

So over years ago, I was in my office and I was doing some counseling with a couple.

And a woman came in and she was kind of laying out that they're having marriage problems, marriage struggles.

And I assumed it would be a conversation about just some unresolved anger issues or something terrible like infidelity or problems with kids or finances, all of that.

And it turned out it wasn't any of that.

She said, I'm a liar.

She said, I lie.

I grew up in a family of liars.

And in my marriage, I've continued this progression, this habit of telling lies.

Sometimes it's for my own protection.

I think I'm going to get in trouble.

Sometimes it's to hide something.

Sometimes I just lie to lie.

Well, you know, there's people out there who lie.

I hope that's not you.

But sometimes people tell lies unknowingly.

And so that's why we're doing this series, Lies We Believe, because I've heard Christians tell lies, and they don't mean to, and they're theological lies.

So we started this series a couple of weeks ago.

Lie #1, you have to earn God's favor.

In other words, you've got to be good enough for God to really love you.

And then

Week 2, it was the lie that God is an angry judge, just waiting to judge us, to put His thumb on us.

And we looked at the story in the New Testament about Pilate.

having his soldiers secretly kill some people in a crowd to push them down, or the tower falling on some people, killing them, the blind man born blind from birth, and why did this happen?

And they assumed it was all judgment.

It's God's judgment when bad things happen.

You see, there's two opposite false narratives in the lives of many American Christians.

One is, like I said, God is judgmental.

One person wrote this, I just figured that God is generally angry with me, but puts up with it until I do something really bad.

And then I wonder, oh no, what is God going to do to me now?

Or it's seen in bad theology that says God is really angry at us and would send us to hell because of our sin if it were not for Jesus.

Jesus loves us.

And He steps in.

to spare us from God's judgment and His punishment.

You do know that God is 1, right?

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and they don't play around with roles like that.

They don't put each other in a bad light or a bad spot.

God is 1 revealed in three persons.

Well, the other false narrative is that God can overlook our sin.

In other words,

He knows that we can't keep from sinning, and he loves us so much that he's big enough to overlook our sins.

It's A theology that says that a God who has no wrath will automatically bring people, though imperfect, into his kingdom.

God would never judge anybody, and that's called universalism, and it's a heresy.

And you've heard that before.

So that brings us to this lie #3, God's love drives away His wrath.

In other words, we've established these first two weeks that God is love, so certainly that love is going to overpower, it's going to push away, it's going to drive away His wrath.

So we are confronted with what do we do with wrath?

What will you do with wrath?

So we're going to look at Revelation chapter 6.

Grab your copy of God's Word, open it up, turn it on.

We're going to jump in to a very important part of the Bible.

And the background of this is we're going to jump into the Great Tribulation.

the tribulation of seven years in the end times and the last 3 1/2 years are called the Great Tribulation.

And it's one of the most written about periods of time recorded in the Bible.

More space is devoted to these seven years of history than any other comparable time.

It's mentioned 50 times in the Old Testament.

Listen to

what the Old Testament calls it.

The day of calamity, the day of wrath, the day of Jacob's trouble, the day of vengeance of our God, the time of trouble, and the day of the Lord.

Jeremiah 37 says this, alas, that day is so great there's none like it.

It's a time of distress for Jacob.

Jacob, the name, right, referring to Israel.

Yet he shall be saved out of it.

And that's the Old Testament.

In the New Testament we find

the writings of Revelation.

And there's over a dozen references to this time period in the New Testament.

And it gets its title from Jesus himself, because Jesus says in Matthew 24, 21, in his famous Olivet Discourse, you have the Sermon on the Mount.

He also has the Sermon on the Mount of Olives, the Olivet Discourse.

where he writes, where he says this, for then there will be great tribulation, such as not been from the beginning of the world until now, no and never will be.

So what's happening is we're jumping into the middle of the tribulation period, the seven years, about halfway, and it is the sealed judgments, the sealed judgments, so the first judgments, the sealed judgments, followed by the trumpet judgments, followed by the

bowl judgments in human history.

So it's the first set of judgments.

And they're pretty cataclysmic judgments.

The seal judgments are taking place.

And in today's scripture, it's the 6th seal that has just been opened.

