

THE BIBLICAL WITNESS

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(From *h2g2 The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: Earth Edition*)*

In his 1934 book, *The Kingdom of God in America*, H. Richard Niebuhr depicted the creed of liberal theology, which was called "modernism" in those days: "A God without wrath brought man without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." His quote sums up so much of the religious environment of today.

Far too many preachers do not want to talk about God's anger. By their ignoring the anger of God they fail to give people a true and full picture of God. Before long, we have constructed "a god who looks like me." Then caricatures of divine wrath are offered to give a more comforting reason to deny God's anger. Some of these include: God having a temper tantrum and thus depicted as childish or, acting like a big bully who needs to be "appeased" before he can forgive or, as is often alleged with reference to the atonement, practicing cosmic child abuse. "Hence the greater problem of not preaching faithfully on God's wrath we fail to see what the world faces, and our desire to evangelize wanes because we truly don't believe God means it when we are told to repent and believe. But He does mean it. Therefore, we should not only preach God's love, but His wrath as well. To do any less is to present a God in our own image, instead of the God who is." (Timothy).

Proclamation of God's anger has been muted. Instead of a bold proclamation of the reality of God's anger today there is a muffled silence or an embarrassing apology for the biblical statements of God's wrath. This retreat has led the Church away from its divine mission of proclaiming the good news of sin's defeat and the saint's victory. Today the Church in many locations has struggled to identify its purpose for existence. If the mission of seeking and saving the lost from the wrathful punishment upon sin is no longer valid then for what purpose does the Church exist? This dilemma has led many to frame a mission statement so the Church knows upon what its mission is to focus. This process of defining the Church's mission reveals that the Church has forgotten its mission. The forgetfulness of its mission is understandable. Having retreated from its mission of proclaiming the gospel's message of reconciliation and atonement as the way to escape God's anger, the Church is adrift—aimlessly existing. The Church has jettisoned the doctrinal anchors that provided stability for its presence and a compass for its direction. So the Church today has turned into an exclusive social mission.

This social-only mission movement of the Church is historically documented. This began when the Modern Period began to erase the biblical doctrines. In erasing the biblical doctrines the Church was left with a question, "For what purpose are we existing?" The quandary was answered by the "social gospel" movement.

The phrase "social gospel" is usually used to describe a religiously intellectual movement that came to prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This was in response to the Modernist erasure of the Church's supernatural elements. Those who adhered to a social gospel sought to apply Christian ethics to social problems such as poverty, slums, poor nutrition and education, alcoholism, crime, and war. These things were emphasized while the doctrines of sin, salvation, heaven and hell, and the kingdom of God were downplayed. The social gospel preaches no consequence for sin, redefines sin as actions that relate only to fellowman or nature. There is a total erasure of any supernatural and the anger of God is gone.

The consequences of this social gospel movement of the Modern Period have evolved into programs in Churches that focus only on social issues and are completely ignorant about any spiritual issues. Consequently we are told that we MUST help those who have no intention of leaving sinful relationships or slothful habits or irresponsible financial spending. There is no mention of sin and repentance.

This socialized morphing of the Church's mission and the gospel's messaging has contributed to the erasure of God's anger.

Adding to the pressure to reject God's anger are the cynical and bitter comments of those who deny God and live blasphemously. Here are some comments from such hard hearted consciences.

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The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully (Dawkins).

The voices and the scheming to erase God's anger are in vain. The very words of the Bible remain as an undeniable witness that God's anger is a reality. As a reality God's anger must be considered in decision-making.

The reality of God's anger is validated by four facts.

Four facts about God's anger—biblical witness (misc texts)

God's Anger is "forever & ever"—Revelation 20:10

This fact has been totally ignored in today's religious culture and absolutely erased in today's civilization's decision-making matrix. The postmodern mind refuses to accept the fact that God's anger exists even for the briefest moment and to suggest that the divine wrath will be "forever and ever" is reprehensible. But the certainty of God's eternal wrath is clearly stated in the Bible. The only way to believe that God's wrath is not eternal is to believe a "different gospel" than taught in the Bible.

