



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 1/Issue 6

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

This Sunday's reading is Psalm 69 (ESV). Titled, *Save Me, O God*, To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. Of David.

1 Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. **2** I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. **3** I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. **4** More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore? **5** O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you. **6** Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. **7** For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. **8** I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. **9** For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. **10** When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. **11** When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. **12** I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me. **13** But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an

acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness. **14** Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. **15** Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me. **16** Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. **17** Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress; make haste to answer me. **18** Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies! **19** You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. **20** Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. **21** They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. **22** Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. **23** Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. **24** Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. **25** May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents. **26** For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. **27** Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. **28** Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among

the righteous. **29** But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high! **30** I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. **31** This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. **32** When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. **33** For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners. **34** Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. **35** For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; **36** the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it.

David being the representative for the people of God, and in that role he wrote this as a prayer that was well-suited to each of God's people in similar situations, providing the ideal response to such trials.



"The Watchman Notes" Pastor Chuck Vitel
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The Watchman's Notes
Offering biblical messages, perspectives
and views on
Biblical & moral issues and current events.
A Ministry of Chuck Vitel, Pastor – Bible
Teacher

"For thus the Lord said to me: Go, set a watchman; let him announce what he sees." Isaiah 21:6 [ESV]

This issue covers a topic that every Christian should know about. In fact, whenever I choose a topic to write about, I always ask myself the question: "Is this a subject that every Christian should know something about and understand?" My title is: "Where Grace and Wrath Meet"

Does God ever get angry? It would be foolish to ignore the passages in Scripture that talk about God's anger. Yes, God does get angry; there are many examples in the Bible of this. He "displays his wrath every day" (Psalm 7:11). "God is not a God who takes pleasure in evil" (Psalm 5:4).

However, we must not equate God's anger with our own human experiences of that emotion. We must look again to the Bible. Ephesians 4:26-27 tells us it is possible to experience anger but not sin. As God cannot sin, we know that His anger is righteous, unlike the common experience of anger in ourselves. As James 1:20 says, "Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

The context of the verses of God getting angry reveals *why* He gets angry. God gets angry when there is a violation of His character. God is righteous, just, and holy, and none of these attributes can be compromised (Exodus 20:4-6; Isaiah 42:8).

What happened when Jesus died outside the city walls of Jerusalem at the place called Skull Hill? We all understand that

The Cross is the very heart of the Christian faith, and without *The Cross* we have no faith at all. What happened on that first "Good Friday" [*The Crucifixion of Christ*] was one of the three most important events in all history: the other two events are The Incarnation [God becoming human and coming to earth] and The Resurrection [Christ being raised from the grave].

However, what happened on the Cross from God's point of view? *What did it mean to God the Father as His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died a criminal's death?* In order to answer that question, we must read Romans 3:20-26 (NIV):

²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

This short passage contains the very heart and soul of the Christian Gospel and answers the question:

What did the Cross mean to God?

First and foremost, it meant the "turning away" of God's wrath – vs 25 - The NIV Bible translates the first part of v. 25 this way, "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood." The phrase "sacrifice of atonement" translates a Greek word that means "propitiation." The ESV version translates v. 25 this way: "Whom God put

forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins." Few people have heard the word 'propitiation' – and fewer still understand what it means. Simply stated: "God presented Jesus as the *sacrifice for our sin*."

At its core, SIN is rebellion against God. Our Sin separates us from God, the Creator and Sustainer of Life. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And "the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Another definition of propitiation: means to turn away wrath by the offering of a gift. It means that the death of Christ [His sacrifice] turns away God's wrath. Wrath is described as God's anger/judgment. Biblically, it is the *divine judgment* upon sin and sinners. It is not a casual response by God to ungodliness, but carries the meaning of *hatred, revulsion, rage and indignation*.

People are made right with God, or declared righteous and Holy, when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding his blood for our sin. This sacrifice shows that God was being JUST - when He held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past.

