



# new wine<sup>®</sup>

JANUARY 1978  
THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE  
DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Balancing the Goodness and Severity of God

What Makes God Angry? • Baxter • 4  
A Prisoner of Hope • Croft • 10  
Covenant Love • Simpson • 16  
God's Judgment in the Here-and-Now • Prince • 21



## COMMENTS FROM THE USA

A friend has been sharing articles from *New Wine* with me from time to time. The one entitled "Fitly Joined" made me decide I need the whole magazine!

Donna L. Packard  
Vienna, VA

The only trouble is once you pick up the magazine you can't put it down. There is such teaching and love coming from your ministry—I thank God for you.

Johnnie Johnson  
Orlando, FL

I appreciate the fact that you made additional copies of the special issue on the 1977 Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches.

Mrs. Marguerite Griffith  
Rossville, GA

It was nice meeting you and others at Kansas City. There are times when you people in Ft. Lauderdale just don't seem real. Thank God you are! And can help people like me.

Bill Coble  
Delphi, IN

The latest issue of *New Wine* on rejection was great. I was surprised to find Derek Prince stating some things in the Spirit which I learned as fact as part of a recent course I took. I had to take this as part of my new job as a psychiatric therapy aid. His views on rejection helped me understand many of my patients better and to understand the origins of some of the diseases they are afflicted with. I know that God loves them just as much as He loves me . . .

Richard Follet  
Binghamton, NY

Some time ago we received from your office one of those "We-haven't-heard-from-you" letters. At the time I was flat broke—I only get paid once a month. Now it is payday. I want you to know that we are alive in Jesus, well

in the Spirit, and flourishing in the riches of our Father.

Perhaps the following will serve to illustrate your magazine's continuous contribution to our lives. Some time ago my wife was listening to some radio speaker who gave a prophecy that God was going to meet the need of an individual who really needed a touch from God as to personal worth. My wife knew in her spirit that the Holy Spirit was directing this to her, but she didn't feel any different or know what was to happen.

About an hour later the postman brought your *New Wine* edition on rejection. She devoured it! There wasn't much work done when I came home from work, but I have a lot happier wife because your ministry helped sweep out some cobwebs from her childhood.

Kendal Smocker  
Irving, TX

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FOREIGN OUTREACH REPORTS

For some time I have been receiving your *good* magazine. I may not agree with everything you say, but I like it and it has been a blessing to me and my work. Many things are happening both inside and outside of our church, so praise the Lord! I sincerely wish to continue my subscription.

Halldor S. Brondal  
Reykjavik, Iceland

Please let us express our heartfelt appreciation for the tapes and *New Wine* being sent to us. May God continue to make it possible for you to aid our teaching ministry in this very good way. There are so many doors open because the same problem of relationship over there is the same problem here. So please give our

thanks to those who have given to make it possible for us to receive these tapes and *New Wine* free.

Rev. and Mrs. H.R. Marsack  
Manila, Philippines

We have just received the March issue of *New Wine* . . . Binding the Strong Man. In the past forty years the church here has grown by leaps and bounds numerically, but it seems to have reached a ceiling long ago in terms of spiritual growth and maturity. Is there a strong man to be bound? The thought is so new, and yet, the enemy has had lots of time to organize. Our prayers seem less like "air-beating" now.

Aubrey Mutch  
Banda, Zaire

I wanted to write and thank you for sending me *New Wine*. At times I have not fully understood all I read, but some of your articles have been a real blessing. I had only been a Christian three months when I came here to Germany to live. One morning a copy of *New Wine* was put through my letter box—my friends in England had asked you to send me a copy. I can't explain how wonderful it felt to know that I was not one alone, but one in a great Body, the Body of Christ, with brothers and sisters all over the world. I am returning to England but I wanted to thank you for helping to sustain me over the past months.

Judy Crawford  
Federal Republic of Germany

I want to thank you with all my heart for your wonderful ministry. I have found *New Wine* to be the best source of Christian teaching today. I am aware that the need to know what God is saying today is great among Christians in our country of Poland. To meet the need, we have been translating and distributing teaching tapes from CGM. Lots of thanks for the people who make it possible for me to regularly receive *New Wine*. Pray for His Church in Poland.

R. Pruszkowski  
Poland



# Editorial

In the study of literature, especially drama, students often hear the term "flat character." A flat character is one whose personality is too simple and one-sided to be realistic. For instance, a character in a play who is always jovial and good-natured is "flat" because no living person is that simple—we all have other sides to our personalities.

Many of us regard God in this same unbalanced way. We either act toward Him as if He were only a kind, old gentleman, handing out blessings to the people of the world, or else we consider Him a ruthless judge, watching intently for a chance to smite with plagues anybody who makes the slightest error. But to view God in either of these ways is to make Him a "flat character."

Because Paul recognized our human tendency to exaggerate one aspect of God's nature, while forgetting or neglecting the others, he warned us to "Consider therefore the kindness and the sternness of God" (Rom. 11:22, NIV). That, in effect, is what this month's *New Wine* is all about—the balance between God's goodness and severity. However, the articles in this issue aren't intended to answer all your questions about God's anger and judgments, or His love and mercy. Though we hope they'll help you gain a more complete understanding of who our God is and what He is like, their ultimate purpose is to point you to Him. For no one can tell you all there is to know of God except God Himself.

Alan Wallace  
Editorial Assistant

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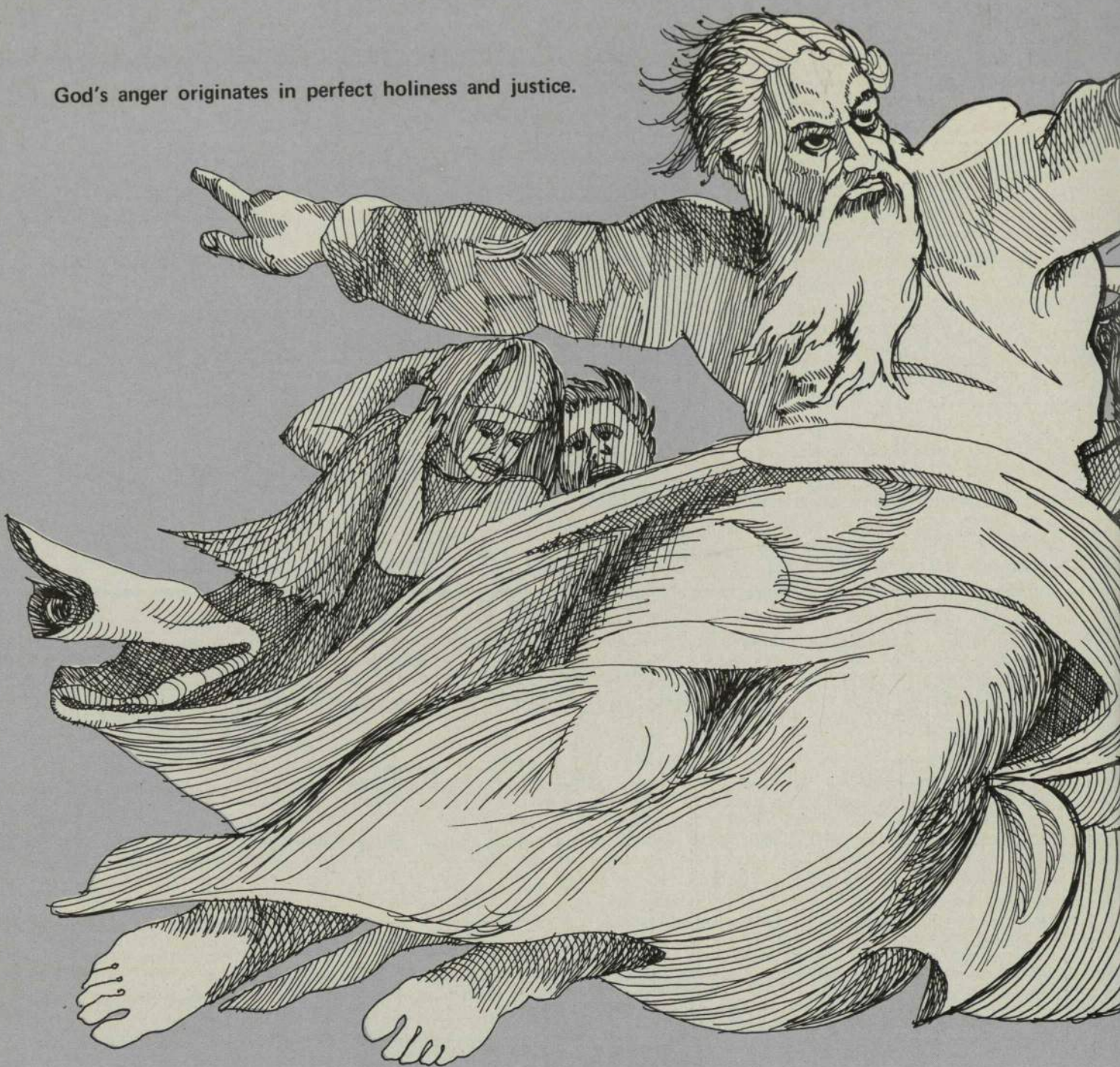
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God's anger originates in perfect holiness and justice.



