

## THE FOCUS OF GOD'S ANGER

*"The focus of God's wrath, or anger, is not an essential of the Christian faith."*

The facts that God possesses anger and demonstrates wrath are undeniable in the Bible. Even those who oppose the anger of God have admitted the fact that God's anger is validated in the Bible. While admitting it as a fact they proceed to do all they can to remove that anger. They redefine the term. They discredit the Inspiration of the text. They affirm the bias of the authors. These will do anything to deny the reality of God's anger.

But their efforts are in vain. God's anger remains.

Since it is futile to discredit the biblical texts and their references to God's anger, the Postmodernist devises another argument to deflect the consequences of God's anger. This maneuver asserts that the purpose or focus of God's anger is NOT upon the sinner but upon the sin. Such argue that God is incensed and enraged because sin has ruined His perfect world. It is maintained that mankind is simply duped into the sin and is therefore not responsible. We are told the fault lies with the environment in which man lives or the racism with which he was confronted or with the inequity of gender or sexual roles, or the fault of a long list of social injustices and religious extremes.

These affirm that God's anger is focused NOT at the sinner but at the sin.

Here is a statement by one who insists that God's anger is not an "essential of the Christian faith." He suggests that God's anger really has nothing to do with the sinner except to persuade the sinner to remove himself from the situation that gives him so much grief in life.

Misconceptions of the wrath of God have led to a false picture of God. One such (misconception) is reading into the phrase "wrath of God" the idea of a "wrathful" or "angry" God. In this phrase God is often seen as stern and cruel, a mean Judge who loves to revenge and punish humankind whenever there is an opportunity to do so...Such a picture of God...is a grave distortion of God's character and often leads to unhealthy fear or reward-motivated obedience — disconnected from love.

God is not indifferent to the doings of man...We believe that the wrath of God comes upon those who reject Jesus. Yet, could this wrath (or anger) of God be focused more on the effects of sin than on the sinner...God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but is pleased when they turn from their sinful ways and live...God does not desire revengeful punishment...divine wrath is not an expression of a despotic deity, but a just and legitimate reaction against the effects of sin. God's wrath is aroused against sin, because sin is a rebellion against God's nature and character (Caruso).

So, the "new, improved" understanding of God's anger is that it is not God's response to mankind's selfishness, spiritual anarchy and disrespect of the holy commands. This "new, improved" understanding is that God's anger is not punitive but is used to "woo" the sinner away from sin. This new position affirms that the divine focus of the holy anger is to entice mankind to leave the situations that bring grief and troubles and accept situations that provide joy and satisfaction. In this scenario the anger of God is threatening with a terrible pain but it will not be a reality—it is a "toothless tiger"!

Thus the anger of God is recognized but it has no substance. Its purpose is to portray a damning event but such will never occur. It is basically a lie! It is a "Boogeyman" to scare people but it is only in the imagination!

This is truly an incredulous development in the biblical doctrine of the Anger of God.

### **The Biblical Focus of God's Anger**

The Bible (the volume containing the 66 books that have been proven to be the inspired revelation from God) gives us the answer regarding the focus of God's anger. The only question that should be asked is, "What

does the Scripture say?" (Romans 4:3). The Bible is very clear in answering the confused question regarding the focus/purpose of God's anger.

The biblical short answer is given in Romans 1:18, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

The text is not saying that God's wrath is only against the ungodliness and unrighteousness. These evils are "of men." The origin and source of the evil sins are in men—they are responsible. These are not pawns that are used by sin. They are personally involved in nurturing and practicing these ungodly actions.

The fact that God's wrath is focused on people who are sinning is evident in these points from the paragraph:

- ✓ God's knowledge had been known by them (verse 19).
- ✓ God's eternal power and deity were understood (verse 20).
- ✓ God's revelation was complete and they have "no excuses" (verse 20).
- ✓ God's rules, revelation, and regulations for life were ignored by them (verse 21).
- ✓ God's honor was disrespected and His holiness was insulted by those who thought they were wise (verse 21-22).
- ✓ God's position as the absolute Sovereign was refused and the sinner foolishly "exchanged" God for worldly treasures (verse 23).

