

Wright Baptist Church

10 Lies About God

and the truths that shatter deception

based on his book by Erwin Lutzer

Bible Study led by Pastor Jeremy

Week 3: God is more tolerant than he used to be

Old Testament (OT) vs. New Testament (NT) in God's character? God's activity? God's revealing himself to man?

Many (Christians) would argue that we see the wrath of God in the OT and the grace of God in the NT.

In a day where the love, mercy and grace of God is emphasized, and the wrath of God and judgment of sin is minimized, it's important that we address the lie that God is more tolerant of our sin than He used to be. If we're being completely honest with ourselves, we want to know for 2 reasons:

1. First we want to know whether we are free to sin with minimum negative consequences
2. We want to know whether it is safer for *others* to do wrong today

Before we go too far with the thought that the Bible presents two versions of God, we need to affirm:

1. God is unchanging (**James 1:17**, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.")
2. God's standards are the same (**Lev 11:44; I Peter 1:16**, "Be holy because I am holy.")
3. God's truths do not change (**Isaiah 40:8**, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.")
4. God is love (**I John 4:8**, "...God is love")
5. Redemption of mankind is God's doing (**Genesis 3:15; John 3:16**)
6. The attributes of God revealed in the OT are affirmed in the NT

Perhaps it's better understood that God has chosen to deal with people differently as we read through Scripture. The fact is, there is the same balance of God's attributes in the OT and the NT.

Let's read **Psalms 103:8-12**

How then do we account for the difference between the consequences of disobedience in the OT and the NT?

Certainly God's judgments abide, but his method of managing them out has changed. As followers of Jesus Christ, he relates to us differently without changing his standards or requiring less of us. Consider a 4 year old boy getting caught stealing candy from a candy store. The parent disciplines the child appropriately for a 4 year old, perhaps with a spanking that is administered immediately and over in minutes. Later that child steals at 12, and the parent disciplines appropriately only this time the consequence is a loss of privileges for a week. Later the young man steals at 23. The consequence is going to be harsher and longer, perhaps allowing the courts to administer punishment. Same crime, but the punishment is administered according the age and maturity of the child. Rather than relax the consequence for the sin, the parent chooses to exact a more serious penalty because of the age of the child and knowledge obtained from 4 to 23. God still deals with sin. God still judges sin. And we shall see, his unwavering consistency and intension to punish sin is as real today as it was in the OT. Thankfully, God offers us a remedy in the face of his wrath.

Hebrews 12:18-29

We see the unity of God (his standards, his attributes, his love, his wrath) reflected in both Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary. God hasn't lowered his standards. He will prove this in the end. Those who are unprepared to meet him face a future of unimaginable horror. The change in management can be seen as we contrast Mt. Sinai and Mt. Calvary.

vv.18-21 we see the God's glory humbling Moses and Aaron into silence and worship. We see the physical distance between the mountain and the people (they would die if they touched it) symbolizing the moral distance between God and mankind. We see God's power demonstrated in shaking the mountain should anyone come near. The people were to stay back, distanced from God because of his holiness. We see the vertical distance between God and mankind - he would "come down" reminding us he is exalted and we are below.

vv.22-24 notice the important contrast. Mount Zion represents the opening of heaven (the Ark of Covenant was placed on Mt. Zion by David after he conquered Jerusalem, thus considered to be God's earthly dwelling place). Jesus came and fulfilled the prophesy that salvation would come from Zion. According to these verses, because of Christ, we enjoy 6 privileges: 1) we gain heaven, 2) we enjoy the assembly of others and of angels, 3) our names are written in the Book of Life, 4) we can enter God's presence through the blood of Jesus, 5) we are united with the saints who went before us, 6) we come to Jesus!

vv.25-27 God's judgement of sin and those that rejected him at Mt. Sinai was immediate physical death. Refusal to come to him through Jesus results in a spiritual and eternal death.

In reconciling God's character and activity in both the OT and NT, we need to keep the following in mind as guiding principles:

The greater the grace, the greater the greater the judgment for refusing it. The more God does for us, the greater our responsibility to accept it. In the OT, God's judgment was immediately applied, allowing others to see the consequences of

refusing him. Today, because of the work of Jesus and the time God has given mankind to accept salvation through faith in Christ, people misinterpret the patience of God as him somehow relaxing his standards.

We should never interpret the silence of God as the indifference of God. His long-suffering is not a sign of weakness, but rather an indicator of his great love, mercy, and patience, intending to bring us to repentance and salvation. **II Peter 3:9** says, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Delayed judgement is still judgement. **Revelation 19:11-16** describes Judge Jesus. The One who redeemed us, who walks with us, who comforts us through His Holy Spirit, who prepares a dwelling place for us in heaven, who will wipe the tears from our eyes and heal us from all pain, will also judge the sin of mankind. When we face Almighty God and are covered with the blood of Jesus, the righteousness of Christ, we will be declared innocent. God satisfies his wrath and judgement of sin by Christ’s death on the cross and equally satisfies is love, grace, and mercy toward us through the Risen Savior and His Holy Blood.

Redemption has always been part of God’s original plan. **Genesis 3:15** points to the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross. **John 3:16** states very clearly that because of God’s love for us, he gave us the opportunity to have a relationship with him through the atoning work of Jesus. We literally can see the journey from the Garden to the Cross as we read through the Bible. We see God’s love on full display! Our sin didn’t thwart his original plan. He foreknew our rebellion and created us anyway. Then, he gave his own to pay for our sin, satisfying his standard of holiness and securing our place with him forever in heaven.

Is God more tolerant of our sin? No.

Will God judge sin? Yes.

Will we escape his wrath? We who are in Christ will be declared innocent.

Will we, who are Christ followers, rejoice in God’s grace by walking/living a life worthy of the calling we have received, or will we “rape his grace” by walking/living in hypocrisy and/or denial of his commands? Our response should be motivated by our love for him and with the sincerest gratitude for all he’s done for us.

Let’s end our time together by visiting both Mt. Sinai and Mt. Calvary:

Exodus 19:16-21

Mark 15:33-39