

The Wrath of God

Adoring God Chapter II

Psalm 7:11

I. The Text Opened

A. Psalm 7:11

1. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psa. 7:11).
2. Here is found God as David Shield. (7:10–16)
 - a) God protects the righteous (7:10).
 - b) God punishes the wicked (7:11–16).
3. David describes how God, his Shield, in saving the upright in heart, brings direct judgment on the wicked.
 - a) Because God is a righteous Judge (cf. 9:8), He is angry every day.
 - b) Obedient believers can be comforted in the fact that people's wickedness does not go unnoticed.
 - c) But they can also be advised that vengeance belongs to the Lord; He will repay (cf. Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).
4. Like a warrior God prepares His deadly weapons for the wicked.
 - a) Swords, bows (v. 12), and arrows (v. 13) often provide the imagery for God's decree of judgment that will destroy the wicked.
5. David states how God traps the wicked with their own plans.
 - a) If someone conceives trouble, it will not produce its intended results.
 - b) Rather the evil scheme will be turned back on the plotter (cf. pit in 9:15; 35:8; 57:6; Prov. 26:27).
 - c) This is retribution from God, for the punishment fits the crime (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc., Ex. 21:24–25).
 - (1) *Jesus said that they "who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52).*
6. The psalm ends with David's vowing to thank and praise God for His righteousness, a righteousness yet to be manifested in the psalmist's experience.
 - a) So even though he was slandered and attacked, David wholeheartedly trusted in his righteous LORD (the Most High) for vindication and equity.
- 7.
8. And even though great and violent persecutors live long, and prosper in the world, as if they rather merited a reward, than procured God's wrath against them for it, God will judge them in righteousness and in his wrath.
 - a) God's Judgments on many persecutors are more spiritual, and so less conspicuous, and visible to the eye of the world.
 - b) This is when God gives them up to blindness of mind, hardness of heart, a cauterized conscience, and a reprobate sense, which of all other judgments are the most dreadful, (Hos. 4:17).

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: God's wrath is His justice burning against sin.

1. God's wrath is His justice and holiness burning against sin, the outward working of His displeasure and indignation against evil.

- a) God's anger is not mere petty revenge or malicious retaliation in response to an injury or insult suffered.
 - b) He is never vindictive like men can be in their pettiness and sin.
 - c) God is wrathful against sin because it is a rebellion against His righteous authority, a denial of and an insult to His unassailable sovereignty.
 - d) God's wrath is a most serious matter.
 - (1) *It is described as terrible (Ps 76:7).*
 - (2) *It inspires dread (Ps. 90:7).*
 - (3) *It brings pain (Job 21:17), punishment (Ps. 6:1, 38:1), and destruction (Jer. 42:18).*
 - (4) *As God's wrath becomes more intense, it is portrayed as fury, or great indignation (Deut. 29:28).*
 - (a) *God's wrath is pictured as burning (Lev. 10:6), and a fire (Isa. 30:27).*
 - (b) *It is referred to as hot (Job 20:23), and smoking (Ps. 74:1).*
2. The manner in which men live determines the amount of wrath they shall receive from God.
- a) Because God is just, their judgment will be infinitely specific.
 - (1) *Men are now heaping up torment for that day.*
 - (2) *Sins committed by them today will heat hell hotter for them tomorrow.*
 - (3) *Romans 2:5 describes those who are "storing up wrath" for the day of wrath.*
 - (4) *They are collectors of God's wrath which will one day be poured forth on them from the cup of His indignation, forever.*
 - (5) *1 Thessalonians 2:16 describes these people as those who "always live to fill up the measure of their sins until wrath comes upon them to the uttermost."*
 - (a) *Every day men fill up their sins, but there is a specific measuring point which God allows, and which only God knows.*
 - (b) *Once they hit that point, God calls them to judgment through death, and justly sentences them based on their original sin as well as their subsequent works that aggravate their eternal condition.*
3. God's wrath is as perfect as His love, faithfulness, grace, or mercy.
- a) His wrath is as much an exhibition of his divine perfection as every other aspect of His nature.
 - (1) *How could God who is infinitely holy ignore sin and refuse to release His wrath?*
 - (2) *How could He who delights only in what is pure and lovely not loathe and hate what is impure and vile?*
 - (3) *Consequently, the very nature of God makes hell as real as heaven.*
 - b) In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul points out that all of creation has become subject to futility, and groans and labors together in pain.
 - (1) *The same creation that declares the existence of God, and advertises His glory, also proclaims that He is the Enemy of sin and the Avenger of the crimes of men.*
 - (2) *But above all, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven when the Son of God came down to manifest the Divine character, and when that wrath was displayed in His sufferings and death, in a manner more awful than any of the other evidences God had given before of His hatred of sin.*
 - (3) *What's more, the future and eternal punishment of the wicked is now declared in terms more solemn and explicit than before.*
 - (a) *Under the new dispensation there are two revelations given from heaven, one of wrath, the other of grace.*

