

CONFESSION OF SIN

(From The Book of Common Prayer)

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

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Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins
through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all
goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in
eternal life. *Amen.*

FORGIVE

RESOURCE:

IF GOD WEREN'T ANGRY BY PAUL DAVID TRIPP

Called to represent God's work of grace in the lives of others, many of us in ministry need to reevaluate how we think about the anger of God. Sometimes we can treat God's anger like the embarrassing uncle in our extended family. It's as if we're working hard to keep this attribute of God away from public exposure. Are we secretly worried about causing undue embarrassment to the family of faith? We are tempted to act as if anger were the dark side of God's character.

God doesn't have a dark side! John says, "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). It is impossible for there to be anything evil in God. It is impossible for him to feel or act unrighteously. He is entirely holy in every respect. He is completely good in everything he does. He is not evil, cannot be tempted by evil, and does not tempt anyone to do evil. He is perfectly holy, always, and in every possible way.

Implications for a Fallen World

All of this has very important implications as we seek to live and minister productively in this fallen world. If God is holy and angry at the same time, then anger is not evil in and of itself. If it were, God would never be angry. The many passages that teach us God is angry simply would not be in the Bible (see Exodus 32:10, 34:6; Deuteronomy 29:28; 2 Kings 22:13; Psalms 2:12, 30:5; Romans 1:18; and more). Therefore, it is not merely possible to be holy and angry at the same time, it is a calling. If you recognize and treasure the unchanging holiness of God and his call to be holy as he is holy, you will find it impossible to be in contact with anything that is in any way evil and not be angry.

This means if we are to take seriously the call to imitate our Father in heaven, calling ourselves and others to act and respond as he does within our human limitations, we must be angry. Not selfishly angry because we are not getting our own way, but worshipfully angry in the face of anything that is a violation of what God says is right, good, loving, and true.

THE ANGER OF GRACE

Let's be very clear. God's anger is the anger of grace. It is not the violent anger of unbridled and unrighteous fury. God's anger always works to right what is wrong. That is what grace does. This gracious anger has two sides to it: justice and mercy. In the gracious anger of justice, God works to punish wrong, but he does even more. God is not satisfied merely with punishing wrong. His hunger for right is so strong that he will not relent until wrong has been completely destroyed. He will not rest until evil is no more and justice and righteousness reign forever and ever!

There is also another side to his gracious anger. It is the anger of mercy. In mercy he works to convict—that is, to produce in us a sorrow for the wrongs that we think, say, and do. In mercy he works to forgive—that is, to clear our moral debt. In mercy he works to empower—that is, to give us everything we need to resist wrong and to do what is right. And in mercy he works to deliver. He will not be satisfied until every microbe of sin is completely eradicated from every cell of the heart of every one of his children.

Where do we see both sides of God's anger coming together in one moment? On that hill outside the city gates where Jesus hung. That is where we see justice and mercy kiss. As he hung there, Jesus bore the full

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weight of the justice of God's anger. He paid the penalty our sin required. And on the cross Jesus became the instrument of God's merciful anger that every sinner needs. He purchased our forgiveness.

If God were incapable of anger, there would have been no cross. You see, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ forces us to deal with God's anger. It requires us to help those to whom we minister to think of God's anger in a deeper, more richly biblical way. Think about it: no anger, no cross; no cross, no hope of the final victory of righteousness, mercy, and justice. This would leave us in a world where evil exists inside of us and outside of us with nothing that we could do about it. The entire world and everyone in it would literally be going to hell, and we would be along for the ride with no way of getting off. We would be both victims and also victimizers living in a now and future hell of separation from God and everything that is good, watching darkness get darker with no hope of light. There would be no redeeming hope, no message worth taking the time to prepare and preach.

Anger is one of God's most beautiful characteristics. For God's children, his anger is a place of bright hope. Because he is righteously angry with sin every day, we can rest assured that everything sin has broken will be restored. Everything sin twisted will be straightened. Everything that has gone wrong will be made right again. God's anger assures us that all things will be made new.

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FORGIVE

RESOURCE:

INTERVIEW WITH NT WRIGHT: FORGIVENESS RE-FRAMED

At the heart of God's work with Israel is the Presence of God, a theme coursing through the whole Old Testament – from Genesis 3:8 to Genesis 12 to the house of God with Jacob to the tabernacle's and the temple's ark of the covenant and especially with the temple and on and on. God's Presence is at the heart.

And this Presence vacates the temple as an act of judgment in Exile.

If the essence of sin is idolatry and the surrender to alien powers, then what becomes of the “forgiveness of sins”? NT Wright argues in *The Day the Revolution Began*, forgiveness of sins needs to be seen through the grid of a sound narratival approach to biblical theology. But we have approached it all, he claims, from mistaken paths:

We have Platonized our eschatology (substituting “souls going to heaven” for the promised new creation) and have therefore moralized our anthropology (substituting a qualifying examination of moral performance for the biblical notion of the human vocation), with the result that we have paganized our soteriology, our understanding of “salvation” (substituting the idea of “God killing Jesus to satisfy his wrath¹ for the genuinely biblical notions we are about to explore). (147)

When God's Presence is absent it is called Exile, or the “death” of Exile. The end of Exile is the return of the Presence to the temple, and this is precisely how Jesus is at times described in the NT: John 1:14 especially!

Jews of Jesus' day were not looking to be rescued from this world but for a renewal and rescue within this world (113). They were looking for that renewal in connection with the return of the Presence to the temple, and that means they were looking for the end of Exile and an expression that was often used to speak of the end of Exile was...

... the forgiveness of sins. NT Wright now, from p. 115:

The “forgiveness of sins” was a huge, life-changing, world-changing reality, long promised and long awaited. It was the fulfillment of Israel's hopes for restoration, coupled with the sense that when Israel was restored, this would somehow generate a new for the whole human race.

[p. 157] “Forgiveness of sins,” for the first disciples, was now to be seen as a fact about the way the world was, a fact rooted in the one-off accomplishment of Jesus's death, then revealed in his resurrection, and then put to work through the Spirit in the transformed lives of his followers. Forgiveness of sins became another way of saying “Passover” or “new Exodus.” Or, as in Isaiah 54-55, following hard on the heels of the kingdom announcement of chapter 52 and the “servant's” work in chapter 53, it would come to mean “new covenant” and “new creation.” The gospel was the announcement of this new reality.

And when the Presence returns God would return as king, God would bring redemption through suffering, and all this as a dramatic expression of God's covenant love. Hence, what the people needed was (1) the end of Exile or the forgiveness of sins, (2) it would be the great Exodus or the final great Passover, and (3) this would all occur as the work of God (138).

Forgiveness of sins in the NT, he is arguing, is about the end of Exile, the return of God to the temple, and the establishment of kingdom conditions already at work in this world, and all this means that individuals can be rescued, renewed and restored to God, to themselves, to one another and to all creation.