Inspiration does not communicate that the anger of God is a positive enticement for mankind to leave unsavory situations. Inspiration does not communicate that the anger of God is focused on the sin and not the sinner. Inspiration does communicate that God's anger is focused on those who disrespect, dishonor, and disobey God's revealed commands. God is enraged at those who have been given instructions but then "exchange" the holy for the worldly!

The fact that God's focused anger is upon the person and not their sin is illustrated by these biblical texts. These communicate that God's anger is upon People who refuse to obey and to continue faithfully in their commitment to God. It is a ludicrous idea that God's wrath is only a threat to manipulate people out of bad situations.

- ✓ John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
- ✓ Romans 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.
- ✓ Romans 2:8 to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.
- ✓ Romans 3:5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)
- ✓ Romans 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
- ✓ Romans 9:22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?
- ✓ Ephesians 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
- ✓ Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
- ✓ Colossians 3:6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.
- ✓ 1 Thessalonians 1:10 And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

### **The Actions that are the Focus of God's Anger**

The Bible identifies specific actions that are the focus of God's anger. These actions are evil and God hates such behavior. But the divine rage is focused upon the People behaving in these ways!

➤ *God's anger is focused upon the action of accepting religious doctrines that are different from the New Testament.*

The Apostle Paul was concerned that those to whom he had preached the gospel would turn away from God. In 2 Corinthians 11:4 the Apostle wrote, "For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted you seem willing to accept him."

The word translated as "different" is from the Greek word that communicates the idea that although these are similar in some areas one version has been altered and is totally different. The Apostle was concerned that the simplicity of the gospel would be altered by man and then accepted and believed by the Church.

The same concern is found in the Epistle to the Galatians where the Christians had left the original pattern that God had given them and accepted "another" pattern (Galatians 1:6-9). The behavior of these that left the original and accepted the counterfeit include:

- ✓ They cause "trouble" and are "disturbing" God's congregation (verse 7). This term refers to the ungodly behavior of stirring up, agitating or instigating trouble. They are not peacemakers focused on the harmony of God's Word but they are sowers of discord focused on causing divisions and evil feelings.
- ✓ They "pervert" God's Word (verse 7). This term refers to an act by which the true fact is turned and becomes corrupt; it is perverted from its original purpose. These ungodly people are described as taking the simple truth of God and twisting and turning it so it is far different from its original form. This term can be translated as "strange" and thus communicating that it is not the same as the original.
- ✓ They are "accursed" (verse 9). This is a strong word and refers to a harsh judgment that places one in a damned condition. This Greek term is used to refer to a religious ban or to one who is no longer in fellowship and communion with the Lord. Such people are accursed or anathema.

Those who accept, believe, obey and follow religious doctrines that are "different" from the doctrine preached in the first century, will be the focus of God's angry wrath!

➤ *God's anger is focused upon the action of not knowing the gospel and not obeying the gospel.*

This is evident in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when 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, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

There are two groups of the disobedient specified. First there are those "who do not know God." These have not heard the gospel message. Their ignorance is not excused. They are damned even though they never heard the gospel message. This is a strong motivation for Christians to be energetic in evangelistic efforts throughout the world. If there are those who never hear the gospel they will be damned. If we choose to live comfortably and not be inconvenienced by evangelistic opportunities then we will also face God's anger (See Ezekiel 3:18, 19 for validation of this somber fact). The second group is composed of "those who do not obey the gospel." They have heard. They have knowledge. Some may have even started the life of obedience but then chose to "trod underfoot the Son of God" (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:24-31). We discover that the anger of God is focused upon the individuals because of the troubles they initiate.

The anger of God is "only just to repay with affliction." God's anger is righteous, hence it is just. There is nothing immoral about God's anger focusing upon sinners. In fact, this text teaches that if God's anger did not focus upon sinners it would be unjust ("to those who afflict you"). And justice is meted with "affliction." This term refers to the pressure of pain and tormenting agony. It refers to anguish, tribulation, troubles and

burdens. The word communicates that those who afflict the faithful followers of God (by scorn, contempt, sarcasm, criticism, etc) will themselves be afflicted with a more intense torment. This is the focus of God's anger.

The anger of God is focused upon these two groups. God's anger will not be turned away! God's anger cannot be evaded! (Revelation 6:12-17).

