



BibleProject Podcast

Saved from God's Wrath Character of God E11

October 26, 2020, 56.37

Speakers in the audio file: Jon Collins, Tim Mackie, Carissa Quinn

- Jon** Hi, this is Jon at BibleProject. This is our last episode on the anger of God. Today we're going to look at how the Apostle Paul talks about God's anger in the book of Romans. We've done these past six episodes on this one attribute of God, because for many of us, God's anger can be scary and confusing. For others, we've actually flattened out God's anger to be something simpler than what it actually is. 00:00:00
- Tim** This is the basic summary of Christian belief when I was first introduced to it in my early 20s, is you're human, you have a conscience between right and wrong, you've done wrong, sin, God is holy, therefore, He is angry at you for your sin, and He's going to kill you. It's His justice and His Holiness, He has to kill you. Jesus died in your place instead, and so you can be forgiven and have life instead of death. So what I'm saying is that abstraction doesn't really do justice to all of the elements in that summary, especially this idea of God's anger and death. God's anger is God's handing people over to a process that's self-chosen that results in death, but it's very much what I want. 00:01:00
- Jon** So the Apostle Paul opens his letter to the Romans saying, quote, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people."
- Tim** So then that raises the question, well, how is the wrath of God being revealed? What does it look like? He repeats himself three times. He says, "Therefore, because they've exchanged their glory that God wants them to have for idolatry, therefore, God gave them over in the passionate desires of their hearts."
- Jon** God's wrath is handing us over to ourselves, giving us what we want, which doesn't lead to a true life. What Paul will later say is that we are rescued from this path by Jesus. And because of Jesus, we are now at peace with God. 00:02:00
- Tim** So to say that you're saved from God's wrath, it's like you're being taken off a set of train tracks and you're put onto different set of train tracks that leads to life. This is what he means when he says

to be saved from God's anger. It's not just a post mortem event at the end of your life. God's wrath is something that begins now. It's something that I need to be rescued from right now. I don't want to be given over to my basis desires. That would be terrible for me and everybody around me, starting tomorrow, and not just after I die.

Jon Paul puts it this way in Romans 5, but God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him?

Tim When Paul talks about the cross, what he foregrounds of God's character is not his anger. He foregrounds God's love. The cross is a demonstration of God's love. 00:03:00

Jon Thanks for joining us. Here we go.
We are going to finish up a conversation on the anger of God. This conversation is part of a series where we're walking through five different attributes of God in Exodus 34. The middle attribute, the third attribute is not so much an attribute of God, but it's a description of the way God handles anger, which is that He's slow to anger. This is our boy, sixth episode, I think, on anger, and we'll try to land the plane. I'm here with Carissa. As usual, hi Carissa.

Carissa Hi.

Tim And Dr. Tim Mackie. I should say Dr. Carissa Quinn as well if I must say Dr. Tim. I'm the one here without a doctorate and the most confused of us all. Speaking of which, man, I feel like I really have been doing such a bad job. I just feel like I'm just all over the place. What I would love is to hear...Tim, you built these notes. We haven't had you yet do a recap. Could you try to do like a five-ish minute just like how would you recap the main beats of where we've been and then bring it to Jesus. 00:04:00

Tim So God's anger in the Bible is very common. Most people think that, especially the God of the Old Testament is He's mainly just angry at humans and killing them for the stupid things they do. So the fact is, is that the portrait of God's anger is way more nuanced than that. It's actually telling us some really powerful things that we stand to benefit and learn from about ourselves and about God. God's anger doesn't occur nearly as often as readers of the Old Testament might think. It occurs less often in the Bible. And when it does occur, it's surprising. 00:05:00

So God's Anger appears first in the Bible with Moses in a conversation that he's having about how He wants Moses to represent Him. And Moses refuses five times over. That's the first time God gets angry. So that itself

is beginning a pattern that God's anger in the Old Testament is most consistently expressed towards the people that He's calling to represent Him. The famous stories like the flood or Sodom and Gomorrah, they are acts of God's justice against evil. But in neither one of those stories is God angry. In the flood, God is overcome with grief and sorrow.

So as the storyline of the Bible develops, God invest in one particular group of people to be His representatives to the world. They are the ones with whom God gets most angry most often in the storyline of the Bible. Just like how we tend to get the most angry and frustrated with the people that we are most invested in relationally. If you get a concordance and you search out all the times that God gets angry at Israel, you'll find a few dozen stories, and you'll find a pretty consistent response. How does God expresses anger? It's most consistently demonstrated with the phrase and God handed them over, or gave them over into the hands of their enemies.