God's wrath is not a popular topic these days. Many pastors fear to preach on God's wrath – (*lest they incur the wrath [anger] of their congregation*). We would all rather hear about *God's love & Grace* than about His wrath. *Yet both are entirely biblical because both wrath and love flow from God's basic nature*.

God is by nature love (1 John 4:16), however, it is also true that He hates the wicked and those who do violence (Psalm 11:5-6). In His justice He must punish sin. The punishment is called the *wrath of God*. *Sometimes in our attempt to appear as compassionate & tolerant Christians – we proclaim that, "God hates the sin and loves the sinner."* We must be careful in using

that statement indiscriminately because first, that statement is not found anywhere in the Bible, and second, it is only partly true and can be misleading. In fact, God is angry and expresses His wrath with the wicked and evildoers everyday – (Psalm 7:11).

J.I. Packer, Author of Knowing God says: “God’s wrath is His righteousness reacting against our unrighteousness.”

Does God love sinners? Yes, He does - because sinners are part of the world Christ came to save (John 3:16). God indeed loves what He created! But as it stands, the statement seems to imply that love is God’s only response to sin and sinners. That’s just not true. (Psalm 5:4-5; Psalm 37:13; Psalm 101:7). God doesn’t take pleasure in evil or sin. God hates all who do wrong. No one who practices sin will dwell in God’s House or stand in His presence. The wicked will perish and vanish like smoke.

Modern gospel preaching is somewhat weak or anemic precisely because we preach less than the whole truth to guilty sinners. If all we say to the lost or to those who are caught up in sinful behavior is “God loves you” – than we are in danger of making them think that their continued sinful behavior or rebellion doesn’t matter to God. Instead, we must warn them to flee from the wrath to come (Luke 3:7). If we must say, “God hates sin but loves the sinner” – let us at least add these words, “God hates the sin that has tainted us – God hates what sin and wrong behavior has done to the individual. And God warns the sinner to repent of their sin before it’s too late.”

I don’t want to be misunderstood as to what I am saying here. I fervently believe in God’s love and grace for all of us – but God’s love and grace, as great as they are, cannot cancel God’s holy hatred of sin. There is no conflict between love and anger (wrath). True love is often angry.

For example: we see propitiation at work when a husband realizes that he has offended his wife. Hoping to make it up to her, he stops at a store and buys flowers, maybe some candy and a card. He gives her the gifts – hoping to turn away her wrath and restore a good relationship. Ask any wife and she will say [at one time or another] – “I’m so angry because my husband [the one that I love] has disappointed me.”

Likewise – because God is Holy and He loves us – He is angry over our sin. Because He is love, He provided a means through His grace to turn away His own anger by the offering of His Son. God provided a sacrifice of atonement. The believer’s deliverance from God’s wrath is through the atonement (Rom. 5:8-10).

(1 Thess. 5:9 NIV). “For God has not appointed [destined] us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Revelation 3:10) adds these words: “Since you have kept My command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial [wrath] that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”

The greatest illustration of this concept of atonement comes from the Old Testament Day of Atonement [In Hebrew, Yom Kippur] – when the Jewish High priest would enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of a goat. (Leviticus 16 provides the details). The High Priest and him alone, had to make the sacrifice. And it had to happen on the Day of Atonement – and on no other day. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would sprinkle the goat blood on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. That gold lid – was called the “Mercy Seat.” Inside the Ark was copy of the Ten Commandments – representing the Law of God. By the sprinkling of the blood, the sins of the people were “covered.” That covering by means of blood was called the “Atonement.” The sacrifice of blood turned away the wrath of God. Why is this important? Because God’s Holiness &

Justice demands death as the ultimate punishment for sin.

The O.T. sacrificial system had one major problem. It provided only a “temporary forgiveness” because it was based on the blood of animals. (Hebrews 10:4) says that, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.” That is why every year, year after year, the High Priest would go in and do it all over again. And when he died, another High Priest would take his place and do the same things each year on the Day of Atonement. The O.T. system provided no permanent forgiveness for sin (Hebrews 7:23-28).

