

Read also Jonah 3:1-10. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Jonah was bugged by God's compassion. God was sending him to preach repentance to Nineveh so that the people would repent and God would forgive them. Jonah did not want to warn them of God's coming judgment. Jonah didn't want any other people to be under God's care and concern. After all, he was Israel's prophet, not Assyria's prophet. Why should he aid them? They were Israel's enemy.

He wanted God to judge them.

Jonah's refusal to go to Nineveh immediately drew God's attention. God's track record was to tell people the truth. To not give a warning of coming judgment was unjust. Yet, God does not skirt around sin or compromise God's standards or excuse someone because they grew up with messed up parents or no parents at all. God hates sin and judges it.

God's judgment is just.

The story of Jonah helps us to see the nature of God's wrath and why it is much higher and more just than our own sense of right and wrong. Let's explore the notion of God's wrath. READ 2 Thessalonians 1:4-12

The Thessalonian Christians were suffering at the hands of non-believers. We know a little about it. Remember Jason who was falsely charged with "harboring criminals" because he opened his home to Paul and Silas. He was hauled before city courts by a huge local mob and had to pay a hefty fine. So persecution and suffering at the hands of non-believers was common.

God allows these hardships so that you grow through them. You learn to stand strong when you are wronged, making you worthy of the kingdom of God. You learn not to retaliate against someone who mistreats you. The Bible says,

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them, if they are thirsty, give them something to drink" (Romans 12:19).

So we are not to judge ourselves, but rather have a good and positive attitude toward people who mistreat you. Paul says, "God will vindicate you." He even lists specifics:

1. God will pay back those who persecute you.
2. God will bring judgment on people who refuse to obey the Good News of Jesus Christ.
3. The punishment for those who have rejected God's ways and resisted Jesus Christ will be:
 - eternal destruction,
 - forever separated from the Lord and his power.

In God's sight, for God to repay wrong done to you is a righteous thing.

Yet, such words are difficult for us in 2017. We are very fuzzy about sin and punishment and grace, mercy, and love. Isn't God a loving God? How in the world does God take such wrathful action? That is the puzzle. Let us consider a couple of examples.

Consider the Code of Conduct for students in Duncanville schools¹:

1. Ages 6-19 must attend school and be on time.
2. Be responsible, and demonstrate courtesy and respect for others.
3. Prepare for each class; take appropriate materials/assignments to class
4. Complete homework and return it to the appropriate teacher
5. Strive to build meaningful relationships with your teachers.
6. Students must be clean and neatly groomed:
 - a. No sagging
 - b. No sweat pants, warm up suits, or tights unless shirt covers to the knees.
 - c. No caps, hats, or hoods in school.
 - d. Skirts, dresses and jumpers must be to the knee.
 - e. You must wear shoes.
 - f. No visible body piercing except for the ears.
 - g. Hair must be clean, neat, well-groomed, and color not distracting.

If the rules are broken, the following consequences may be applied by authorities:

Behavior contracts	Citation/fine
Confiscation of articles	Corporal punishment
Detention	Discretionary classroom removal
Expulsion	Juvenile Justice AEP
Loss of privilege	In-school Suspension (ISS)
Parent/teacher conference	Verbal/written warning
Student/teacher conference	Peer Mediation
Physical restraint	Restitution
Saturday school	Seat changing
Shadowing	Time-out

That is about half of the possible punishments.

Why have rules? (Ask audience)

- Safety of students, teachers, personnel
- Learning environment
- Success for student

Does the school district have the right to set the rules? Does the school district have the right to enforce the rules by punishing offenders?

Teachers are hired workers. They do not own the school nor did they bear the students. They are employees of the State of Texas, overseen by a principal, a district board, and ultimately, the

¹Duncanville ISD Code of Conduct manual, http://duncanvilleisd.org/cms/lib6/TX01917816/Centricity/Domain/4/Code%20of%20Conduct_Final_7_12_16.pdf, accessed July 6, 2017.

State Board of Education, who set the rules and determine how much power the teacher has to enforce them.

But God owns the world. God has produced the people. God set the rules. God has the authority to avenge the breaking of the rules. That is the wrath of God.

The word “wrath” is scary because God’s authority is immense.

In my childhood head I can still hear my mother say to my brother and me, “You do that and you will incur my wrath.” My mother’s authority was immense so we did get the message.

My oldest son has a new dog and the dog bared his teeth and growled at me. He barked. He received my son’s wrath. My son did not raise his voice but he was very firm and it was clear who was in charge—after a stern talk the dog was exiled to the laundry room.

The dog received the wrath of his master. The dog submitted to his authority.

People who ignore or disdain Jesus get the wrath of God. That wrath includes eternal destruction and forever separation from the Lord and from His glorious power.

That’s the natural consequence. Or punishment. Or wrath. With God, wrath does not signify unjust abuse. It signifies consequences which occur after clear warning. Yes, those are very negative consequences.

Why do you tell your children if they do not do their homework, they will be punished? You want them to succeed, right? You know there is the potential for them to step up and do the right thing. So you paint that vision and you follow up with expectations.

God knew there was potential for the Ninevites to change and do the right thing.

THAT’S JUSTICE.

God’s way is also grace. There is no grace without justice or justice without grace. Paul is a perfect example. He was headed on the path of receiving God’s wrath. He hated Jesus and all He stood for. Paul persecuted Christians as a result. In his own words, “I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison...authorized to bring the Christians, in chains, to Jerusalem to be punished.” But God, in mercy, intervened. Jesus in a vision spoke to him and he realized his persecution was wrong. Paul changed. (Acts 22:3-8)

God’s wrath is filled with God’s grace. You, and all who love and obey Jesus, abound with God’s grace. So when you are criticized or persecuted by those who do not believe, here’s your honorable response:

- Release them to the Lord.
- Pray for them.
- Practice restraint.
- Let your words be tender and sweet so that tomorrow you do not have to eat them.

Jesus said, “Rejoice when you are persecuted for my sake, for your reward is great in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:11)

The grace and the wrath of God. God’s wrath is just. When you give those who wrong you to God, it takes away the burden of you carrying the world’s wrongs yourself. Isn’t that a wonderful gift? That is the grace and the wrath of God.

AMEN