

What Ever Happened to the Wrath of God?

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There is a deafening silence these days, emanating from the pulpits of our land regarding the subject of God's wrath. In the interest of being "user friendly" and not wanting to scare off the "seekers" we are bombarded with the message of an exclusively loving God. Commenting on this trend in homiletics, Steven J. Wellum, professor of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said that "there has been a shift away from the language of divine holiness, wrath, and justice" and instead we are encouraged to view God as " a self-limiting, fellow-sufferer and loving parent."

This trend has been escalating since the late Reinhold Niebuhr complained that the church today wants "a God without wrath, who took a man without sin into a kingdom without justice, through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." Niebuhr was writing at a time when God had been declared dead by the liberal church establishment. Now however, the evangelical church having

resurrected this “dead” God seems to have tamed Him with a theological stun gun, loaded with missiles of soporific and syrupy love.

We talk a great deal of being “saved” and the need of a lost world to be “saved”. But ask the average Christian these days “Saved from what?” and you get a blank stare in return for your question. The reason for this ignorance lies purely at the feet of those who bring good news, but who have unfortunately avoided the bad; and this includes both teachers and pastors.

I have shocked many people in my adult Sunday School class by referring them to these passages of Scripture which they had (sadly) never read nor had ever been taught.

- Psalm 5:5 “The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.”
- Psalm 11:5 “ The Lord tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.
- Proverbs 6:16, 19 “ There are six things that the Lord hates...a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord

among brothers.”

These Christians were appalled at the notion that God hates anyone. They had always been taught that “God hates the sin but not the sinner.” That should be placed in the same “bible” that contains the age-old saw that “god helps those who help themselves.” (Credits to Benjamin Franklin) I quickly pointed out to these people that Hell and the Lake of Fire are not places where God will display His love, but rather places in which the inhabitants will incur the eternal and unrelenting wrath of God.

To the pastors who read this I would say, it’s time to get honest with your congregations about our God. Preach the whole counsel of God and let the chips fall where they may. You and we who are teachers “will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1). There is no need for “good news” where the antithesis is “bad news”. It is up to each one of us to begin to tell it like it is, realizing that “the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18) Those who are perishing will continue to perish regardless of what we preach and teach, but those who are “being” saved will respond more quickly to

the “good news” of the cross, where mercy and wrath meet, if they are told of the “bad news” resulting from a life of unbelief.

Hell gets very little airtime as the subject matter in sermons of today. I recommend that some of you read Jonathan Edwards *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* and then search the Scriptures in which Jesus issued many a caveat concerning this very real place and the Lake of Fire as well. C.S. Lewis said this to those who would object to the doctrine of Hell, “What are you asking God to do? To wipe out their past sins, and at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done so on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does.” (*The Problem of Pain*)