00:06:00

So God hands Israel over to the consequences that are destructive and ruinous. But it's the choices that they made that got them there. Moses says it's God hiding His face. The prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, they developed this in a big way. The bad guys that Israel is handed over to because of their faithlessness to the covenant is Assyria and Babylon. We didn't talk about this. Isaiah calls Assyria the rod of God's anger. It's as if Assyria is the instrument of God's anger, which is to hand Israel over to their bad decisions.

00:07:00

So when Jesus enters the scene, He sees Himself in the role of another one of these prophets, but also, as the covenant God of Israel Himself, pursuing His people again, warning them that if they don't accept His way of being Israel among the nations, that they are going to yet again be subject to God's anger, which will be to be handed over to the power of Rome. Jesus warned that this would happen. When He wrote into Jerusalem for Passover, He intentionally provoked the rulers of Jerusalem, challenging their authority, claiming that He was Israel's true authority.

And when He begins to talk about what He thought was going to happen, it becomes clear that He knew that he was going to die. In fact, He went to Jerusalem specifically to poke the bear, to provoke the leaders to a showdown knowing that they would kill Him. But it's not a tragedy in Jesus' eyes. In Jesus' eye, he is—and He uses this phrase multiple times in that Passover week—that He's going to drink the cup of God's anger, which is a key prophetic image for Israel being handed over to pagan oppressors, to foreign armies.

00:08:00

Jon Say that again, Tim. He's going to drink the cup of God's anger...

Tim Yes, which is a very particular Old Testament metaphor for Israel being overwhelmed and conquered by foreign armies and pagan oppressors.

Jon So they put a fine point on it.

Tim Mm hmm.

Jon When Jesus uses that phrase, you think He's specifically thinking about the fact that He's going to be killed by Roman oppressors?

Tim Yeah, and the corrupt leaders of Israel that are in league with Him.

Jon Okay.

Tim I think that if you just study the scriptural hyperlinks that Jesus is making there, I think that's unavoidably the conclusion. That's precisely what He goes to Jerusalem to do. That's why He stages His protest in the temple courts, in full view of the leaders of the temple, but also in view of the Roman governor, because the Roman governor had a vested interest in keeping the peace in the temple courts.

00:09:00

So Jesus' trial, the moment of these two Jesus' standing on trial, an innocent Jesus Son of God, and then a guilty Jesus Barabbas, who's the rebel against Rome, and the innocent Jesus, who was trying to tell Israel to love their Roman enemies, and then the guilty Jesus who tried to kill the Roman enemies go free. Jesus intentionally goes to his death on behalf of His guilty people. This is what He meant by drinking the cup of God's anger. The anger there is simultaneously the wrath of Rome and the wrath of Israel's leaders.

00:11:00

Another important strand in here is Jesus' understanding of His death and confrontation as being a cosmic confrontation with demonic spiritual powers that have hijacked the kingdoms of this world to be instruments of injustice as opposed to justice. He believes that what He's confronting the powers of darkness. So it's substitutionary atonement. It's Jesus dying in our place, it's Jesus conquering the powers of death and evil in our place, and it's Jesus as an act of love and surrender, giving his life in the place of faithless, corrupt people. It's all of those things rushing together. So anger is one sub theme of them. That took me a while. Sorry.

00:10:00

Carissa No, that's good. It's really helpful.

Jon Anger being a subtheme, meaning that the anger of God, which results in experiencing the consequences of our evil and injustice that manifests itself very concretely in the biblical story of, like Babylon coming, that Jesus is experiencing that anger and that He is experiencing what it's like for the chaos of the oppression of Rome coming and taking His life, which is what He is saying is going to happen to all of Israel because of the way they're acting.

Tim Yeah, that's right. And that's what Jesus Barabbas represents—a rebel Israelite who tries to confront Rome. What would normally be coming His way, which is to get killed by the Romans for being a rebel, but instead, the guilty Jesus Barabbas goes free. And Jesus of Nazareth, who's innocent, takes His place and goes to his death. This reasonably struck me that that scene was Barabbas is actually close to the heartbeat of the atonement theology in the Gospels.

Carissa Amazing.

Jon So Jesus is experiencing God's anger here?

00:12:00

Tim He drinks the cup. But what that doesn't mean is God's angry at me and so He just takes out His anger on me and kills me. It's God's anger has already decided to give Israel over and Jesus puts Himself in the place of His people.

Jon So He experienced an anger.

Tim He experienced God's anger, which is being handed over to death.

