

Who, **What**, Where, When, How and Why questions

What is freedom? What are we **freed from** that is so dangerous?

Freedom from wrath (loss of protection and insulation from harm and degradation)

Antidote: Reconciliation and peace

Freedom from fear (expectation of severe punishment in the name of judgment)

Antidote: Perfect, unconditional and unshakeable love that never lets go

Freedom from shame (loss of connection to life and intimacy and all that is inherent in that)

Antidote: Restored joy and boldness and confidence and awareness of personal worth

Freedom from sin (the inevitable fruit of distrust, unbelief, shame, fear and false views of reality)

Antidote: Death to the power of sin to define my identity by trust in my true identity in Christ

Freedom from condemnation (the false assumption that God threatens punishments for offending Him)

Antidote: Truth that God is not a destroyer or manipulator but relentlessly invites intimacy

Freedom from lies (cause of despair, depression, hopelessness, meaninglessness, loneliness, confusion)

Antidote: Truth as it is in Jesus – truth about God's disposition, reality, and our real identity

***They heard the voice of Yahweh** God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife **hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh** God among the trees of the garden.*

Yahweh God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

*The man said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and **I was afraid**, because **I was naked**; and **I hid myself**."*

*God said, "**Who told you** that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" (Genesis 3:8-11)*

*But **God proves his love for us** in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be **saved through him from the wrath [of God]**. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:8-11 NRSV)*

Something extremely important to note is that in the Greek the reference to God here is absent. There is **no mention of God** in relation to wrath, simply that we will be **saved** from **wrath** itself. The wrath that threatens to undo us is **not from God** from **from inside ourselves** and projected as coming from God.

*Or do you **despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and patience**, not knowing that the **goodness of God leads you to repentance**? But according to your **hardness and unrepentant heart** you are **treasuring up for yourself wrath** in the day of **wrath, revelation, and of the righteous judgment of God**; (Romans 2:4-5)*

Note that the wrath mentioned here is not God's wrath but **wrath induced and stored up internally** caused by **hardening** the heart **against God's goodness**. Unwillingness to change the mind about this cherished perspective **distorts everything** and causes us to **react with terror** when the truth of God is revealed that **contradicts our settled opinions** about reality. This is part of what Paul refers to as **living under the law**, or living **according to the flesh**.

*Because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. For **through the law comes the knowledge of sin**. But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been revealed, being testified by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe.*

*For there is no distinction, for **all have sinned**, and fall short of the glory of God; being **justified freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be an atoning sacrifice, through faith in his blood, **for a demonstration of his righteousness** through the **passing over of prior sins**, in God's forbearance; **to demonstrate his righteousness** at this present time; that **he might himself be just**, and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:20-26)*

*There is **no fear in love**, but perfect love casts out fear; for **fear has to do with punishment**, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and **hate** their brothers or sisters, are liars; for **those who do not love a brother or sister** whom they have seen, **cannot love God** whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. (1 John 4:18-21 NRSV)*

Consider all this **in light of the story** of the encounter between God with **Adam and Eve** after they became **infected by lies** about **God's disposition** and **their identity**. They **assumed** God had come to **enforce the law**, and we tend to read it that way ourselves. But there is **no hint** of that in the text. God came to **do what He had always done** – to hang out with His kids and spend **intimate time** together. **Nothing had changed in God** but everything had changed in human perceptions about Him, and because they now lived in a **different version of reality** with **faulty definitions** of words and concepts, they **perceived God through a distorted lens** of counterfeit justice, or under the law.

God came to our first parents with the **same righteousness** that He **came to us in Jesus** sent to save us from our sins. Jesus revealed the righteousness of God entirely **outside** the context of how we perceive law as **threatening punishment** for disobedience. Jesus is the gospel, the renewed truth that God was never our problem but rather our **unbelief** in His goodness, graciousness, lovingkindness and eagerness for us to be **reconciled** back into full **trust in His heart** – this is the truth that **alone can set us free**.

There are references in Scripture to the wrath of God, but they are serious **distortions** that lead millions to continue to live in fear and distrust because they **confuse** our meaning of **wrath** with the truth about **God's passion** and thus serve to further **alienate** us in **distrust** rather than motivate us to be reconciled.