B. God's Wrath and Love in Both Testaments

1. People often avoid studying the doctrine of God's wrath because it is difficult or uncomfortable to imagine how a God they see as only loving can be angry with people and vengeful against them.
 - a) They struggle to reconcile the biblical truth of God's love with the biblical truth of His wrath.
 - b) Many people think the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament.
 - c) They believe the Old Testament shows an angry God with rules and laws which require men to remain in steadfast obedience to Him, or He will 'smite' them.
 - (1) *They say the God of the New Testament is a God of overflowing love, demonstrated clearly in the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the world. "For God so loves the world ...," right?*
 - d) When emotions come into play concerning difficult theological ideas, however, people tend to forget basic concepts like God does not change.
 - (1) *Malachi 3:6 states: "I the Lord change not."*
 - (2) *And as further study will verify, both biblical testaments portray the same God in the same way.*
2. In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as both a God of love and a God of wrath.
 - a) A clear passage that supports this truth is Malachi 1:2-3: "I have loved you," saith the LORD. Yet ye say, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" saith the LORD: "yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."
 - (1) *Numerous additional Old Testament passages affirm God's love for His people as well as His hatred for the wicked and those who rebel against Him.*
3. Likewise, the New Testament equally demonstrates how God loves His people while despising those outside of Christ.
 - a) Hebrews 10:31 states that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
 - b) God has power to save and to destroy (James 4:12), and He is to be feared because, beyond the death of the body, He has the power to destroy both body and soul in hell (Luke 12:5; Matthew 10:28).
 - c) Christ, being God, is portrayed as the judge of wicked men who is exceedingly wrathful against sin, the bloodied slain Lamb who enacts judgment on the wicked so fiercely that people of all kinds pray for the mountains to fall on them (Rev. 6:16-17).
 - d) At the same time, numerous New Testament references portray Christ as the Savior of those He loves.
 - (1) *There is no inconsistency between the testaments of God's love and God's wrath.*
 - (a) *See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, As I live forever, if I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and will repay those who hate me. (Deut. 32:39-41)*
4. God's Wrath in Hell
 - a) Hell is not a place where wicked men hang out together and have 'a good time.'
 - (1) *Hell is also not the place where the Devil currently lives.*

(2) *Hell is a real place, created by God initially as the future eternal abode for the Devil and his host of fallen angels for their rebellion against Him.*

(3) *Hell is also where the unspeakable torment of God's wrath is poured out on the wicked for their sin (Matt. 25:41).*

b) Christ describes God's wrath in hell using word pictures to communicate its truth.

(1) *He calls hell "that fire which shall not be quenched," (Mark 9:43-48); a place of "outer darkness" (Matt. 25:30); "a prison" (Luke 12:59); "hell fire" (Mark 9:47); and a "furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:42).*

(2) *Scripture further calls hell "a lake which burns with fire and brimstone," (Rev. 21:8), a place of "everlasting destruction," (2 Thess. 1:9); and Tophet (which means "place of fire") "For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." (Isa. 30:33).*

(a) *Tophet was in the southeast end of the valley of the son of Hinnom south of Jerusalem.*

(b) *Jesus uses this idea in Luke 12:5, "Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell."*

(c) *Hell in this passage is Gehenna, a word which derives its meaning from the Hebrew word "Gehinam," a reference to Hinnom in the Old Testament.*

(d) *To understand this name "Hinnom," listen to Christopher Love: In both Joshua 15:8 and Nehemiah 11:30, this valley of Hinnom is referenced and is the historical background to which Jesus points. In this valley owned by Hinnom, the idolatrous Jews set up a statue of Molech. Molech was a foreign god of the neighboring peoples. This large statue was in the form of a man with his hands stretched out before him, his palms turned up – as if he were going to receive something.*