Jon But if you were to try to parse that down more and say, was God angry at Jesus in that moment, then you've got farther than where the biblical authors go.

Tim Yeah. I think from everything Paul the apostle or John says about the cross, I think they would say, "No, that's the opposite conclusion." Paul would say the cross is an expression of God's love and it's where God's love and God's anger meet together to rescue humans, and to provide them life out the other side of death. That's actually where we're going right now in the rest of this conversation.

Section Break

00:13:42

Tim So I've excerpted here a selection from Romans 1. I'll just kind of lead us through and be to play tour guide as we go through. But you'll just follow Paul's thought here. Paul's writing a letter to network of house churches in Rome that are divided along ethnic and cultural lines, and he's trying to help them see that they should be unified because he wants to go there and use their network as a home base to go be a missionary further on into Spain.

He wants to announce the gospel, the good news. So he unpacks what that is. He says in chapter 1, verse 16, "I am not ashamed of the good news. It is God's power for rescuing everyone who believes to the Jew first, but also to the Greek. For in the good news, God's righteousness, the upstanding character of God that compels him to do right by his promises, that's what is revealed in the good news." That's my paraphrase. That's not actually what the translation says but my paraphrase.

It's revealed from faith to faith. There's literally whole stacks of books written on just what that phrase means. "Just as it is written," and he quotes Habakkuk 2, "the righteous one, the one who does right by God will live by his trust—his faith in God." So the righteousness of God is revealed in the good news. And then he flips it. He says, "Because the wrath of God, the anger of God is being revealed from the skies against all ungodliness, all unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth and unrighteousness. He unpacks it. He says, because what is known about God is evident even inside of people, God has made it evident to them. Since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes, His power, His nature, you can see them being understood by what's been made." 00:15:00

Carissa Tim, here, he's talking about all humanity here, not just the Jewish people. Is that right?

Tim Yeah, that's right. That's going to be important. His point is even without having the special privilege of Israel, watching the ten plagues, and the rescue of the Exodus, and being at Mount Sinai, you can just do Psalm 19. "The heavens declare your glory." You look up and you'd be like someone's behind this whole, elaborate cosmic system. Yep, that's his point. 00:16:00

So he says, even though humans can infer that there is some beautiful mind behind the whole thing, even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks. Rather, they became futile or pointless in their speculations and their foolish hearts were darkened. How does that work? Well, thinking that they were all wise, they became fools, and humans exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible humans, birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures. So for modern readers, this doesn't land nearly the way it would for somebody who lives in the first century Rome, which is where these people lived, where you had idle shrines at every corner, and even in the corners of most people's houses. 00:17:00

Carissa This seems like just probably because we've been talking so much about Exodus and the golden calf, it seems so similar to that story. But do you think it's meant to be much broader than that?

Tim Yes. Well, that little line there, they exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for the image of humans, birds, four-footed animals, he highlights, he's actually quoting from Psalm 106 in that little statement. "They exchange their glory for an image." He's quoting from Psalm 106, which is retelling the story of the golden calf in poetic form.

Carissa That's interesting.

Tim So he's using the golden calf story to describe all humanity. He's using a story about Israel to describe the state of all humanity. Which essentially, he tells us a story of humans are made for so much more and they are talking to us, revealing that there's something cosmic and transcendent going on. But what humans want to do is create. Instead of recognizing they're the image of God, they give over their dignity and authority. And they don't under the Creator, rather, they exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for a self-made God. 00:18:00

Jon And for all of the values and ideas that these other manmade gods represent?

Tim Yeah, that's right. That's what kind of we have to infer here. Like, what did these idols mean to people, but the names of these idols are Roma, which is the Roman Empire deified as a goddess, or you Iustitia justice. Then there's all of the classic kind of Greek gods or Zeus or Apollo. But they all embody war, justice, wine, the economy. They're what today we would call institutions. Actually, when I lived in Madison, Wisconsin, where I was going to graduate school, it's also the state capitol. And the state capitol building is like right next to the big university. So I went in there quite a bit. And I went to Oregon State Capitol where I grew up like once on a field trip for school or something. But I went into the Wisconsin State Capitol a lot. 00:19:00

If you look up, is all of these elaborate decorative carvings, and there's all these great words like liberty and justice, but written in Roman capital letters, like Latin capital letters, and above them are statues of the Greek or Roman gods that these words represented. I remember it hit me one day like, "Oh, I'm not as far from the first century as I thought. I think this is an all of our state capitols." We've like secularized all of this, but these institutional ideals hold the same place in our imagination that they did in the first century. 00:20:00

Jon I remember when we were talking about the golden calf story, and I realized this detail that they weren't creating a new god, they were recreating Yahweh. They're like, "Here's Yahweh. Let's worship Yahweh. And it's a golden calf. It's this domestication of let's turn God into something that we want, that we can understand and control."