When this first began to dawn on my conscious awareness years ago, I immediately **went to the Greek** to analyze the **word translated as 'wrath'** in connection to God. To my astonishment I began to realize the **enormous extent of the conspiracy** we live under designed to **prevent us from living in freedom** from fear and condemnation. Indeed the **truth does set us free** if we are **willing to embrace it** and lay aside all our preconceived and strongly held opinions that resist it.

[Strong's 3709] Orge – from 3713; properly, **desire** (as a **reaching forth** or **excitement of the mind**), i.e. (by analogy), violent **passion** (ire, or (justifiable) abhorrence); **by implication** punishment:--anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath.

Note this **scandalous admission!** All this negative stuff that has come to define God's supposed angry disposition towards sinners is **entirely by implication!** The core **original meaning** given here is what we need to pay the closest attention to if we want to **experience the truth that sets us free**.

The **core meaning** of this word involves **intense desire**, a **reaching out**, and **excitement** of the mind, i.e., **passions**. And while for **sinful humans** this could easily describe **negative emotions** like **rage** or cravings for **revenge** or supposedly justified **punishments** of those who cause suffering to others, none of this corresponds to the **revelation of God** as demonstrated in the life example and teachings of Jesus **who alone has seen the Father** up close and personally.

Even checking the **root word** from which orge is derived only serves to **further reinforce** this awareness.

[Strong's 3713] Oregomai; to **stretch** oneself, i.e. **reach out** after (**long for**):--covet after, **desire**.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known of God is revealed in them, for God revealed it to them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse. Because, knowing God, they didn't glorify him as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (Romans 1:18-22)

How can this tragic condition be **reversed**? Choose the opposite of what caused the problem originally.

As he spoke these things, many believed in him.

Jesus therefore said to those Jews who had believed him, "If you remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

They answered him, "We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How do you say, 'You will be made free?'"

Jesus answered them, "Most certainly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is the bondservant of sin. A bondservant doesn't live in the house forever. A son remains forever. If therefore the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:30-36)

So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life. For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19)

Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

Sin means unbelief of the real truth about **God's disposition** towards us and unbelief in our true godly identity **designed to reflect** His kindness, graciousness and relentless love. Sin turns us into fools, vain in our logic and formulaic rituals and appeasement attempts. Yet **the cure is embedded** in the description of the problem in Romans 1. We are without excuse as the **remedy is fully provided** – the **revelation of God's true disposition** is exposed in the reflection of His Son who **came to save** us from our sin. So **how may we participate** so as to be reconciled and live in **freedom right now**?

Allow **Spirit** to give us **refreshed perception** of the attributes of God that have been obscured. Choose to **glorify Him** the way Jesus glorified Him – **apart from the law**. Choose to **give thanks** for **His good attributes**, because that is **the only kind** that **authentically defines His disposition** towards sinners and saints alike. Choose to **embrace Jesus' version** of God in exchange for the lie that has made us afraid of God.

*we traded the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man...
we exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...
we refused to have God in our knowledge...*

Since then the children have shared in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death he might bring to nothing him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all of them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
(Hebrews 2:14-15)

Jesus formulated the only remedy that heals and restores us to full healthy reflection. He neutralized the devil and all his lies that make us afraid of God and of death. **Jesus took the keys** of death from the devil by destroying it with His resurrection. The only thing left is for us to **agree with Him** and **trade back** the corrupted image for the reflection of God in Christ, and **exchange the lies for the truth**.

This is how **salvation** works.

This is the gospel, the **good news that liberates us** from bondage to fear, shame and condemnation. This is **God's disposition** correcting the darkness in the word 'wrath' that has misled us to live in fear. This fear is fueled by the lies of the devil that distort our reflection of God's true glory. As we return to worshiping the one true God exactly like Jesus, we are saved from what we imagined as God wrath as we **choose to believe** that **His passion is always for us** and never against us.

*What then shall we say about these things? If **God is for us**, who can be against us? He who didn't spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how would he not also with him **freely give us all things**? Who could bring a charge against God's chosen ones? **It is God who justifies**. Who is he who condemns? **It is Christ who died**, yes rather, who was **raised from the dead**, who is **at the right hand of God**, who also **makes intercession for us**. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Could oppression, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, "For your sake we are killed all day long. We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter." No, in all these things, **we are more than conquerors through him who loved us**. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from **the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**. (Romans 8:31-39)*