves.

Radically Undemanding Faith

Is true Christian faith undemanding?

No! It is the opposite. It is so demanding that God sent His Son to die for our sins, and call us to holiness.

Should I Hate Myself?

A biblical self-image is

- 1) In Christ;
- 2) Love God;
- 3) Love others;
- 4) Deny myself.

Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:3

Say goodbye to self-preoccupation!

The New American Religion

A radical transformation of Christian theology and belief replacing the sovereignty of God with the sovereignty of the self. Sin, wrath, justice are discarded as out of step with the times and unhelpful for self-actualization.

Self-Exam

1. Why do you exist? Do you exist for God or does God exist for you?
2. Do you prefer serving or to be served?

Self-Exam

3. Can you articulate and define your theological convictions? Do you have any? What about creation, man, sin, grace, redemption, atonement, justification, sanctification, future events, heaven and hell?

Self-Exam

4. What is the driving passion of your life? What do you live for? What occupies your thoughts? To live for the glory of Christ? To be happy? To feel good about yourself? To be successful, loved, accepted?

Self-Exam

5. What does it mean to you to be a Christian? To be a good person? To intentionally love Christ, obey His commands, and witness for Him?