So these horrific events are taking place.

The first of three great earthquakes, the sun, moon, stars, all the earth are affected.

And the martyrs in heaven are crying out, avenge us, avenge us, God.

And the wicked on earth are crying, Hidus.

And you can read more about this in the Old Testament, even in Joel 2 and Isaiah 13.

So let's jump into Revelation 6, 12-17 and see what this sixth seal is all about and how it applies to this notion that our God of love must

overpower, chase away any wrath.

Revelation 6, verse 12, I watched as he opened the sixth seal.

Who is he?

Who has the authority to open the seals?

Jesus.

Jesus, the Lamb of God.

I watched as he opened the sixth seal.

There was a great earthquake.

The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair.

The whole moon turned blood red.

And the stars in the sky fell to the earth, as late figs dropped from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.

The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Verse 15, Then the kings of the earth, the princes and the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

They called to the mountains and the rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Who's the Lamb again?

Jesus.

For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?

See, up to this point, man, including the Antichrist, has been responsible for the atrocities on earth in the end times.

But now we see the opening of God's wrath on mankind, on evil.

This is God's judgment in the form of some supernatural and other natural disasters.

And so what we're finding here is we're about halfway through the tribulation, the start of the Great Tribulation where things get really bad.

And

Some believe that Christ will come back pre-tribulation, so Christians are spared.

Some believe that Christ will come back mid-trib, so to speak.

Some believe that it's right now, before the 6th seal is broken open and the scroll revealed in red.

that Jesus will come back before the most cataclysmic judgments of God's wrath on mankind.

So that's called the pre-wrath view.

What view do you have?

You know?

It's all good with me, because we do not know exactly.

But that's called the pre-wrath point of view.

So in these last 3 1/2 years, what do we see?

There are six events in the 6th seal.

A great earthquake,

The sun turns black, the moon turns red, stars fall to the earth, the sky is split, mountains and islands move from their place.

Now, what kind of writing are we reading in Revelation?

It's apocalyptic writing, right?

It means there's hidden meanings, right?

It's symbolic.

So that doesn't mean in these cataclysmic events that it all happens at once, and literally, that is what takes place.

Like, does the moon,

completely turn red?

Or is it just the appearance of that?

Do all the stars fall from the sky?

Or is it this escalation of shooting stars and meteors, meteorites, and it looks like all the stars are falling from the skies?

Whatever it is, God is going to use natural and supernatural means to shake the world up, to get their attention.

What means would God use?

Well, earthquakes,

God would use a tsunami, certainly, when it talks about moving islands, meteors, dust, clouds covering the sun and the moon so the whole sky appears dark during the daytime because of the large meteors hitting the earth.

We don't know exactly.

But notice that unbelievers in this stage of human history would rather hide from God than turn to Him.

Again, the martyrs in heaven are looking down saying, avenge us, God, go God, avenge us.

And the evil people are hiding, hide us.

To go back to the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, first man and woman, sinned against God.

They disobeyed Him, right?

And they discovered their sin, their nakedness, their sin, and what did they do?

Did they go to God and fall down and say, oh God,

We're sorry.

We sinned to get you.

We didn't trust you.

We thought there was a better way.

We thought you were holding out on us.

We were missing something.

The serpent tempted us and we fell.

What did they do?

Somebody said it.

They hid.

And God had to say to them, and He knew, where are you?

I wonder if there's anybody here today, time out, who's hiding from God.

And God would say, where are you?

Why are you turning back to that again?

Am I not better than that?

Where are you with that attitude?

I thought you'd forgiven her.

Where are you with that worry and that anxiety?

Don't you trust me?

Where are you trying to hide?

I can see everything.

I know everything.

And I loved you.

Come to me.

Come to me.

If there's anyone here who needs to run back to God, this is the day to do it.

If there's anybody here that needs to run to Jesus, this is the day to do it and say, Jesus, I've been running from you.

I believe in you, but you haven't been my Lord.

Come in, invade my life, take over, be my Lord and my God.

I'm tired of running.

Well, there's wrath mentioned in many places throughout Scripture, not just in this little snapshot of what it's going to be like in the end times.

John 3.36, Jesus said this, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

I tell you, there's one thing I don't want on me, I don't want to carry, I don't want to carry God's wrath.

