

Program: SS Panel 2025 1 Q

Quarterly title: God's Love and Justice

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Lesson Title: #5 The Wrath of Divine Love

For Lesson Dates: *January 25-31, 2025*

Section title: Sunday - Grieved by Evil

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Next week #6 God's love of justice

Lesson 5

January 25-31

The Wrath of Divine Love

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Psalm 78; Jonah 4:1–4; Matt. 10:8; Matt. 21:12, 13; Jer. 51:24, 25; Rom. 12:17–21.*

Memory Text: "But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (*Psalm 78:38, NKJV*).

Though God's compassion is often celebrated, many find the idea of His wrath disturbing. If God is love, they think He should never express wrath. That notion, however, is false. His wrath arises directly from His love.

READ

Some claim that the Old Testament God is a God of wrath and that the New Testament God is a God of love. But there is only one God, and He is revealed as the same in both Testaments. The God who is love does become angry at evil—but precisely *because* He is love. Jesus Himself expressed profound anger against evil, and the New Testament teaches numerous times about the righteous and appropriate wrath of God.

God's anger is always His righteous and loving response against evil and injustice. Divine wrath is righteous indignation motivated by perfect goodness and love, and it seeks the flourishing of all creation. **God's wrath is simply the appropriate response of love to evil and injustice.** Accordingly, evil provokes God to passion in favor of the victims of evil and against its perpetrators. Divine wrath, then, is another expression of divine love.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February*

SUNDAY

January 26

Grieved by Evil

The God of the Bible loves justice and hates evil. **Sin and evil, therefore, provoke Him to passion,** a passion expressed on behalf of those oppressed and abused, and even in cases when one's evil affects primarily oneself. **God hates evil because evil always hurts His creatures, even if self-inflicted.** In the biblical narratives, God is repeatedly provoked to anger by what biblical scholars refer to as the cycle of rebellion. This cycle goes as follows:

The people rebel against God and do evil, sometimes even horrendous atrocities, such as child sacrifice and other abominations in His sight. God withdraws according to the people's decisions. The people are oppressed by foreign nations. The people cry to God for deliverance. God graciously delivers the people. The people rebel against God again, often more egregiously (in an outstandingly bad way; shockingly:) than before.

In the face of this cycle of egregious evil and infidelity, however, God repeatedly meets human unfaithfulness, but with unending faithfulness, longsuffering forbearance, amazing grace, and deep compassion.

Read Psalm 78. What does this passage convey about God's response to His people's repeated rebellions?

Psalm 78

READ

According to the Bible, love and justice are intertwined. Divine anger is the proper response of love against evil because evil always hurts someone whom God loves. There is no instance in Scripture where God is arbitrarily or unfairly wrathful or angry.

Isa 9:12 The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is stretched* out still.

Isa 9:17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one *is* an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is stretched* out still.

Isa 9:21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: *and* they together *shall be* against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is stretched* out still.

Isa 10:4 Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is stretched* out still.

READ

And while God's people repeatedly forsook and betrayed Him, over the centuries God continued patiently to bestow compassion beyond all reasonable expectations (*Neh. 9:7–33*), thus demonstrating the unfathomable depth of His longsuffering compassion and merciful love. Indeed, according to Psalm 78:38, God "being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them.

Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath” (NKJV).

Surely, you have been angry over the evil done to others. How does this emotion help you better understand, then, God’s wrath toward evil?

Psalms 78:1 1 Give ear, O my people, *to* my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,

3 Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide *them* from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children;

6 That the generation to come might know *them*, The children *who* would be born, *That* they may arise and declare *them* to their children,

7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments;

8 And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation *that* did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

9 The children of Ephraim, *being* armed *and* carrying bows, Turned back in the day of battle.

10 **They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law,**

11 And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them.

Psalms 78:12 12 Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.

13 He divided the sea and caused them to pass through; And He made the waters stand up like a heap.

14 In the daytime also He led them with the cloud, And all the night with a light of fire.

15 He split the rocks in the wilderness, And gave *them* drink in abundance like the depths.

16 He also brought streams out of the rock, And caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 But they sinned even more against Him By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.

18 And they tested God in their heart By asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?

20 Behold, He struck the rock, So that the waters gushed out, And the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?”

21 Therefore the Lord heard *this* and was furious; So a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also came up against Israel,

22 Because they did not believe in God, And did not trust in His salvation.

23 Yet He had commanded the clouds above, And opened the doors of heaven,

24 Had rained down manna on them to eat, And given them of the bread of heaven.

25 Men ate angels’ food; He sent them food to the full.

>**Psalms 78:34** When He slew them, then they sought Him; And they returned and sought earnestly for God.

>**35** Then they remembered that God *was* their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer.

>**36** Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue;

>**37** For their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant.

>**38** But He, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, And did not destroy *them*. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, And did not stir up all His wrath;

39 For He remembered that they *were but* flesh, A breath that passes away and does not come again. How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, *And* grieved Him in the desert!

41 Yes, again and again they tempted God, And limited the Holy One of Israel.