Remember this point from lesson three..."The very words heralding the gospel were 'inspired' (that is originating with the very mind of God—2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21). The recognition of the power of 'words' is stated in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 when the Apostle Paul says the gospel came directly from the 'words' of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. This 'verbal inspiration' of the Bible attests to the authority of the Bible for the governing of civilization."

The Bible teaches, "(T)hey will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Consider the terms used by Inspiration to describe those who face the wrath of God. These terms show that the wrath of God is real and is eternal. One may wish that God's wrath was "figurative" or "serious but not literal" but such is contrary to the Bible's words. One may long for the wrath of God to be limited and thus make hell's punishment only a brief time and then the suffering soul is annihilated, but such is contrary to the Bible's words.

"Tormented"—**Βασανίζω** (basanizō) *bas-an-id'-zo* refers to severe torture and includes the concept of great pain, toil, torment, vex. This refers to the most severe distress that humans can imagine.

"For"—**εἰς** (eis; ice) is a primary preposition—indicating the point of place, time, or intended purpose. This preposition gives the direction of the action. The action is "torment." The direction of this torment is "for ever and ever." The purpose of this torment is to be "for ever and ever." The place of this "torment" is "for ever and ever."

"Ever and ever"—**αἰών** (aiōn) *ah-ee-ohn'* refers properly to an age; communicates the perpetuity of the event—it never stops.

The current religious culture minimizes and seeks to remove the terror that God's wrath focuses upon sinners. Here is a comment that seeks to redefine the term "forever and ever" with current culture:

The term "for ever," as used in the Bible, means simply a period of time, limited or unlimited. It is like the word "tall," which means something different in describing men, trees, or mountains. In the case of

man, this means "as long as he lives" or "until death." (See 1 Samuel 1:22, 28; Exodus 21:6; Psalm 48:14.) So the wicked will burn in the fire as long as they live, or until death. This fiery punishment for sin will vary according to the degree of sins for each individual, but after the punishment, the fire will go out. The teaching of eternal torment has done more to drive people to atheism and insanity than any other invention of the devil. It is slander upon the loving character of a tender, gracious heavenly Father and has done untold harm to the Christian cause. The Bible tells us that "the wages of sin is" not eternal life in hellfire, but "death" (Romans 6:23), the same penalty God assured Adam and Eve would be theirs if they ate the forbidden fruit. Interestingly, it was the devil who was first to suggest that sinners would not die (Genesis 3:4). A hell where sinners never perish would prove the devil right and would make God, who told Eve she would "surely die" as a result of transgression (Genesis 2:17), a liar (Batchelor).

This comment clearly states the way today's religious minds convolute the teaching of God's eternal wrath. According to the Postmodernist's philosophy an eternal Hell makes God a liar and the Devil truthful! According to the modern religious thinking, "The teaching of eternal torment has done more to drive people to atheism and insanity than any other invention of the devil. It is slander upon the loving character of a tender, gracious heavenly Father and has done untold harm to the Christian cause." It is thus suggested that the teaching of an eternal (perpetual tormenting horror) Hell is incompatible with the "all-loving god" of the Postmodernist Period. (Read again the prophet's shock to a culture that erases God's anger, "You turn things around" Isaiah 29:16).

So the persuasion is to remove any suggestion of an eternal tormenting and replace it with a fabrication of the imbalanced "god of tender and gracious love" and lacking any negative anger!

The pure selfishness is evident in the fact that while these seek to deny the perpetuity of hell's horrors they say that the same term (for ever and ever) mean that Heaven's joyful splendor is never-ending! The proverb wisely comments on the intelligence of such advocates, "Like the legs which are useless to the lame, So is a proverb in the mouth of fools" (26:7).