**T**his 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

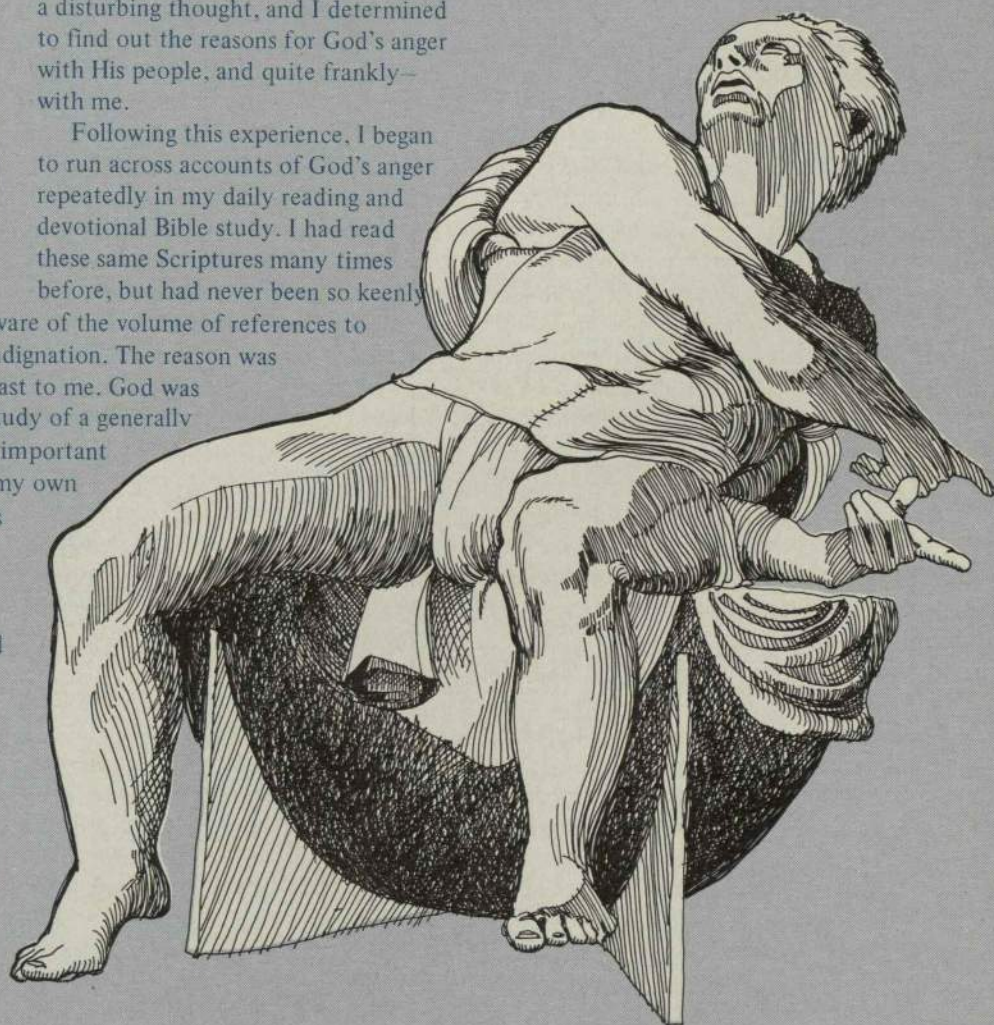
neglected yet extremely important

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. <sup>1</sup>

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."<sup>2</sup>

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."<sup>3</sup> 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."<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>



## 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 lightening 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

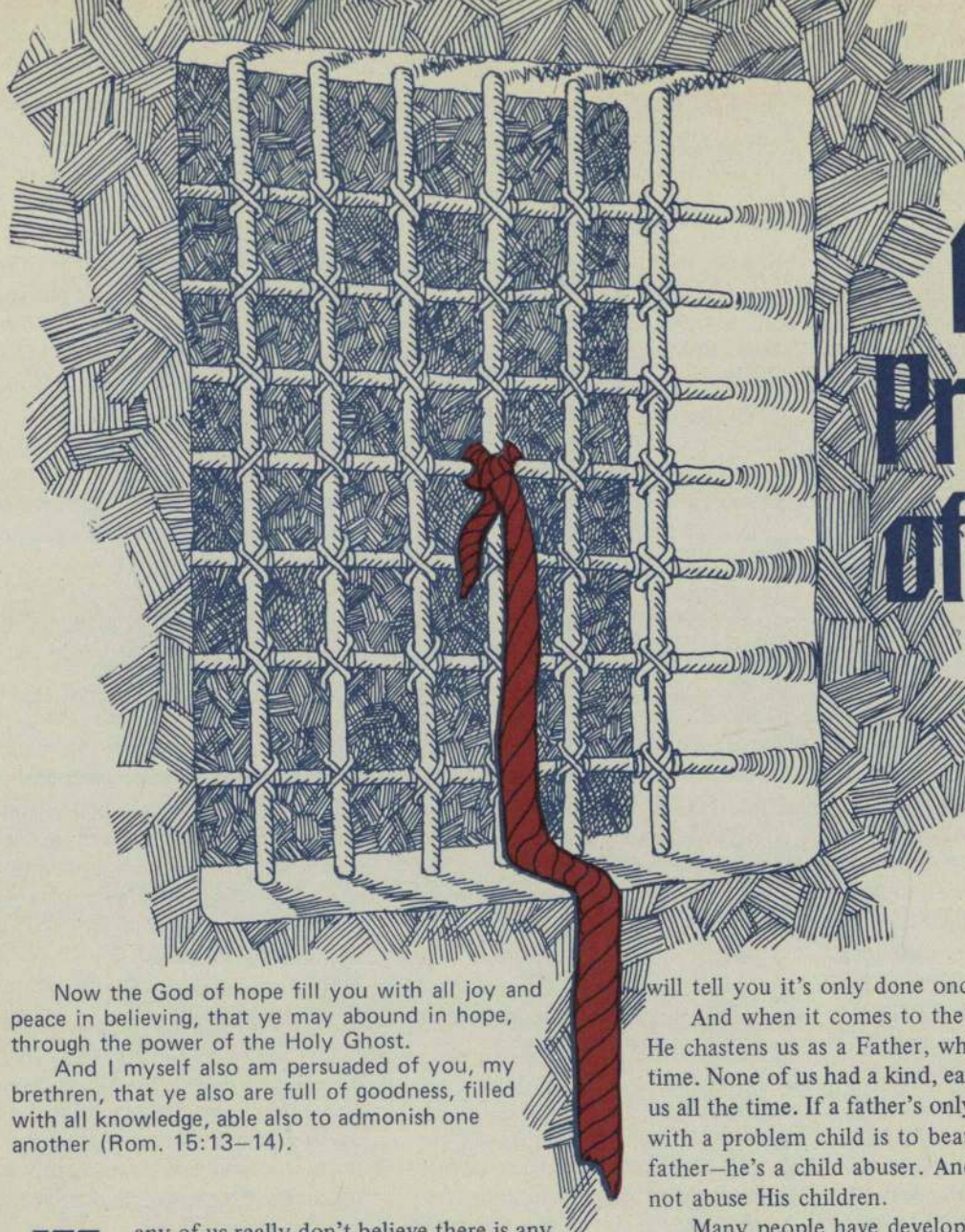
Grumbling against God-ordained authority is the last item in Paul's list. To move an entire nation from one place to another requires responsible authority and strict obedience from the nation involved. If the authority supervising the journey were undermined, the lives of all involved would be jeopardized. 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.

(continued on pg. 15)





# A Prisoner of Hope

by Jim Croft

God's faithfulness  
in the face  
of human failure.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another (Rom. 15:13-14).

**M**any of us really don't believe there is any goodness in us, or that we're really going to make it. One reason is that generally preachers have majored a lot more on the problems of Christians than on their potential. We've talked more about the dealings of God than the grace of God; we've stressed the negative rather than the positive. Therefore, many believers have come to see God as a glorified Dr. Kildare in surgical garb, complete with mask and bloody gown. And He's always operating on us—cutting something out. Just as our wounds are almost healed from one operation, it's major surgery for something else.

The truth is that God is not that way. He isn't a knife-happy surgeon. But you say, "Don't you believe in the chastenings of the Lord? Don't you believe in the prunings of the Lord?" Yes, I do. But when it comes to prunings, the Scripture implies that it's done once a year and only in cases where there has been fruit or completely dead branches. Any farmer

will tell you it's only done once a year, if that often.

And when it comes to the chastenings of the Lord, He chastens us as a Father, which is simply for a short time. None of us had a kind, earthly father who beat us all the time. If a father's only approach in dealing with a problem child is to beat him, he isn't a loving father—he's a child abuser. And God the Father does not abuse His children.

Many people have developed a mentality of "God, what are You after now? Just cut it out! Take all of me. I'm just no good!" What if you had a child who wet his diapers, and he came to you after the third time and said, "Oh, Daddy, just cut my kidneys out. Just take them. I know I'll never be able to control myself. You just remove my kidneys." That's an unreasonable approach to the problem. The kidneys and bladder are there for a purpose, and as that child matures and is trained with loving admonitions, he will learn how to properly control himself.

God is not always out to deal with us harshly. You may say, "But you don't know me! I have such inward struggles! When she did that to me, I hated her. I mean I really hated her! I could really feel it in my bones. And when my boss did so-and-so, I felt like belting him right up-side the head. I'm just no good!"

I want to tell you something—it's scriptural to have struggles! It's normal to have struggles! Let's look together at Romans 7:21-25.



I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So with the mind I myself serve the law of God: but with the flesh the law of sin.

In our hearts and minds we want to serve God, but inwardly we have struggles. Now I'm not talking about big, gross, horrible sins like murder or adultery, but I am talking about the inward struggles that the normal Christian has—struggling against being angry with someone, being bitter, having resentment, becoming depressed. These things war against us and most of us have a constant battle with them.

Many Christians think that if they even feel a temptation, if they suffer depression, if they ever feel anger, or resentment, or hate, they've blown it. But that's not true.

The Lord says to us in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He's speaking to those people who have a double law working within them: they want to be righteous, but at the same time they're conscious of something within them that's always trying to drag them down and cause them to sin and fail in their real desire to be righteous and serve the Lord.

Romans 8 says when you are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. You're not to condemn yourself, nor are you to let others condemn you because of struggles you might have. That's all part of the Christian life. The Bible says we're in warfare, and not only do we war with Satan around us, but we war with the old man within us.

## HANDLING OUR WALLED CITIES

Let's look at Romans 8:5-6.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

What does it mean to be fleshly minded? To be fleshly minded is to have your life guided by the things within that are dragging you down—by the law in your members which says, "Commit sin." It is when we see all of our problems simultaneously and think we have to take care of them all at once that we are deceived into allowing our problems to determine our direction.

But when we are spiritually minded, we realize our salvation experience is very much like that of the children of Israel when they came into Canaan's land.

The first big obstacle Israel faced in the land was Jericho. As they marched around it, the walls fell down and they had a tremendous victory. Can't you imagine their conversation!

"Boy, we've really done it! This is something! Isn't salvation grand! This is beautiful! God has such a wonderful plan for us." As they gathered around Jericho and took the spoils, they made a good confession. Then all of a sudden one of them said, "But look! Do you see all those other walled cities? We've got to take those, too! Just look at that one and that one and . . ."

So God said to them, "Don't concern yourself with that one and that one because I'm not going to give you this whole land in a day or even in a couple of years. I'm going to give it to you little by little as you're able to hold it." In the same way, God says to us, "Don't worry about all the obstacles in your life until I'm ready to deal with them. I'll tell you when it's time to take each one."

"But God, you don't understand. There's that walled city of bitterness; and that hate-my-mother-in-law walled city; and the yell-at-my-kids walled city! And impatience walled city. And late-to-work walled city."

Well, it's true that all those things are bad, and ultimately we should be able to conquer them. But being frustrated by all our problems and trying to handle them all at the same time only leads to feelings of constant defeat. That is not God's way. When we allow what's going on in our flesh to lead us from place to place, we're not being guided by the Spirit—we're being guided by the flesh and it will work death in us.