Romans 2.5, but because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you're storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Now, these aren't touchy-feely parts of Scripture, are they?

These aren't your favorite memory verses, are they?

And a lot of people don't want to deal with this notion of the wrath of Christ, the wrath of God.

They don't want to talk about it.

They don't want to deal with it.

And so they ignore those parts of Scripture.

It's almost like Thomas Jefferson, you know, that he wrote a condensed version of the teachings of Christ.

And it was called...

It was a selective Bible.

It was titled The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth.

It was 83 pages.

And what he did, he took the New Testament gospels and he would literally cut sections of that page out of the gospels and he would then paste them, cut and paste on an

other paper to make an 83-page book that just had the ethical teachings of Jesus, just the moral teachings of Jesus.

Jefferson claimed to be a believer, but he wanted to focus not on Jesus raising people from the dead, healing diseases, causing blind people to walk again, casting out demons.

No, he just wanted to hear about the ethical teachings of Jesus.

And a lot of people do that with the wrath of God.

They skip over, they might not cut them out, but they skip over all the pages of the Bible that talk about God has to deal with sin, that His love can't chase away this aspect of judgment and wrath.

some want to do the same thing with the Bible, like I said.

But we've got to understand that wrath is a loving response of a just God to sin.

So Dallas Willard says this, that just like love is to will the good of another, so is wrath.

It has nothing to do with anger and emotions.

It's not like human anger.

See, human anger, when I get mad at someone,
right?

It becomes about me.

Like, you've offended me.

You did something that didn't please me.

I was wrong by you.

It's about me.

God's wrath is not that at all.

God's wrath is a loving response of a just God who must deal with sin, and He does it in a redemptive way.

It's about you.

It's about me.

He does it for our own good, to get our attention, to correct us.

to bring people to Himself.

The Anchor Bible Dictionary says this, the wrath of Yahweh is portrayed somewhat differently from human anger in the Hebrew Bible.

It is not passion.

It's not a loss of self-control.

It's an act formed with care and intention.

Listen to this.

In the Bible, God's wrath is His righteous, settled hostility towards sin and injustice.

Rather than an impulsive, uncontrolled temper, it is the deliberate, holy response of a just creator to rebellion, idolatry, and the mistreatment of others.

While God's wrath sometimes manifests itself in the Bible with cataclysmic judgments,

like we just read about in Revelation 6 with the opening of that sixth seal.

It's things in the Old Testament like the great flood that caused Noah to build the ark, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by those volcanic activities that God orchestrated.

But in the New Testament, God's wrath is more described as God allowing humanity to face the natural consequences of their own choices.

Romans 1 describes this as God giving people over to their sinful desires and destructive lifestyles.

That's one thing I've prayed many times in my life.

God, don't give me over to that.

I don't want that.

What a scary thought that God

He has all power.

Our loving God would actually give someone over to their favorite signature sin because that's what they chose time after time.

That's what they wanted.

It's a scary thing.

God's wrath is a just response to sin and evil.

J.I.

Packer, the famous theologian, writes this, God's wrath in the Bible is always judicial.

It's always right.

James Bryant Smith, who wrote The Good and Beautiful God that I've drawn from a lot in this series, it's a great book.

He writes this, I do not want a universe in which there's no justice, no right and wrong.

And I do not want a God who is indifferent to moral evil.

Well, you've heard of the group MAD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, right?

Well, pre-MAD,

some of you might remember there was way more lenient laws towards drunk driving.

And if someone was driving under the influence and did something stupid and ran into, killed somebody, it was not the mandatory sentences that we have now.

But that was happening time after time after time, and particularly these moms, grieved by their children being killed,

formed a group, got together, became a national coalition, and law started to change.

Because of their, what?

Righteous anger, they have saved the lives of many other people's children.

That's what God's trying to do through His wrath.

That's what He's trying to do when He must punish sin.

See, wrath, and I want you to listen to this.

Wrath is not an attribute of God.

Love, holiness are.

If there were no sin, there would be no wrath.

Wrath is not something that God is, but something that God does.

So think about the classical attributes of our God.

God is self-existent.

God is eternal.

God is immutable.

