

## **“Be Patient!”**

Worldwide evil is progressing rapidly. But believers are not anxious because we know God is controlling the pace of evil. 2 Thessalonians 2:7 tells us, “... he who now restrains it will (continue to) do so” ... until God chooses to remove Him. One reason for this restraining work of God upon evil is to assure Antichrist does not come onto the world scene until God’s timing.

In Revelation 13, when he is allowed to come on the world scene, the Antichrist exerts economic control over the whole world. No one can buy or sell without the mark of the beast imprinted into the back of the hand or on the forehead. This is an act of faith, an act of trust and worship. It is a choosing to trust Antichrist for life and rejecting trust in Christ. The angel announces that this is a fatal choice. Anyone who receives this mark shall experience the fury of God's wrath to the last dregs. There will never be a desire for repentance, nor will people who take the mark want to turn to the Lord Jesus.

This passage is not a popular doctrine. It is regarded as contrary to the gospel of love. But all through the Bible, you see that God's love is manifest to people everywhere, urging them to escape this judgment. God in love pleads with people, “Do not go on to this end!” However, ultimately, he will judge those who refuse his offer of escape from judgment, His grace. He says by warning of future judgment, I love you. Trust me to provide all you need. Therefore, love and trust me, and you will find the fulfillment your heart is looking for. But many people now say and will say, “No. I will take your gifts and all the good things you provide, but I do not want you! Let me run my own life.” Let me have my own way. I can handle things. I can choose what is good for me. To them, God ultimately says, “All right, have it your way!”

God has three choices when it comes to this kind of rejection: First, he can let rebellion go on forever and never judge it. If he does this, the terrible things that are happening on earth, all these distressing injustices, cruelty, anger, hate, malice, sorrow, hurt, pain, and death that now prevails, will go on forever. That opposes who God is. He is Holy, and must punish sin. God does not want sin to be unchecked and unjudged, and neither do we.

Second, God can force people to obey him and control them as robots. But he will never do that because that means they cannot freely love him. Love cannot be forced. The third and only choice God really has is that He must withdraw

ultimately from those who refuse his grace and love. He must let them have their own way forever. This results in terrible torment, a life separated from God, from His life, from His grace, a life of godlessness. If God is necessary to us, then to take him out of our lives is to plunge us into the most terrible sense of loneliness and abandonment that mankind could know. We have all experienced a time when we get what we want and then discover we do not want what we got! For that sense of bored emptiness to go on forever would be unspeakable emotional torment. Add to that the physical torment of hell and eternity is more than miserable.

Because the earth is filled with violence and widespread hate, believers are to be patient, wait for the future day of judgment, when the world will be run by righteousness, by the Righteous King who gave His life to save sinners. So, believer, stop complaining... learn to be patient, learn to wait. The King is coming. Waiting calls for patient endurance, a determination not to yield to panic and anxiety. Don't take things into your own hands. Believers won't take the mark of the beast, because they anticipate the coming of the Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.