



Coffee/Question: Interact with the statements below.

"If we would know God, it is vital that we face the truth concerning his wrath... Otherwise, we shall not understand the gospel of salvation from wrath, nor the accomplishment of Jesus' cross, nor the wonder of God's redeeming love, nor the hand of God in history." J.I. Packer

"Without the wrath of God, we are left only with an idol in the shape of a teddy-bear."

**03:00**

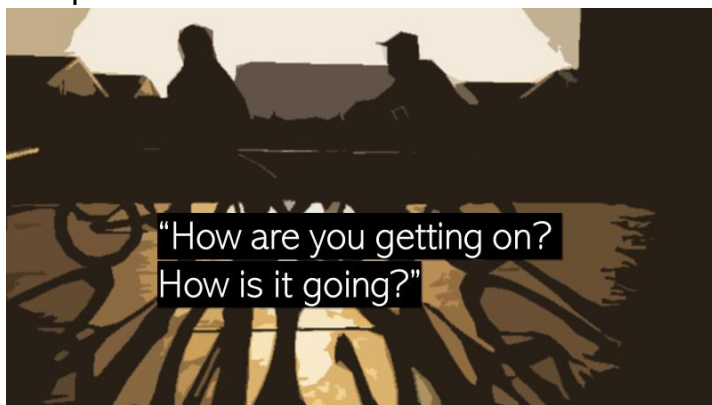
Joseph Scheumann wrote,  
The doctrine of the wrath of God has fallen on hard times.  
In today's world, any concept of God's wrath upsets contemporary sentiments.  
We live in a day where humanity has set itself up as the judge of God... and it is God's character that is on trial.

"How can hell be just?" "Why would God command the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites?" "Why does God always seem so angry?"

The fact that so many people struggle with these questions, and many more like them, means that more than ever right thinking is needed about the doctrine of God's wrath. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/five-truths-about-the-wrath-of-god>

Tom Wright in his commentary described a conversation he had with a professor of his who he bumped into while out on a bike ride. This professor had been assigned to oversee Tom as he wrote his doctoral thesis on Romans 1:18-3:20 which speak mostly about the wrath of God against all human wickedness.

The professor asked...

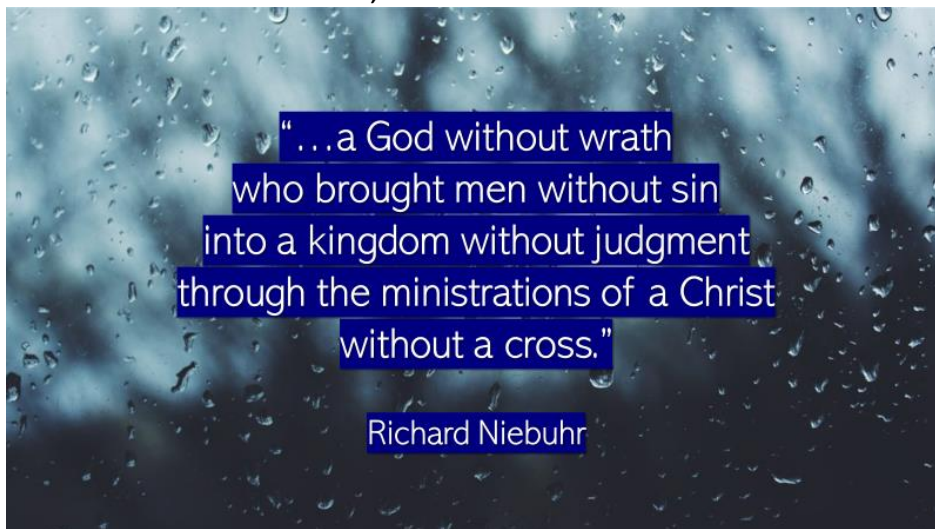


"How are you getting on?  
How is it going?"

Tom answered, "Actually, I'm having a hard time with wrath," to which the prof cheerfully responded, "Aren't we all," and then cycled off. p.141

Tom Wright says, "We would all much rather imagine a God without wrath and live in a world that was the same."

But if this were the case, Richard Niebuhr describes what we'd have...



"...a God without wrath  
who brought men without sin  
into a kingdom without judgment  
through the ministrations of a Christ  
without a cross."

