

God's anger originates in perfect holiness and justice.



This morning, during my private devotions, for just a few seconds, God let me see His anger."

I was strangely gripped by these words, spoken by a young man during a time of sharing at a meeting where I was to minister. My interest intensified as he went on to give reasons why God was justified in being angry with us. He had obviously been deeply moved by the "vision" he had experienced

that morning, and had given much thought to it. As he cited scriptural reasons for God's anger, I was impressed by the mature manner in which he spoke. I was even more astonished when the leader of the meeting whispered to me that the young man had been converted for just three months. This only increased my conviction that this lad had experienced an unusual God-given insight.

The incident made a strong

impression on me and set me to thinking. I could understand God being angry with a "sinner" upon whom His "wrath rested" (John 3:36); but the thought of God being angry with "His people" somehow left me shaken and uncomfortably confronted. Though I knew from my study of the Bible that this had been so on several occasions in history, somehow I hadn't thought of it as a possible present reality. "Love" and "grace," "mercy" and "forgiveness" were the



What Makes God Angry?

by Ern Baxter



prominent words in my mind when thinking of God. But I had just been reminded that God could be angry with His people now—today! In fact, God could be angry with *me*! That was a disturbing thought, and I determined to find out the reasons for God's anger with His people, and quite frankly—with me.

Following this experience, I began to run across accounts of God's anger repeatedly in my daily reading and devotional Bible study. I had read these same Scriptures many times before, but had never been so keenly

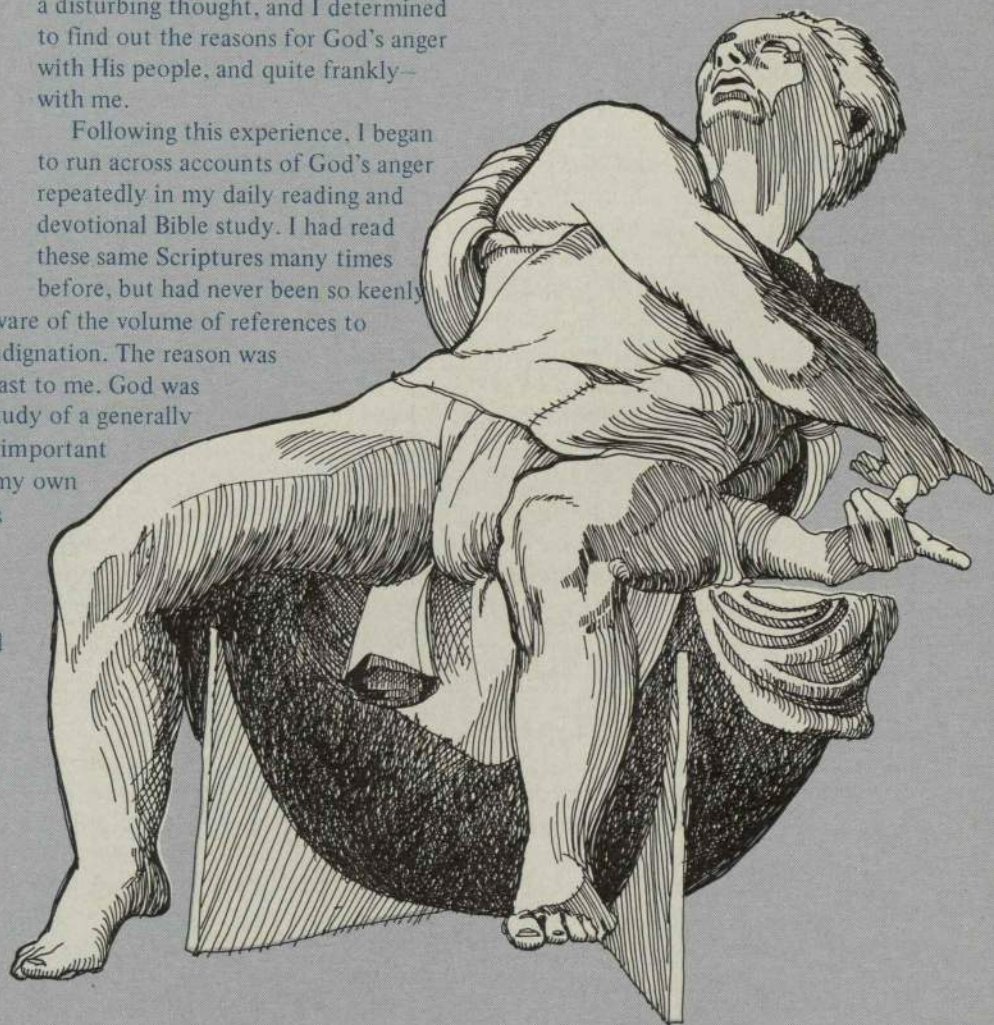
aware of the volume of references to divine indignation. The reason was