In order to change the biblical doctrine of Hell's eternity of the sinner's horrific torture one must redefined the words "for ever and ever." Even though Postmodernism has committed such an unethical action in deliberating manipulating the word meanings, it cannot remove the words of Inspiration that are communicated with clarity. The only way to misunderstand "for ever and ever" is to reject the love of the truth and follow self-delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). This point shows why "words" are so critical in communicating spiritual truths and why God chose a verbal communication of His Word that would keep the word meanings clear.

God's Anger is governed—those not in the Book of Life face God's anger (Revelation 20:15)

God's anger is not capricious. It is righteous. It brings divine justice upon those who refuse the godly and live as god-less. The righteousness of God's anger focuses upon those who had the opportunity to know and to obey but chose to reject the wisdom of God for the wisdom of the world.

The rejection of God's commands is neither casually dismissed nor forgotten. Those who choose to deny themselves and obey God's commands face confrontations and criticisms by those in the world, but the faithful are not forgotten. The certainty of the divine memory is communicated to man with the metaphor of a chronicled history. Each human is living a life that is chronicled—his words, deeds, and thoughts are recorded. This history of each life will be the measure of God's justice. While living this historical record is fluid and can be altered by the individual. But once earthly life ceases this chronicle is fixed—what his life is at death is what his life will be throughout eternity!

After death there is no change. This fact is stated in Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." This verse teaches that upon death a "judgment" occurs. This judgment is upon one's life's choices and decides his assignment to either Paradise or Torment where he awaits the resurrection and universal Judgment and eternal assignment to either Heaven's bliss or Hell's horrors. While one lives he

has hope to write the history of his life so Heaven is his eternal home. But if he chooses to deny God and live according to the worldly culture then he will be in Hell forever and ever.

God's anger in assigning mankind to an eternity of torment is governed by the record of man's life on earth. Man's deeds, words and thoughts are recorded and stand as absolute facts that justify God's judgment.

This "record keeping" is often repeated in the Bible. God has often urged mankind to realize that a record is being kept. God has repeatedly stressed that this record will be the basis for deciding man's eternal destiny. Eternity is not the choice of God BUT is the choice of man! God has done all He can to provide mankind with the means by which he can live and choose to spend eternity in Heaven's bliss. But Satan has persuaded mankind to believe "another gospel" and to choose "power and signs and false wonders and the deception of wickedness because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved, for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false" (Galatians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

The record is unerring in recording the truth...one either accepts and lives in submission to God's commands OR one rejects God's commands and lives according to how "he" thinks God's commands should control his "personal reality." This is a fact that is as absolute as gravity...you can deny it but eventually and too late that denial is seen as a damning delusion.

There is an unerring record that is being kept on each person's life. For some this record will bring the words that welcome the saint into eternal bliss, "Well done, good and faithful slave enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 24:21). For many this record will result in the angry pronouncement, "You wicked, lazy slave...throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:26-30).

The "books" chronicling man's deeds, choices, thoughts and lifestyles will righteously judge each person. No one will escape this examination. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). How will this judgment on good or bad deeds be possible? It is possible because such are recorded in "the books."

After the general judgment upon the godly and the god-less eternity in Heaven's bliss or Hell's horrors begin. "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 24:46).

God's anger is governed by "the books." It is not unpredictable. God has clearly told mankind what to expect. Unfortunately current culture has deluded many to believe that the anger of God does not exist and so there is no control needed for one's deeds, lifestyles, thoughts, words, and choices. Today's culture urges each to satisfy personal urges regardless of how that satisfaction impacts others. Man is perceived as the "measure of himself" and the "decider of his own destiny." God's anger as a control of behavior has been erased!

The Bible often speaks of the recording of deeds, thoughts, and choices in the "books" of God's Judgment (Psalm 69:28; Daniel 7:10; 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 3:20; 4:3; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 3:5; 8:8; 17:8; 20:12, 13, 15; 21:27).