Richard Niebuhr

Wright, p.141

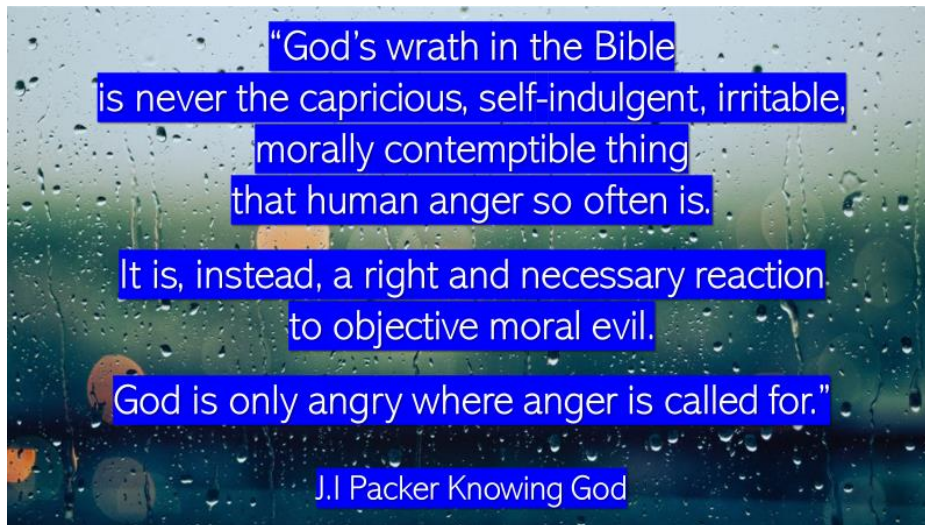
Let's read our passage.



Let me remind you ...

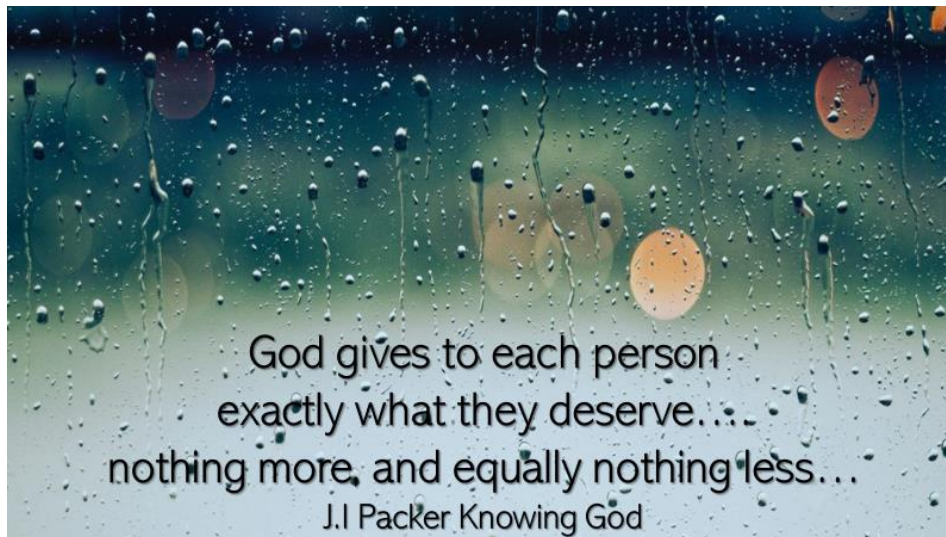
**1. God's judgments are always just...and appropriate.**

J.I Packer writes...



p.167.