Carefully notice 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9. The following terms show the severity of either biblical ignorance or turning away from obedience:

- ✓ They will be engulfed in "flaming fire" at the Lord's return. Here is the metaphor discussed in lesson four. The "flaming fire" describes the angry wrath that falls upon those who refuse to obey God.
- ✓ They will be dealt "retribution" because of disobedience. This "retribution" is a term communicating vindication. The disobedient thought they would never have to answer for their blasphemy but such was a deluded comfort. There is a day of righteous vengeance that will bring retribution and punishment to those despising God's commands.
- ✓ They will "pay the penalty of eternal destruction" for their rebellion. This indicates the time period involved in their punishment—it is "eternal." It is "for ever and ever." It is perpetual. The term "destruction" is used to communicate the devastation that will occupy the sinner's "for ever and ever." This term communicates the idea of being destroyed or ruined. This is how the sinner and the apostate will see their eternity—total ruin. Such is in contrast with the splendor which the obedient child of God is promised (Revelation 21-22).

There are those who are deluded, arrogant or ignorant and believe that precise obedience to God's specific commands is not important. They chide "God doesn't sweat the small stuff!" So they worship as they wish; they conceptualize God as they think He should be; they live as they wish; their morality is dictated by their own feelings. But they are wrong; damnably wrong! God's anger will erupt at those who foolishly believe this error. God's anger will rage against those who do not know God and against those who do not obey God!

➤ *God's anger is focused upon the action of accepting God's blessings but refuse to obey God's commands.*

Illustrating this point is the Israelite nation which was a warning to New Testament Christians on the verge of giving up fidelity to the Word of God and loyalty to the Lord's Church. These had accepted multiple blessings from God. God had been compassionate, longsuffering and forgiving. But the Israelites did not honor the divine grace. "Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways'; As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest'...And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?" (Hebrews 3:10, 11, 17).

Following this historical event there was a strong exhortation, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another...so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12, 13).

Why should Christians "take care" to guard their hearts and carefully obey God's commands? So they will not "provoke" God so He becomes "angry" (Hebrews 3:16, 17).

The focus of God's anger was on those whose action of "going astray in their hearts" "provoked" Him. This refers to the Israelites who died in the wilderness. Yes it is an absolute reality that the sinner can continue in his sinful practices and that behavior will embitter the Almighty God. You cannot casually dismiss disobedience to God's specific commands. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

➤ *God's anger is focused upon the action of not uniting faith in daily living.*

Once again the nation of Israel illustrates the point. Israel had heard and understood God's Word. But it was all ritual and mechanics. There was no faith that gave life to the scripture. God had been careful to provide Israel with sufficient information so the nation would obey. But they did not obey.

The text reads, "For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, 'As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest'" (Hebrews 4:2-3).

That action kindled the anger of God. That anger continued to increase until it became "wrath." Being supplied information and being instructed in what to do but then refusing and turning from the instruction, ignited God's anger. The focus zeroed in on the person committing such an action of disdain toward God's Word.

Those today whose religion is only ritual and mechanics will kindle the anger of God and their constant actions will lead to the same wrathful rage that Israel faced.

➤ *God's anger is focused upon the action of not "abiding" in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).*

This action causes one to accept, fellowship, support, and encourages another who is not following the revealed truths of the Bible. The parameters of fellowship are defined by the phrase "the doctrine of Christ." This refers to the commands of the New Testament. This includes all aspects of Christian faith and practice. It states that one cannot devise his own doctrinal system and maintain fellowship with either Christ or His followers. Those who attempt to create their own religious brand act in a way that brings God's anger to focus on their lives.

The "doctrine of Christ" is NOT the "doctrine about Christ." Some wish to excuse disobedience by saying this text only condemns those who do not believe Christ is the Son of God who came to earth. The phrase is not about the incarnation of the Son of God. It does refer to the doctrine that originates in the Son of God—the doctrine that has its basis in Christ's teaching and commands. This is not the doctrine ABOUT Christ but the doctrine FROM Christ (Kachelman). It is the doctrine that was communicated by the Apostles and the inspired writers of the New Testament. Paul wrote, "recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

God's anger is enraged whenever one ignores or redefines the doctrine that God has communicated in the New Testament. Those doing this are arrogant. They are wise in their own eyes. They do not submit to God's written will that is found in the New Testament. These are like the worldly Corinthians who "went beyond the things written (1 Corinthians 4:6). That blasphemous rejection of the doctrine of Christ led to multiple problems within the Corinthian congregation.

