



Thoughts from Second Thessalonians ...

## Righting the Wrong

People have an innate sense of justice. But since justice is rare this side of glory, there is often a lot of frustration and rage at the corruption that goes on, especially when the descendant of Adam is the victim of injustice himself. The root cause of the injustice, corruption, and destruction is, of course, Satan the destroyer. "He was a murderer from the beginning," said Jesus, and "the father of lies" (John 8:44). But, lest anyone try to put all the blame on the devil as did Eve, God holds the human race accountable on an individual basis. People willingly step into the tempter's traps, and hence are responsible for their own participation in rebellion against God. That rebellion often breaks out in the persecution of Christians, as in Thessalonica of old. The saint of God, though, instead of being frustrated and enraged at the injustice of the world, recognizes it is part of following Jesus. "If they persecuted Me," averred the Savior of the world, "they will also persecute you." One of the major encouragements in the midst of this persecution is the other half of Jesus' statement: "If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20). There will be someone in the midst of the controversy who will be interested in the truth and willing to obey the gospel. That makes it all worthwhile.

- **In the midst** — The apostle Paul is thankful for the brethren in Thessalonica's being able not only to keep their faith intact, but to continue to move forward in the gospel. "Your faith is greatly enlarged," he comments commendably, "and the love of each of you toward one another grows ever greater." Thus he is able to speak proudly of the Thessalonian brethren among the churches spread throughout the eastern Roman Empire, "for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure" (2 Thessalonians 1:4). That persecution and affliction was considerable, as Paul himself personally experienced, being run out of Thessalonica very shortly after his first preaching there.

- **God's righteous judgment** — God makes it clear that He will right the wrongs inflicted on His people. Even Hannah, the humble hand-maiden of the Lord and mother of Samuel in the Old Testament was aware of God's justice, and made mention of it in her prayer of thanksgiving for the birth and dedication of her first-born son. "He keeps the feet of His godly ones," she affirmed to the Lord, "but the wicked ones are silenced by darkness" (1 Samuel 2:9). This suffering and affliction dealt to the saints is "a plain indication of God's righteous judgment," remarks Paul, "so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering" (2 Thessalonians 1:5). How encouraging it is for brethren to know, because it is a statement inspired and backed by the Holy Spirit, that the suffering of true saints points to the eventual judgment of God on those inflicting the persecution, unless the persecutors themselves repent and join the ranks of the suffering as well.

In his Roman epistle the apostle Paul noted that disciples of Christ are fellow heirs with Christ "if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17). Saints must suffer to be considered worthy of the eternal kingdom of God. But the suffering is not the end of the story. "For after all," Paul informs the brethren, "it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" (2 Thessalonians 1:6,7). The affliction of the rebellious, of those who persecuted the church of God, will be immense — really beyond comprehension — in the dark fires of a Christless hell. The saint can be encouraged; God will right the wrong!

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JAY WILSON