obvious—at least to me. God was directing me to a study of a generally

neglected yet extremely important aspect of truth, not only for my own

sake but also for the sake of others with whom I would share it.

Even before opening my concordance to review the references to the anger of God, a scripture came to mind that was illuminatingly pertinent to that topic. "Behold ['fix your gaze on'—Mon.] therefore the *goodness* and *severity* of God" (Rom. 11:22). I was immediately convicted about my own personal tendency to read the Bible with bias, favoring and choosing to remember the things the Bible said "for" me, and passing over with less enthusiasm the things it said "against" me.



This reminded me of something Dietrich Bonhoeffer had said some years ago. In the summer of 1932, Bonhoeffer delivered a paper at a conference on the church in Gland, Switzerland. With reference to the Bible, he said:

... the great concern which has been bearing down on me with growing heaviness throughout the whole conference; has it not become terrifyingly clear again and again, in everything that we have said here to one another, that we are no longer obedient to the Bible? We are more fond of our own thoughts than of the thoughts of the Bible. We no longer read the Bible seriously, *we no longer read it against ourselves*, but for ourselves. If the whole of our conference here is to have any great significance, it may be perhaps that of showing us that we must read the Bible in quite a different way, until we find ourselves again. 1

In view of what Bonhoeffer said, I found myself wondering, "Do I give equal attention to the 'severity of God,' or am I more inclined to 'fix my gaze on' the 'goodness of God'?" The answer was obvious.

I thought not only of my personal attitude, but of the general attitude among most Christians. We speak often of "the goodness of God," and our songs and hymns are filled with references to His "kindness, grace, love, mercy," etc.; but I couldn't think of one chorus that contained references to His "severity." We love to sing, "O, God is good"; but wouldn't it be jarring to follow that with, "O, God's severe." And yet, Paul insists that we, as Christians, need to keep these two factors in balance in our thinking.

So our tendency has been both in our hymns and choruses and in our walk with the Lord, to celebrate the "goodness" much more than the "severity." Though there may be some justification for this, which we shall consider later, it would seem that our self-serving partiality needs some adjustment. One author puts it strongly but accurately when he writes:—"To an age which has unashamedly sold

itself to the gods of greed, pride, sex and self-will, the Church mumbles on about God's kindness, but says nothing about His judgment." 2

The psalmists, with unabating faithfulness, celebrate God's judgments as well as His mercy. Psalm 101 is a good example, for its first line sets the psalm's theme, "I will sing of *mercy and judgment*."

I discovered a few statistics about the severity of God by consulting my concordance, and though they are by no means exhaustive, they will sufficiently convince us of the need to pay "more earnest heed" to the subject. "Anger," as applied to God, with its synonyms "wrath, indignation, fury, vengeance, displeasure," appears approximately 500 times in the Bible. A. W. Pink states, "A study of the concordance will show that there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury and wrath of God, than there are to His love and tenderness." 3 This awesome array of scripture, viewed in conjunction with A. W. Pink's observation, demands our sober attention and warns us that we cannot "escape" if we "turn a deaf ear to Him who now speaks from heaven" (Heb. 12:25, Wy.).

