

# Words of Truth



## The Wrath Of Man Worketh Not The Righteousness Of God

By: Brian A. Yeager

We live in a world wherein we are surrounded by evil (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43, John 7:7, and Galatians 1:4). Sin abounds everywhere (I John 5:19). Like the apostates of old, many today are not at all ashamed that they are in sin (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12). Like Jeremiah, those of us who know the truth can find plenty to be righteously indignant about (Jeremiah 15:16-17). This is especially true when you realize how stupid people are (cf. Jeremiah 10:14). What do we do with these situations?

It is certainly possible to be angry and not sin (Ephesians 4:26). That does not mean that anger is not dangerous (Proverbs 14:17). We have to learn to set aside our anger (Proverbs 19:11). If we cannot set anger aside, we at least have to control ourselves when we're angry (Galatians 5:22-23). If angry, we need to be able to think clearly about what we are saying and doing. When speaking, we need to ask ourselves if we are speaking as the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11). When acting, even in anger, we need to know that we are acting in a manner that pleases the Lord (Ephesians 5:8-10 and Colossians 1:10; 3:17). Jesus shows us that we can be angry, act, and speak in anger; but not lose control to sin against God (Mark 3:1-7). However, that does not mean we want to walk around angry all of the time.

We all know that anger is a swift fire that consumes our joy. As Christians, we ought to be the happiest people on this earth (Psalms 144:15, Psalms 146:5, Proverbs 3:13, and I Peter 1:8). Even in times of persecution, we're supposed to be joyous (Matthew 5:10-12, James 1:2, and I Peter 4:13). Very plainly, the Scriptures teach us to put off wrath and anger (Colossians 3:8). Therefore, though there is much to be angry about, we have to realize that we cannot walk about this life full of anger and wrath (Proverbs 27:3-4). If we do walk about allowing ourselves to be consumed with anger and wrath, we will not be able to accomplish God's will!

### The Road To Pleasing God Is Blocked By Wrath

*"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"* (James 1:19-20). There is a wonderful recipe in the Scriptures you just read. The first is to be a quick listener and slow to speak. So often anger gets us to open up our mouths before our words have been properly chosen. We have to be able to control our speech (Proverbs 13:3 and Matthew 12:34-37). Then, after we control what we say, we cannot allow our anger to create wrath. We simply must cease from anger (Psalms 37:8), so that it cannot grow. God is a wonderful example of how we can accomplish this. He certainly had many reasons to be furious with His people. Yet, so that He did not completely destroy everyone, God would not allow His anger to be stirred too much. Notice: *"But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath"* (Psalms 78:38). Consider then how many times you could have prevented yourself from boiling over had you turned away your anger?

When you read James 1:19-20 you read that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. If you will recall, Moses allowed his frustrations to keep him from doing the righteous work of God when he smote the rock in disobedience to the Lord (Numbers 20:1-12). Christians understand, even when anger is justified, that a non-compromising means to peace is the Lord's will (James 3:17-18). Notice this Scripture: *"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly"* (Proverbs 14:29). Let's apply these principles.

### **Applications To Think About**

You have just purchased a brand new vehicle. You're driving off the dealership's lot and you begin hearing a popping noise. (The salesman was demonstrating the sound system in the car on your test drive, so you had not had the chance to hear this noise before.) You return to the car dealer and tell them you want another car. They tell you that the popping car is yours and the best they can do is get it inspected and repaired. You are angry! You then find out that they cannot do it today. Your anger grows to wrath. You now tell this jerk exactly what you think about him, the automobile you purchased, his dealership, etc. Now, after you've really blown up, go back and ask him if he'd like to study the Bible with you. Do you see the dilemma (Philippians 2:14-16)? Wait, you might now be thinking, "I have all the right in the world to be upset." Correct, you do have the right to be upset. However, did your wrath help or hinder the work of God (Ephesians 4:31)? Why can't you allow your Father to deal with this injustice (Romans 12:17-21)? Is it better to sin in anger or to get ripped off (Psalms 4:3-8)?

You are at work. It is a normal day surrounded with common frustrating situations. A co-worker approaches you and says something that really irritates you. You keep your calm and dismiss the situation. You have even thought about how anger resteth in the bosom of fools (Ecclesiastes 7:9). This co-worker is not happy though. He/she wants to "get at you". They approach a second, third, and even fourth time to see if they can irritate you. Now, you know this person is going to just keep coming at you. So, you decide to trade insults and "tell this person off". What did you accomplish? Well, you've engaged in jesting [witticism]. Therefore, you've sinned in doing that (Ephesians 5:4). Have you accomplished peace in your workplace? No, you have decided to stir up anger with your reply (Proverbs 15:1; 18). You might think you were slow to anger (Proverbs 16:32). Yet, does slow to anger mean that once you become angry you can lose all self-control? No, we must always exercise self-control (I Corinthians 9:25-27 and II Peter 1:5-10). The one thing you have done is you've made sure that if you ever have a Bible discussion with your co-workers about anger, self-control, strife, etc. that you have painted yourself as a hypocrite who certainly has contributed to the loss of souls (Proverbs 11:9).

### **Conclusion**

Anger and wrath have such negative effects on every part of our lives. We cannot pray right when filled with anger (I Timothy 2:8). Anger negatively impacts our families (Proverbs 21:19 and Colossians 3:21). We are even instructed not to be friends with angry individuals (Proverbs 22:24). Of course, this list could be made much longer. The point of this article should be clear to all of us. When we are filled with anger we are sure to fail in doing what God expects us to do in all areas of our lives.

I have found it very helpful to always prepare myself when entering situations wherein frustration is possible (Proverbs 16:1 and Ephesians 4:23). As noted already, that is just about every area of life since stupid abounds everywhere. Don't let these things keep you from doing God's will!