- ✓ The details of these books are confirmed by this statement of Christ, *"I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* (Matthew 12:36, 37). This is a most inconvenient truth for those who refuse to obey God because it shows that even the "little things" in life are a "big" concern to God. There are those who attempt to encourage rebellion and blasphemy by casually dismissing obedience saying "God doesn't sweat the small stuff." Such will be faced with their blasphemous attitudes "when the books are opened"!
- ✓ These books that will be opened on the Day of Judgment are the register of all human actions (Psalm 56:8; Isaiah 66:6; Malachi 3:16).
- ✓ The Day of Judgment will focus on mankind's choices, action, submission to God's commands and lifestyle habits. According to these books mankind will be judged "according to their works." This fact is

the constant doctrine of Scripture (Romans 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7; Colossians 3:24, 25; Revelation 2:2, 5, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

The significance of these “books” that will govern God’s decisions on the Day of Judgment is the fact that Jesus is the “Author” of this Book as His sacrifice provided the only means to propitiate God’s anger. It is this fact that the Hebrew writer used to urge his readers not to “shrink back” in their devotion, loyalty and obedience to God’s commands. Hebrews 12:2 exhorts Christians saying, *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

The fact that Jesus is the Author of the records “books” of the Day of Judgment affirms that He has the means to revise the records of each human so that the record shows a turning from sin and blasphemy toward salvation and submission in obedience. When one obeys the gospel he is saved and the books are purged of any damning record. This is because Christ, as the Author and Perfecter of our faith eagerly responds to those truly penitent “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:12).

The anger of God is governed by the “books” that will be opened on the Day of Judgment. These books record the details of mankind’s deeds, thoughts, choices and lifestyles which they lived on earth. If they lived in submissive obedience and devout loyalty following the commands of Inspiration, they will hear the “Well done” welcome into heaven’s splendor. If they lived in rebellious blasphemy they will hear “Depart I never knew you” and will spend eternity in Hell’s torment. There is no grey area in this scenario. You are either living to be recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life or you are listed in the books as damned. The comforting delusion offered by contemporary culture may give you satisfaction here, but offers absolutely no consolation for hereafter!

Now is the time for you to choose to be recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Now is the time to submit and have all damning records of your choices and lifestyles and blasphemy purged from the books that will be opened on the Day of Judgment. “Now” is the response required for the present time so you can escape the anger of God (2 Corinthians 6:2).

God’s Anger is certain—God “remembers” (Revelation 16:19; 18:5)

“The liberal error is to think of God’s mercy as a sort of unconditional universal forgiveness that makes the possibility of divine wrath unimaginable. God will simply ooze out enough love that even the hardest hearts will eventually stop being party-poopers” (Adams).

The insurmountable problem that the liberal (progressive; postmodernist) has with erasing God’s anger is the “memory” of God. God “remembers.”

The righteousness of God requires Him to remember and to forget. This attribute of God’s character brings a wonderful relief to the righteous but terror to the wicked. Consider the following points that reveal how the biblical texts speak of God’s memory showing that the righteous anger of God cannot be erased.

The biblical words for God’s memory help us to understand that the Almighty is very aware of mankind’s attitudes, actions, choices, and lifestyles.

The Hebrew word that is translated as “remember” is from the term זָכַר (*zâkar; zaw-kar’*). This means properly *to mark* (so as to be recognized—in our modern time we would say that such is “highlighted” so it will not be forgotten). This means that the action is to be remembered. By implication this term mean that something will be mentioned, be mindful, be recounted, recorded, make to be remembered, bring (call, come, keep, put) to remembrance. The term expresses the idea that one has etched in memory facts that are not erased but are present. These facts are marked and will be recalled and mentioned at a later time.