Then the other thing I'm thinking about here is that, and you pointed this out many times, is that the tragedy here is not merely the turning away from God and creating an idol to represent Him. It's that we're missing that we're supposed to be the image of God. So there's this calling of reflecting the true nature of this. And he uses the word "incorruptible". I'd be curious, why that word. But you think of just this untamable God we're supposed to be the image of to rule the world. 00:21:00

Instead, we say, “Well, no, actually, let’s create things that we can obey and serve instead that are maybe a little more easier to figure out.

Tim Totally. We can even drill even closer. When he says they exchange the glory of the incorruptible God, this is that interview we did somewhere within the last year with a New Testament scholar Haley Goranson Jacob. She traced the theme of glory through the letter to the Romans. It was really cool conversation. But what she was pointing out is this is the first occurrence of the word glory. If you trace it through, what it most often refers to is the glorious status that God made humans for.

00:22:00

So to exchange the glory of the incorruptible God is to exchange the glory that the incorruptible God wants us to have. That’s what it means here. So we are the glorious image of God, but we exchange that, the glory that God wants to give us, and we give it to these corruptible human statues. It’s this tragic inversion of our identity.

Carissa It’s interesting that that aligns so much with our view of God’s anger—him being angry when people...

Tim Betray Him.

Carissa Yeah, they betray Him, but they don’t have proper maybe understanding of their representation of him, or they’re harming themselves. Maybe that’s what I’m getting at. There’s like this humanitarian thing there where people are harming themselves or harming others, and they’re not representing Him. It makes sense why this is so connected with His anger, or His handing them over.

00:23:00

Tim Yes. I’m just cluing into something you said Carissa a few minutes ago. Here we are again, at the story of a golden calf. Even in the letter to the Romans, when Paul brings up God’s anger, the first story, he starts thinking in terms of is the golden calf story and in light of the Genesis 1 image of God story. Here it’s, yeah, you’re right, it’s not even betrayal as such, it’s the thing that God’s so passionately invested in to share this world with human partners ruling it together. And that’s the thing that we forfeit when we take these transcendent ideals of beauty and goodness and justice and these wonderful gifts of sex and food and power. And then we treat them as gods that we’re willing to give everything for. And that’s the moment that God gets angry. That’s Paul’s argument in a nutshell here.

So then that raises the question, well, how is the wrath of God being revealed? What does it look like? If you want to know where to look for it, if God’s angry, what would you say? And he repeats himself three times what he thinks it means. It starts in verse 24. He says, “Therefore, because they’ve exchanged their glory that God wants them to have

00:24:00

for idolatry, therefore, God gave them over in the passionate desires of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored.

He goes on to talk about all these destructive, sexual misbehaviors that hurt people, through which people hurt others and themselves. Verse 26, he repeats it again. "For this reason, God gave them over to dishonoring or degrading passions." Verse 28, skipping forward, again, "And just as they didn't see fit to even acknowledge God anymore, God gave them over to a senseless mind, so that they would do things that are not right."

00:25:00

He begins to go through this bucket list here that he uses to describe the culture that he sees around him: unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip. That is basically any human community anywhere in the history of the world. Verse 32, "Even though people know that these things are wrong and if they believe in God as he says, even though they know that God's commands, they know that people who practice such things are worthy of death. But yeah, we do them anyway. And we even approve of people who do these things."

He's trying to give a realistic portrait of what happens to human communities when they exalt idolatrous ideals and self-made ideals to the place of God. He gives people over. He said it three times. God's anger is giving people over to the consequences of their decisions.

00:26:00

So there's a lot more going on in Romans one. I just wanted to point that out, that this is exactly how the Hebrew Bible talks about God's anger.

Jon Handing him over.

Tim Paul's articulating it just like they do.

Carissa It seems like a lot of times when we read that verse, Romans 1:18, for the wrath of God is being revealed, so he gave them over, and then he gave them over and he gave them over. At least for me, I feel like I've tended to disconnect those ideas. Like God's wrath is coming because of all these things that people do or have done instead of the wrath of God is revealed and this is how it's revealed. You see evidence of it when people are turned away from Him. That is actually his wrath has handed over. Does that distinction make sense?

Tim Yeah, I hear that. I guess my question in return would be: why does he say the wrath of God is revealed? Oh, you mean it's something that you can go see happening right now? I think that's what he means. God's wrath is happening right now.