Before examining some of these scriptures and some of the specific points deriving from them, it might be well to consider the nature of God's anger in comparison to man's. God's anger is as different from man's anger as God Himself is from man. God's anger originates in perfect holiness and justice. It is free from all the contaminations of sin and human finiteness that characterize man. This is inferred in Ephesians 4:26 when Paul admonishes Christians, men and women who have been redeemed and are being changed into the likeness of Christ, to "Be angry and sin not."

Such an admonition could not properly be addressed to God because though He can be angry, He cannot sin. Yet, when we read about God's anger, our point of reference is human anger. So although God has chosen to use human language as His means of communication with man, we ought to remember He is always careful to

remind us that "God is not a man," and we must therefore take great care in translating God's *meaning* in terms of God's *revealed character*. God's wrath "is a personal quality, without which God would cease to be fully righteous, and His love would degenerate into sentimentality. His wrath, however, even though like His love, has to be described in human language. It is not wayward, fitful, or spasmodic, as human anger always is. It is as permanent and as consistent an element in His nature as is His love." 4

Dr. James Orr says that God's anger is:

an energy of the divine nature called forth by the presence of daring or presumptuous transgressions and expressing the reaction of the divine holiness against it in punishment or destruction of the transgressor. It is the 'zeal' of God for the maintenance of His holiness and honor, and of the ends of His righteousness and love, when these are threatened by the ingratitude, rebellion, and willful disobedience or temerity of the creature . . . This anger is not pictured as in heathen religions as the mere outburst of capricious passions, but always appears in union with the idea of the divine holiness; and as directed to the maintenance of the moral order in the world. 5

Since we feel it necessary to have a clear understanding of the nature of God's anger, we would like to quote one other writer.

The anger of God is a fact. More than that, it is a fact that vitally concerns us. "Thou wast angry with *me*" (Isa. 12:1). God's anger is not a smoldering emotion within Himself. His anger is directed, and directed at us . . . If God did not feel anger at the sin He sees in this world, He would not be righteous . . . His anger is toward those who have tampered with His handiwork, frustrated His plans, and ruined His creation. God's anger has four qualities which are often lacking in human anger. His anger is equaled by His grief. His anger is impartial. God's anger is also inescapable, and always compatible with all His other qualities. 6

GOD'S ANGER UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

Some say there is a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. They claim, "The God of the old covenant was characterized by a questionable anger—almost cruelty, while Jesus is the 'express image' of God and is different from the God of 'time past'" (Heb. 1:1). Although God truly did inaugurate a new "administration" with the coming of His Son, God Himself remains unchanged (Mal. 3:6). In pre-Christian times God was angry with those who rejected His revealed will. This remains so after the coming



of His Son. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God* abides on him" (Jn. 3:36, NAS).

John the Baptist, the prophesied forerunner of our Lord, warned the Pharisees and Saducees of the "wrath to come" (Mt. 3:7), and this did not necessarily refer to the great final judgment. Jesus, speaking of the destruction which was to befall Jerusalem in A.D. 70, warned that "there will be great distress upon this nation, and *wrath* upon this people" (Lk. 21:23, LB). Paul, referring to this terrible judgment on "the Jews," declared, "But the *wrath* [of God] has overtaken them to destroy them" (1 Thess. 2:16, Con.).

On one occasion when Jesus was in

the synagogue on the Sabbath, a man was also present "whose right hand was withered. The scribes and Pharisees watched Jesus, whether He would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him. He knew their thoughts" (Lk. 6:6-8). And "looking around at them, *angrily*, He was deeply disturbed by their indifference to human need" (Mk. 3:5, LB).

Another time Jesus told a parable about a man who prepared a great supper and sent invitations to certain people. These invited guests in the parable were the Jews to whom Jesus was sent first. However, the invited guests found reasons for not coming, and when the master of the house heard this, "it stirred his *anger*" (Lk. 14:21, Wey.). So he sent his servants to invite whoever would come, but he also angrily declared that "none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Lk. 14:21-24). There was no doubting the meaning of the parable: God is angry with those who refuse His love and forgiveness.