The Greek term that is translated as “remember” is from the word μνάομαι (*mnaomai; mnah'-om-ahēe*). It translated the idea that something is a *fixture* in the mind or of mental *grasp*. Thus the idea is that this fact will continue to *bear in the mind* of one. The term expresses the idea that one will *recollect* facts, actions and

choices and implication reward or punish one on the basis of this recollected data. It can be translated to communicate the idea that one will be mindful, remember, or have in remembrance facts and details.

This attribute of the Almighty God is presented in language and illustrations that are instructive to mankind. The Bible teaches that God does not forget the sins, trespasses and offenses committed against Him. Those who disobey are remembered. The bitter blasphemy and scorn that is demonstrated to the Almighty is not ignored—it is remembered! Contrary to the liberal's delusion that "God will simply ooze out enough love" is the fact that God will NOT ignore the defiance and contempt for His commands and scorn for His boundaries.

However the righteousness of the Almighty God provides for "forgetfulness" of man's rebellious attitudes, actions and choices. The Cross of Christ (discussed in previous lessons) provided the means by which the damning certainty of God's memory can be changed and the righteousness of God will "remember no more." God's still remembers but "no more" is there damnation but forgiveness.

The blessedness of God's "remembering no more" is stated by Paul, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13, 14).

Thus the memory of God is a certain fact presented in the Scriptures. It holds peace and promise for the one submitting to the divine commands but it promises terror and torment to those who casually treat the commands of God with contempt. Consider each of these aspects of God's memory.

For the righteous the memory of God is a refuge as he lives a sanctified life on earth. The "righteous" person is not a "perfect" person. No one is perfect. All commit sin. The term "righteous" refers to one who is in a "right relationship" with God. He is obeying and serving and worshipping as God directs. The righteous man is aptly described in Psalm 1 as living daily life with devoted choices and restricted actions. The New Testament shows that the righteous is the one who has obeyed the gospel's commands and is immersed and consequently has sins removed and then he lives a strict life (the narrow way of Matthew 7:14) that honors the commands of God that restrict his lifestyle, his personal choices, his worship, and all other facets of daily living. Look at these biblical texts that highlight how the memory of God is a blessing to the obedient saint.

An oft repeated phrase in Scripture comments on God's affection for those who follow His commands. This phrase simply says, "God remembered." See Psalm 98:3; 112:6; 136:23 as a sampling of these verses. There are poignant statements showing that God's memory will not hold sins and transgressions against those who obey God's revealed commands (these commands are found in the New Testament).

Here are a few of the many biblical texts that offer comfort and peace to the child of God:

- ✓ Ezekiel 18:22, "All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live."
- ✓ Ezekiel 33:16, "None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall surely live."
- ✓ Hebrews 8:12, "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."
- ✓ Hebrews 10:17, "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

The memory of God is a wonderful assurance as Christians are struggling through this world. God's memory is unerring. God's memory guarantees blessed rewards and vindication of the Christian's attitudes and actions in earthly living. God's memory holds assured blessings for even the smallest deed done for the Lord. Even a cup of cold water is remembered and brings blessed rewards (Matthew 10:42).

As wonderful, rewarding and blessed is the memory of God for the saint, it is just the opposite for the sinner.

For the wicked the memory of a holy God is a holy terror awaiting the life wasted in pursuit of selfishness and pleasure and blasphemy. How tragic are these lives lived. How wasted are the opportunities for devoted service, religious worship and blessings offered but insultingly refused!

Just as God's memory records and recalls and judges the Christian's actions and attitudes, so will God's memory record, recall and judge the attitudes and actions of the self-centered soul. This memory will bring grief and punishment on earth but will assign the soul to an eternity in tormenting agony where selfish souls will writhe in pain "forever and ever."