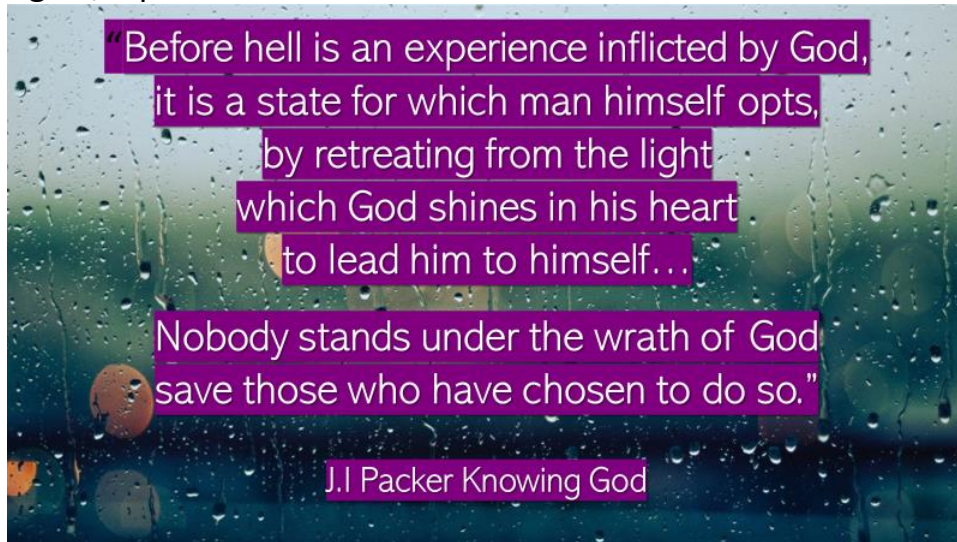
When we say that God is just, what we mean is that his wrath is judicial. What that means... is that...



p.168.

## 2. God's wrath is what people choose for themselves.

Again, I quote JI Packer...



p.169-170

## 3. God's judgment in the last days is a severe mercy, intended to persuade a person of the folly of living without God... and convince them to repent of their sin and lay hold of God's Savior, Jesus Christ.



In the days of the OT God said to the Hebrew people in Deuteronomy 30:15-16, **“I set before you life and death,”** and then God urged them to choose life.

Life or death

In the person of Jesus Christ, for the past 2000 years... God has set before the world of humanity... life and death.

What he did long ago with the Hebrew nation, God continues to do... by his Spirit and through his church... he is urging everyone... to choose life.

## First Bowl, v.2.

The bowls of wrath are purposefully similar to the plagues which came upon Egypt.

The reader is meant to go back and think upon what God did in Egypt long ago, and see the parallels between then and what he is doing now.

The first bowl is similar to the sixth Egyptian plague, see Exodus 9:8-11, which caused... “festering boils.”

The first plague was poured out... on the land.

The plague impacted... those who had the mark of the beast and who worship its image.

What is the mark of the beast?

“The mark of the beast  
is the character of the beast  
imprinted on the soul.”

Darrell Johnson, p.246

Remember God is just.

This is the testimony of Psalm 96:10...

Psalm 96:10

The LORD...will judge  
the peoples with equity.



The judgment of the first bowl is equitable (it is just)... it is an appropriate response by God to those who worship the beast and in doing so... have his character imprinted on their soul.

The plague of ugly and festering sores which break out on people ... and it is not specified whether these sores are on one's body or souls.... are intended to impress upon those impacted.... the truth revealed by God – the wages of sin is death.

### **Second bowl, v.3.**

The second plague was poured out... on the sea.

What did the plague do?

It caused the sea to turn into blood... like that of a dead person.

What does this mean?



When a person is dead, their blood no longer carries life.

The impact of the plague upon the sea, was that the sea no longer was able to sustain the life of the creatures which lived in it.

### **Third bowl, v.4.**

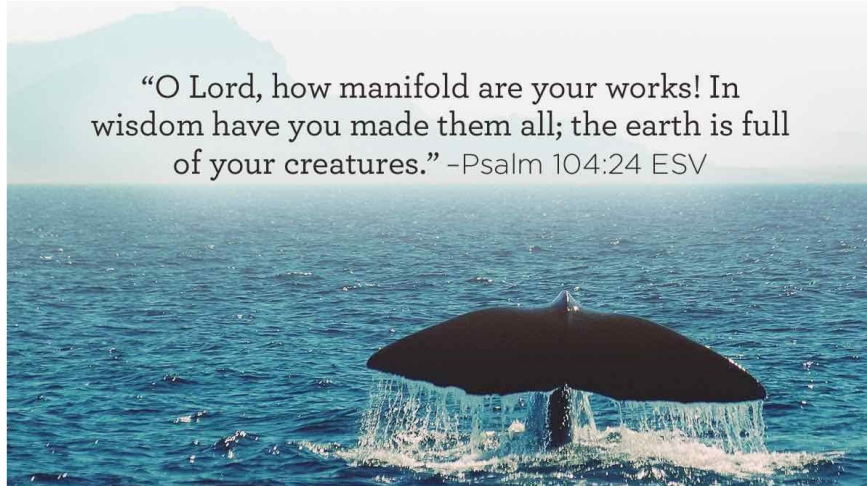
The third plague was poured out... on the rivers and springs of water.

