

Hands of Justice

Proverbs 6:16-19*

The book of Proverbs shows that the emotion of heaven is aroused when a man eats the bread of violence rather than the desserts of hard work. Many of Solomon's word pictures and wise sayings show how God feels about those who "shed innocent blood" in order to get what they want. He is angered when He sees hands that were made to help others used instead to rob, defraud, and murder.

"Hands that shed innocent blood" are the instruments of pride and deception. They are strengthened by a proud heart that regards one's own interests as more important than the interests of others. Their work is fueled by the lie that we have a right to take by force something we have not rightfully earned or otherwise received.

"Hands that shed innocent blood" are hands full of rebellion against God. They are hands that have shoved aside the wisdom of God, which tells us that we are made to be satisfied with God's blessing on the work of humble and honest hands.

To please God, we must know what He values. What does He care about? What does He love? What does He hate?

God's values in the negative form (16-19)

- #1. God hates haughty eyes (17a)
- #2. God hates a lying tongue (17b)
- #3. God hates hands that shed innocent blood (17c)

God's values in the positive form (select vv.)

Does God Scowl in his Wrath?²

We know that God is as loving as he is just. He is not more loving than he is just, nor more just than he is loving. All of his attributes are perfectly balanced.

Evangelical Christians have therefore always accepted the truth that God's holiness and justice sometimes requires a response of wrath. Hopefully, this is not something we cherish, but rather we accept as a necessary part of his justice.



However, I find myself wondering if we have misunderstood part of the biblical doctrine of God's wrath, and it can be summarized with this question. What is on God's face when he is meting out punishment — a scowl or a smile, or tears?

When we see a parent discipline a child in anger, we instinctively know something is wrong. When we see a parent spank a child and seem to enjoy it, we know something is wrong. I heard a story many years back of a parent who, uncharacteristically, spanked their son in anger, and the three-year-old pointed his finger at the parent and said, "No." Even at that age he understood that something was different, and wrong.

When I had to discipline one of my children, it was always in sadness. I was not smiling. I was not scowling. I was not enjoying it. It was in sadness, sometimes in tears, that Robin and I had to teach our children right and wrong and the consequences of their bad choices.

I am struck by the fact that the New Testament never says Jesus was angry. We assume he was angry when he was cleansing the temple, but it doesn't say he was. We assumed he was angry when he was condemning the religious leaders in Matt 24, but it doesn't say he was. The closest I can see to Jesus being angry is in the textual variant of Mark 1:41 followed by the NIV, but even then Jesus was surely "indignant" at the destruction of his beautiful world by sin, not the request by the man with leprosy.

I wonder if we have allowed Church history and the bitterness of some forms of fundamentalism to affect how we think of God and his wrath. I am pretty sure there is deep sadness on his face in the midst of his wrath, but in some cases a gleam in his eye as he already knows the positive outcome of his discipline

—Bill Mounce

*These notes are prayerfully prepared to aid, not replace, your personal study of God's word.

² Bill Mounce, <https://billmounce.com/>