Look at these texts and observe how God's memory is a terror to the one living only a vain profession of commitment to God but who in real life scorn the divine commands and show contempt to the divine restrictions on life's choices, attitudes, actions, worship, etc. These show a religious attitude and speak religious words but it is a shallow superficiality—it is hypocrisy. It was to such religious hypocrites that Joel exclaimed, *"'Yet even now,' declares the Lord, 'Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.' Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil"* (2:12, 13). The prophet's appeal was for the selfish religious devotees to repent and return before God's anger was kindled and burst forth with punishment.

The assurance that God's memory will bring terror and punishment to the wicked (those who do not obey God's commands) is repeatedly stated. This fact ought to stir people to repent of their disobedience and return to God in faithful living and holy attitudes. Read and carefully consider the emphasis upon the memory that a righteous God has regarding the unrighteous attitudes and actions of a self-centered human.

- ✓ Ezekiel 3:20, "Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand."
- ✓ Ezekiel 18:24, "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die."
- ✓ Revelation 16:19, "The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath."
- ✓ Revelation 18:5, "for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."

The most frightening fact for the self-centered religious hypocrite and for the worldly life is summed up in the phrase "I know" (Genesis 18:21; Exodus 3:19; Psalm 50:11; Isaiah 37:28; Ezekiel 11:5; John 10:14; Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

The horrors of eternal punishment are guaranteed to those who practice sin and rebellion to God's commands. These are in an inexcusable position. But there is offered an escape and that is discussed in the next point.

God's Anger is escapable—"only those whose names are..." (Revelation 21:2-27)

There are multiple times in the Bible where God promises that our sins can be removed and that we can become reconciled to God and avoid His angry wrath. Here are two of the many references:

"Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. "If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword" (Isaiah 1:18-20).

(F)ormerly you were separate from Christ, excluded, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off

have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace and might reconcile them in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (excerpted portions of Ephesians 2:11-22).

God's compassion has designed a wonderful escape that is available for all of mankind. This offer is universal. This opportunity transcends national borders, different languages, racial categories, genders, and earthly governments. This offer is extended to "all the world" (John 3:16-21).

To each person, the angry wrath of the Almighty God is undeniable but it is avoidable! This is indeed the "good news" of the gospel of Christ Jesus.

The points already discussed in this lesson clearly establish that there are only two groups who will stand before the Judgment Bar of the Righteous God. There are those who are saved and have chosen the "strait" way (the restricted lifestyle of godly living) and those who are damned because they chose the "broad" way (the lifestyle that has no boundaries and no discipline as it is consumed by pleasuring Self). There are only two groups—only two! Into which group have you chosen to life?

It is God's earnest desire that all would choose to live life by respecting the absolute boundaries that are presented in Scripture. God certainly wants all to be saved but unfortunately many in the world do not have the slightest respect for God's wishes. These scorn, scoff and spurn the divine commands. These use energies to rationalize and excuse practices of sin. These have only utter contempt and disdain for the Holy God Almighty.

The attitudes, actions and lifestyles of those rejecting God and living a lifestyle of blasphemous rejection are the objects of God's angry wrath.

There are those living in sin that have a tender heart and are willing to turn to God. But they do not know what to do. These are the ones who hear the gospel preached and then instantly respond, "What are we to do?" (Acts 2:37; 16:30; 22:16).

There are those living in sin that have obeyed God's commands and become a part of God's Church (the Body of Christ) but then chose to reject the hold truth and return to the pig sty of worldliness. Many of these do not care about following God's will. Many do not have a heart that is sensitive to Christ because they "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." And they have no concern for their actions. Unfortunately for these the Bible says "it is impossible to restore them to repentance since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame" as they are committing a "willful sin" (Hebrews 6:6; 10:26).

The Hebrew writer addressed those who had obeyed the gospel and become Christians but following that obedience they had returned to the world. The Hebrew Epistle was written to urge such to be restored and renew their loyalty to Christ. But some refused to repent and return to God's truth. To those in this group these somber words were addressed, "(T)here no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (10:26-31).

Since it is God's desire that no man perish in eternal torment but that all should turn and live godly according to the Bible, how can this escape be accomplished?