However - when Jesus died on the cross – the blood that He shed was like the blood on the Mercy Seat. It turned away the “wrath of God” and covered the sin of the entire human race. How could that be? In the O.T. it is the blood of animals – in the N.T. it is the eternal blood of Jesus Christ (God in the Flesh) that has eternal value in the eyes of God. When Jesus hung on the cross, He cried out (Mark 15:3), “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” In that moment all the “wrath of God” was poured out on Jesus. He became sin for us, and all of your sin and all of mine and the sins of the whole world [past, present, & future] were poured out on Jesus. In that moment God turned His face away from His own Son.

To call the death of Christ a “Propitiation” means that God’s “wounded heart” is now satisfied with the death of His Son. When a sinner trusts Christ (by faith), God accepts that sinner on the basis of the blood sacrifice Christ made when He died on the cross.

You say - Why did God do it this way? Because it was His Plan! Not our plan. And because as an infinite God of infinite Holiness – all sins committed against Him are infinite in magnitude. Only a GIFT of infinite value could take away the infinite wrath of God. And only God Himself (in the Person of His Son, Jesus) could make such an infinite gift.

That's why my friends – our meager efforts to be good enough to stand before a Holy God and our weak attempts to turn aside God's wrath are doomed to failure.

What else did the Cross mean to God? It also meant a demonstration of God's Justice – (Romans 3:25-26). People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being JUST when He held back His wrath [anger] and did not punish those who sinned in times past, v.26 "for He [God] was looking ahead and including them in what He would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate His righteousness [Justice], for He himself is fair and just, and He declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus."

Again - Why did Jesus have to die? Simple answer > *because sin must be punished.* God is Holy – He cannot allow sin to go unpunished – His Holiness and in turn, His justice, demand that every sin be punished – no matter how small it may seem to us. If He were to forgive sin without proper and fair punishment – He would cease to be Holy and Just. God would no longer be God because He would *have denied His own character!*

All of this is an outpouring of God's grace – (Romans 3: 24) - tells us upon what basis God saves us. "Justified freely by his grace." "Freely" - literally means "without a cause." Salvation comes "without a cause" in us. That is, God saves us despite the fact that He can't find a reason within us to save us. Salvation is a free gift to the human race. *There is nothing in us that causes God to want to save us.* No good works, no inner beauty, no great moral attainment, no intellectual merit of any kind, no future potential. When God saves us, He does it - despite the fact that we don't deserve it.

"Grace is what you need but do not deserve." God declares us righteous when we have nothing but the *sewage of sin* in

our veins. **This is the teaching or doctrine of free grace.** God saves people who actually deserve condemnation. Apart from the grace of God, the only potential you have is the potential for eternal damnation.

Listen my friends, "There's a place where mercy reigns and never dies. There's a place streams of grace flow deep and wide. Where all the love I've ever found comes like a flood come flowing down. At the Cross, At the Cross." (Song, At the Cross, by Chris Tomlin)

Has the blood of Jesus ever been applied to your heart? God's Son, Jesus Christ, has turned away the wrath of God. He shed His blood on *The Cross* and what was a place of Judgment is now a "Mercy Seat" for people like you and me. It is a free gift to everyone who believes and trusts in Jesus. If what you just read is logical and makes sense and you believe it – then respond and receive Jesus as Savior. Run to the Cross as your only hope of salvation. Amen.