Jesus actually said more about God's wrath in the Gospels than did any other New Testament person. "It would be a complete mistake to think of Him as all mildness and meekness. There is scarcely any element more conspicuous in His words than a strain of fierce indignation." 7

The vigor of our Lord's holy displeasure with the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel in the days of His flesh, is seen in His detailed denunciation recounted in Matthew 23. "You serpents," He charges, "you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?" (Mt. 23:33, NAS). "Giving unrestrained expression to the pent-up criticism of a lifetime, He exposed their hypocritical practices in sentences that fell like strokes of lightning and made them a scorn and a laughing stock, not only to the hearers then, but to all the world since." 8

It is interesting to note that in the New Testament epistle having the most to do with the revelation of God's saving purpose in Jesus Christ, Paul's letter to the Romans, there are "more

explicit references to God's wrath than all the rest of Paul's letters put together." 9 Paul speaks of "the day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22) by which he seems to be referring to that time of ultimate reckoning, although the present manifestation of God's anger is not ruled out.

In three other places he clearly indicates that the wrath of God is an ever-present reality. Taking these three in order of occurrence, we see that the first concerns all mankind. "For *God's wrath is ever being revealed* from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who smother the truth by their unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18, Mon.). The verb in the present tense indicates an ongoing exercise of divine wrath in human history.

The second reference warns Christians not to play God in avenging wrong done to them, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for *the wrath of God*, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord," (Rom. 12:19, NAS).

The third shows God's wrath in the context of civil government.

For it [civil authority] is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings *wrath* upon the one who practices evil.

Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of *wrath*, but also for conscience' sake (Rom. 13:4,5, NAS).

Paul speaks clearly of God's wrath in his other writings as well (Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9), and there are other New Testament references which further show the unchanging character of God in terms of His wrath. This should be sufficient scriptural evidence that the anger of God is a reality in new covenant times.

We see, then, that God's anger with His children today can range from the temporal indignation of Jesus with His disciples for rebuking the children who wanted to come to Him (Mk. 10:14), to the fierce judgment and

premature death of an entire generation (Heb. 3:11–12; 10:26–27). All the New Testament writers refer to the judgments God rendered in the Old Testament as recurring in the New Testament for similar offences.

It isn't possible to make specific comments in this article about the approximately 500 scripture references to God's anger. We can, however, note the major reasons for His anger, recognizing they are the same in both the old and new economies. Paul establishes this principle when writing to the Corinthians. He describes the miraculous deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt and recounts the ongoing supernatural provision in the miracle of the manna and the water from the rock (1 Cor. 10:1–4). The divine exodus under Moses was typical of the deliverance of the Christian community by Christ (Heb. 3:14–16; Acts 7:37, 38), and the Corinthians, or any instructed Christian, could not fail to see the parallel between the two great historical redemptive acts.

Yet immediately after comparing the two, Paul writes something that must have had a crushing and solemnizing effect on the Corinthians: "But with many [the great majority]—AMP] of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Cor. 10:5). The "not well pleased" of Corinthians is synonymous with "I swear in my wrath" (Heb. 3:11), and the psalmist says of the wilderness episode, "They provoked him to anger with their deeds . . . Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people" (Ps. 106:29, 40, NAS).

Far from relegating this manifestation of God's anger to the status of a mere object lesson from an act of the past, Paul rather makes it immediately applicable to the Corinthians and to us. "Now these things happened as examples for us," writes Paul, "that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved" (1 Cor. 10:6, NAS). He then lists the causes of God's anger: idolatry, immorality, impatience with God, and grumbling (1 Cor. 10:7–9).