(i) *This statue, made of brass and hollowed out, was stoked with wood, and a fire was kindled in it. The fire was kindled continually so that sacrifices could be offered in the hands of this statue. You can imagine that a brass statue would become exceedingly hot, even to the point of glowing red (as brass would) with such a fire stoked continually inside it.*

(ii) *The Jews would place one of their youngest children in the burning hands of this statue and sacrifice their children, alive, to the god Molech. Their children would be set in the fiery, hot hands of this heated furnace and burned until dead, as if to cook them alive. In some twisted and warped fashion, the fathers of these children thought that such a sacrifice to this god would bless their other children and their home. There was a continual fire in the idol and thus a continual shrieking and crying could be heard from the sacrifices of passing their children through this fire. It is even recorded that the Jews continually played music and rang bells to drown out the sounds of the shrieking and crying of their children. It was not until righteous King Josiah came along that this place was destroyed, as recorded in 2 Kings 23:10.*

(3) *In this grotesque picture of the depravity of man, Jesus reminds the Jews about the place of eternal torment.*

(a) *Hell is the place of the continual fire and burning of God's wrath on unrepentant sinners, a place of unending torture.*

c) People often associate hell with an absence of God.

(1) *They think hell is the place where God is not.*

- (a) *They appeal to Jesus when He says, “depart from me, ye that work iniquity,” (Matt. 7:23).*
- (b) *They believe that “departing” means absence of being, as if God sends people away to hell devoid of His presence.*
- (c) *But this is not what Jesus says. Rather, the verse says, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity,” (Matt. 7:23).*
- (2) *Hell is the place where God’s justice resides without mercy.*
- (a) *God is there, in the fullness of His being, but only communicates His justice in wrath for His glory.*
- (b) *It would be a great comfort to everyone in hell if they knew, at some point, God would not be there.*
- (c) *But God is the one that makes hell, hell.*
5. Scripture depicts the final coming of Christ as a day of wrath.
- a) The Lord Jesus will certainly and quickly appear in His glory when the world comes to an end.
- (1) *This end is for the express purpose of gathering His people into heaven, and to set His eternal wrath on the wicked.*
- (a) *And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matt. 24:30-31, NASB)*
- b) The universe belongs to God by right of creation and dominion (Ps. 24:1).
- (1) *And as governor of the universe He will vindicate His dominion and magnify His justice on all the forces of evil and the proud rebels who have dared to defy Him.*
- c) As to when this day of wrath will occur, no one knows.
- (1) *The mystery of His coming prompts His people to always be watching and ready because they do not know the hour He will return.*
- (a) *“Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen,” (Rev. 22:20).*
- (2) *The wicked, on the other hand, give little to no thought to the second appearance of Christ where He will gather all nations before His judgment seat (Rev. 20:12), separate the righteous from the wicked (Matt. 3:12, 25:33), open the books of their life against them (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12), take account of them, and then pronounce a just sentence upon them for their sins against His infinite holiness.*
- (a) *But on that day rebels against God’s government will, without a doubt, be made to acknowledge that God is Lord.*
- (b) *... every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:10-11, NKJV)*
- (c) *ALL will bow before Him (Rom 14:11).*
- (d) *The Devil will bow.*
- (e) *The demons will bow.*
- (f) *Kings, statesmen and celebrities will bow.*
- (g) *The rich and the poor.*
- (h) *The exalted and the outcast.*
- (i) ***Every knee will bow and confess that Jesus is LORD.***
- d) Those who rejected Christ will be left to themselves, with no one to plead their case. They will hear God’s righteous pronouncement of eternal judgment:

- (1) *“Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41)*
- (2) *On that day, Christ, as Judge, will condemn impenitent, wicked men to hell – along with the Devil and his angels.*
- (3) *He will pour out His wrath and fury on them to the exact measure they deserve.*
- (4) *When this sentence is irreversibly pronounced by the Judge on the wicked, what incredible cries will ensue?*
 - (a) *How will they endure such a sentence?*
 - (b) *Scripture conveys that the condemned will have a clear understanding of the glory and happiness they have missed.*
 - (c) *They will remember all the opportunities they had to follow Christ, but chose to reject Him instead.*
 - (d) *These memories will only add to the unending torture of body and soul under God’s wrath, without any intermission and in its due extremity. It will be as though the wicked are ever dying, but never dead.*
 - (e) *This final plight of the wicked is without a doubt horrible.*

c. But Believers are Rescued Through the Cross

1. Since the original sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden, everyone is born under the curse of sin and death (Psalm 51:5).

