

Christian Response to the Rage & Wrath of Man

Scripture Reading: II Thessalonians 3:1-5

The knowledge of God's love and grace comforts us and builds us up (II Thessalonians 2:16-17), but as we learn to apply and share that knowledge, we will also encounter resistance and persecution from the world (II Timothy 3:10-12; I John 3:12-13). At this point Paul reveals the need to seek the Lord, not for mere survival, but for the advancement of the work of the Gospel. The world is not going to get nicer (John 16:33). We must get stronger. We must remember to seek for the balance of God's strength for spiritual warfare, and God's love for tenderly reaching people who need to be rescued from devilish, worldly lies (I Corinthians 16:13-14; II Timothy 2:1-10,19-26). It may be summarized by saying that we need passion for God's Word and compassion for people.

So, how do we respond when the world becomes unreasonable and resistant to the ministry of the Gospel? It could be easy for us to react in such a way that we become like the world. Is there a checklist for things to do and not do? Where do we turn when it seems overwhelming? How can we help each other? Paul reveals some answers to these questions in our Scripture reading. Let's check our understanding.

Understanding the big picture – What is at stake? (II Thessalonians 3:1)

People need God's Word! They are doomed without it! Scripture is glorious. It reveals God's glory (i.e. who God is and what God does). People cannot know God and glorify Him unless they receive the message from God's Word and glorify His Word. See Romans 10:13-17; II Corinthians 4:3-6; I Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:22-25; Psalm 56:10; 119:49-50,105; 130:5; 138:2.

Understanding the big picture – What is the problem? (II Thessalonians 3:2)

The biggest problem in the world is unbelief. People believe, say, and do wicked and absurd things because they do not have faith in God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. See Hebrews 11:6; Romans 3:10-18; I Timothy 1:12-13 cp Luke 18:8 b; Hebrews 3:12.

Understanding the big picture – Who is the source of help? (II Thessalonians 3:3)

God cannot depend on our faithfulness. We must depend on His faithfulness! Prayer to God must be our first resort, not our last resort (II Thessalonians 3:1). It is **His** deliverance that will preserve us (II Thessalonians 3:2). See John 15:5; I Thessalonians 5:17-18,23-24; Philippians 1:6; 3:3; 4:13,19; Ephesians 6:10-20; II Corinthians 1:8-10; II Timothy 4:16-18.

Understanding the process – Receiving God’s grace leads to obedient action! (II Thessalonians 3:4)

No matter how much we invest in people, no matter how much talent and potential they demonstrate, we must trust God’s Spirit to work with and through other people. We must not rest on the knowledge that people have. That knowledge must be converted into action, so that people’s faith brings forth faithful obedience. See Zechariah 4:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 15:18; Philippians 1:11; 2:12-13; I Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 2:20; 5:6,16-18,22-26; James 2:17-18; Romans 1:5; 16:25-26; I John 2:3-6 cp. Jude 1:3-4. See also Romans 7:18 cp. Philemon 1:6.

Understanding the goal that the Lord has for you – God’s love and Christ’s enduring strength! (II Thessalonians 3:5)

We should focus most on, not what is happening **to** us, but what is happening **in** us. God is continually directing our hearts. The Greek word for “*direct*” means “*to make straight.*” We tend to wobble and swerve with our attention and affection. God has two things for us to stabilize us:

- The love of God
- The patience (enduring strength) of Christ

Love of God

It is God’s love that makes us godly and useful for the work of the Gospel. Without that love, we are just handlers of doctrine and of people. We cannot expect God’s results without His love controlling us. See II Timothy 1:7; I Corinthians 13:1-3; 16:14; II Corinthians 5:14-15; 6:1-6; Galatians 5:6,13-14; Ephesians 3:14-19; 4:11-15; 5:1-2; Philippians 1:9-10; I Thessalonians 1:2-3; 3:12; 4:9-10. See also Romans 5:1-5; 8:35-39.

Patience / Enduring strength

“*Patient waiting for Christ*” – The KJV gives a paraphrasing here. It implies that, as we anticipate the second coming of Christ, we will be alert to our duties. We want to be found faithful. See I Thessalonians 3:12-13; II Thessalonians 2:1-2; Matthew 24:44-51; Titus 2:11-14.

“Patience / steadfastness **of** Christ” – This is the more literal meaning of the Greek. This shows that we are looking to Christ for enduring strength. See Hebrews 4:14-16; 12:1-3; 13:20-21; II Timothy 2:1,3-4; Philippians 1:11; 4:13,19; John 10:27-28; 15:1-8.

Closing Benediction – II Corinthians 13:14