Verses 15 and 16 of Romans 8 continues:

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

We have not received the spirit of bondage, but when we start using the bondage of our flesh to guide us, in a sense we come back under the law. It may not be the Mosaic Law, but we set up our own laws: "Thou shalt not do this; I shall not do this; I shall not do that." And when we transgress any of our self-made laws, we feel horrible. But we're not to live in fear of doing wrong. Instead God wants us to be guided by the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

How does the Spirit produce that liberty? "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." If we are waiting for our flesh to



say that we belong to God we're going to wait a mighty long time because it's never going to say it. While we're in this life, even though we can be "more than conquerors," the flesh is going to do everything it can to drag us down. But the Spirit will keep reminding us that we belong to the Lord.

## SEEING OUR FAILURES FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

Let's look together at how God sees us when we have failures. He views our failures as if they were successes, mainly because He looks at them with eternity in mind. He can take our biggest failures and call them victories because He knows what they contribute to our growth. God looks at our "futures" through the eyes of eternity. I believe we can see this in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter. Speaking about the Old Testament saints, the writer says:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (vs. 13-16).

There were many of the Old Testament saints who never came into the promise. Even though God told them He wanted to do specific things in their lives and they believed Him, launching out in faith, they simply wandered from place to place and never actually came into that which God had promised them. If we were to evaluate them today, we would have to say that they were failures. They never came into prosperity; they never came into healing; they never came into abundance. They were never able to apprehend things by faith.

But God looks at the intent of the heart. All He was looking for was a people who would say, "All right, we'll go. We know there's something better somewhere." And when they showed that the desire of their heart was to obey God, the Bible says the Lord was pleased to call them His people.

It's the same for you and me. God knows the desires of our hearts, and He honors those desires. Even if we "blow it," He is still pleased to call us His friends, His children. And for anyone who blows it as often as I do, that is mighty good news!

I want to give you some specific examples of people in the Bible who "blew it." Speaking about Moses,

Hebrews 11:27 says, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

When we read the New Testament and think of Moses, we see him as having a great vision: "Yes, I'm going out. I'll be out there for forty years, and I'll toil, and then I'll come back, be accepted, lead the people out of Egypt into Canaan's land." But actually, if we read Exodus the second chapter, we find Moses running away. He had just killed a man, and he was running from Pharaoh because Pharaoh was out to kill him. Moses was saying, "I'm packin' and I am leavin'. I'm going, do you hear? And I'm not coming back!"

Moses saw his flight to the wilderness as a defeat, but God is so gracious. He says, "Wow, Moses has the faith to go out in the desert without even knowing what's out there." Even though we think we're wrong and we've really messed up, God sees our failures differently than we do.

Another example is Jephthah in Hebrews 11:32. "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." Jephthah was a man who, because he wanted to win a battle, made an extremely foolish vow. He said, "Lord, if you will give me success in this battle, when I get back home, the very first thing I see walking in front of me I'll give to you as a sacrifice." Do you know what that very first thing was? His very own daughter! So he had to follow through and sacrifice his own daughter.

Now can you imagine how Jephthah felt? He probably felt like a failure. Here he had made a vow to God, and in order to keep it he had to sacrifice his own daughter. He probably went through depression and regret for a good part of his life. I think most of us would. But God saw the situation in light of eternity.

I can just see Jephthah in heaven as he watched the Holy Spirit inspire the book of Hebrews. And when Paul wrote, "By faith Jephthah . . ." Jephthah probably said, "What are you talking about, man! What did I do by faith?"

But God said, "Well, you were faithful to keep the vow."

And Jephthah replied, "You mean, you don't hold it against me because I made such a foolish vow?"

And God said, "No, I just appreciate you because you kept it. I don't hold it against you."

Romans 4:20 says of our father Abraham that "he staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." When we read this, we visualize Abraham as never having made a mistake. But when we look at the Old Testament—to my way of thinking—he staggered. When a man says of his own wife, "She's not my wife . . . she's my sister. Take her, but don't kill me,"



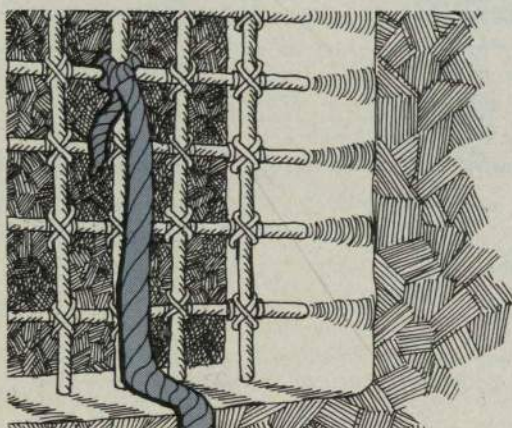
I would say he's not showing much faith in Jehovah God. And Abraham did that twice!

Then Sarah brought Hagar to him because the son God had promised them had not come, and Sarah said to him, "You take Hagar and by Hagar you can have this promised son." So Abraham went in to Hagar and the result was Ishmael, undoubtedly one of the biggest mistakes Abraham ever made.

Years later, when the true child of promise was born, Ishmael caused him nothing but trouble. Then there came a time when God wanted to do something further in Abraham's life.

And he [the Lord] said, "Take now thy son, *thine only son Isaac*, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen. 22:2).

Now this blesses me because at times I have thought of God only as someone who reminds me of all my Ishmaels. "Now, Jim, the reason I'm going to take you through this valley right now is because of the mistake you made three years ago." No. God is so good that He



didn't even remind Abraham of Ishmael. He said, "Take Isaac, your son—*your only son*." As far as God was concerned, he only had one son.

Let's look at Peter. He was a man who often muffed it. He talked too much and, like many of us, was always bragging about something he really couldn't accomplish. The Lord said to Peter, "Satan has desired to sift you." He was saying, "There's a war going on in your members. But I'm going to pray for you that your faith doesn't fail."

Now I don't believe Jesus prayed fruitless prayers. Peter denied the Lord, but that doesn't mean that his faith failed. Why? Because later he had the faith to come back with full assurance that the Lord would accept him. And even though you do something that seems tragic to you, the Lord is there to pick you up. He's there to greet you again. He is very concerned that your faith doesn't fail. As long as you can believe in the goodness of God—even with your inward problems—you're exercising faith, and that pleases God.

Let's look at 2 Samuel 1:23–24. King David had just gotten news that Saul and Jonathan were dead. Now Saul had done nothing but give David trouble all of his life. Saul tried to kill him many times; he was demon-possessed; he wouldn't keep a covenant—in other words, he had many, many problems. But I believe that in the words spoken by David, we can see the attitude of God toward those who fail.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

Did David remember the bad things about Saul? Did he say, "The guy who was demon-possessed . . . the man who tried to kill me . . . the man who drove me from place to place . . . the man who lost the anointing"? No. He said, "He was like an eagle. He was a mighty warrior. And all of Israel should weep because this man did nothing but good for you." I believe the heart of God was speaking through David concerning Saul.

## TURNING OUR FAILURES INTO VICTORIES

How should we view ourselves in the midst of turmoil? I believe, according to Romans 8:28 which says that all things happen to us for our good, that every Christian should be an optimist. No matter what's happening, no matter what the turmoil is, we should keep saying, "My God is able. I'm walking in the Spirit. I'm with my Lord." Here are some reminders that will help to give us the proper perspective in times of difficulty or failure.

### A. Seeing ourselves as kept by the blood of Jesus.

The first step we must take is to realize we are kept by the blood of Jesus. The story of Rahab, the harlot, in Joshua chapter 2 illustrates this for us. Here was a prostitute, living on the walls of Jericho, who had heard for years about a mighty army of people coming across the desert who received manna in the morning and whose God performed miracles. The account relates how she welcomed the spies into her house and made an agreement with them to hide them if they would protect her when they took over the city. The spies said to her, "Just take this red sash and put it in your window, and when we come we'll save you and your household." Then they left, and it was quite a while before they returned.

Try to imagine what went on in Rahab's mind during the interim. Remember, she was a prostitute. Do you know what the Israelites' law did with prostitutes? It stoned them. But she couldn't stop making a living just



because those men had visited her house. She didn't know how soon it would be before they returned. There were certain things she had to live with—things that were unchangeable until the salvation of God came in. But do you know what she said? She said, "I have faith in that red piece of cloth in my window. That means that no matter what I've done, no matter if I'm still sinning when those men come, I know I will be saved."

And when Joshua and the children of Israel took the city of Jericho, they saved Rahab (Josh. 6:25).

Now I'm not condoning sin; but if you're living with something in your life that you're struggling against, and it's not God's ordained time to take that particular "walled city," I believe the blood keeps you anyway. And I think you ought to look at yourself as kept: not in condemnation, not feeling bad, but saying, "I'm kept by the blood of Jesus."

#### *B. Seeing ourselves as kept by the Word of God.*

The next thing that keeps us is the Word of God. When Paul got ready to leave Ephesus, he called the elders together and told them, "When I leave, grievous wolves are going to come in. In fact, there are going to be wolves raised right up from among you. But I commend you to God and to the word of His grace." When we are covered by the blood and are staying in the Word of God, I believe that we can commend one another to the Word of God. No matter what your problems are, I can commend you to the Word of God because I know it will cleanse you, and it eventually will smite that wicked thing that harasses you.

#### *C. Seeing ourselves as prisoners of hope.*

We also need to look at ourselves as prisoners of hope. The Scripture speaks of Abraham who, against hope, believed in hope when hope was completely dead. When there was no reason to have any optimism whatever, or even the slightest thought that he and Sarah could have a child, he still had hope. When we think of Abraham and Sarah, we see them as wrinkled up old people whose bodies were practically dead. Sometimes we're tempted to think that one day they just went into the tent and knew one another biblically and a child was conceived. Well, undoubtedly that happened at one point, but we don't know how many times they attempted it before it actually happened. There were many times that they attempted to bring forth that promised child, but everything was dead. It was useless. At such times, the thought of having a son must have seemed almost laughable. And yet, they never lost hope.

Like Abraham, we need to see ourselves as prisoners of hope. We need to confess that *no matter what it looks like, we're going to make it through!* God will do what He's promised, even though it seems impossible—

even though some particular problem or group of problems seem to continually overwhelm us.

Let's look at Hebrews 6:13–19:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

We have a steadfast hope, and we are to come to hope as a refuge, laying hold of it. In Old Testament times there were six cities built as refuge cities. Within each one of these cities was a temple with an altar, and upon the brazen altar were horns. If a man killed somebody by accident—for example, if while working on his house, a beam fell and struck a man and he died; or if he got angry with his neighbor and struck and killed him, not in a premeditated way, but rather because something uncontrollable overtook him momentarily, then that person could run to one of these refuge cities, enter the temple, and grab the horns of the altar. It would be a place of sanctuary for him.

The same has been provided for us today. Even if we don't think we're going to make it, God says we can and He's provided a refuge for us. Even though we're having struggles, we can lay hold of hope: we can lay hold of the anchor of our souls; we can go running and grab hold of the horns of that altar and say, "Here I am. I'm hanging onto You no matter how rough it gets. You are my hope. You are my anchor!"