- a) Scripture plainly tells us that “all have sinned,” (Romans 3:23).
- b) Understanding that God’s wrath remains on all those who practice lawlessness and will culminate on them until the day of judgment, is a frightening realization.
- c) For that reason, it is God who must rescue people from hell.
 - (1) *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” (Acts 4:12).*
 - (2) *Salvation comes from Christ alone, and His salvation delivers His people, “from the wrath to come,” (1 Thess. 1:10).*
 - (3) *Wrath is coming.*
 - (4) *Men do not know when, but when it comes, it will be literally earth-shaking, “For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:17).*
 - (5) *There is one – and only one – reprieve “from the wrath to come,” and it is found through application of God’s sacrifice of Christ on the cross.*
- d) Jesus Christ fulfilled His covenant of peace with God (Zech. 6:13) to rescue His people from their sins.
 - (1) *This covenant included taking the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7-8), living a perfect sinless life to satisfy God’s Law (Heb. 4:15), willingly dying on the cross as a sacrifice for sin (Col. 1:20), rising from the dead after three days (1 Cor. 15:15), ascending to the Father (John 20:17), and presently interceding on behalf of His people as high priest (Heb. 10:21-22).*
 - (2) *Truly, Christ came to rescue sinners from the wrath of God.*
 - (3) *This should be grounds of eminent joy for the Christian.*
 - (a) *Soak your heart in the blood of Jesus, shed for your sin on the Mount at Calvary.*
 - (b) *Cast your eyes on the Bible’s depiction of a crucified Christ.*
 - (c) *Contemplate the nature of your sin, the wrath of God, and the passionate, undying love of a Savior who redeems.*
 - (i) *Such thoughts are healing to the callous heart and prescription to break up the most fallow ground of an obstinate soul.*

2. Some people may say, “I can’t see myself rejoicing in heaven while people are in hell tormented under God’s wrath. I don’t see how I could do it.”

a) However, when the saints in glory see God’s wrath executed on ungodly men, it will not be an occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.

b) They will hear the Judge pronounce sentence on them, saying, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

(1) But they will do so in a glorified state of mind, and in agreement with Christ against His enemies. Jonathan Edwards says: The sufferings of the damned will be no occasion of grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have no love nor pity to the damned as such. It will be no argument of want of a spirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they should love them, because they will know then, that God has no love to them, nor pity for them; but that they are the objects of God’s eternal hatred.

c) They will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections.

(1) They will love what God loves, and that only.

(2) However, the saints in heaven may have loved the damned while here, especially those of them who were near and dear to them in this world, they will have no love to them hereafter.

(3) It will be an occasion of their rejoicing, as the glory of God will appear in it.

(4) The sight of God’s strict and immutable justice will render Him amiable and adorable in the eyes of the redeemed.

(5) They will rejoice when they see Him who is their Father and eternal portion so glorious in His justice.

3. There is no doubt that a full meditation on the wrath of God, as described in Scripture, is a scary thing.

a) Hebrews 10:31 states, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

b) But as difficult a subject as it is, meditating on God’s wrath is a very valuable exercise for His people.

c) By nature, Christians tend to minimize sin, to treat it lightly, to gloss over its ugliness, and to make excuses for it.

(1) But the more they study and consider God’s unqualified hatred of sin and His terrifying vengeance upon it, the more likely they are to realize its seriousness.

(2) When they fully consider the doctrine of God’s wrath, it causes us to examine our own lives:

(a) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2 Cor. 13:5)

(3) Meditating on God’s wrath engenders a healthy fear in our souls for God, which may lead to greater reverence for His awesome majesty.

(a) “Thus, let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire,” (Heb. 12:28-29 ESV).

(4) Thinking long and hard on God’s wrath in the Scriptures moves his people to joyful praise of Jesus Christ for having delivered believers heavenward. “To wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come,” (1 Thess. 1:10, ESV).

(5) It presses them to be good witnesses to the world concerning the Gospel, as well as praying that God would send more laborers into the harvest to gather in souls through preaching the Word of God.