The way of *escaping God's angry wrath for those in the world* is often repeated in the Book of Acts. Acts is the history of the Lord's Church and details the preaching points that caused those who were captives to sin in the world to turn and seek the way to find freedom from sin's slavery. The grace and mercy of God offered the

directions that man could accept. Once man accepted these directives he then followed and was saved from God's angry wrath. The conversion accounts in the Book of Acts offer a wonderful explanation of how one can escape God's angry wrath and becoming a beloved member of God's Family (the Church). What is discovered from these conversion accounts is the good news that it is possible to be saved from the wrathful anger by the grace and mercy of God.

There are eleven cases of conversion detailed in the Book of Acts. Although there are many references to the summation of these conversion cases Wayne Jackson has an excellent article that presents the points I want to stress. Jackson lists the eleven conversion cases and then makes these interesting conclusions:

- In not a solitary episode are all the conditions of salvation explicitly stated.
- In 10 of 11 cases, teaching is specifically mentioned; once it is implied.
- In 6 instances, believing is mentioned; it is implied in the remaining 5.
- Confession is explicitly mentioned only once (KJV, NKJV), but the acknowledgment of faith is implied by supplementary texts.
- Repentance is specified in 3 cases, but implied in 8.
- Immersion is plainly stated in 10 cases, and implied once.
- Thus, in 30 instances a specific condition is stated, while in 25 requirements necessarily are implied.

Jackson offers the Chart below to illustrate in an easy-to-grasp fashion the actions required for true conversion in the New Testament. The reader is welcomed to go to the web site and download a PDF of this chart.

Elements of Conversion in the Book of Acts

Text	Teaching	Believing	Confessing	Repenting	Baptizing
Acts 2:38	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 8:12	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 8:13	<i>implied</i>	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 8:37	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 9:5ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 10:34ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 16:14ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 16:25ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 17:32ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>
Acts 18:8	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 19:1ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES

Those in the world are offered a simple plan by which they can escape God's wrath. This plan involves actions that can be performed in any nation and with any language. This plan invites everyone in the world to understand the terror that is coming from God's wrathful anger but offers an escape. That escape is in

complete obedience to God's commands. Christ says "all" must be done (Matthew 7:21). The Bible teaches there is no "other" faith except that offered by Christ Jesus (Acts 4:12).

God's love implores those in the world to leave sin and seek the salvation offered by the gospel of Christ. God's anger will terrorize those who refuse to obey this offer of salvation.

The way of *escaping God's angry wrath for those once faithful but who compromised their loyalty to God* and are now damned is found in a number of biblical references. The Scripture teaches that one may become a Christian but allow Satan's temptations and delusions to lure him back into the world and away from God. The Apostle Paul speaks of this as "You have been severed from Christ...you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). This term, "fall from grace," refers to the sad truth that one was saved by the grace of God by accepting the conditions and agreeing to be faithful, but they became traitors to that vow. They have now "fallen" from the position of salvation into which God's grace had placed them.

There are multiple texts that teach this same point. Two of the clearest are:

Hebrews 6:4-6 *"For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."*

2 Peter 3:17 *"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness."*

It is astonishing to think that one would understand the gospel's offer of salvation and accept it and live obediently and loyally but then turn traitorous to the Lord who sacrificed to save him from God's anger. But it is a reality that is too often recorded in the "books" that will be opened on the Judgment Day.

This reality of believers falling from a saved position is detailed in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, *"the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction."*

Those who have "fallen away" are not forever damned to face God's wrathful anger. They can return to God. Even though they have become traitors to their pledged loyalty to God's Kingdom, they can return. Their restoration depends upon their willingness to admit their sin and humbly ask God's forgiveness.

The principle of the offer for restoration to those who have turned their back on God is found in Deuteronomy 4:30, "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice."