At any given moment during the day, sacrifices were being offered in the temple, so there would always be blood around the bottom of the altar. So the person seeking refuge would have to lie against the altar and would get blood all over himself. That's the way it is for us, too. When we latch hold of the horns of the altar, then we're covered by the blood of Jesus.

#### *D. Seeing ourselves as triumphant in Christ.*

The final way we're to look at ourself is as one who is always made to triumph in Christ in every place. The Scripture says, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14). What does it mean to triumph?

In New Testament times, whenever a Roman



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.

Price ..... \$4.95 each

(continued from pg. 9)

However, Moses, a type of our interceding Lord, took swift mediatorial 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; Ps. 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; Ps. 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" (Ps. 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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8. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
9. *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer (Inter-Varsity Press), p. 170.



**I** know of no subject as blessed yet as frustrating to me as the subject of covenant. It has been a source of infinite blessing because through it, I have come to know God better and appreciate more fully what Jesus did on the cross. Covenant has helped me to distinguish God's love from all others. It has frustrated me because the subject is so at odds with our modern mentality. It cuts across the grain of self-preservation. To try to preach on covenant is humbling. First, because it's beyond the preacher's comprehension; second, because it is beyond the hearers' comprehension; thirdly, because it so angers Satan that he brings every distraction possible on the scene. Before proceeding further, we need to pause and ask God's help in understanding His covenant love.

In 1972 I began to preach on the subject of covenant. The first time was one of those marvelous situations where the Holy Spirit took over and I preached beyond my own understanding. No one except me realized that I didn't understand much of what I was preaching. I believe God blessed me wonderfully in delivering that message in order to trap me. He wanted me to become identified with and excited about the subject so He could begin to teach me something of its meaning.

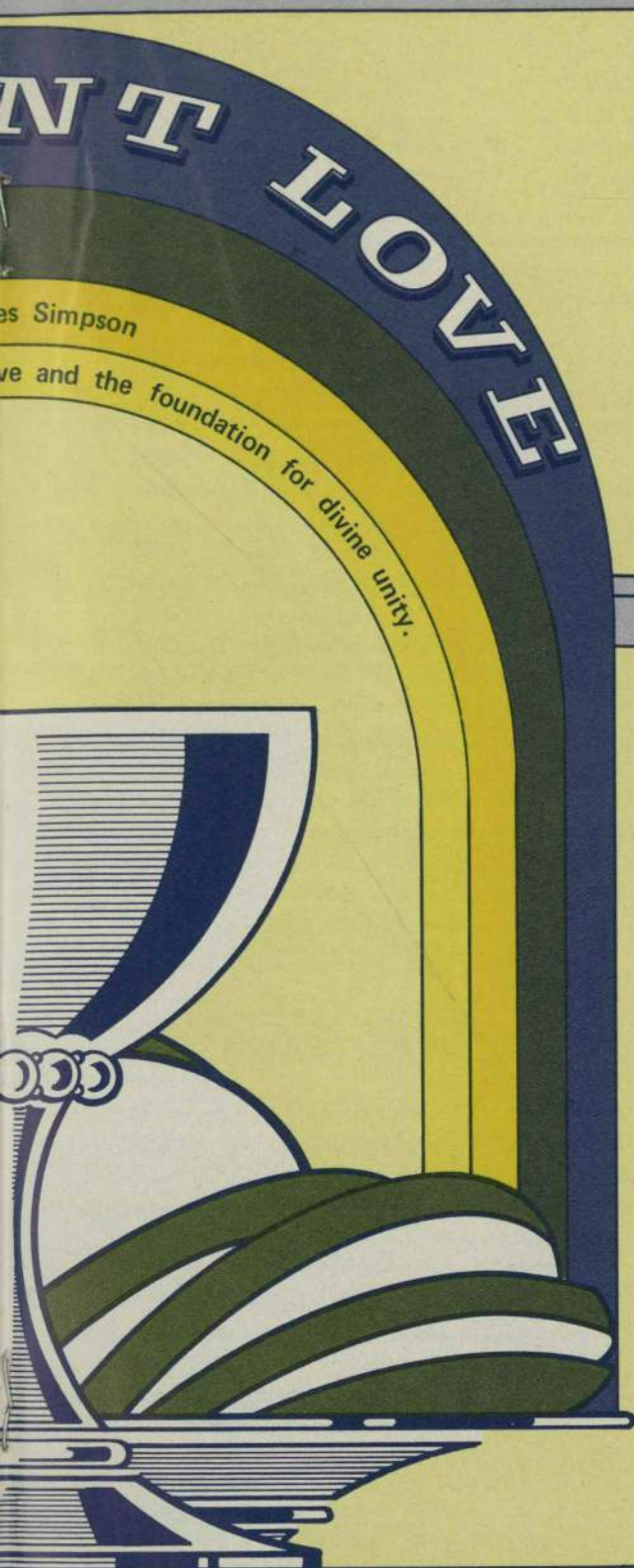
I planned to review the message by studying the tape; then I would make it available to others. But unfortunately, the tape was bad. So I planned to preach it again. Naively, I took the same outline and stood before 1,800 people and began to preach. Man, every demon in the state showed up. The public address system went out, the oppression in the meeting was stifling, the men on the rostrum were dozing. My words fell in a puddle on the floor. I was embarrassed, but not being one to quit easily, I preached it on four or five additional occasions. Each time the results were similar.

# COVENANT

by Charles

Covenant is the expression of God's love





Once, while I was preaching on covenant in Toledo, Ohio, the microphone picked up a local radio station and music came out with my message. Of all the many tape recordings made of those meetings not one was acceptable.

Why does Satan hate this subject so much? Because covenant is the revelation of God's love and faithfulness. Covenant reveals the nature of our salvation. It is the secret of living together in Christ. When it comes to love, covenant is the measure of "the real thing." It is the test which Satan "flunked" and which men without God are still "flunking."

#### GOD'S LOVE LEADS TO COVENANT

Love is an overworked word. We "love" ice cream. We "love" football. We "love" God. It is difficult to discern real love. Scripture talks about a love that is actually lust. It talks about a higher love—brotherly love. It also talks about the eternal love of God. Unfortunately our one English word "love" is used to describe all of these forms of love, and is most inadequate.

God's love is distinguishable from the others essentially because His love is unselfish. God's love is the opposite of lust or self-gratification in that He gives Himself for His people and teaches them how to give themselves for one another. While this can sometimes appear to be a morbid or legalistic "death of self" such unselfishness in fact creates a life-giving atmosphere of kindness, mutual service and respect.

Many years ago when I studied physics in college, we regularly performed experiments. I remember there were always methods to test the success of each experiment. If it turned the chemically-treated paper a certain color, or it burned, or if the mixture had certain properties, we knew it was a success. The ability to make and keep covenant is the test or



proof of God's love. There are many kinds of love but only God's love will stand in covenant-making and covenant-keeping.

A long time ago when our country could afford real silver coins, you could bite them and tell if they were real. It was not uncommon to see a man bite a silver dollar. If it was genuine silver his teeth would make a slight indentation in the soft metal. There's a similar test for diamonds. Because diamonds are extremely hard you can cut glass with a true diamond. On the other hand, costume jewelry looks nice, but won't pass that test.

Much of what has passed for religion is being tested today. God says that in the last days "a lot of coins will have the right words on them but you can't bite the metal." And lots of "diamonds" won't "cut glass." Now we don't want to face the ordeal that is to come upon this world and the Church with our confidence in "pasty jewels" and "counterfeit coins." Jesus speaks of gold, silver and jewels tried in the fire. Let's put our love to the covenant test and let God refine us while there is yet refining time.

### SCRIPTURAL COVENANTS

God's eternal love for man has always led Him to make covenants with men. The Bible is composed of the old and new covenants. Within the old covenant are numerous covenants that God made with certain individuals and groups.

In Genesis 6, the whole world is portrayed as wicked and full of evil imaginations. Noah alone finds favor in the sight of God. In other words, God looks at Noah and loves him. Noah is a faithful *family* man who enjoys the respect of his wife and sons, at a time when the rest of society is falling in moral and spiritual perversion. God, expressing His love to Noah, gives him a plan by which he may escape from the judgment that is coming. He shows Noah how to build an ark. Then, in Genesis 6:18, God says, "I will establish my covenant with you." After the flood, God makes His covenant with Noah.

Genesis 8:20-9:17 tells us how it happened.

Generations later, descendants of Noah try to build a tower to reach heaven. God frustrates their efforts and they fall into confusion. But the family of Abraham is called out to seek a city God has prepared for them. In Genesis 17:2 He says to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and you." Again God's love leads to the establishment of a covenant.

After Israel is delivered out of Egypt, God confirms His covenant once again saying, "Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments (Deut. 7:9, NAS). Here God establishes covenant with His people Israel.

Centuries later, David is referred to in Scriptures as a man God loved in a special way. He was a man after God's own heart. Abijah, his grandson, tells us that God made a covenant with David that his descendants would rule Israel forever (2 Chron. 13:5). God's love for this man led Him to make an eternal covenant with him and with his descendants.

Through the record of God's dealings with man His love has always culminated in a covenant, committed relationship. Nowhere is this more clearly revealed than in Jesus' relationship to His disciples. At the close of His ministry on earth He gathers His disciples into an upper room and says:

"I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;

for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

And having taken a cup, when He had given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves;

for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

And having taken some bread, when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is

given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "*This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood* (Lk. 22:15-20, NAS).

The great love Jesus shared with His disciples was the covenant love of God.

Marriage is a parable of God's relationship to His people. In Jeremiah 31:31-33, God discusses His relationship to Israel. Referring to Himself as Israel's husband, He says that Israel has broken her covenant. In another place He speaks of Israel as an adulteress. This of course refers to a marriage partner who has been unfaithful. The prophets often used marriage in a parabolic way to describe God's relationship to His people.

Paul does the same thing in Ephesians 5. He likens Christ and the Church to husband and wife. Love between a man and a woman should bring about a covenant relationship. A conjugal relationship without covenant is illicit. Such a relationship fails the covenant test and indicates a lustful, selfish motive rather than covenant or unselfish love.

### GOD HELPS US MAKE AND KEEP COVENANT

I will never forget the night when Carolyn and I stood at the altar. It was in the First Baptist Church of Mobile, Alabama, July 18, 1960. Her dad, a deacon in that church, stood beside her to give her away. For more than two years we had courted. I loved her and I wanted her to be my wife. But first, we would have to stand at the altar, before witnesses, and pledge our word and take vows to accept our responsibilities.

"Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" When the pastor, Dr. Reeves, asked that question, I looked at Dr. Dix, Carolyn's father. His mouth was moving but the words were not coming out. Then he tried again.

