

How Will We Respond?

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Here in the 21st century, at least in our society, God's word is being challenged on many levels. Included in these levels are challenges to the Lord's many divine truths. These truths are not simply refused; many are actively seeking their destruction. The Lord's people live by these truths regularly, for they give us stable, healthy lives, and provide foundations we can live by and on that, man's truths cannot provide.

The question I ask in this article is "How will we respond" to these attacks and attempts to tear down our spirits and the temptation to "blend in with the crowds?" We will be tempted to respond in kind. Our temptation will be to call those who oppose the Lord names, for that is how we are being treated. However, when we sink to this level of dialogue, we are not projecting the spirit of the Lord. And such responses do not encourage those we may be calling "names" to follow the Lord. They are only encouraging them to blaspheme the Lord further.

We are tempted to yell and scream at those we perceive as our enemies. To carry signs and "protest" what they are doing. This also is not the Lord's way. It can be very difficult to respond and answer in a godly manner when we, ourselves, are being mistreated. Our nature is to "fight back" with how we are being treated. However, we must be encouraged to always answer humbly and with love for those we are trying to convince. We are urged to "give an answer for the hope that is in us" (**1 Peter 3:15**) in a godly and holy manner rather than resort to our true enemy's nature, that of Satan. The world is NOT our enemy. We do not wish them spiritual harm, for we should want them to repent and be saved, just as we are on the path toward salvation. We need to remember that the Lord wants all to be saved, including those challenging His truths and His people.

Let us consider some of the many examples in the Scriptures of how the Lord's people answered such challenges from the world. I like how Daniel responded when he was commanded to not pray to anyone but King Darius in **Daniel 6**, and in particular, look at his response in **verse 10**. He prayed three times each day! It did not matter to him what the decree demanded. He was only interested in what the Lord commanded, and His God asked him to pray. He did not retaliate, but simply continued praying. The Lord surely was pleased with his spirit. The end result was that King Darius honored God at the close of that chapter!

I especially like how those we know as Daniel's friends responded in **Daniel 3**. They were commanded not only to bow before the golden image of King Nebuchadnezzar but they were also commanded not to bow before their God. Their response is noted in verse 16 of that chapter. They declared they would not bow down to the golden image, even though it may cost them a horrible death. The Lord was surely pleased with their response. Also, note how Nebuchadnezzar gave glory to the Lord at the end of that chapter! In both of these instances, the Lord was glorified as a result of their faith.

We go to the New Testament in Acts chapters four and five. In **Acts 4:18-20**, the Jewish leaders forbade them from preaching the name of the Lord. It is interesting they did not command the Christians to not believe in Jesus; they just commanded them not to preach in the name of Jesus. Peter responded in **verses 19-20**: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." After they were released, what did they do in **verse 23**? They met with their brethren and asked the Lord for boldness!

Again, in **Acts 5:22-32** the apostles were commanded not to teach in the name of the Lord. They responded in **verses 29-32**, "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" When they were released from custody, they praised the Lord, that they were allowed to suffer for His name. What a great response!

The world hates Christ, and the world hates His Christians. The world desires we either be convinced to serve their gods and ideas or be destroyed. Jesus taught his followers they would be persecuted for following and preaching in His name. This principle continues into our modern era.

Let us not allow our spirits to be lowered to Satan's level and those who follow him and his wickedness. Let us respond to such threats with grace, godly wisdom, and love. We also should want all men everywhere to be saved and respond with this goal in mind.