They too became blood.

They too lost their ability to sustain life.

The second and third bowls are similar to the first plague to strike Egypt, which caused, Exodus 7:19-21,... "The fish in the Nile to die and the Nile to stink."

The message of the Bible is that God is the Creator of the earth.  
He has filled the earth with life.



Everything...the earth and all life...is his.

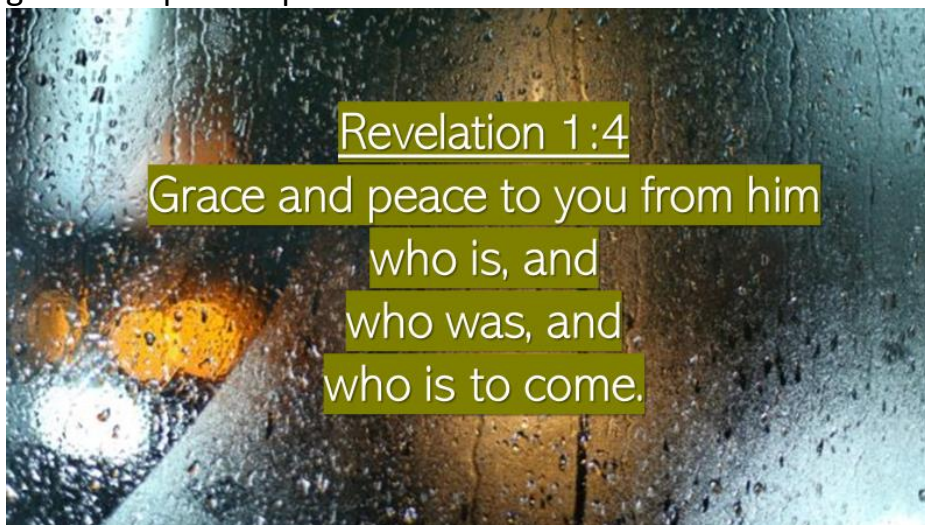
He sustains all things... but sometime... in wisdom and for his glory... he removes his sustaining hand... he takes away.

Before the fourth bowl of wrath is poured out, the angel in charge of the waters speaks a word of praise to God... which provided for John as well as all readers of the Revelation an explanation for these judgments.

It is important to God that his people understand what is happening with these bowl judgments and why.

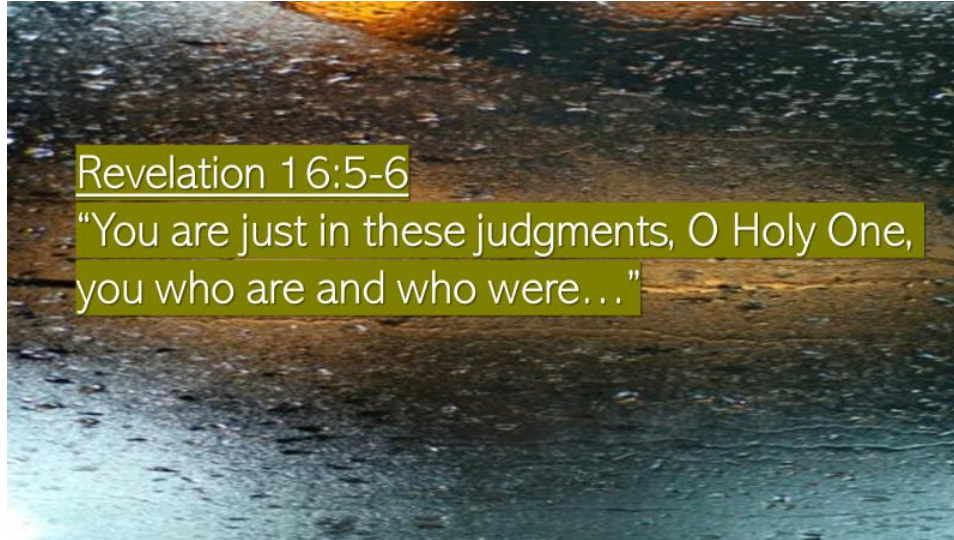
And it is here in this emphasis... that we encounter the connection of God's truth to our own lives.