"I do," I heard him faintly say. Then it was my turn. The words of the



marriage covenant were so awesome, so final and so sobering to say.

After the reception, driving out of town, it hit me: "I'm married!" I had made a covenant. I wasn't sorry, but I was sober. I had promised the only life I would have. I had promised to love and cherish Carolyn for better or for worse. "What if it got worse?" I had promised to love her in sickness and in health. "What if she were stricken by some disease?" I'm glad we had discussed these things previously. We knew we had to enter covenant in faith, trusting God for the grace to walk together. Covenant love is not merely desiring someone; it is desiring someone's well-being even above your own. Jesus put it this way: "Greater love has no one than this; that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

As a married man I can appreciate in a limited way what Jesus did. By the grace of God He came and laid down His life for my well-being. And His love shed abroad in my heart will help me to lay down my life for the well-being of others.

#### THE NATURE OF COVENANT IS THE BINDING OF LIVES TOGETHER IN ONE LIFE AND ONE WILL

The words for covenant, *berith* in Hebrew, and *diatheke* in Greek, mean "to bind together." Whether the covenant was between God and man or between one man and another, the result was that the participants were bound together in the condition of the covenant. There were no longer two wills regarding the matter, but one. Both had pledged their very lives to keeping the conditions.

The Old Testament phrase for making covenant was to "cut a covenant." The reason was that an animal sacrifice was cut in half and the two covenant-makers walked between the pieces when covenant was being made. This action signified death to themselves. The animal was a representative sacrifice on behalf of each participant. Walking between the pieces signified that in the sacrifice they were bound together (see Genesis

15 and Jeremiah 34:18). In the making of covenant there was a death to the individual wills and the creation of one new mutual will. In other words, they were made one in the covenant. Such a ceremony was the most solemn of all commitments. A person who broke such a commitment was called a covenant-breaker and considered a worthless or untrustworthy person.

God taught His people this kind of love. From Abraham to Christ He taught them how to make and keep covenants. At the very heart of God's purpose is His desire to make His people like Himself and bring them to know the same love and unity that is within the Godhead. All the law and the prophets are given to His people to teach them His ways.

Covenant is both the expression of God's love and the foundation for divine unity. For generations He showed His people how to "cut covenant." He taught them how important it was to love one another unselfishly and to love truth above oneself. He gave them the grace to forgive one another in covenant relationship. He showed them how to forgive by His multiplied forgiveness toward them. Israel became the "covenant people." They were born out of a covenant relationship between God and Abraham. Their very existence and lifestyle were dependent upon covenant.

Then God sent Jesus and there were no more shadows and symbols and no more animal sacrifices. God Himself came in His Son to be "the Lamb of God." Not only was Jesus God, but He was man born of a virgin. He was the Son of God and the Son of Man without sin. Jesus came representing both God and man. John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God." Jesus was to give the new covenant, the eternal covenant, not predicated on symbols and shadows but built rather on God's personal sacrifice of Himself on man's behalf. Jesus became the perfect covenant sacrifice. He is the only one who has ever represented both God and man perfectly. He was the only one ever qualified to be the

proxy sacrifice on behalf of God and man, thus bringing God and man together.

When we accept Jesus as Lord, we are accepting the new covenant He came to establish which was sealed by His blood. The covenant provides all that pertains to life, both now and forever. The responsibility we have when we enter into covenant with Him is to obey Jesus as Lord. In Christ, there is one new will established—the will of God.

In the light of covenant I have a greater appreciation for what Scripture means when it says that we are one in Christ—one with the Father and one with all who are in Christ. In Christ's very body and nature, God and man are brought together. In His death they are bound together by His blood. Not only are we bound to God, but all who are in Christ are bound together with us by the blood of Jesus.

Such love is incomprehensible! That God would send His Son is amazing. That He would want to be eternally "bound together" with me reveals a love that I can scarcely grasp! His name and His life are bound to me. He is identified with me and all my frailties. His reward is that in being bound together with me, I'll be changed by His unselfish love. I'll come to know His love and accept it as

## Just Around the Corner

The next issue of *New Wine* will probe the role of suffering and trials in the Christian life. We'll look at the question "Why do Christians suffer?" in an article by Francis Martin, and in an article by Bob Mumford we'll consider the trials Paul went through. Derek Prince will share some ways praise helps us rise above our trials, and there will also be related articles by Jim Croft and Paul Billheimer.



a higher way than my own self-centered desires. The evidence that His love will be shed abroad by the Holy Spirit into my heart and life is that I can be identified with, and "bound together" with and gracious toward my brothers and sisters in Christ (even those less mature than I). God's faithfulness and forgiveness will reveal itself through me as I walk with Him in covenant in the divine community.

### WHY THE ALTAR IS NECESSARY

By faith, ahead in the distance, we see green pastures and still waters. Love, joy and peace rest like a benediction on the lambs in the meadow. The Lord stands tall and watchful in the midst like a great shepherd. All kinds of trees bearing delicious fruit are growing everywhere. But why is there a fence around such abundance and beauty? And what is that little pile of stones there at the gate? What's an altar doing there? Is God trying to keep His people out? No, He isn't. But He is keeping something out—the *wolf*. For the wolf preys upon lambs. He likes to romp in the meadow among the fruit trees. He likes to smell the flowers and desires to "fellowship the flock," so he can attack a defenseless lamb and devour it.

The Good Shepherd knows that. The fence is covenant relationship. The Shepherd stands at the gate and presides over the altar. At the altar selfishness, envy, murder, strife, and all that is rooted in the human will is put to death. There is only one will directing the life inside the gate—the Chief Shepherd's will.

The laying down of one's will before Jesus is evidence that the person seeking fellowship is a sheep and not a wolf.

Most marriages take place at some kind of altar. I think all marriage vows should be made before an altar. For a man and woman to become one new person, there must of necessity be the death of the two wills. The altar is the door to covenant life together. Unfortunately, many marriages were not made at an altar. The two who

have bound themselves together both seek selfish gratification. But because neither is willing to die to himself, they systematically destroy one another and the marriage.

### THE LIFE OF COVENANT RELATIONSHIP IS LOVE

Without love, being "bound together" is the worst kind of bondage. I don't advise people to "go make covenant" with someone they have not learned to love with God's love.

Years ago I knew two young men who became involved in a prolonged and consuming dispute. Finally, they became so embittered that they locked their left hands together in a firm grip and with knives in their right hands began to stab one another, when one finally loosed his grip it was too late. He died from his wounds and the other was permanently scarred.

When God made covenant with Abraham or anyone else in the Scriptures He did so because He loved them. He did not bind Himself to them legalistically in order to do them harm. Rather He was motivated by divine compassion. In covenant He committed Himself and His resources to the well-being of the covenant partner. John 3:16 tells us that God ". . . So loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

In Deuteronomy 7:7, God told Israel that He did not love them because they were a large nation, for actually they were only a few people. Rather, it was because of His love for their forefathers and for them that He had kept His oath. Unselfish love is the motive for covenant. Love is what makes covenant a life and not a living death.

### THE STRENGTH OF COVENANT IS COMMITMENT

I want to make it clear that covenant cannot be taken for granted. When God offers covenant, He asks for a definite response. He knows exactly whose names are written in the covenant. Jesus said, "I know My

sheep by name." Marriage, or any other contract must be made as specific as possible so that the covenanters know the ground on which they stand.

Modern communication is so full of loopholes and innuendos that we have developed the art of "almost saying something." We habitually avoid "nailing down" a commitment. Vague contracts are hardly worth the time and effort it takes to make them. God has told us exactly what He will provide—everything. He has told us exactly what He expects—obedient faith. The degree to which we clearly commit ourselves will determine how totally we will see the faithfulness of God.

### CONCLUSION

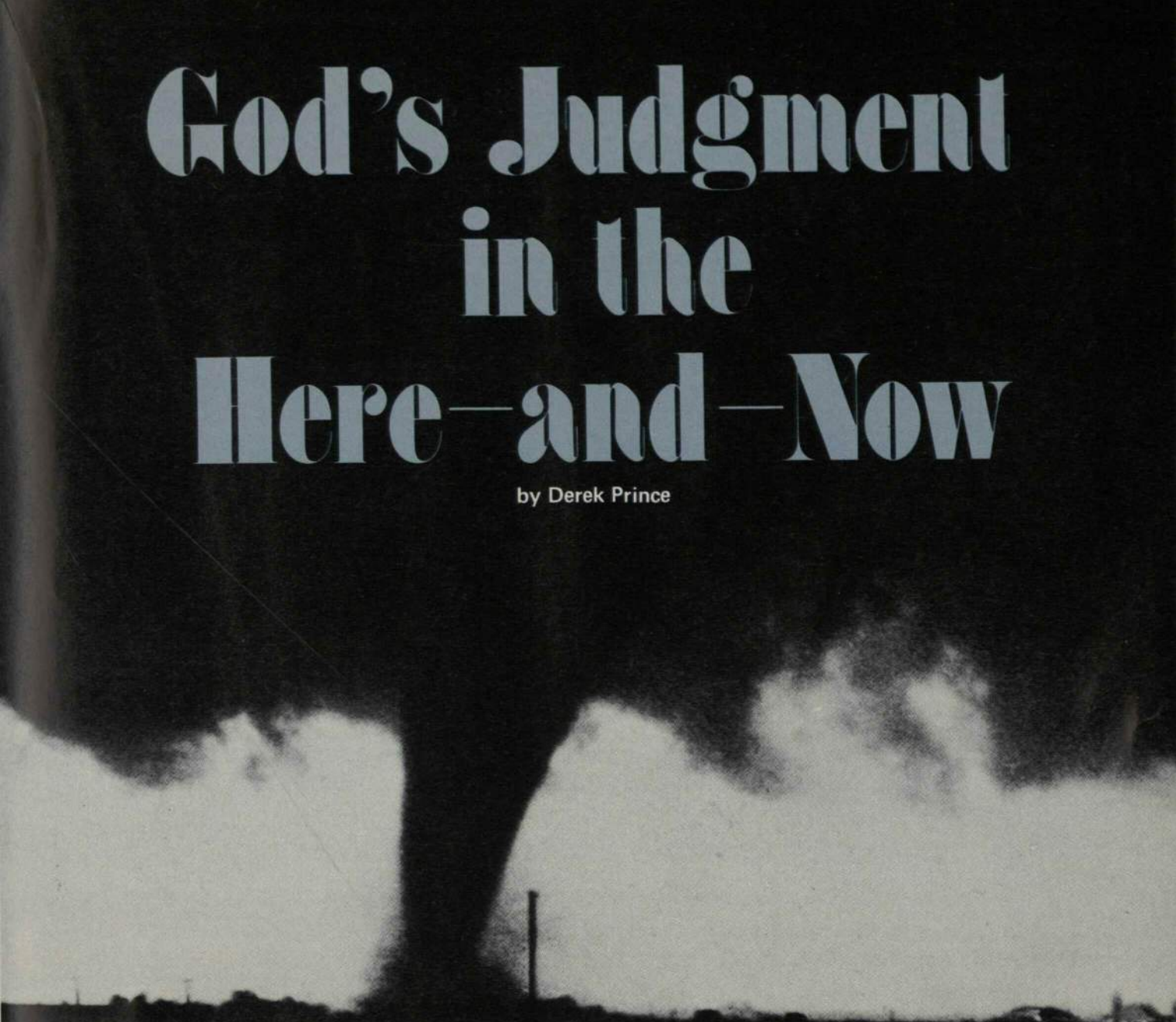
God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. Reconciling God and man and bringing reconciliation among men is the purpose of Christ's life and ministry. Covenant in Christ Jesus' blood is the basis of our eternal union with God and each other. Someday that reality will burst upon the Church. The true approach to unity is not all believing the same doctrines or all having the same methods or all belonging to the same denomination. The basis for our unity in Christ is the same as the basis for the total unity that's in the Godhead. It's the covenant nature of God that is both in the Godhead and in the Body of Christ. The Lordship of Jesus and His blood have provided us a common life and a common will.