00:27:00

Carissa Yeah.

Tim How? What does it look like in the triple handing over?

Jon That's interesting. Because what you would typically say is, what's being revealed is human nature.

Carissa Which is kind of the wrath of God. It's like the handing over to one's own desires.

Tim Yes.

Jon And when human nature is left unchecked by God, where he says, "Okay, yeah, give into it," then that is His wrath.

Tim That's right. Which we're back to the prophets in the gospels too about being handed over to Babylon and Assyria. What happens when it's just Lord of the flies? What happens? It might make right, and then people justify their grabs at power and dominance and usually attach some kind of divine will to it, say it's in the name of some God to justify, give authority and idolatry. There you go. I think it's pretty press repeat and you've got human history.

00:28:00

But just to identify what you're saying, Jon, we would separate that. We would say, "Well, God's angry, and so He's going to do something about it. And then just humans are stupid, and they do terrible things to each other. But in the Bible, those two are intertwined. God letting humans destroy themselves is the expression of His anger. That's what Paul is certainly trying to say here.

Section Break

00:29:00

Tim Can't quote Romans without quoting one of the great Romans commentators of our day, N. T. Wright. He's got a great way putting this. He says, "The Great evils of the 20th century..." So pick your world war, pick your genocide, just 20th century, that's what he's talking about.

Jon The bloodiest century in human history.

Tim Bloodiest century in human history. "...these evils remind us that unless God remains in practicably opposed to the evil that distorts and defaces creation, not least humanity, God is not good. If God isn't angry and unavoidably positive to evil, like the 20th century showed us, then God cannot be good if the 20th century isn't a total affront to God's goodness." He goes on.

00:30:00

"Paul's whole theology is grounded in the robust scripturally rooted view that the Creator is neither a tyrant nor an absentee landlord, but rather the creator and lover of the world. The result is God's wrath. Not just an attitude of hostility towards idolatry and immorality, but also actions that follow from that attitude. The content of God's wrath

involves the process of giving people over to the result of their own folly, but also more. Those consequences are also in anticipation of a final judgment, the death that Paul mentions in verse 32 of chapter 1.”

In other words, what he’s saying is, when God handing people over, three times over, and it all leads up to the climax of the chapter in verse 32 there which is death, it’s all one organically connected whole. Those two the handing over and the ending in death are connected organically, the moral degradation in the present is an anticipation of the ultimate degrading of humaneness itself that is death. I just thought that’s a good way to put that. We see them as separate things. He’s trying to say Paul sees this all as one connected thing.

00:31:00

Carissa Like death is not tacked on punishment. It’s the natural result or the natural end of people living their own way. Kind of like the flood. Humans were creating destruction for themselves and others and their natural end was death. They’re destroying themselves in the world. Is that what you’re saying?

Tim Yes. That’s what he’s saying. I think he’s got his thumb on what Paul’s saying. Good memory. That was so many conversations ago when we talking about the flood. But it’s the logic of the flood story. People are ruining the land. So God says, “Their end has come up before me so I’m going to accelerate their ruin by means of the flood.” That’s right.

00:32:00

Carissa So this matters, because otherwise we think of death as just an unrelated punishment. Am I getting that right?

Tim Yeah. This is kind of the basic summary of Christian belief when I was first introduced to it in my early 20s is you’re human, you have a conscience between right and wrong, you’ve done wrong, you’ve sinned. God is holy, therefore, He is angry at you for your sin and He’s going to kill you. It’s His justice and His Holiness, He has to kill you. Jesus died in your place instead and so you can be forgiven and have life instead of death. What I’m saying is that abstraction doesn’t really do justice to all of the elements in that summary. Especially this idea of God’s anger and death. God’s anger is God’s handing people over to a process that’s self-chosen that results in death, but it’s very much what I want.

00:33:00

Jon Well, to be fair, it’s not what you want.

Tim Well, it’s what we choose.

Jon It’s what you choose not really realizing.

Tim Oh. Well...

Jon I mean, what you want is you want pleasure, you want freedom, you want all these other things.

Carissa It's distorted desire.

Tim Yeah, distorted desire. Okay. Yeah, that's fair. But yeah, the question is, when you're after an idolatrous version of pleasure, you can begin to see that it's destroying you or destroying your relationships. And then you're faced with a choice. This is destroying me, but it's giving me the thing that I want. Lots of people will just choose to destroy themselves or find a way to slowly destroy themselves so they can get as much enjoyment out of it as they want.

