September 3

**Romans 12:19**

When we think about the wrath of God it is far too often downplayed. People want to believe that the words of Scripture are exaggerated because a loving God could not possibly be like what is often described in the Bible. Some are guilty of teaching that the symbols in the Bible describing the wrath of God are just that – symbols. The problem with that is that if it is true, it really does not improve a rebellious person’s situation. You see, we (human beings) grasp for symbols of devastation or beauty when the reality we are trying to describe is worse (or better) than what we can put into words.

John Piper said it this way, “If I say, ‘My wife is the diamond of my life,’ I don’t want you to say, ‘Oh, he used a symbol of something valuable; it’s only a symbol. So, his wife must not be as valuable as a diamond.’ No. I used the symbol of the most valuable jewel I could think of because my wife is far more precious than jewels. Honest symbols are not used because they go beyond reality, but because reality goes beyond words.”

So, when the Bible speaks of hell fire, woe to us if we say, “It’s only a symbol.” If it is a symbol at all, it means the reality is worse than fire, not better. The word “fire” is used not to make the easy sound terrible, but to make the exceedingly terrible sound something like what it really is. Paul says in Romans 12:19, “Leave room for the wrath of God.” Then, the wrath of God is defined further as God’s vengeance, “Vengeance is mine.” His wrath is connected with His response to something that deserves vengeance. And then it says, “I will repay.” So, God’s wrath is treated as a repayment to man for something man has done. God pours out wrath because it is deserved.

Again, Piper defined God’s wrath like this: the wrath of God is God’s settled anger toward sin expressed in the repayment of suitable vengeance on the guilty sinner. John MacArthur said, “God’s wrath is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people whom God does not like.” God’s wrath is a settled, determined response against sin. It is not an outburst of anger, but it is anger, nonetheless. The wrath of God is never less than a perfect, justifiable decree, but is always more than a perfect, justifiable decree because it is always full of right and fitting anger. Paul wrote in Romans 2:8, “But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, *there will be* wrath and indignation (anger).”

Friends, I simply want you to know today that the wrath of God is as much a part of His nature and character as His love. The wrath of God is not to be taken lightly or trifled with. It is real and it is coming on all who ultimately reject Christ. Here are a few closing characteristics about the nature of God’s wrath. It is ultimately and finally eternal (2 Thess 1:7-9). His wrath will be the source of indescribable pain. Matthew records the words of Christ as He taught about hell. The symbols for hell that Jesus chose to use included a furnace of fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. His wrath poured out will be totally just and right (Romans 2:5) and it is important to know that His wrath could have been escapable. Paul writes that Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross was God’s way of redeeming us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). The book of Jude is meant to warn us to guard against and contend against false teachers and to be vigilant about defending the Truth. I hope you see that there is so much at stake.