(a) *“The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest,” (Luke 10:2).*

(6) *Finally, their eagerness or their hesitancy to meditate on God’s wrath may be a reliable test of how much they love God.*

(7) *If they do not love God as He truly is, but rather love Him for who they want Him to be, then can they say they truly love Him?*

(8) *If they love a god without wrath, then do they love a god made in thier own image – an idol? “You thought that I was one like yourself.” (Ps. 50:21, ESV).*

4. Sinners should never dare to think that they will escape judgment forever; God’s mill grinds slowly, but it grinds exceedingly fine.

a) His patience and His generosity are glorious and impressive now, but when we see how His goodness is abused and taken for granted, His fury will be all the more terrible and unbearable.

b) There is nothing smoother than the sea when it is still, but when stirred up into a storm, nothing rages stronger.

c) There is nothing as sweet as the patience and goodness of God, but nothing as terrible as His wrath when it takes fire.

III. The Text Applied

A. How will you escape His wrath?

1. Armed with a full understanding that God will pour out His wrath on those who reject the sacrifice of His Son as payment for their sin debt, you should ask yourself, “Am I part of the majority or the minority?”

a) What do I mean by this?

b) Jesus was asked a question about the majority in Luke 13:23, “Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?”

c) Think about this for a moment.

(1) *How would you answer this?*

(2) *Most people today believe that the way to get to heaven is simply to die.*

(3) *All you need to do is die and God will let you into His heaven.*

d) Hell, on the other hand is reserved for people like Hitler, Stalin and the Devil.

(1) *Most people, like the one who asked Jesus this question, think most people go to heaven.*

e) But Jesus answers this question in verse 24, “And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

(1) *Jesus does not say “enter in the broad door, where people have broad thoughts about God’s mercy and salvation, which is part of the broad road so wide that it will never get too crowded, where almost everyone gets into heaven.”*

(a) *No. To the contrary.*

(2) *A parallel passage in Matthew 7:13 complements Jesus’ answer. He says there, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:13-14)*

f) We are not dealing with people’s opinion here.

(1) *This is the teaching of the Lord Jesus.*

(2) *He contrasts two ways – a narrow way and a broad way.*

- (3) *The broad way leads to eternal death ... and “many” are on that path.*
 (4) *The narrow way leads to eternal life, and “few” are on that path.*
- g) What is Jesus saying?
 (1) *He is warning His listeners that if the vast majority of human beings you and I know were to die tonight, they would go to hell.*
 (2) *This also means there is a significant number of people – people who go to your neighborhood church, or live in your city or community – who, if they were to die tonight, would go to hell.*
 (3) *Why? Because they are on the broad way that leads to destruction.*
 (a) *The broad way encompasses most people from all of history.*
- h) Which begs the question: What if you are deceiving yourself?
 (1) *What if you think you are getting into heaven, but you are really on the broad road?*
 (2) *The greatest tragedy any person will ever experience is to die and wake up in hell the moment thereafter.*
- i) Jesus said those who go to hell, who are on the broad road, will experience weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:42).
 (1) *Those who thought they were saved respond with weeping the moment they wake from their stupor of self-deception, horrified at the prospect of spending eternity in hell.*
 (2) *Those who are gnashing their teeth (a biblical metaphor for human fury) are those atheists and others who never claimed to believe in God, but now must admit that the claims of Christ are true.*
- j) If you were to end up in hell today because you deceived yourself into thinking you were part of the minority, there is nothing you can say to God in His just judgment of wrath against you.
 (1) *You will have committed cosmic treason against the Creator, who owes you absolutely nothing.*
 (2) *You will realize that, if you wake up in hell upon your death, you will have lived a life which merited perfect justice from an infinitely Holy God, and His judgment about you was right and good and just.*
- k) If we are wise, we will take note of the fact that Jesus spoke much more about hell than He did about heaven.
 (1) *He taught more about hell because He was warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come.*
 (2) *You must find yourself in agony to get into heaven.*
 (3) *This is the word Jesus uses when He says “strive” to get into the narrow gate.*
 (a) *Use every effort that God has made available through Jesus Christ to enter into heaven so that you may not be deceived into thinking you are part of the minority, when you are in fact, among the majority on that broad road that leads to destruction and eternal damnation.*