In verse 11 he returns to the solemn

importance of these things for the new covenant community (as he had stated in verse 6). The significance of the repetition should not escape us. He writes, "Now these things which happened to our ancestors are illustrations of the way in which God works" (1 Cor. 10:11a, JBP), "and were recorded to serve as a caution to us" (1 Cor. 10:11b, Twentieth Century New Testament). He continues, "For upon us the fulfilment of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11c, NEB). The seriousness of our disobedience is intensified by the distinctiveness of our end-of-time mission.

The writer to the Hebrews uses the same illustration of Israel's disobedience to warn his readers. He quotes the psalmist's account of God's punishment of the rebellious and disobedient nation: "So I swear in my wrath [vowed in my anger]—NEB], they shall not enter into my rest" (Heb. 3:11; Ps. 95:11). Then follows a warning to the Christian community: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12).

The warning is clear. God's anger can be manifested dealing with the new covenant community as truly as it was on the old. Later in the epistle, the writer shows the seriousness of Christian disobedience by contrasting Moses and Christ. "For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, how terrible our danger if we refuse to listen to God who speaks to us from heaven [through His Son, Heb. 1:2] (Heb. 12:25). This twelfth chapter ends ominously by declaring, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:2A). It is instructive to note that in a great many references to God's anger we find it associated with fire, the word "kindle" being often used.

ANGER AT IDOLATRY

By far the largest number of references to God's wrath and anger which point to a cause have to do with idolatry. God had warned Israel, "You shall not make for yourself an idol"

"God's anger is as different from man's anger as God Himself is from man."

(Ex. 20:4, NAS). This was preceded by the command, "You shall have no other Gods before [besides—margin] Me" (Ex. 20:3, NAS). An idol was a human substitute for God. The idol usually represented some real object or was made to represent some conception of man's sin-warped and demon-directed mind.

Paul said, "We know well that an idol has no real existence in the universe" (1 Cor. 8:4, Mon.). The psalmist ridicules the idol as "the work of man's hands" (Ps. 115:4, NAS).

Isaiah also ridicules these man-made substitutes for the real God, but then puts his finger on the real and terrible reason for idols. Man is deceived and deluded; he is trusting what can never give him any help at all (Is. 44:9–20, LB). The idol is the product of going "astray from God" (Ez. 44:10). Man is made for God, and when he turns from the true One, he has to manufacture a false one.

"But," you say, "we don't worship idols today." That is not true! There is still much of idol worship in the world, unchanged from its first appearance in human history. There is much replacing of pure, unshared devotion to the one True God by a myriad of "idols." Paul speaks of wrong attitudes and actions as idols—"Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust and shameful desires; don't worship the good things of this life [greed—Wey.], for that is idolatry. God's terrible anger is upon those who do

such things” (Col. 3:5,6, LB).

The Amplified Bible provides an amplified rendering of John’s warning against idolatry. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols—false gods [from anything and everything that would occupy the place in your heart due to God, from any sort of substitute for Him that would take first place in your life].” Idolatry is quite modern and is still hated by “the Ancient of Days,” and still subject to His angry judgment.

The reason for God’s anger with idolatry is His jealousy. “You shall not worship them [idols] or serve them; For I, the Lord your God, am a *jealous* God” (Ex. 20:5, NAS). Again, after warning Israel of the Canaanites’ idols and commanding that they destroy them utterly, He declares, “For you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, *whose name is Jealous*, is a *jealous* God” (Ex. 34:14, NAS).

Many of us will probably react to this idea as we did to God’s anger, and for the same reason. But we must deal with God’s jealousy as we did with anger—viewing it in the light of God’s revealed character and the testimony of Scripture. God’s jealousy is a manifestation of His holy character, and must therefore be divorced from all the vicious connotations that accompany man’s jealousy.