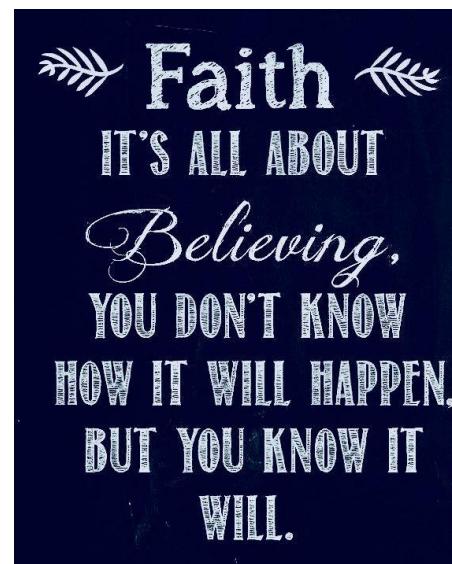
This week, Pastor Vitels message is what we need to hear as we navigate through the pandemic. Some of us might be tip-toeing wondering when God is going to drop the next shoe.

In an article by Daniel Stenberg he writes, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is one of the more popular sermons in American history. British Colonial Christian Theologian Jonathan Edwards, painted the picture of a God with an itchy trigger finger, constantly at the ready to dispense justice on wicked sinners. The God that Edwards describes is so angry at sin, and those that live in it, that he is doling out bits and pieces of Hell to the wicked, that they might understand what their future holds should they continue down the path they are currently on."

This is brought to the forefront today as many in evangelical America use hardships and trials to spread the message that God is enacting justice on the United States for any number of reasons, such as our current abortion laws or when a natural disaster strikes certain

parts of our country or certain areas of the world. I often hear a soft undercurrent in Christian circles about how God was punishing those affected for the sin that they have ignored or accepted. Or when a Christian brother backslides and then some health issue or tragedy befalls him, they are quick to call out God's judgement on that person in an effort to have the congregation toe-the-line in fear. God does hate sin? The answer is YES. But the current pandemic is not his judgement. You see, this is the Easter story. We are all sinners! But is God angry at us? No. God's wrath was poured out on Jesus, totally and completely. We can rest in the truth that God looks on you with love and favor because of Jesus. Live in the comfort that when we fail there is forgiveness, not in the fear that God will seek retribution. Rejoice in the complete work of Christ on the cross. Seek out our Christian brothers and sisters that may be going through hard times and encourage them with the gift of mercy. Seek out those around us that don't know of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection and the grace that is afforded to them. Comfort those who fear that everything is out of control, and that the world is not in the control of God.

God is our protector, God holds our lives in His hands. He is in control. It's not the "pointing finger" of an angry God. When Christ hung on the cross, abandoned, he cried out, "It is finished." God's wrath was spent and our savior, our substitute bore our sins.





PRAYER LIST

✓ Continuing Prayers for loss:

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19. The family of Mary Grace Reyes.

✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs:

Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor and Sue Vitel

✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:

Leonard Hatfield

✓ Continuing Prayers for:

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families

✓ New Requests:

Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman as they are quarantined from each other.

Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic.

Anne Benliro - My Co-worker's (Alicia) husband--Oscar, is fighting for his life right now at the Condell ICU. He is a nurse. He was infected through his patients that have Covid19. Oscar is the only main bread winner of their family (+2 teen kids).

Mylin Lardizabal - My husband, Errol, and I are both nurses and Errol did get assigned to work in ICU to take care of Covid patients, he will have to work on the unit for at least a month. We were told that we will be pulled to other areas as needed. Please pray for us that we will stay healthy to take care of others. Our biggest concern is not getting our girls and our friends sick and that includes our church family.

Liza Mitchell in her role as a health care worker at Vi Independent and Assisted Living Facility.

Brian Mitchell requested prayer on behalf of Carol Pelfrey. Carol is from Ohio and visited our Sunday School and service a few months ago. During her visit she shared a prayer request. Her son Daniel Ruhlman who lives in Morton Grove has terminal brain cancer and Carol is concerned about his spiritual condition. Pray for Daniel as he voiced that he made a decision for Christ but now must be in a different place. Pray that God will comfort him and the Pelfrey family, as they can't travel to be with him.

Brian also asked for prayer as another co-worker tested positive making the total 5.

Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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