00:34:00

Jon Is it true, though? Like we celebrate vices that destroy you slowly. Or the ones that destroy you quickly, we're like, "Yeah, those are bad."

Carissa Some culturally acceptable vices.

Tim My main point bringing this up is to say, this is the most elaborate description of God's anger that we have in the letters of the apostles. Once again, it's really nuanced, and I think it's profound, and it's not quite what you might first think when you think of God's anger in the Bible.

Section Break

00:35:32

Tim So Paul is creating a problem here in chapter 1, and he goes on to talk in great detail and through long, complex lines of argument about what God is doing about all this. I just want to hit his kind of recap of this in chapter 5. We'll just start in verse 6. Reading Paul anymore is impossible when you can't sit down and just read the whole thing, the whole letter because this is hopelessly out of context. But it's like we don't have time to talk about the whole thing.

00:36:00

But starting verse 6, where he says, "At just the right time when we all were still weak or powerless the Messiah died for those who are ungodly." Maybe steps back and reflect, and he says, "Yeah, it's interesting, it's very rare that anyone would go die in the place of a righteous person. Though maybe for a really good person, someone might dare to die."

There's a New Testament scholar, Simon Gathercole, who's written on this little line. He thinks Paul is alluding to some of the famous Greek epic stories of the noble death of the soldier who will die for his army general or this kind of thing. He's playing into that category of like, you know, we have this category of the noble death, but somebody who would die for their enemies, die for weak, powerless, sinful people, that's crazy. And that's what the Messiah did.

So then verse 8, "God demonstrates His own love for us in this. While we were the ones in the wrong, that's when the Messiah died for us." So he's inverting the noble death theme here. You might die for your leader or for your friend, but to die for someone who can benefit you in no way...

00:37:00

Jon And who has betrayed you.

Tim And who has betrayed you. Yes. So this passage is important. Just keep reading it and we'll come back and talk about this. The next statement is, "Therefore, since we have been justified," NIV translation, where you could kind of infer what he means by that, "Since we have been declared to be in right relationship with God by his blood, that is by Jesus a sacrificial death, how much more will we be saved from God's wrath through Him? For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son. How much more after we'd been reconciled will we be saved through His life? And not only this, but we can actually boast? We can speak publicly about how God has given us honor through Jesus Christ our Lord through whom we have received reconciliation."

00:38:00

In other words, to be someone for whom the Messiah died isn't to stay cowering in the dust and be like, "Oh, God would put up with me, terrible me." He says there's something you can boast about. You can go out in public and say, "Yeah, that guy built a Coliseum, she built a library, and that's a testament to her honor." You know what I boast in? The Messiah of Israel gave His life for me." And that's what gives me honor. Dude, Paul! So good the way he's working all these themes. This is a great passage.

My point and to bring it up here is, when Paul in verse 8 of chapter 5 of Romans, when he talks about the cross, what He foregrounds of God's character is not his anger. He foregrounds God's love the cross is a demonstration of God's love. In the next sentence, he does say that it's by Jesus' death that we are delivered, rescued from God's wrath through Him. So what many people take that to mean is that, oh, yes, God was going to kill me. But instead, He killed Jesus and He wants to forgive me.

00:39:00

What we have to do is upload what Paul means by God's anger and wrath from chapter 1, and read this statement in light of what he's already said about God's anger. When you do that, I think that this passage becomes even more beautiful than maybe it already wasn't in the first place.

Jon Yeah, I just noticed that and I hadn't ever noticed that before. But since we just read Romans 1, talking about God's wrath, and then also seeing here you've got the past tense. Well, I guess present tense. He

demonstrates His love for us. While we were sinners, he died for us. That's past tense. Now being justified mean in this right relationship by the sacrifice. How much more shall we be saved? That's future tense, right?

00:40:00

Tim Mm hmm.

Jon It's like speaking towards now how am I going to live? And how is this going to shape me? How is this rescuing me? If I upload Romans 1, which is a way of living in a scrub state where my mind is handed over, my heart is handed over, I don't have to experience that. I can have a heart and a mind that is uncorrupted as I move forward in my life.

Tim But also remember the present being handed over to my destructive decisions leads me on a course that organically is connected to a whole life trajectory that leads to death. That's Romans 1. So to say that you're saved from God's wrath it's like you're being taken off a set of train tracks and you're put on a different set of train tracks that leads to life. This is what he means when he says to be saved from God's anger.

00:41:00

It's not just a post mortem event at the end of your life. God's wrath is something that begins now. And it's something that I need to be rescued from right now. I don't want to be given over to my basis desires. That would be terrible for me and everybody around me starting tomorrow. And not just after I die.

