

Does God ever get angry?

Having realised the wonder that God is Father, Son and Spirit, living together in wonderful love, and found such amazing joy in being invited into that love, a while ago I started to question about what is God like. Does God ever get angry? Does God ever send people to hell?

So I tried this argument: Imagine if I had the best parent there could ever be. Would my 100% perfect mother, say, ever get angry with me, her child? Even if I did and said some terrible things to her, could she, would she, ever get angry, if she had perfect love for me?

More recently, I've come to orient my thinking around Jesus' words, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father". If I want to know what God is like then, supremely and wonderfully, I can look at the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Life-changing!

So did Jesus ever get angry? When people did and said terrible things to him, did he ever get angry? Yes, he got angry, but only with the Scribes and Pharisees, and that was because they were telling lies about God and stopping people experiencing God's love.

And when we face God in judgement, will we experience his anger if we don't believe? Will my own children and grandchildren face God's anger if they don't believe?! Sorry, I don't believe so.

Am I becoming a universalist? No! God, who is love, wants to relate to us in love, so he gives us – love *has* to give us – freedom to choose. And if that choice is real, there's the possibility that we'll reject God's offer, Jesus' offer, of life. And God, in love, will respect that choice.

So how will God feel if I stand before him and reject him? Surely, he'll feel pain, the terrible pain that only real love can feel. Will there be even the faintest hint of anger? I don't believe so.

Then where did we get the idea that "God will punish us for our sins", an essential element of our traditional preaching of the gospel? Is that what the Bible really teaches, or just what we have always been taught. I'm not theologically trained (which is why I've sent this to a few other folk who are), but I've done a word search of the New Testament on 'punish', and apart from apocalyptic writings, all I can find is the Pharisees getting it in the neck from Jesus.

So, please tell me, where does God/Jesus ever say, "I will, literally, punish you for your sins" or "I will, literally, exclude you from heaven if you don't believe in me"? Yes, it's there as a metaphorical idea, but that has to be understood in the light of the overwhelming torrent of God's love expressed in Jesus.

OK, if we don't believe in Jesus, we will be punishing *ourselves*, and excluding *ourselves* from heaven, but unless anyone can show me any Scriptures to the contrary, I can't and won't preach the good news to my friends and family that's predicated on the idea that we are under God's curse. [I've just done a search on 'curse' – identical result to 'punish'!] And if I'm right, could we have been preaching 'another gospel' and are thereby in danger of 'God's curse' as Paul says?

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