In Revelation 1:4, John greets the seven churches and pronounces a blessing of grace and peace upon them.



Where does this grace and peace comes from?  
From the God... who is...and who was...and who is to come.

When the angel in 16:5-6 speaks to God in John's hearing... the angel said...



Do you see what phrase is missing? **"...who is to come."**  
Why is this phrase missing?

At the resurrection of Jesus, the God who is to come...brought his future into the present.

In Jesus Christ new creation began...in the midst of the old.

As the bowls of wrath are poured out, the God who is to come in judgment on the last day... begins in the here and now... to deal with sin and sinner, with evil and the evil doer, demonstrating to the world, and particularly to his people... that he will make everything right, everything new – that the heavens and the earth will become the home of righteousness.

The praise which the angel of the waters voiced to God reveals why the sea and the rivers and springs of water became like the blood of a dead person.

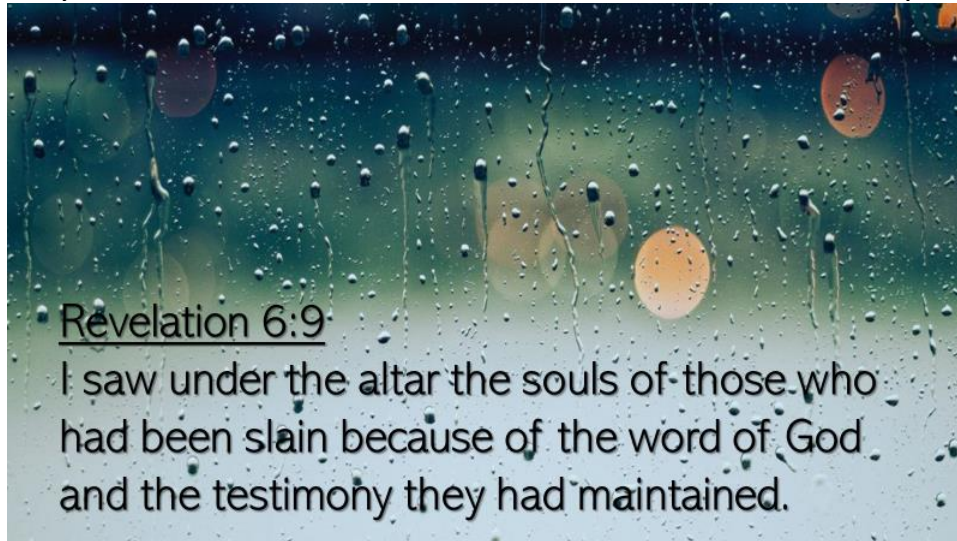
Look again at v.6 – **"... for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets..."**

Who is "they?"

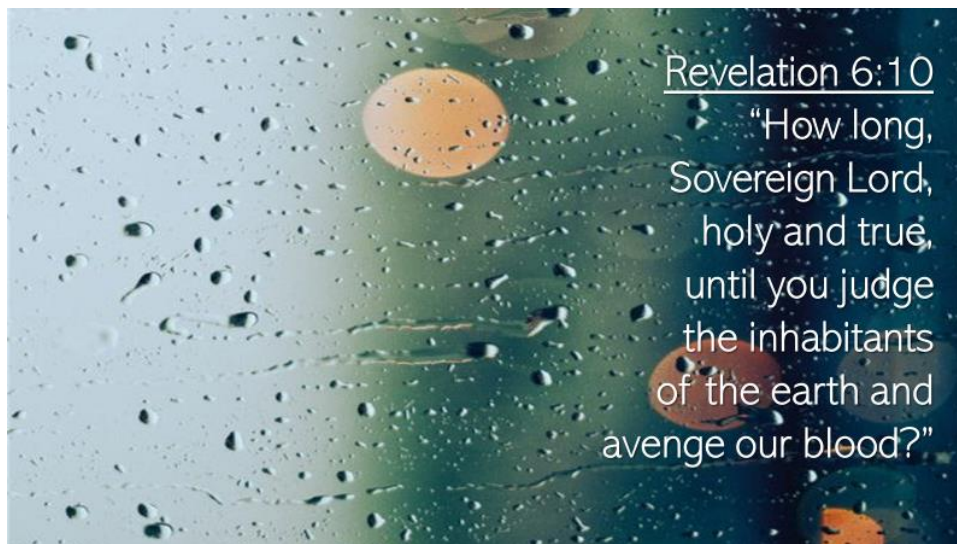
v.2 tells us – "the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshipped its image."