He never changes.

God is immense, bigger than we can imagine.

He's all-knowing.

He's

always present.

He's all-powerful.

God is holy.

He's righteous.

God is truth and God is love.

Those are the classical attributes of God.

I didn't hear anything in there about wrath, did you?

That's what theologians back in the early centuries of Christianity used to describe God.

I didn't hear anything about wrath.

See, wrath is not one of God's attributes.

You do not worship A wrathful god you worship a god who's all those other things I mentioned.

Wrath is something he must do because one of his true attributes.

is He's holy and He's loving.

And so He must, He must push back against sin and evil.

So you cannot biblically say that God is wrathful.

You can say that's something He carries out, something He does.

It's an action.

And because He does it towards evil, think about it this way, God's holiness and righteousness are part of God's goodness

And so is wrath.

If there's love, true love, because of sin, there has to be wrath.

And that's the problem, right?

You and I have a terminal disease that we were all born with, and it's the depravity of man.

We were born with that terminal disease.

And as little babies, we grow up.

And we see this disease everywhere in culture.

It's what the New Testament calls the world, right?

And it doesn't say that everything about you is evil, certainly not, but it says that every part of our lives of man's being is tainted by sin, that sin nature that we're born with.

We're born with a dead spirit to God.

Listen to this.

is from Billy Graham, actually, in the book Secret to Happiness.

Now the Bible teaches that our souls have a disease.

It is worse than dreaded cancer, polio, or heart disease.

It is a plague that causes all the troubles and difficulties in the world.

It causes all the troubles, confusions, and disillusionments in your own life.

The name of the disease is an ugly word.

We don't like to use it.

is sin.

Jesus said it this way in John 3.

This is the verdict.

Light is come into the world, but men love darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil.

Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Are you there?

Are you trying to hide from God?

Stay a little bit in the darkness.

You don't want your deeds to be exposed.

You don't want to really see what's going on.

You don't want to admit it.

I read the funny story of an old nomad in the Middle East, right?

And he's in his tent, wakes up in the middle of the night.

He's hungry.

He lights a candle, a candle lamp,

And there's a bowl there of dates.

Anybody love dates?

I love dates.

And he picks one up, takes a big bite, halfway through it, it's got a worm in it.

He pitches it outside the tent, grabs the next one, takes a big bite, got a worm, throws it away, gets a third one, takes a big bite, there's a worm.

He throws it away.

What does he do?

He's hungry.

He blows out the candle and then eats the rest of them out of the bowl.

Didn't want to deal with it.

Have you ever been that way in your life?

You don't want to deal with it.

You don't want to admit.

Right?

You just want to just keep rocking and rolling.

Just go along.

Right?

And that's the temptation.

That's part of human depravity.

That's why there must be consequences.

if God is not against your sin, how could He be for you?

That's what it comes down to.

We can blow off other people's sins.

I don't care.

God cares.

We've established that, right?

That God is a God who loves you more than you can understand, and He wants the best for you.

And so we have these things in our life, hamartia, right?

That's the Greek word, the main Greek word in the New Testament for sin that's missing the mark.

You're shooting at that target right there and you're way off.

God cares about that when you're way off.

He wants you to make wise decisions in your life, yes?

There's another biblical New Testament word for sin, for iniquities, and the root of that means to be bent.

to be misshapen.

Have you ever put anything in a dishwasher that shouldn't have been in a dishwasher and it kind of misshaped it, right?

God didn't want you to look like that.

He doesn't want you to be bent and misshapen.

He's got a better life for you.

It's another word for sin that's trespass.

It means where you've intentionally stepped out of bounds.

You stepped over the boundary line.

You knew it was wrong and you're going to do it anyway.

It was intentional.

You have trespassed.

God wants to bring you back home.

He wants to bring you back to a place of blessing.

There's another word that just means moral evil.

You've gotten in some stuff you know is evil and you did it on purpose.

and God wants you to pull you out.

He wants you to know how dangerous that is.

That's the realm of the evil one.

Come back.

See, God's wrath is part of all that.

It's amazing grace.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my sins relieved.

Grace teaches your heart to what?

Fear.

Fear the wrath of God.

And that's the same grace that saves us.

you really don't want an unholy God.