Carissa So when he's talking about being saved from God's wrath here, I mean, that whole line is so important. "We've been justified by his blood. Now, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him?" So is he talking about this new life in Jesus that now...? What does it mean that how much more now shall we be saved from God's wrath? Is it because now we're connected to God's own life we're reconciled to Him? Also maybe because we're compelled by the example of Jesus about this reconciliation, justification, and then being compelled by God's love Christ died for us that now we have new life. Is that kind of where the argument is?

00:42:00

Tim Yeah, I think so. This is also embedded right in the middle. We're in the middle moment of there's something that comes before this and after this in Romans 5. But his whole point is going to be that through what Jesus has done for us, we are invited into a new and different kind of humanity that actually participates in the very love and life of God Himself. And he begins our career that's going to culminate in Romans chapter 8, which is going to be all about the very spirit of this God dwelling within us to give new life to our dying bodies that will bear fruit in the resurrection.

Jon Is that what he means in verse 10 shall be saved through his life?

Tim Yes, I think so. Yeah, that's right.

Jon The life of the resurrection and the life of the Spirit. 00:43:00

Tim So in a way we've been, we've been saved both through his death, and we've been saved through his life. That's right.

Jon We've been reconciled through His death, which is a type of rescue, but then there's this trajectory that humanity is on this being given over and debased. And we're also rescued from that through his life, his spirit, His resurrection power.

Tim Yeah. So again, just to put the point on it, when Paul wants to articulate the character trait of God that's most clearly on display in the death of Jesus, he highlights God's love first and foremost. God's anger functions in the background of what the cross means, but it's not the foreground character trait. What he says is that through the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus, we are rescued from God's anger. 00:44:00

What is God's anger? Then we're back to chapter 1. It's God being angry that His royal human images hand over their destiny and glory to created things rather than the Creator. And so He gives them over on a path that leads to death. That whole trajectory is what we are rescued from through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as an act of God's love.

Carissa Yeah, that's cool.

Tim Yeah. It's coherent. This actually is coherent as a whole set of thoughts. It's not just a bunch of little one-liners. Paul doesn't just tie a bunch of one-liners together. He's thinking through the same sets of themes and ideas that unify the story of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament as well.

Section Break

00:45:34

Carissa The idea of being saved from God's wrath in Romans, or I guess the idea of God's wrath in Romans just from these couple passages we've looked at, seems like...you know, if we think about the category we had for that before, the idea of being handed over to the power that rules, here it seems like God's wrath is referring to maybe being handed over to the power of sin and death more than some other power. But it is that idea still there, that handing over idea in Romans? I can't be handed over to your own desires. But how does that relate to being handed over to like the rulers and authorities? Or has it changed a little bit?

Tim That's not so much his emphasis in Romans. He's going to bring up the powers and authorities in chapter 8. And they play a big role more in Ephesians and Colossians. There are some other places where he talks about God's wrath or anger in the letter to the Romans. But the

significant thing is it's God handing people over on a trajectory that leads them towards death. And that death is the just outcome of a trajectory of human life or human community that chooses corrupt, subhuman kinds of behavior. And that whole line is called God's wrath. And that's what he's saying we're rescued from. I mean, we already tried to summarize at the beginning of this conversation where we've been. I don't know, maybe it'd be good to just offer some final reflections. 00:47:00

Jon So bringing this back to where this all came from, Exodus 34, there's five attributes of God, or maybe arguably four attributes of God, and then this one. So He's gracious, compassionate, overflowing with loyal love and faithfulness, and He's slow to anger. Right in the center, He's slow to anger. Why does God highlight His slowness to anger? I really appreciated this really deep dive and nuanced just exploration of God's anger. But what is it about God's relationship with us as humans, and specifically, I guess, in Exodus, His relationship with Israel, that is slow to anger?

You brought up that Proverb, something about someone's wisdom is seen in their slowness to anger. 00:48:00

Tim Proverbs 19:11. Yeah.

Jon And maybe they're just saying the same thing again, which is a good God has to get angry at injustice. That makes sense. It would be weird if God was good, and He didn't get angry at evil and injustice. But what is highlighted in Exodus 34 is not that he gets angry at injustice, it's that He's slow to do it. Depending on where you're at, that can either be really frustrating, because you're like, "God, just come and just make new creation. Like, let's get rid of injustice, make it happen." But there's this, this forbearance, to use very religious word.

Tim It's the word Paul uses in Romans 2 actually. There's forbearance.