If you deliberately refuse to submit to a doctrine of Christ in the New Testament, then that action ignites the anger of God.

There is a second action that the Apostle John mentions..."greeting one who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ." This action also incites the anger of God. By such you are giving your approval, support and encouragement to one who has despised God's commands. You are saying that your judgment is superior to God's judgment. Upon what basis can one ignore the boundaries that God has set? Upon what authority can you decide "this situation doesn't fit"?

One may justify and rationalize associating with those who have despised God's commands. BUT the one justifying and rationalizing association with those who despise God's commands cannot ignore God's judgment that by doing so "such participates in his evil deeds"! (2 John 11)

God's anger is incensed; it is fueled into a raging wrath by those who ignore lifestyles and religious practices and belief systems that do not "abide in the doctrine of Christ." How tragic that the Postmodern Period has been so successful in infecting our culture with a "tolerance" that refuses to acknowledge some as not abiding in the doctrine of Christ and all act as if there is nothing wrong!

### **The People who are the Focus of God's Anger**

The Postmodern Period has deceptively convinced our culture to believe that anger is not an emotion of God and specifically that God is not angry at individuals. This persuasion has caused many to accept the cliché that God hates the sin but loves the sinner. We have seen that this cliché is without biblical support and is in fact



contradictory to biblical authority. This point is once again addressed in this lesson and adds material to that previously discussed.

➤ *God's anger is focused on the person who "hinders the gospel."*

There are people who are openly opposed to God. There are others opposing God in a more stealthily manner by sarcasm, criticism, mockery, or other expressions of discontent. Whether one is overtly or covertly opposed to the biblical boundaries the result is the same—they oppose God!

These may have "grown up" in a god-fearing home. They may have been taken "to church" every time the doors were opened. They may have even preached the gospel. But now they are everything opposite to what they once were!

This tragic defection from God and aligning with Satan is referenced by Paul when he speaks of such partners with Satan, "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things" (Philippians 3:18, 19). Read this text and feel the heartbreak of Paul as he speaks of those who were once loyal to God but turned from God and to Satan. Each phrase in this verse speaks of the person whose actions and attitudes are destined for the wrathful anger of God's punishment. These are described living in the same manner that our Postmodern Period encourages culture. They have repudiated God's way for the evil and damning way of culture!

- ✓ These once were loyal to God but now they are "enemies of the cross of Christ." This word "enemies" a term that describes a heartbreaking situation. It is from the Greek term **ἐχθρός** (echthros; ekh-thros') and is from a word that means to hate; to be hateful; to be passively odious, or actively hostile. It thus describes a person that has turned against and seeks to damage. It is translated as an adversary and is used to describe especially Satan (Matthew 13:39). This is used to describe a person who once was loyal to God but now has turned and supports Satan's evil opposition.
- ✓ These once anticipated the blessings of eternity in heaven's splendor but now their "end is destruction."
- ✓ These once enjoyed a hunger and thirst for God's truth but now their "god is their appetite" for selfish satisfaction.
- ✓ These once strove to glorify God in word and deed but now they "glory in their shame."
- ✓ These once sought to set their minds on the things above where Christ is seated but now they think only of "earthly things."
- ✓ These once brought joy into the heart but now they bring "weeping." This refers to a deep "wail" of heartbreak. This person stimulates great sorrow. But notice that even though Paul felt this great sorrow he did not excuse, overlook, associate, rationalize or sit silently—he exposed them and sought their repentance and restoration. This is the way the Apostle Paul dealt with the Postmodernist in his day and his example should be followed by Christians today as we face similar "enemies" of God.

Another text addressing this point is found as Paul wrote to the Thessalonian congregation he described the person who is the object of God's anger and unless he repents and returns, this person will face an eternity of damnation. His current choices and attitudes and actions are hated by God. This illustrates that God not only hates the sin but hates the sinner because he has become a partner with the Devil!

The text reads, "They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost" (1 Thessalonians 2:15, 16).