The variety of personality and ministry within the Godhead is possible because of the covenant nature of God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit do not have to conform to the same office or function because they are of the same nature—God. When we recognize our covenant nature as God's people and release His covenant love to one another, it will not produce rigid conformity. Rather, out of our security in God and in each other, we will manifest to the world the beautiful and fruitful variety God has placed within His people. ☞



# God's Judgment in the Here—and—Now

by Derek Prince



**M**ost people fear the word “judgment,” and especially the thought of God’s judgment. About twelve years ago, I produced a series of seven books of basic Christian teaching called *The Foundation Series*, and I titled most of the seven books after the basic doctrines listed in Hebrews 6:1–2. The seventh book is called *Eternal Judgment*, and over the years it’s amused me to observe that a lot of people who buy the first six don’t want to buy the seventh. There’s something frightening about the word “judgment.” But if we’re realistic, we have to face the fact that there is judgment, and in this article we want to talk about God’s judgment and our response to it.

Jesus said, “When He, the Holy Spirit, is come, He will convict—or reprove—the world of three things—of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” We are answerable to God for the way we live—whether it’s a

life of sin or a life of righteousness. Our lives are subject to His judgment. So we’ll begin by examining the Scriptures on the theme of judgment, and close by giving it a practical application to our lives.

The first time the word “judge” is used in Scripture is in Genesis 18:25, and there it’s applied to God Himself. In this passage, Abraham is reasoning with the Lord about the judgment the Lord is preparing to bring upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because Abraham wants to make quite sure that God is going to judge justly, he says in verse 25:

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Abraham recognized that he was talking to the Judge





of all the earth, the Lord Himself. God is the ultimate and never-changing Judge. The Bible gives us an insight into the way that God judges, and I want to carefully trace this in Scripture.

There are actually two main aspects of God's judgment. One is His judgment in time and in history—in the outworking of our lives, whether as individuals or families or nations. These are what I call the historical judgments of God because they take place in a time/space world. But the title of the book I mentioned, *Eternal Judgment*, is taken directly from Hebrews 6:2 and indicates another kind of judgment—God's judgment in eternity. This is not the outworking of the principles of justice in time, but rather it is God's final determination on the ultimate destiny of every soul.

### HISTORICAL JUDGMENT

First we want to examine God's judgment in history. After that, we'll look at God's eternal judgment and then consider some of the specific ways in which God judges us.

Exodus 20 opens with what we call the Ten Commandments, and we want to look particularly at the second commandment, which is in verses 4–6:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation* of them that hate me;

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

In this prohibition of idolatry, which by definition is the making of an image of any sort and worshiping it as God, God says that where men commit that sin, He will bring judgment not only on them, but also on their descendants to the third and the fourth generation. That's the outworking of God's judgment in history.

Personally I do not believe this judgment pertains to every type of sin. I don't believe God necessarily judges all sin beyond the generation that commits it. But God says, "I *will* judge the sin of turning to false gods or having another God besides the true God, not only in the lifetime of the people that commit it, but also in the following three generations as well."

Now in essence I believe that particular sin is what we call "involvement in the occult." After all, involvement in the occult, whether you go to a fortune teller or a medium or practice astrology or look at the horoscopes, is essentially going to a false god for that which you are only permitted to receive from the one true God. It's making a false god.

Without going into detail, let me just state that in many sessions of counseling in the ministry of deliverance, I have discovered that God does exactly what He said He would do—that those who are guilty of that particular sin bring judgment not only upon themselves, but on their descendants as well. I've discovered in many lives that to resolve a person's problems, you have to discover what it was their ancestors did. Some may have difficulty receiving this, but as far as I'm concerned it's a scriptural fact, a historical fact and a fact of experience.

Some of you may have problems in your lives for which you cannot find a sufficient cause. I suggest to you that the cause may lie in your parents, your grandparents, or even your great-grandparents. In my experience it has sometimes proven necessary to unearth



the root problem that lies in the background in order to bring people to full deliverance and liberty. But I share the fact of my experience in this matter simply to testify that God does do precisely what He said He would do when He spoke to Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments.

## ETERNAL JUDGMENT

Now to look at God's eternal judgment for a moment, let's turn to Ezekiel chapter 18, and begin at verse 19.

Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die [that's eternity]. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die (vss. 19-24).

Many people might protest that what God says through the prophet Ezekiel here is contrary to what He said to Moses in the Ten Commandments. I don't see it that way. We simply need to understand the difference between historical judgment and eternal judgment—that God was speaking to Moses about His judgments in history, and through Ezekiel He is speaking about His judgments at the end of history, in eternity. Thus there is no contradiction.

If I understand this passage rightly, what God says is that in *eternity* every soul will answer for *his own life only*: not for his parents or any other person, but each of us will be directly accountable to God precisely for the way that we have lived. At that point we will not be able to put the blame on anybody else; God will hold us accountable, individually and personally, and our eternal destiny will be settled by the way we answer that account.

In Ecclesiastes 11:3 Solomon says, "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." That's

eternity. When we come to face God's eternal judgment, we answer solely for the way we have lived, and our eternal destiny is settled by the answer. We are like the tree. In whatever direction we fall—at death—we must lie throughout eternity.

So we have the two types of judgment: God's judgments that work out in history from generation to generation—in an individual's life, in a family, in a nation; and then we have the other judgment of God which is beyond the threshold of time, in eternity.

In this article, I'm not going to deal with God's eternal judgment. Instead I'm going to point out certain specific ways in which God judges us in time, in history. I'm viewing it primarily in the way in which God judges nations. Although I'll be citing biblical illustrations, the country I primarily have in mind in all these examples is the United States; we need to recognize that this nation is subject to God's judgment just as much as any other nation in history.

## JUDGMENT BY RULERS

The first way, and perhaps the primary way, that God judges a nation is by the rulers He gives it. Few Christians realize that the kind of rulers we have is a judgment of God, and whether their rulership is a blessing or a curse, it comes from God.

Just as an introduction, let's look in Proverbs 29 for a moment at verses 2, 4 and 12. Since the Watergate scandal, I've found that some of these Scriptures have come alive in a remarkable way to Americans. Let me just show you how up-to-date Proverbs is.

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn (Pr. 29:2).

Is that true? I'll tell you one nation where it's true. That is the nation of Uganda. Terrible things are going on in Uganda because a wicked, cruel man is ruling there. And believe me, the people of Uganda are mourning.

The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it (Pr. 29:4).

Do you know what an equivalent word for "gifts" is in modern America? *Graft*. Someone has said that graft is as much a part of the American way of life as cherry pie!

Here's another scripture. Think of the Watergate scandal in the light of this statement from Proverbs 29:12:

If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

The Living Bible says, ". . . all the aides on his staff



are wicked." Is that accurate in light of recent U.S. history? We have to acknowledge that the Bible tells it like it is.

Now let's go to Romans 13 and see the basic statement about rulers that Paul makes there. I'll quote these verses from the New English Bible, which is a very good, vivid translation of these particular verses.

Every person must submit to the supreme authorities. There is no authority but by act of God, and the existing authorities are instituted by him . . . (vs. 1).

The authorities that exist are ordained of God. Do you realize that every authority in existence is placed there by God; even the people who set the speed limits?

Consequently anyone who rebels against authority is resisting a divine institution . . . (vs. 2).

Every time you exceed the speed limit, you're resisting the ordinance of God. "And those who resist have themselves to thank for the punishment they will receive." So don't complain when you get tickets. "For government, a terror to crime, has no terrors for good behavior." The man who's keeping within the speed limits doesn't get scared when the patrol car comes up in his rearview mirror. "You wish to have no fear of authorities? Then continue to do right and you will have their approval . . ."

You might be saying, "Well, Paul didn't have some of the rulers we have." Do you realize that this was written in the days of the Emperor Nero? "For they (the rulers) are God's agents working for your good." "But if you are doing wrong, then you will have cause to fear them; it is not for nothing that they hold the power of the sword, for they are God's agents of punishment, for retribution on the offender."

Rulers are God's agents, for good or for punishment, but whichever they do, they are nonetheless God's agent. "That is why you are obliged to submit. It is an obligation imposed not merely by fear of retribution but by conscience." A Christian conscience requires us to obey the civil authorities. "Render therefore to all their dues: taxes to whom taxes, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear . . ." (KJV) and so on. In a certain sense, when you pay taxes, you're paying them to God—God's representative, His agent.

Some of you may find this hard to receive. It's a truth that Christians have overlooked, but it's very clearly stated in the Bible. I'll give you just two passages:

For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.

But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another (Ps. 75:6–7).

God is the judge. He is the one who puts rulers in positions of authority.

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: [Now that can be said of nobody else. God has the wisdom to know what to do, and He has the power to do it. That combination is found perfectly in no one but God.]

And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him (Dan. 2:20–22).

There are seven statements made there about God which we would do well to ponder. But notice that one of the statements is that he removes kings and he sets up kings. Promotion comes from the Lord. If a king is there, if a president is there, if a governor is there, if a ruler is there—*God put him there*. The authorities that exist are ordained by God.

Now you say, "Well, God has certainly put some bad men in authority." It's true, but why? As a *judgment* of the nations to whom He gave them as rulers. The primary way God judges nations is by the kind of rulers He gives them.

As we look back over our recent history as a nation, I think we need to ask, "What problem in a nation's relationship to God precipitates His judgment?" I'll cite one example from Scripture which is extremely relevant. In the opening chapters of the book of Isaiah, God states the great problem of Israel in Isaiah's day, which could be summed up in one word—rebellion.