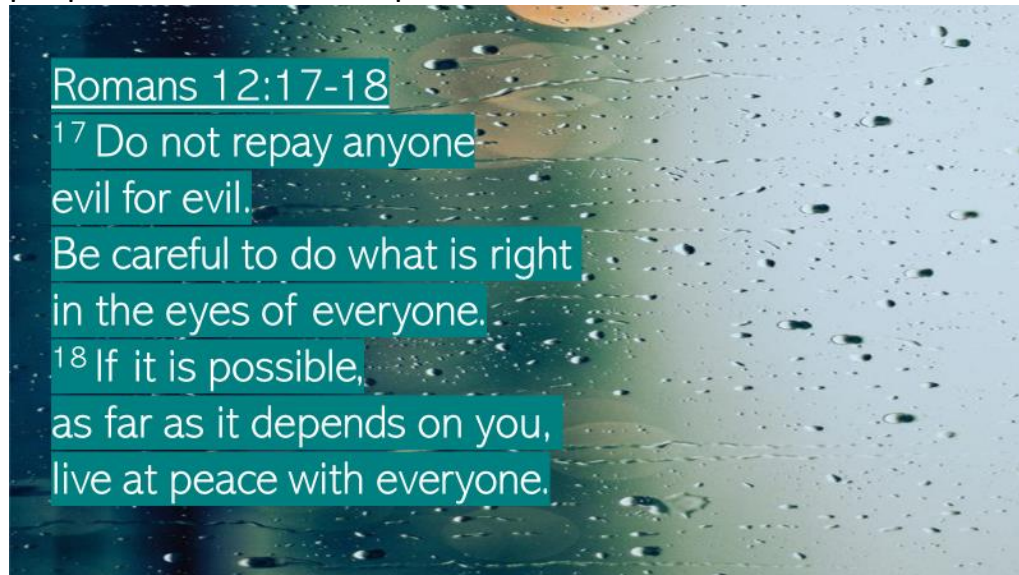
Do you remember what John saw when the fifth seal was opened?



John not only saw these disembodied martyrs who lived before God...he also heard them call out to God in a loud voice...



The Spirit of God... through Paul... in a letter to the church at Rome... told the people of God how to respond to evil and how evil can be overcome.



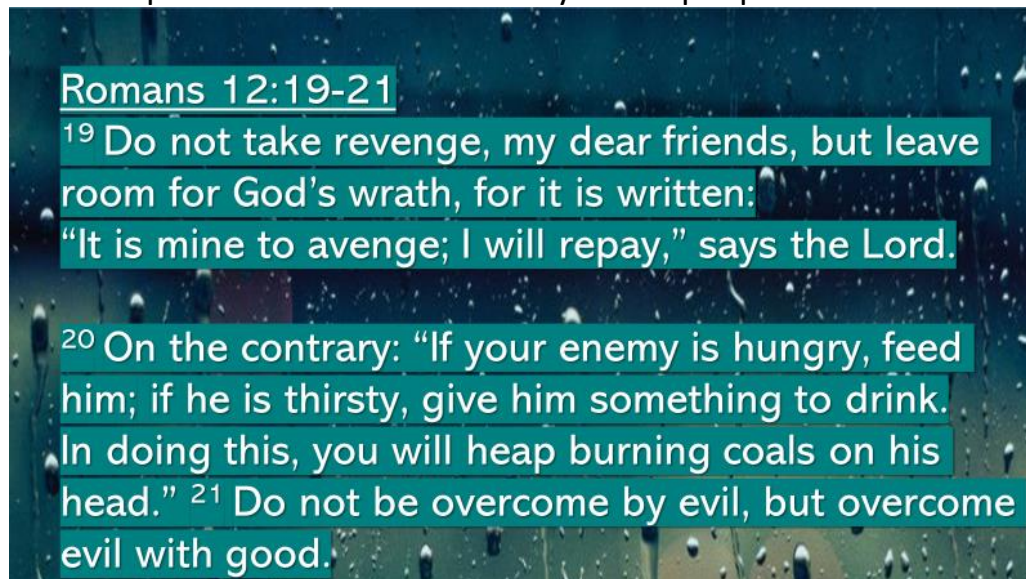
The command here is both negative and positive.