Again the context looks at those who were fighting against the biblical teaching. These had the same attitudes and actions that are demonstrated by the Postmodernist/Progressive/Liberal in our culture. Note these points from the Bible text:

- ✓ *They are not pleasing to God.* The word translated "pleasing" communicates the idea of being "agreeable." This person will not agree with God. He always finds a rationalization for not obeying

God's commands. He is always sarcastic and cynical when God's commands are taught. He is known to disagree on almost everything.

- ✓ *They are hostile to men.* The term translated as "hostile" communicates the idea of always being the opposite of everyone else especially in matters regarding God's commands. This person is antagonistic and contrary in presence and disposition. Again the main idea suggested is an antagonistic sarcasm and criticism.
- ✓ *They hinder the speaking of the gospel.* This describes the actions of this person. He is going to become active in preventing the teaching of God's Word. His actions may be in accusing words as he criticizes those following God's Word by a cynicism attacking the one teaching. The person will make comments regarding the teaching of God's Word that discourages those trying to follow the truth of God. The gospel is silenced so the "personal choice and reality" of those listening can continue. Those not following the Bible's commands are not pleasing to God and are hostile toward the gospel and are guilty of hindering the gospel (Revelation 13:5ff; 14:9-11). Who wants to be identified as such? Who wants to be associated with such?
- ✓ *They live lives that are "filled up" with sin.* A horrible image is communicated. The term "filled up" refers to a complete filling where there is no room left. Applied to this person it communicates the idea that his entire life is filled up with sin and he has no room left for the Word of God. He has permitted sin to dominate and fill him. In contrast to this sad person is the loyal Christian's exhortation, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Colossians 3:16).
- ✓ *They face "wrath to the utmost."* Since they have no room for godliness and sin fills them completely, this is the destiny awaiting them. This phrase indicates the purpose of God's anger. The term "utmost" is from a Greek word that refers to the conclusion. Because of their blasphemy they have become enemies of God whose lives are filled full with sin and the end they reach will be the wrath of God!
- ✓ *God's anger is focused on the person who is involved in "the activity of Satan."*

The paragraph in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 is a point that enrages the Postmodernist. This text affirms three things that the Postmodern Period reality refuses to accept. *First* it affirms that God's anger is so intense that He "slays" the disobedient. *Second* the passage teaches that there is absolute truth available that people will not receive and will choose to be self-deceived. *Third* it affirms that there is an absolute truth but people hate that truth. These are three critical points that destroy the philosophy of "feelings and not facts." That philosophy brings total ruin because it hates the absolute truth of God and by that blasphemy invites the anger of God.

Notice how the key points in this passage expose the emptiness of the Postmodern Period:

- ✓ God will "slay" those who follow lawlessness.
- ✓ God will punish those who live in partnership with the "activity of Satan."
- ✓ God will expose the error upon which false doctrine is based.
- ✓ God will judge those who do not love the truth and obey it and they will "perish."
- ✓ God will allow people to choose to "believe what is false."
- ✓ God will reveal those who do not believe the truth, but take pleasure in wickedness.

The Postmodern Period wishes away the anger of God as well as the absolute truth that God has revealed. Such is an exercise in futility. God's holy anger and His absolute truth will not be erased but it will rule and judge mankind! Those who deny this fact live life without respect to God. They determine what God likes and how worship can be more meaningful and how undisciplined one's lifestyle can become. But the only thing that such acts prove is that they are partners in the "activity of Satan"!

They remain unrepentant and defiant. They go "further and further" into unrighteousness and away from God. They mock and scoff and scorn the precepts of God. Upon such people will fall the angry wrath of God! Their true destiny is with "those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved because they did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."

These are described in 2 Timothy 2:16 as speaking with “worldly and empty chatter. Such speech “will lead to further ungodliness.” This is the situation of people who are involved in “the activity of Satan.” Inspiration commands us to “avoid” such people. The Greek word used communicates the idea of “turning around.” If you see such a person in a group you are approaching then God expects you to “turn around” and not go to them (See Titus 3:9). Once again we find the repeated urging of God that the Christian is to have no association with those who have become involved in the “activity of Satan”! If you see a person who has turned from God then stop, turn around and go the opposite way. Failure to do so will place you in the focus of God’s anger.