In Isaiah 1:4, the prophet says this:

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

"This nation is subject to God's judgment just as much as any other nation in history."



Why should ye be stricken any more? *ye will revolt more and more . . .*

That's the key. Israel as a nation was guilty of rebellion against God, His word, His prophets and His standards of righteousness. The ensuing chapters of Isaiah give us a picture of what happens when a nation rebels against God. Looking at the third chapter, we see that God removed all kind of good authority. God removed all the people who could govern that nation well. Bear in mind that this is the outworking of a nation's rebellion:

For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water [First of all, there's a shortage of food and water; and then it says, He takes away . . .]

The mighty man, the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer [the craftsman], and the eloquent orator (Is. 3:1-3).

In answer to rebellion, God removes all men of skill and integrity and competence to rule. In their place, God says, "I will give children to be their princes and babes shall rule over them." That's the judgment of God. When there is no longer a man of integrity and competence to rule us, that's God's judgment. And we came very, very near to being in that situation as a nation just a few years ago.

If we don't see it as a judgment of God, what will we do? We'll complain about our politicians. But that's not the solution. The solution is: repent, acknowledge God's judgment, and meet His conditions for changing those rulers. We see, then, that God judges us through our rulers.

### JUDGMENT THROUGH JUDGES

God also judges us through our judges. Turn for a moment to Job chapter 12, starting with verse 16. If you'll follow the rest of the chapter, you'll see that it's all the outworking of God's judgment. Verses 16-17, speaking of God, say:

With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his.

He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools.

Who makes fools out of judges? God. Has that been a judgment that has come upon this nation? It may be controversial to say, but it would seem that the American nation has been subjected to some of the most foolish judgments imaginable. Judgments which in a sense have protected the wicked and penalized the guiltless so that you're almost more guilty for leaving your key in a car so that it can be stolen than you are

for actually stealing the car.

It has actually worked out—and again, I don't want to be controversial, but it's obviously a fact—that the Supreme Court, by the way it has *interpreted* laws, has actually *made* laws. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the matter of abortion which, in my personal opinion, is not only a wrong judgment, morally and ethically. It is also totally illogical and unscientific.

As we said concerning God's judgment through rulers, you can complain, but that doesn't solve the problem. What does solve the problem? Repentance! Humbly and sincerely, we need to say, "God, we had it coming. We were rebellious. You judged us. We deserved it." But it's a lot easier to complain than to repent.

### JUDGMENT IN THE WEATHER

I believe God judges people through climate. In the light of the uncharacteristic weather we've had recently in our nation, I think this is especially pertinent. Let's look at Psalm 107, verses 33-35:

He [God] turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

God can do either. He can turn a barren, dry ground into a fresh, well-watered area, or He can take a well-watered area and turn it into a barren wilderness. If He does the latter, the Scripture says it's for the wickedness of those that dwell therein.

There is historical evidence that maybe three thousand years ago, Egypt had forests. Today, essentially, except for a little strip on either side of the Nile, it's a very barren land. I know because I lived two years in the sands of Egypt. I slept in sand, ate sand, got sand in my hair, and got tired of sand. But the Scripture indicates that changes such as the one in the climate of Egypt and all of North Africa are a judgment of God. If we see history in the light of Scripture, we understand that climate is the outworking of God's faithfulness and God's judgment on nations. God judges us through the weather.

If we turn to Deuteronomy 28:22-24, we'll see a few of the results in a nation of deliberate disobedience to God's revealed will. God warned Israel what would happen if they disobeyed Him.

The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning [various types of sickness], and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew [that's disease on the crops]: and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.

And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thy feet shall be iron.





The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

What one word would describe that condition? I would say the word "drought." Heaven like brass and the earth just dust. Now that's a judgment.

Amos chapter 4, verses 6–10 reveal more of God's judgments upon the people of Israel for their disobedience.

And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities [that's a nice biblical phrase for famine. If you've not had anything to eat, your teeth don't get dirty], and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest [that's a judgment of God]: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied [shortage of water is a judgment of God]: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

I have smitten you with blasting and mildew [that's a crop disease]: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them [the insects that devour our crops are a judgment from God]: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt [that's a judgment of God].

In spite of all these judgments, Israel still refused to return to the Lord. And by what means did God judge them? Through natural calamities, particularly the weather.

## JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO RESPONSE

I want to come now to a more practical application, one that is based on the recognition that God does not judge us because He's unmerciful. He judges us in order to call us to repentance. If we refuse to see and bow before His judgments, we have failed to respond to God the way He desires. God judges us that we may repent, and He promises mercy to those who do repent.

Let's look at one passage in Jeremiah 18, reading only verses 7–10, which clearly demonstrates that God deals with any nation in judgment according to the way it responds to Him.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;

If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

God says, "I will warn you of judgment and tell you it's coming, but if you change, I'll withhold the judgment. Or conversely, if I have promised good and blessing to you upon the condition of obedience, and you turn to disobedience, I will withhold the good. I'll deal with you according to the way you respond to Me." This is the way God has promised to deal with any nation.

Do you believe God would deal with the United States like that? Do you think it's possible that God is even now dealing with our nation? Do you think that in



many cases we've been very slow and stubborn to see God's judgments and to acknowledge that we deserve them? God calls us to repent instead of complaining and criticizing. And He promises mercy if we do repent.

This principle of the people's response is even more clearly stated in 2 Chronicles 7 in a revelation that God gave to Solomon immediately after he had finished building his temple.

And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people [God gives three examples of judgment: one is by weather, one is by insects, and one is by disease];

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

That's God's promise of mercy. Let's look at this passage in detail for a few moments. God says, "If my people who are called by my name . . . ." The Hebrew says, "my people upon whom my name is called." At that time God was speaking to Israel. Today God is dealing with the Church. The Church is God's people upon whom His name is called. Our very title, "*Christians*," indicates the name of Christ called upon us. So this verse applies to us as God's people today.

Notice that God holds *His* people accountable for the state of their land. Generally speaking, church-going people tend to blame the non-church-going people for the problems in the world. They say, "Well, the trouble is the student activists, the Communists, the dope addicts, the Mafia." God says, "The problem isn't with them; it's with you. If I can deal with you, I can handle the situation." God always begins with His people.

1 Peter says, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." God doesn't start by judging the ungodly; His first judgment is of His people. And

God says to His people, "If I can get My way with you, I'll reach the world through you. But if you resist Me, I have no way to reach the world."

In the great revival that swept Wales in 1904, God raised up a young man named Evan Roberts who became the spearhead of that revival that changed the whole nation and history of Wales. Evan Roberts had a slogan: "Bend the Church and bow the world." I believe that's exactly the way it is. If the Church will bend, the world will bow. But if the Church will not bend, we can't expect the world to bow. Either we become the channel of God's Spirit to the world, or else we hold up God's Spirit from reaching the world. The way we respond to God is what decides the outcome.

So God says, "If My people will do what I ask, I'll heal their land." It doesn't depend upon the ungodly. It depends on the believers. *We're* the salt of the earth. *We* determine the destiny of the nation.

#### FOUR CONDITIONS

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God sets forth four things that His people are to do to fulfill His requirement for mercy. The first is "*humble themselves*." The Bible says, "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble." It also says, "The Lord knoweth the proud afar off"—and that's where He keeps them! Friend, if God is resisting you, you don't have any hope of getting into His presence. God can push a lot harder than you can. So the first requirement is to humble yourself.

Peter says again in his first epistle, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." A lot of Christians have a wrong idea about humility. They've got the idea that humility is a kind of vague religious emotion that God somehow gives them. That's not so. Humility is not an emotion. It's a decision. It's not in the area of the emotions; it's in the area of the will. If God says, "Humble yourself," He means for *you* to do it. Don't ask God to do it. Don't pray, "God, make me humble," because you're asking for trouble. God can humiliate you, and He may have to do it, but only *you* can make yourself humble.

Many times in our lives we are humiliated, but we're not humbled. That's because humility is an inward change wrought by our will. "If my people *will* humble themselves . . ." God says, "The choice is yours. I can't do it for you."

Now let me just simply state that the God-appointed, scriptural way for us to humble ourselves is by fasting. In Psalm 35:13, David says, "I humbled my soul with fasting." I could say much more about fasting because it's a complete message by itself. However, because of the limitations of space, let me instead recommend for those who are interested in this topic the books listed at the close of this message. But the point we are making here is simply that we obey God's requirement to humble ourselves by fasting.

### *Day of Prayer and Fasting*

At the Chicago Summit Conference in September 1975, national Christian leaders established the first Friday of each month as a day of united prayer and fasting for all Christians in America.

As a reminder to those who participate in this day of prayer and fasting, we want to point out that the day set aside this month is: **January 6.**



Next, God says, "Pray." Prayer that does not come from humility is not guaranteed any answer by God.

Thirdly, He says, "And seek my face." I think that to seek God's face means to pray until you know you've met God. It may take five minutes. It may take five days. It's not a prayer meeting because a prayer meeting begins at 7:30 and ends at 9:00. Seeking God's face ends when you meet God and not before.

The Bible says, "It is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos. 10:12). You don't seek the Lord until 9:00 when the prayer meeting ends. You seek the Lord until He comes. God has given no written guarantee that He'll always come at 9:00. A prayer meeting is good, and I don't belittle prayer meetings, but this passage isn't talking about a church prayer meeting. It's talking about getting through to God.

The fourth thing God calls us to do is "Turn from our wicked ways." But we say, "God, You must be mistaken. I really don't have any wicked ways." Well, let me just mention two potential areas of wickedness in your life that you may not be aware of—not in an attempt to make you feel guilty, but just to face you with facts.

First of all, in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus tells the story about a servant who was forgiven ten thousand talents (the equivalent of six million dollars) and refused to forgive a fellow servant one hundred pence (about seventeen dollars). When the lord of that servant heard about it, he said, "Thou wicked servant." What does that tell us? That unforgiveness is wickedness.

From my experience, I would estimate that more than half of God's people are living in wickedness because they are harboring unforgiveness. That may be the case with many of you reading this article.

Jesus said, "If you forgive, you'll be forgiven." When we pray the Lord's Prayer, how much do we ask God to forgive us? As much as we forgive others. That's God's ratio. Fully forgive, and you'll be fully forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from others, God withholds it from you. And if you refuse to forgive someone, God regards that as wickedness.

Let me give another potential area of wickedness indicated by James 4:17. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." In other words, there are not only sins of *commission*; there are sins of *omission*. If we clearly know what is right and can do it and we do not do it, that's *sin*. And none of us can claim to be faultless in that regard. So maybe we'd better stop arguing with God and face up to the fact that God is absolutely right when He says we need to turn from our wicked ways.

Paul said, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9:20). Are you going to argue with God? "He that reproveth God let him answer it" (Job 40:2). Personally, I won't argue with the Almighty. God says, "If my people will do four things—humble

themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways—then I will do three things." Our four things and God's three things equal the biblical number for perfection—seven. But notice that our four have to come before God's three.