Carissa Yeah. I wonder if the being patient or slow to anger also allows humans to step back into their role of being true partners and doing what's right. We want God to do and to make something happen. But it's also an opportunity for humans to fulfill their God-given role of his partners. 00:49:00

Tim Yeah. For God to appoint human images to be the instruments of His justice in the world, in theory, if his human images were really doing their job well, there would be less for God to be angry at in the first place.

Carissa Yeah. But His purpose in being slow is often that people would turn to Him and realize what they're doing and turn to Him.

Jon Isn't there a verse to that effect? I feel like.

Carissa Yeah, Romans 2.

Jon Is that Romans 2? What's the verse?

Tim It starts in Romans 2:2 where He says, "We know that God's judgment is coming justly on those who practice such things." He's talking about the end of chapter 1. I think here he's getting the hypocritical Israelite in the (unintelligible) here. But you who would pass judgment on pagans, I think, non-Israelites who do these things, but you do them yourself, do you think you will escape God's justice? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance, and patience? Don't you know that God's kindness is what leads you to repentance? Is that the line you're thinking of, Jon? 00:50:00

Carissa That's the one I was thinking of. 00:50:11

Tim Yeah, that's right. God puts up with the nations and with Israel far longer than you would think He ought to have. That's what Paul's reflecting on here.

Carissa That's interesting. So it's like when we see injustice in the world around us, and then systems around us one response here is to recognize that God has been patient and praying that people would be led to repentance by that patience? 00:51:00

Tim Yeah, that's right. God is offering it as an opportunity.

Carissa Or whether or not He's been patient. I don't know. I mean, how do we know what God is doing in a present moment? But that time or that moment would be an opportunity for repentance? I think that's a true reality.

Tim I think for me the enduring takeaway from spending so much time thinking about this is seeing God's what feel like more unpleasant sides of His character, anger, judgment. But I think I'm a step closer to seeing how those are expressions of His deep, agonizing love for creation. And how often the discomfort I have with God's anger is really some way that I'm shielding myself from hypocrisy. Because if I'm impatient or uncomfortable with God getting angry or bringing justice on somebody else, the thing is I'm quite happy when God agrees with who I think to be judged. But when I participate in or in complicit in personal ways, or corporate ways, that hurt other people, I'm really hoping that He'll be patient, and slow to anger with me and show me love. 00:53:00

I don't know, man. The Bible has a much more profound and powerful way of reflecting on God's character, His anger, and His love that normally we tend to think. It makes more sense to me than ever why the Bible is a book that requires a lifetime of meditation to really experience the character of God.

Jon Little addendum. Since we're in Romans 2, if I could just ask you, starting in verse 5, he says, "Your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you're storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath. When is righteous judgment will be revealed? So we were talking about God's wrath in the present tense of being handed over this degrading this spiraling out of control. But Paul, it looks like he thinks about it as a future thing too. The day of God's wrath. 00:53:00

Tim Yeah, that's right. Again, that was what the whole point of our discussion in chapter 1 was it's a trajectory that begins in the present and leads forward to...and then he just uses the word "death". So that's right. He uses the word wrath to talk about either in the whole spectrum from the present and leading up forward to it.

Jon Thanks for listening to this episode of BibleProject podcast. We're collecting questions on the topic of the character of God for this entire series. Our deadline for submitting questions is November 9th, 10 a.m. Pacific. Get your question in before then so we can consider it for our final question and response episode. Record yourself asking the question, keep it to about 20 or 30 seconds, email us your question audio file plus a transcription of it to info@bibleproject.com. Again, it's info@bibleproject.com. We'd love to hear from you, and we'd love to engage with your question. 00:54:00

Next week, we're back and we're moving on from God's anger. We're going to consider the fourth attribute of God in Exodus 34. And that is his loyal love.

Tim There's no word in any language that quite does all of the things that chesed is doing. So it's a challenge to render chesed into any language. It's a covenant partner, you're motivated by love and affection, you do concrete acts. And as you do so, you are fulfilling a promise that you made. That's chesed.

Jon Today's show was produced by Dan Gummel, our show notes by Lindsey Ponder, our theme music from the band Tents. If you've been enjoying this show, we would love it if you could give us a review on whatever platform you use. That helps other people find the podcast and know that it's something that's good. If you have some constructive feedback, we'd love to hear that too. We read every review and we love to hear from you. 00:55:00

BibleProject is a crowdfunded nonprofit. We're in Portland, Oregon. We have free resources so we can all experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. It's all free because of the generosity of many people just like you all around the world putting our resources together and building this together. So thank you for being a part of this with us.