✓ *God’s anger is focused on the person who does not keep the “traditions.”*

Of all the points discussed thus far, I believe this point is the one that elicits the greatest howls of consternation. Of all things despised by the Postmodernist the greatest are the “traditions” of the past. There is a bitter resentment toward these “traditions.” The Postmodernist loathes “traditions” and speaks of them with the harshest vocabulary while using body language to emphasize his feelings. There is probably no greater insult in the Postmodern Period than being called “a traditionalist.”

Especially biblical tradition is cursed by the Postmodernist.

There are differing “traditions” in the religious realm. Some traditions are man-made. These are often hindrances to the gospel’s progress. These man-made traditions were condemned by Christ with strong words (Matthew 15:7). There are approved “traditions” that are biblically approved.

The term translated as “traditions” in 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6 is translated from a Greek word that means “a handing down.” The doctrine of Christ that was revealed by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration is recognized as “traditions. “Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you” (1 Corinthians 11:2). The term “traditions” used in 2 Thessalonians 2 and 3 refer to “Christian doctrine in general and a claim of Divine origin” (Vine).

God’s anger will be focused upon those who do not honor and obey the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). Such reject God’s traditions and go beyond the boundaries of Holy Scripture (1 Corinthians 4:6). This focused anger of God is due to three points in the Thessalonian Epistle’s text (3:6):

- ✓ These people fail to keep the “traditions.” This refers to the revealed commands of God in the New Testament. One must keep the traditions of the New Testament—this is not optional. They “fail” to honor these commands. His life is lived yielding to temptations from Satan and not walking in agreement with God.
- ✓ These people act “unruly.” This Greek term has a military root. It refers to the ordered ranks of an army. It is used by Paul in the sense of troops marching “out of order” in 1 Thessalonians 3:11. A soldier that does not march in formation is quickly spotted and is bad for the unit. People who are insubordinate and “out of step” with the congregation of God are identified by this term. They are “unruly” because they reject God’s commands and “march to their own music.” This selfish individualism will be punished by God’s anger.
- ✓ These people are not to be in our association—“keep away.” This term communicates that when we are aware of people who are “out of step” with God’s commands and walking according to their own feelings, then we are to abstain from associating with them. Association with such a person is to be avoided.

God warns His children to be aware of these individuals whose lifestyles, attitudes, actions and religious error are the focus of His wrath. God offers a simple counsel to follow so that you do not become the focus of God’s anger is (2 Thessalonians 2:15):

- ✓ “Stand Firm” is a Greek term communicating the command that Christians are to remain stationary and persevere in their loyalty to God. They are not to move or moderate in their commitment to God. They are not to compromise their conviction in the “traditions” of God’s Word. They are to be stubborn.
- ✓ “Hold to the traditions” refers to one’s attitude and actions regarding the inspired commands of God. The action that will keep you from becoming the focus of God’s anger is seen in the way you treat



God's Word and the way you view obedience to God's commands. God expects Christians to seize and hold firmly the doctrines of the New Testament. It is not acceptable to waver or "water down" God's commands regarding doctrines to excuse and justify disobedience.

Once again we find texts where Inspiration urges Christians to separate from those who have neither respect for God's commands nor faithful loyalty to God's Church. 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame." Why would the Christian not "keep away" and "not associate" with the person who is the focus of God's anger? WHY?

✓ *God's anger is focused on the person who is wicked.*

We have already discussed Psalm 7:11 but we list it here as a part of the persons who are the focus of God's anger.

### **Absolute Take Aways from This Study**

Contrary to Postmodern thinking, God's anger does have a focus and that divine anger is an essential part of the Christian faith. In fact, God's anger is at the center of the Christian faith because all is designed to provide mankind with an escape from the divine wrath and a joyous welcome into the divine happiness. As we look at the focus of God's wrath these points are emphasized.

*First*, God's anger is focused on individuals who practice and believe contrary to what God has commanded.

*Second*, God's anger is focused upon these individuals because they are partners with Satan and seek to destroy God's work.

*Third*, God's anger must be avoided by individuals making a choice to accept and obey and remain loyal to the commands of God.

### **God has not destined us for wrath. He offers us an escape!**

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).

### **Sources Cited**

Lesson Seven: *The Focus of God's Anger* (in final MSS will be at end with other citations)

See this page for guidance on MLA website citations: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/>

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