

## What Love and Wrath Have in Common

So many people—even those outside the church—love the imagery of Christmas: a baby in a manger who came to bring “Peace on earth, good will toward men.” While that’s true—the arrival of Jesus brings peace and good will—that’s not all Jesus brings.



Jesus also brings the wrath of God.

When Simeon encountered the infant Jesus with His parents in the temple, he spoke some glorious words. Simeon referred to Jesus as “your salvation ... a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel (Luke 2:30-32). Good news indeed, but Simeon did not stop there. He told Mary, “Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed” (v. 34).

Jesus will cause many to rise: those who look to Him as Lord and trust Him to save them will be saved. But Jesus will cause many to fall as well. Those who reject Jesus and choose to live for themselves place themselves in a dangerous position; instead of experiencing the love and salvation of God, what remains for them is God’s wrath.

One of the most well-known and best-loved verses in the Bible is John 3:16. It’s the gospel in a single sentence.

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

No doubt God love us, but let’s keep reading.

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. *This is the judgment: The light has come into the*

*world*, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil” (vv. 17-19).

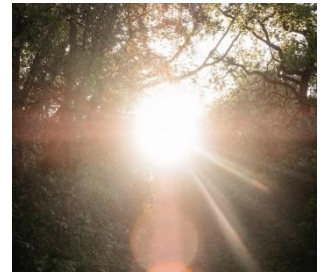
The apostle John concluded chapter 3 quite bluntly:

“The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him” (v. 36).

God’s glory and love were revealed through Jesus, but that very revelation also revealed God’s heart toward sin: He hates it. His wrath is settled on sin. The good news for us is that, because Jesus took our sin on the cross, He took God’s wrath for us. But if we don’t turn from our sin and turn to God, our sin remains and, therefore, we remain in the path of God’s wrath.

Don’t mistake me for a fire-and-brimstone preacher. That has never been my style. Frankly, I’m not a fan of preaching about the fires of hell in order to scare people into heaven. I prefer to focus on Jesus: who He is, His love, His grace, and His offer of salvation.

But the reality is that God’s wrath sits right alongside His love. God’s holiness demands that sin be punished. His love for us does not nullify His wrath, but His sacrifice of love—His death on the cross for us—satisfies that wrath.



Light either illuminates our way or it blinds us. It all depends on what direction we’re facing. The light of Christ either points us to God and an eternal walk with Him, or that light causes us to run from Him—just like cockroaches that scatter when the kitchen light is turned on.

I’m thankful for that light. I’m thankful for all that Jesus reveals. He revealed my sin and He revealed His love that made it possible for me to no longer be under His wrath. I hope you’ll do the same. Run to the light of Christ, not from it.