The invitation to turn from rebellion to rededication is found in Joel 2:12-13, "'Yet even now,' declares the Lord, 'Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.' Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil."

The response required in order to be restored is a full reversal of the blasphemous attitudes, actions, and lifestyles. This is illustrated by the apostasy of Simon in Acts 8:20-23. Here was one converted to Christ but afterwards turning from his commitment. The Apostle's words were blunt, "your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." The compromised Christian cannot continue in his unfaithfulness. There must be a visible distinction marking him as a loyal follower of the New Testament pattern. He is either "for" Christ or "against" Him. There is no room for a compromised allegiance. We must do exactly as the New Testament commands and not go "beyond the things that are written" (1 Corinthians 4:6).

In order for the compromised Christian to escape the angry wrath of God he must “come out” (Revelation 18:4) from associations with those that do not follow God’s commands. Only those “whose names are recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life” will be allowed entrance into Heaven’s blessings (Revelation 21:2-27).

The biblical command for this “coming out of” association is stated clearly in Ephesians 5:5-12, “(I)mmorality or any impurity or greed...no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting...no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you...because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience...do not be partakers with them...Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them.”

The biblical illustration of this command is Lot (Genesis 19). Lot sought to persuade others to follow God’s commands but he was treated with scornful contempt and comic ridicule (19:14b). Lot was directed to get away from the evil or else he would be “swept away in the punishment of the city” (19:15). Lot could not continue his association. If he remained with these blasphemers then he would face the angry wrath of God. Lot was told that his escape from the wrath of God was “the compassion of the Lord was upon him” (19:16). He had a choice to make...would he follow God’s commands and separate from the blasphemers or would he continue association and be swept away in their punishment?

God’s love implores those who have committed to following God’s commands but who have compromised their vow by their attitudes in worship, actions in devotion, and worldly lifestyles to leave their sinful ways and “return again” to the loyal obedience that God expects. God’s anger will terrorize those who refuse to obey this offer of restored salvation.

Absolute Take Aways from This Study

There is an absolute validation for the anger of God. As the biblical record is examined there is no question that God’s anger is a terrifying reality. This aspect of God must be preached and taught so mankind will be governed in the paths of righteousness.

The absoluteness of God’s anger should propel God’s People to be active in the teaching of truth and the exposure of evil error. God’s People should nurture an acute sensitivity about those who are not following the New Testament in their attitudes, actions and lifestyles. Christians must be bold and courageous in confronting and exposing evil. This confrontation is often excused and those in blasphemy are permitted to continue thinking they are in a saved relationship with God. However some utilize this confrontation in an arrogant and callous way that confronts but it is just as wrong as those who refuse to say anything. The exhortation from Inspiration is for Christians to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). Following this one will be bold and courageous in exposing the evil but do so with a broken heart. “I am certain that to preach the wrath of God with a hard heart, a cold lip, a tearless eye, and an unfeeling spirit is to harden men, not benefit them” (Smoyer).

There is an absolute query regarding the anger of God and all must give an answer. This question asks what will you do with the Bible’s teaching on the anger of God? This serious question is asked in the beloved hymn “What Shall I Do With Jesus?” This hymn has been used as a song inviting sincere hearts to respond publically and obey God’s commands. It was produced in 1926 and copyrighted by the Gospel Advocate Company. Its first publication was in *Sweeter Than All Songs* edited for the Gospel Advocate in 1927 by C. M. Pullias.

The hymn asks, “What shall it be? what shall it be? What shall your answer be? What will you do with Jesus? Oh, what shall your answer be?” All responsible human beings have sinned and come short of God’s glory. Yet, He loved us enough to send Jesus to die as an atonement for our sins, reveal His plan for our redemption in the gospel, and offer salvation to all who obey Him. The question that each one of us must ask and answer for ourselves is, “What Shall It Be?” (hymnstudiesblog).

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Lesson Four: *The Biblical Witness* (in final MSS will be at end with other citations)

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