Negative: Do not... repay evil for evil.

Positive: Be careful... to do what is right...

Positive: if it is possible, as far as it depends on you...live at peace with everyone.

But the Spirit of God had more to say to the people of God.



Again, the command of God... is both negative (what we are not to do) and positive (what we are to do).

The followers of Jesus are to respond to evil and overcome it... by trusting in the justice of God... and leaving room for God's wrath.

We do this because God has promised his people,  
**"It is mine to avenge; I will repay."**

As the followers of Jesus grow in the grace of God, we learn to put into the hands of God... **the what... of our lives... and the when.**

What the Revelation reveals to the reader is that there are instances when God's people will not experience his justice in their lifetime.

That in no way means God is untruthful or unfaithful regarding his promises.

What we learn is that with God there is always a right time.

In some instances that right time may take place during a person's lifetime... and in some instances... it may take place after their death.

But this we know with all certainty... the Judge of the earth will deal with every instance of wrongdoing, and he will make everything right.

**This is the hope that the wrath of God brings and gives to the believer.**

This is why the angel in charge of the waters praised God.

And this too is why the people of God praise the Lord for his wrath.

We are confident that on the last day... none of us will say...

"God did not come through; God short-changed me; God failed me; God left me high and dry."

Long ago, the Spirit of God led the prophet Isaiah to write one of the songs that will be sung on the last day.

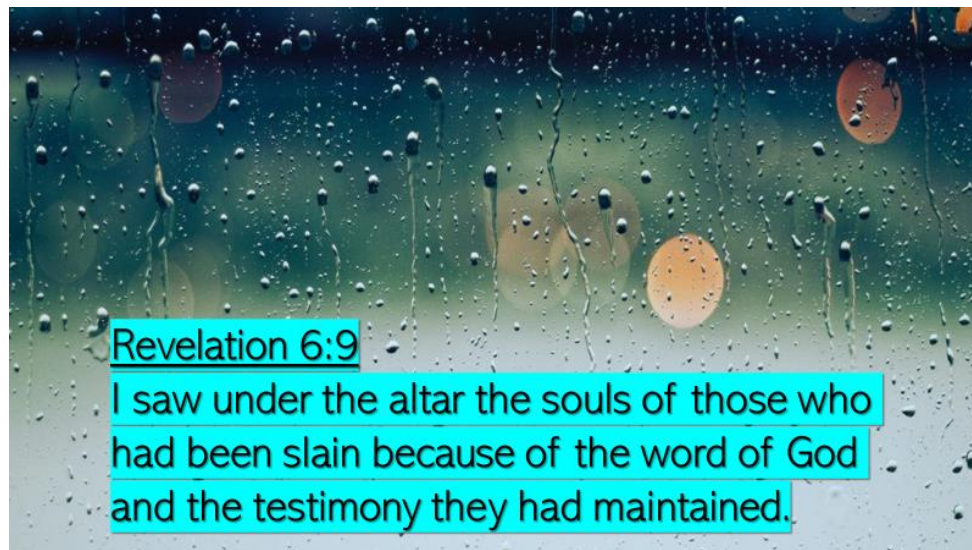
Look at the words ... they express faith that is now sight.

Isaiah 25:9  
"Surely this is our God;  
we trusted in him,  
and he saved us.  
This is the LORD,  
we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice  
and be glad in his salvation."

It is amazing that the reader of the Revelation hears... not only the praise of the angel who is entrusted with the waters of the earth, but that the reader also hears the response of the altar.

What is this about?

Remember...who is it... that is at the altar?



These martyrs are permitted by God to see his wrath act in their defense. And as they do, they too praise God – v.7.

They praise God for who he is...they speak of him as the **Lord God Almighty**. And they praise him for his judgments, testifying that they are **true and just**.

#### **Fourth bowl, v.8-9.**

The fourth plague was poured out... on the sun.

What did the plague do?

It scorched people with fire.

Listen to what GK Beale says about this judgment.

**It is important to recall that since the language describing the commencement of each bowl judgment is figurative – “poured out”... the resulting effect of each judgment is likewise a metaphorical representation of the execution of divine judgment from heaven.**

**The pouring out of God’s wrath in the OT is often figuratively expressed as being accompanied by fire.**

Jeremiah 7:20

My anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground, and it will burn and not be quenched.