While many of us will think of jealousy as the malicious “green-eyed monster,” we must be reminded that there is a jealousy permitted to mankind which is like God’s jealousy. Under the old covenant a man had a right under law to be avenged of infidelity on the part of his wife (Num. 5:11–37; Pr. 6:34). Such jealousy is consistent with a right understanding of the marriage covenant, and it is in this context that God is expressly angry with idolatry and speaks frequently of it as spiritual adultery, both in the Old and New Testaments (Ex. 34:15, 16; Ez. 16:30–34; 23:36, 37; Jas. 4:4). God spoke of His relationship to Israel as a marriage and of Himself as her husband (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:14, 20; 31:32). For Israel to be unfaithful to God by being “estranged from Him through all their idols” (Ez. 14:5) stirred Him

to jealousy, and He dealt in anger with his treacherous wife, and with her illicit lovers. “These things . . . are written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11).

ANGER AT IMMORALITY

Confining ourselves to the reasons for God’s anger as referred to in 1 Corinthians 10, idolatry is followed by immorality, and there is a significant relationship between idolatry and immorality. Unfaithfulness to God (idolatry) produces unfaithfulness to one another (immorality). Since being in covenant with God is fundamental to all other covenants, to break covenant with God is to jeopardize all other covenants or valid relationships. If we will disobey the greater, we are more likely to treat lightly our pledges to the lesser. Paul cites Israel’s immoral behavior with the Moabites (Num. 25:1–9) and comments that God’s “fierce anger” was expressed in killing 23,000 by “the plague” as a potent exhortation to “not sin sexually” (1 Cor. 10:8–Beck).

ANGER AT IMPATIENCE AND REBELLION

Next, Paul speaks of “tempting Christ” (1 Cor. 10:9), or “trying the Lord’s patience” (Wms.) as a further cause for God’s anger, and he refers to the time Israel “became impatient because of the journey” and “spoke against God and Moses.” “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. For there is no bread and no water, and we loathe this miserable food” (Num. 21:4,5, NAS).

If the Lord’s judgment on this occasion seems severe, remember that this was not the first time they had criticized the way God was handling the massive migration of some 3,000,000 people. To allow such rebellion to continue unchecked could bring about the destruction of the entire nation. Thus, it was necessary for God to take severe enough steps to purge rebellion from the people. “So the Lord sent *fiery* serpents among the people and they bit the

people, so many *people of Israel* died” (Num. 21:6, NAS). This painful judgment produced repentance, and the judgment was stopped.

Let’s not forget that Paul is recalling this distressing event to warn us against trying the Lord’s patience for oft-repeated expressions of disapproval of God’s journey plan. Or do we think God has changed, and such drastic judgments are no longer possible? One has only to read other parts of this same Corinthian letter to discover that God still deals with His people by judgments on the physical body (1 Cor. 5:1–5; 11:30).

ANGER AT GRUMBLING

Grumbling against God-ordained authority is the last item in Paul’s list. To move an entire nation from one place to another requires responsible authority and strict obedience from the nation involved. If the authority supervising the journey were undermined, the lives of all involved would be jeopardized. Such undermining was the more serious when led by one who himself was an authority figure.

In the case Paul alludes to, Korah, one of the Levites, with some fellow rebels, questioned the right of Moses and Aaron to lead Israel (Num. 16:1–3). God severely judged Korah and those who shared his insurrection by opening a giant fissure in the earth and “swallowing them up” (Num. 16:31–34). The judgment for leaders is more severe than for those who are led (Jas. 3:1).

Not realizing the seriousness of violating God’s ordained structure of authority, and thinking this judgment too harsh, “the next day all the congregation of the sons of Israel *grumbled* against Moses and Aaron” (Num. 16:41). God then threatened to “consume them instantly” (Num. 16:45, NAS). Such an abrupt end could have been a mercy if they were going to continue opposing God’s delegated authority—better to be cut off quickly than go through constant judgments and so drag out a series of painful punishments.

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centurion was successful in battle, he would send news of his success to Rome. Then the Senate would come together and vote whether or not to grant this particular centurion a "triumph," which was a triumphal march. If it were granted, he would be granted a parade through the city of Rome on a chariot pulled by two beautiful white horses. He would stand in the chariot and behind him, bound up in chains and in cages, would be a procession of all the wild animals taken from the countries he'd conquered, all of the slaves, all the kings—everyone he had conquered in battle. All of Rome would line up to see his victories and to cheer him.

