

What is wrath?

Webster's Dictionary: 1. intense anger; rage; fury
2. any action of vengeance

Oxford Annotated Bible: God's steadfast and holy hatred of sin

“In pagan religions the wrath of the gods is an *alternative* to love.”

But, if God is love, then God's wrath cannot be an alternative to love.

In the death of Jesus:

1. “The very fact that God can be angry with us means that God is interested in us and care enough to be offended and hurt by us.”
2. “God cares enough to refuse to let us get by with our sin.”
3. “In the death of Christ *God* bears the consequences of our sin.”

“Must we talk about the wrath of God? Yes. But God's wrath is not like that of the gods. It is the wrath of the God who was in Christ reconciling the world to God's self.”

from “Christian Doctrine” by Shirley C. Guthrie Jr.

What is idolatry?

Webster's Dictionary: 1. Worship of idols

2. excessive devotion to or reverence for some person or thing

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. 50. What is required in the Second Commandment?

A. the Second Commandment requireth the receiving, observing and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his Word.

Q. 51. What is forbidden in the Second Commandment?

A. The Second Commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images or any other way not appointed in his Word.

“Paul uses the image of four-footed reptiles and animals, probably a reference to specific idols of the first century. Compare that image with the trust we place in four-wheel-drive vehicles, which give us the illusion of freedom to go anywhere, under all weather conditions, and which also symbolize our desire to escape pressure and create security.”

Art Ross and Martha M. Stevenson

“I no longer think idolatry is a problem of primitive people in a simpler time, those who worshipped golden calves in fertility rites. I have only to open a newspaper to contemplate the wondrously various ways in which idolatry is alive in the here and now.”

Kathleen Norris, Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith (1998)

“Idolatry is the practice of ascribing absolute value to things of relative worth.”

Frederick Buechner

➤ So what do we idolize today?

“For Paul, the fundamental sin is idolatry: false worship is the way in which Gentiles have fallen short of the glory of God.”

David L. Bartlett