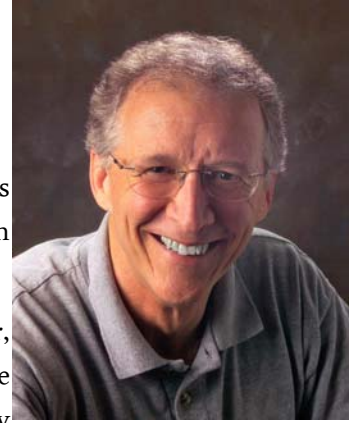


# Defending My Father's Wrath

God's son bore God's curse in my place | John Piper



I write this from Cambridge, England, and my indignation about the assault on my Father is British-born. The calumny I have in mind is the following paragraph from a popular British writer:

The fact is that the cross isn't a form of cosmic child abuse — a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement: "God is love". If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus' own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil.

(Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus*, [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003], pp. 182-183)

This is breathtaking coming from a professing Christian. On behalf of my Father in heaven I would like to bear witness to the truth that before He adopted me His terrible wrath was upon me. Jesus said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey . . . the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36). Wrath remains on us as long as there is no faith in Jesus. Paul puts it like this: We "were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:3). My very nature made me worthy of wrath.

My destiny was to endure "flaming fire" and "vengeance on those . . . who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus . . . [and who] suffer the punishment of eternal destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). I was not a son of God. God was not my Father. He was my judge and executioner. I was a "son of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). I was dead in trespasses and sins. And the sentence of my Judge was clear and terrifying: "Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6).

There was only one hope for me — that the infinite wisdom of God might make a way for the love of God to satisfy the wrath of God so that I might become a son of God.

This is exactly what happened, and I will sing of it forever. After saying that I was by nature a child of wrath, Paul says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5). "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son . . . to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). God sent His Son to rescue me from His wrath and make me His child.

How did He do it? He did it in the way Steve Chalke slanderously calls "cosmic child abuse." God's Son bore God's curse in my place. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13). If people in the 21st century find this greatest act of love "morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith," it was not different in Paul's day. "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

But for those who are called by God and believe in Jesus, this is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). This is my life. This is the only way God could become my Father. Now that His wrath no longer rests on me (John 3:36), He has sent the Spirit of sonship flooding into my heart crying Abba, Father (Romans 8:15)... [P]lease know, heavenly Father, that I thank You with all my heart, and that I measure Your love for me by the magnitude of the wrath I deserved and the wonder of Your mercy by putting Christ in my place.