

# God of Love Or God Of Wrath?

Joe Slater

Dozens of times in both testaments Scripture affirms God's love. The same is true of His wrath. Even Jesus, who perfectly embodied love, became angry. If you don't believe it, just ask the thieving money changers in the temple! (See John 2:14-15.)

Skeptics claim that love and wrath are incompatible, so the Bible contradicts itself or portrays a God who doesn't exist or isn't worth serving. Do they have a valid point?

No indeed! People who pit one attribute of God against another invariably end up with egg on their face. Mercy or justice? Love or wrath? It isn't "either/or"; it's "both/and"!

The very idea that love and wrath are mutually exclusive flies in the face of common sense and betrays a bogus definition of love. A "love" that cannot become angry amounts to nothing more than sickeningly-sweet, syrupy sentimentalism! The skeptics themselves don't practice it, nor should they. Ask them, "Do you love your children?" Of course they do! "Have you ever been angry with them?" The honest answer would have to be, "Yes!" "Have you ever chastened them?" Some might say, "Oh, no, I love them too much to do that!" But hear the Spirit-inspired words of the wisest king who ruled Israel: "*He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly*" (Proverbs 13:24).

God's wrath is an expression of His righteousness and holiness. Those attributes are every bit as excellent as His love and mercy. If sin didn't offend God's very nature, He wouldn't be righteous or holy. Now that would make Him a god (not God) who wasn't worth serving!

# Save Us!

There was rebellion in the camp! The way had been hard, and the people were discouraged. Complaining about food, water, and hardships of the journey turned into speaking against their leader, Moses. In fact, it went further and turned into speaking against Almighty God!

Punishment was swift and severe. Fiery serpents appeared among the people; by their bites the Israelites began to die. "We have sinned," the nation cried. "Save us! Take away these snakes!" Their plea was presented to God by an interceding Moses, and a gracious God hearkened to them. "*Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live*" (Numbers 21:8). Those who did as they were told lived.

More is embraced here than just an historical event. Christ says this is an analogy of the redemption of fallen humanity. "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:14-15).

Sin is a deadly malady that has spread through the world. Wherever man is found, there sin is found also. Like snake venom, sin is deadly. Victims die from snake venom; in a more awful way, sin's victims pay the penalty of death.

The remedies for both snake bite and sin are prescribed by the Lord. The Israelites could not heal themselves; neither can we! They escaped punishment just as we can, by heeding Heaven's instructions.

*"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). "*And how why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). "*There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 3:21).

–Bobby Key (deceased) via *Old Paths*

# Tricky

"A physics professor at Adelaide University in Australia, Sir Kerr Grant, used to illustrate a point by allowing a heavy ball suspended from the roof trusses to fall some 30 feet and be caught in a sand bucket. Each year he lined up the bucket meticulously to catch the ball -- and each year students secretly moved the bucket to one side, so that the ball crashed thunderously to the floor. Tiring of this rather stale joke, the professor traced a chalk line around the bucket. The students moved the bucket as usual, traced a chalk mark around the new position, rubbed it out and replaced the bucket in its original spot. 'Aha!' the professor exclaimed, seeing the faint outline of the erased chalk mark. He moved the bucket over it and released the ball -- which thundered to the floor as usual" (D.G. Dewar, Reader's Digest).

Sometimes it is hard not to get tricked. While many tricks are harmless, like the one with the professor, others can be dangerous, especially when we are facing someone who is named, "*the Deceiver*" (Revelation 12:9). Satan wants so badly to trick us into making poor decisions. Perhaps one of the greatest ways he accomplishes such deceit is through the many different religious thoughts. Scripture only speaks of one true way (John 14:6) and one true faith (Ephesians 4:5). All the others miss the mark, equating themselves to the ball that thunderously crashed to the floor (Matthew 7:21-23).

There is only one way to keep ourselves from being deceived: check Scripture. God has given us every instruction we need to succeed with life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). He has personally breathed out all the words in Scripture so we can be properly taught, corrected, and equipped (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is up to us to see how the different thoughts and religions measure up to the divine measuring tape of Scripture. Satan wants to deceive us, so be sure to fight back with the living and active sword of the spirit, the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17).

--Author unknown (via Athens, AL)