When the Bible says we've been made to triumph, it means we've been granted the same triumph that the Lord Jesus Christ has. We are standing right up there in the chariot with Christ, and all of our enemies—our problems—are in chains marching behind us.

In the Roman days there was one additional custom they followed in regards to the triumph. They would take a slave who really knew the triumphant centurion. They'd put him on a horse and station him behind the centurion's right ear. And while the conqueror was driving to Rome and receiving the applause of the people viewing the victories behind him, this slave would say in his ear, "I know you. You're only a man." He'd remind him of all his mistakes, of all the things he had done wrong.

That's the way it is with us also. If it's not the devil

in our right ear, it's our old flesh. "You did it wrong! You didn't overcome today. You could have done a lot better." And we have the choice of either standing erect in the chariot and saying, "I'm going toward my hope, with all my enemies behind me," or we can begin to listen to that accusing voice and respond to it, "That's true. That's true! I'm really no good!" And then the next thing we know, we fall backwards out of the chariot and all of our enemies (that we had previously conquered) trample over us. But, praise be to God, it doesn't have to be that way. Our Lord can pick us up from underneath all those feet and put us back in the chariot. That's where we belong—always triumphing!

We *can* turn our failures into victories if we learn to be led by the Spirit of God and trust God that He will allow us to take those walled cities in our lives in His timing. In the meantime we need to see ourselves as kept by the blood of Jesus, kept by the Word of God, a prisoner of hope, and triumphant in Christ. If we can do this, we're going to make it! ☞

TAPE AVAILABLE

Jim Croft's article on "A Prisoner of Hope" is also available on tape. Use the order form on page 31 to order his message entitled "God, Your Struggles and You," catalog number JC-103.

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However, Moses, a type of our interceding Lord, took swift mediational action and sent Aaron among the people with a censer to check the "wrath that had gone forth from the Lord" (Num. 16:46, NAS). But already "the destroying angel" (1 Cor. 10:10) had killed 14,700. Paul warns us that such judgment should be looked at seriously by Christians to deter them from grumbling in the manner of Korah and Israel, for God's character has not changed, and attacking God's delegated authority is serious and will not escape penalty.

However, this is probably the place to point out that delegated authorities are also subject to God's anger if they disobey Him. For, while those who opposed Moses' authority were punished, Moses himself also came under the dealings of God's anger (Ex. 4:14; Num. 20:12; 27:14; Deut. 1:37; 4:21). Many other leaders likewise experienced God's anger, such as Aaron (Deut. 9:20; Ex. 32), David (2 Sam. 24:1; Psa. 38:3), and a list of kings of

Israel and Judah too long to be included here. All leadership should consider God's strong warnings to "shepherds," lest they yield to the temptation of thinking that leaders are immune to God's anger (Jer. 12:10-13; 23; 25:34-38; Ezek. 34:1-10).

SLOW TO ANGER

Without mitigating or diluting anything that has been said, we must, however, consider those things which are said about the nature and action of God's anger, in principle. Although anger is an essential part of God's character and must, when required, be manifest, He is "slow to anger" and obviously loves to be merciful (Num. 14:1; Neh. 9:17; Psa. 78:38; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3). His anger is not forever (Jer. 3:12; Mic. 7:18). In terms of time as God looks at time (2 Pet. 3:8), "His anger is but for a moment" (Psa. 30:5). But such "timing" is related to His inscrutable purposes (Jer. 30:24), and none of us understands the power,

extent, or particular manifestations of His anger (Ps. 76:7; 90:11).

Both God's anger and His love and mercy should motivate and monitor our attitudes and actions. The grace extended to the thief on the cross has often been pointed out as a proof of God's mercy. But is that the norm? Or should it be viewed as someone has referred to it? "There was one that all may have hope, and only one that none may presume." ☞

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