God's response to our four actions of obedience is "I will hear from heaven." God isn't committed to hear everything that's prayed in every church. He's selective about the prayers He hears. "Then will I hear from heaven, forgive their sin [the sin of my people], and heal their land." God will postpone His judgment and bring a blessing instead of a curse, based upon the proper response of His people, the Church. So, if our land is not healed, who's to blame? God or us?

Let me tell you something. I have preached this message across this nation for about twelve years. I believe it's desperately needed, and I also believe Christians are responding. In fact, I believe God is beginning to heal this land, and I think I have a pretty good claim to be an objective observer.

I'm not a prophet of doom. I believe there's hope if we meet God's condition. I take God seriously. I take Him at His word. I do not believe that the situation is hopeless. In fact, I believe that we could be on the verge of the greatest spiritual awakening this nation has ever known. But I think it depends on us.

If we are faithful as a people to obey the requirements of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and respond to God's historical judgments, then instead of judgment, our nation can receive the mercy and healing that the Lord so desires to pour out upon us. 🍷

### Books on Fasting

Four recommended books on fasting (mentioned by Derek Prince in his article).

*God's Chosen Fast* by Arthur Wallis

*Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting*  
by Derek Prince

*Restoration through Fasting* by Derek Prince

*How to Fast Successfully* by Derek Prince

Use form on page 31 to order.

### BIBLE STUDY ANSWERS

(From page 29)

1. A. Repentance from dead works, B. Faith toward God, C. Baptism, D. Laying on of hands, E. Resurrection of the dead, F. Eternal Judgment; 2. A. Repentance from dead works, B. Faith toward God, C. Baptisms; 3. Laying on of hands; 4. Eternal judgment; 5. Great white throne; 6. death, hell, cast, second; 7. Words, works; 8. secrets, Jesus Christ, Paul's; 9. Father, Son; 10. His Word; 11. A. No, B. Yes; 12. A. Angels, B. The world, C. Things pertaining to this life; 13. Ananias, Sapphira, Hymenaeus, Alexander; 14. Goodness, severity; 15. The unthankful and the evil; 16. Repentance; 17. despise, faint, rebuked; 18. C. Sons that He loves; 19. blood, covenant, severer; 20. A. Incest, D. Blasphemy; 21. Corporate action under proper oversight; 22. Yes.



# Bible Study

## THE NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON JUDGMENT

by JIM CROFT

Judgment is one of the most neglected themes in the Church today. The Body of Christ at large seems to shrink back not only from teaching on this subject, but more importantly from the responsibility of exercising discipline within its own ranks in areas where Christ has clearly given us authority. In order to come to maturity, we must endeavor to present both the goodness and severity of God not only through God Himself, but also through the local church.

(Bible Study answers are found on page 28.)

1. List the six foundational doctrines of Christ (*Heb. 6:1-2*).  
A. \_\_\_\_\_  
B. \_\_\_\_\_  
C. \_\_\_\_\_  
D. \_\_\_\_\_  
E. \_\_\_\_\_  
F. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which three of these are designed to bring us into our initial walk with the Lord?  
A. \_\_\_\_\_  
B. \_\_\_\_\_  
C. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which one serves to keep us in health, encouraged, and is also used to impart spiritual gifts to us? (*Mk. 16:18; 1 Tim. 4:14*) \_\_\_\_\_
4. And finally, which one takes place when we have departed from the time and space world? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Before what throne does the final phase of the eternal judgment take place? (*Rev. 20:11*) \_\_\_\_\_
6. When \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_ into the lake of fire, it is a signal that the phase of the eternal judgment known as the \_\_\_\_\_ death has begun (*Rev. 20:14*).
7. Read Matthew 12:36-37 and Revelation 20:12 and list two things that will be taken into consideration in the day of judgment. \_\_\_\_\_
8. There is a day coming when God shall judge the \_\_\_\_\_ of men by \_\_\_\_\_ according to whose gospel? (*Rom. 2:16*) \_\_\_\_\_
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ judges no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the \_\_\_\_\_ (*Jn. 5:22*).
10. What will the Lord use as a standard for judgment when He does judge us? (*Jn. 12:47-48*) \_\_\_\_\_

11. Read Matthew 7:1-5 carefully and answer the following two questions.

A. Are Christians forbidden to judge others? \_\_\_\_\_  
B. Is it possible to see clearly enough to extract a mote or splinter from a brother's eye? \_\_\_\_\_

12. According to 1 Corinthians 6:1-4, what three things do Christians in authority have the responsibility to judge?

A. \_\_\_\_\_  
B. \_\_\_\_\_  
C. \_\_\_\_\_

13. List 4 persons that came under the judgment of the New Testament church as those in leadership were obedient to the Holy Spirit in executing discipline (*Acts 5:1-11; 1 Tim. 1:18-20*) \_\_\_\_\_

14. What two features of God's dealings should every Christian be aware of? (*Rom. 11:22*) \_\_\_\_\_

15. What two types of persons does the Lord often show His kindness toward? (*Lk. 6:35*) \_\_\_\_\_

16. What does He expect His goodness to produce in people? (*Rom. 2:4*) \_\_\_\_\_

17. We, as believers, should in no way \_\_\_\_\_ the chastenings of the Lord, nor \_\_\_\_\_ when we are \_\_\_\_\_ by Him (*Heb. 12:5-9*).

18. Circle the answer that best completes the following statement: God chastens all \_\_\_\_\_

A. Evil workers B. Demons and fallen angels  
C. Sons that He loves.

19. According to Hebrews 10:29 (NAS), if a person "insulted the Spirit of grace" and counted the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ an unholy thing, his punishment will be \_\_\_\_\_ than that of others.

20. Circle the two sins that caused some New Testament characters to be turned over to Satan (*1 Cor. 5:1; 1 Tim. 1:20*). A. Incest B. Robbing temples C. Obeying the mosaic law D. Blasphemy.

21. By New Testament example, can this type of judgment be enacted by a single individual or must it come by corporate action under proper oversight? (*1 Cor. 5:1-5; Mt. 18:15-17*) \_\_\_\_\_

22. Once this type of judgment has been passed, is restoration to the Body of Christ possible? (*2 Cor. 2:6-8*) \_\_\_\_\_



# INTERCESSORS

by John Beckett

*Four years after the formation of Intercessors For America in November, 1973, John Beckett, President of the organization, interviewed two men instrumental to the birth of IFA—Derek Prince and Ern Baxter. The following is the first of two parts of that recent interview.*

**Q** Derek, your book, *Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting*, has given hope to many Christians since it was published four years ago. Can you tell us why you wrote this book?

**A** Part of the reason I wrote the book, was first out of a specific calling of God. In the early years of my Christian experience, God showed me that history could be shaped by prayer and that many situations that we would consider almost hopeless could be altered through prayer.

Then secondly, I was prompted by the situation that I saw immediately before me in the United States at that time. I feel that as a person of British origin, educated and brought up in Europe, I see more objectively the tremendous dangers that threaten the United States, and at the same time the tremendous potential for good and for the extension of God's Kingdom in this country. God has given me a deep concern that His highest destiny for the United States should be fulfilled.

**Q** Ern, you and Derek were instrumental in the formation of Intercessors For America which also occurred four years ago. What were your concerns at that time?

**A** My concerns, I think, were generated by what I was observing in almost every area of life—a deterioration and declination and especially a lack of vision among God's people concerning their God-given and God-intended ability to alter life situations by prayer.

Although I was living in Vancouver, Canada at the time, I had a deep concern for both Canada and the U.S. I had been stirred, too, by the emergence of intercessory prayer organizations in Great Britain and Australia and felt that a similar thrust was needed here.

I happened to share this feeling with Derek on one occasion, and he made reference to some similar directions his ministry was taking. I don't recall all the details of our conversation, but we recognized a definite

and significant conjunction of guidance and direction. We took the fact that we were of one mind in this matter to be an indication that we were on the right track.

**Q** Derek, what is distinctive in the concept of intercession as contrasted with other forms of prayer?

**A** One of the great responsibilities of all Christians is to practice intercession. However, there are some who are definitely called to intercession as their main ministry. One of the great features of this ministry is that it liberates us from being self-centered and forces us to lift our eyes to God above circumstances and situations.

I believe the two highest ministries spoken of in the Scriptures are that of the king (the ruler) and the priest (the intercessor). These ministries are found first of all in Jesus Christ and then in Christians. To me they represent the most effective ministries for forwarding God's purposes and establishing His Kingdom. And I think in a certain sense they represent the climax of Christian achievement. However, I believe that God does not permit us to function as rulers until we have learned to function as intercessors.

**Q** Derek, have you seen an increased prayer emphasis in America in the last four years?

**A** In the last four years, the most remarkable changes have taken place in the outlook, activities and achievements in the Body of Christ in this nation. Today there are hundreds of thousands of Christians seriously and intelligently committed to intercede for this nation. I am personally in touch with a number of 24-hour/7-days-a-week prayer chains which make intercession for the nation one of their top priorities. Overall, I would say that total achievements are tremendous.

**Q** Ern, in the last four years, we have seen major political upheavals in Washington and we've also seen a major spiritual awakening across America. How do you interpret what is happening?





Coming from a theological background and believing in the sovereignty of God and His sovereign rule over all things, I believe that there is a conjoining of a number of factors here. I believe the intercessory prayer emphasis coincides with the increase in lawlessness in the world, and that through prayer, God is being released into world situations.

It amazes me that when our Lord gave the very intimate words in the upper room discourse recorded in John, He told us how His administration would function in this age. He said, "Up until now you have asked nothing in My name," but then He added, "In this day the order of getting things done will be that you will ask the Father in My Name and *it will be done.*"

It is my view that there is nothing accomplished for God that is not done through prayer. Somebody somewhere prays. It almost seems like God has put His power at our disposal—enabling us to release Him into specific situations. With the acceleration of prayer through Intercessors and other groups, these prayers are being answered. They're being answered not only in the

visitation we see upon God's people but in God dealing with nations, with governments and with economies.

I would like to add that one of the major assignments given to God's people is that they pray for all men, especially those in authority. This responsibility has been terribly neglected. We criticize men, we evaluate them, we categorize them, but we don't pray for them. We are becoming aware, especially with the current emphasis on the Kingdom and government of God, that God has delegated to us the authority through prayer to release Him into human affairs. Looking at it very subjectively, if we should fail to pray, we may be failing to govern well in Christ's stead. So I see that what is happening is a direct result of an increase in prayer and is part of God's sovereign purpose for the age in which we're living.

To be continued . . .

In next month's Intercessors Report, Ern and Derek answer questions on pessimism among Christians and the steps and priorities in intercessory prayer.

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