You really don't want a God who has no judgment, who will never express any wrath on sin.

See, if God does not execute His wrath on evil and sin, then devil wins.

Sin reigns and hell takes over earth.

Because of God, because of His love, hell is necessary.

hell is isolation from God forever, yes?

It's the granting of a request.

And C.S.

Lewis, the famous atheist in Britain who became an apologist for the faith and a great writer, he describes it in that same way.

It's not a question of God sending us to hell.

The doors of hell are locked on the inside.

It's people who didn't want God in their 70, 80, 90 years on earth, and they don't want Him in the next life.

It's a choosing and God must deal with that.

We've seen people die for different reasons just in this last week or two, right?

It might be the two soldiers in Jordan, the one in Iraq.

Pray for those families.

Pray for our military.

Pray for an end to war.

Pray for justice.

Pray for Jesus to show up.

Pray for Jesus to come back.

Right?

I saw a family, it was friends, they were swimming in a river and one person got in trouble, the others swam out there to save them.

How many people died?

Like 4 or 5 adults.

And a little child was spared.

And that's how they found about all those people dying.

They found the child out on the highway or something.

Crazy things.

You think God loves when people die, when things like that happen?

Of course He doesn't.

But you know what He hates even more?

when people die without Christ.

He doesn't grieve when people journey to heaven.

He knows it's a much better place.

It's a reward for heaven's sake.

But what grieves Him is when people pass away who have rejected the call of His Spirit.

Maybe we need to spend more time in churches praying for that kind of a prayer list, for salvations, for repentance.

than we do for bad knees and ankles.

Jesus is the way, but He's also the way to escape the wrath of God.

And that is the hope, 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says, For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, amen for that, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There's God's heart for you.

He wants you to receive salvation.

He wants you to be able to be free from His wrath.

Well, Jesus is the friend of sinners.

But isn't it interesting that He's also the one who carries out God's wrath?

Who's coming back anyway in the end times on that white horse with these angels behind Him to make war?

Who is it?

Jesus.

the Prince of Peace, the friend of sinners.

It's Jesus that carries out God's wrath.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, will not return as a lamb, but a lion.

So I don't know, where are you with this whole wrath thing?

And maybe kind of in your mind you've compartmentalized it, or maybe you've heard friends say, God will never, God's a God of love.

He's never going to judge people.

No, He loves them so much, He must.

Where are you with this wrath of God thing?

Where are you with Christ?

Do you see Christ as this gentle, meek lamb and He would never hurt anybody?

Or do you see that, no, that's one picture.

He's the sacrificial lamb who died a horrible death to bleed for people like you and me, to have His body torn for people like you and me, and that He's coming back one day and it's not going to be like a lamb.

I read this poem once and it starts off and it sounds kind of silly, but I want you to hang in there.

It's written by Marvin, Marbeth Rosenthal, who do End Times Magazine have for years.

I don't know if they're still alive or not.

Mary had the little lamb who lived before his birth.

Self-existent son of God from heaven he came to earth.

Mary had the little lamb

See Him in yonder stall, virgin-born, Son of God, to save man from the fall.

Mary had the little lamb, obedient Son of God, everywhere the Father led, His feet were sure to trod.

Mary had the little lamb, crucified on the tree, the rejected Son of God, He died to set men free.

Mary had the little lamb, men placed Him in the grave,

Thinking they were done with him to death, he was no slave.

Mary had the...

the little lamb.

Ascended now is he.

All work on earth is ended, our advocate to be.

Mary had the little lamb, mystery to behold.

From the Lamb of Calvary, a lion will unfold.

When the day star comes again, of this be very sure, it won't be lamb-like silence, but with the lion's roar.

So this week I want you to think through your perspective of who Jesus is, what his role is, and the fact that our loving God and Savior who loves you with an agape love that you can't fathom must, must also be a God who carries out wrath.

And because of that,

We have a little bit more reverence of God in our lives, yes?

And because of that, we have more of an impetus to somehow lead conversations into spiritual conversations this week, yes?

To pray for people who are far from God, that they won't have to experience some of the things we've read about today.

So let's live our week differently because we know that our God of love is also a God who must carry out wrath.

So