Ezekiel 22:21-22

I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted... in a furnace... and you will know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath upon you.

**The description of the fourth bowl speaks in line with OT language of God’s judgment on those who blaspheme him.**

**The symbolism of cosmic alteration indicates that people are to be judged because they have... [committed cosmic treason by altering].. God’s moral laws. p.335.**

You know the saying... if you play with fire, you’ll get burned.

It is the same with sin.

Those who sin will encounter the burning and brilliant holiness of God’s person.

But in all things God wants his people to know... by the emphasis that is made in the middle of v.9, **“he has control over these plagues.”**

God is directing the judgment which is happening on the earth...and it is just.

His intent is that the people of the earth might respond to his judgment by repenting and glorifying him, as the latter half of verse 9 says.

But like Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the OT era, in the last days, the hearts of those who bear the mark of the beast become increasingly hard towards God. Look at their response in v.9 – **“they cursed the name of God.”**

I appreciate what GK Beale says about this...

**The blasphemy of those who cursed God probably includes a denial that God really and ultimately has the power over these plagues...and that they are sovereign punishments from God. p.336.**

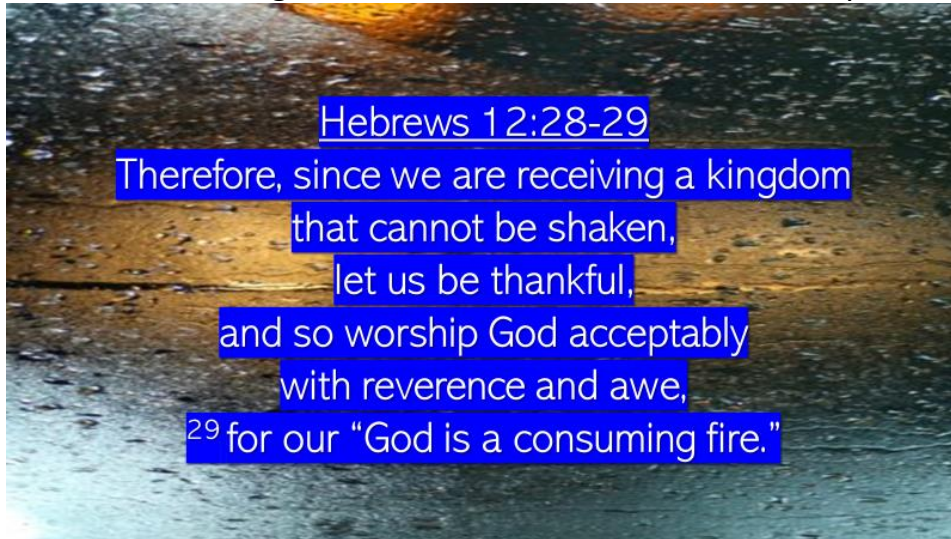
### **Life Connection**

It is important that we see the connection between the Scripture and how we live.

J.I. Packer in his book Knowing God.... at the end of the chapter on ‘The Wrath of God’ encourages his readers to meditate frequently upon this characteristic of God... and then explains why.

1. We are prone to regard sin lightly... either to make excuses for it or to allow accommodations with it.  
But as we think upon God’s wrath with the assistance of the Holy Spirit two things happen... there grows within us a holy distaste of sin and a great longing for and love of holiness.

2. That we might learn to be thankful and to worship God acceptably.



As we think rightly about God's wrath... we cultivate within us a reverence of God's majestic person.

This in turns fills our hearts and minds with gratitude for our Savior Jesus who bore in his own body the wrath of God for our sins.

Reverence for God and gratitude of God will fuel our worship.

Life Connection/Question

- How has this passage encouraged you? given you hope?
- In what way has the passage challenged your lifestyle? your priorities? your faith?

**03:00**

- If the passage has made you uncomfortable, what is it that is troubling you?
- What do you think God would have you do to integrate this truth into your life?

## The Blessing

As the people of God, the Scripture tells us to wait for God's Son from heaven, whom God raised from the dead, who as 1 Thessalonians 1:10 says....

**“... rescues us from the coming wrath.”**

This hope testifies to the blessing in which we live daily... the blessing of God's unmerited favor and his love that surpasses all knowledge.