

God's Righteous Judgment

II Thessalonians 1:1-12

Introduction:

- II Thessalonians is, of course, the second letter written by Paul addressed to this church. Remember, this was a young church that still needed some discipleship and guidance
 - Paul, Silas, and Timothy were all used of God to plant and nourish this young church
 - Purpose: Many Bible teachers believe that there may have been a forged letter or document being circulated, claiming Paul as the author, and wrongly predicted the Great Tribulation had already begun- (2:2). So, this church had some questions to which Paul answered
 - Paul emphasizes the rapture in I Thessalonians, and emphasizes the Tribulation and Day of the Lord in II Thessalonians.
- I. **A PERSECUTED CHURCH-** v. 1-5
- a. The church will not go through the Great Tribulation, but that doesn't mean we will not face tribulations in this life! "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
 - b. But before we consider that, I want to highlight God's program through the church
 - i. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is God's program for our day. God's will- for every believer to be an active member of a local body
 - ii. The church is not an organization, it is an organism- a body. Your hand doesn't just decide to not show up does it? At least not usually...
 - iii. Consider the testimony of the Thessalonian church- growing in faith and love
 - c. God's plan through suffering-
 - i. The church in Thessalonica was born in persecution (Acts 17:1-9, I Thess. 1:6, I Thess. 1:6; 2:14-16; 3:1-3), but they patiently endured (II Thess. 1:4).
 - ii. We often wonder, "Where is God?" in the midst of our tribulations, or that it is not a righteous thing when suffer. Paul took the exact opposite position and insisted that the Thessalonians' suffering was evidence (token) of the righteous judgment of God. It was evidence that God is there, because God's work of bringing out enduring faith is often done through trials. Eccl 7:2- the house of mourning

- iii. Despite the persecution (or perhaps because of it) their faith and charity continued to grow
- iv. Missionaries say there is revival in Myanmar and in China and other countries because of persecution. We see that in the book of Acts and throughout church history.
- v. Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."
- vi. Don't think it strange- I Peter 4:12. Don't doubt, get bitter, or give up!
- vii. Patience- is not just learning to wait on your wife when she's running late! In the Greek means to stand under/remain under a weight
- viii. Consider the example of an athlete- Illustr- world's strongest man. How in the world did they get so strong? Through training! How can our faith be so strong and our trust in God be so firm- training
- ix. V. 5-Our sufferings don't save us (i.e. asceticism), but they do make us fit for God's kingdom
- x. Sometimes there are situations in life that make us feel misunderstood, hurt and afraid, all alone- we feel like everything we hold dear is slipping away- but remember God is there! And He is teaching us that when we feel like all we have is God, we realize all we NEED is God!

II. **GOD'S JUDGEMENT AGAINST THE WICKED-** v. 6-9

- a. God has many attributes, and is perfectly whole in His nature and actions
 - i. He does not pick and choose which attribute He will be at a given time
 - ii. He is immutable- He does not change with time, as man does
- b. God's justice- Everything God does is just and right (Deut. 32:4, Rom. 9:14)
 - i. Judgment is a righteous thing- v. 6
 - ii. V. 6- Since it is a righteous thing with God: Many people question the righteousness of God's judgment. They believe that God's love and His judgment contradict each other. "How can a loving God send people to Hell?"
 - iii. But God's judgment is based on the great spiritual principle that it is a righteous thing with God to repay those who do evil. Since God is righteous, He will repay all evil, and it will all be judged and accounted for either at the cross or in hell.
 - iv. There could be no real love apart from justice and righteousness (illustr- this is the moral fabric of civilization)

- v. By the way, those who deny God, but try and use moral arguments to disprove God end up borrowing from God to do so! Morality belongs to God!
 - vi. Our culture today is becoming increasingly naturalistic, but they have yet to come to grips with morality. The notion of evil and good cannot exist in a purely naturalistic world. Richard Dawkins claims we are just dancing to our DNA...then why was the shooting in Las Vegas last week widely considered so evil? We are not just random molecules at work- there is evil in this world! And that means there is also good.
 - vii. Ravi Zacharias puts it this way, When you say there is evil, aren't you admitting there is good? When you accept the existence of goodness, you must affirm a moral law on the basis of which to differentiate between good and evil. But when you admit to a moral law, you must posit a moral lawgiver.
 - viii. There is a moral law (Romans 2), and that means there is a Moral Law-Giver who transcends that law and has given it to us! Why are many people trying to erode morality in our society? Because they are trying to remove God!
 - ix. People don't want to think about morality because that means there is a Moral Law-Giver who they are accountable to and will be judged by one day for breaking His law
 - x. Sinners do not have to face God's judgment in Hell! Salvation is freely offered to all men!
 - xi. God's vengeance- We can see a statement like 2 Thessalonians 1:6 in much the same context as those passages in the Psalms where the writer happily wishes ill upon his enemies – they are a prayer of entrusting the judgment of these enemies to God, instead of personally taking the revenge.
 - xii. God's vengeance is not like man's- marked by spite or vindictiveness. In the Greek, the idea is that it is simply the unwavering administration of justice.
- c. The judgment of God means that there is nothing unimportant in my life. Everything is under the eye of the God I must answer to.
- i. Every idle word, thought, and action
 - ii. This helps us to have character
- d. The tribulation upon these persecutors of God's people is not like a purifying fire. It is the fire of a pure and holy judgment.

- e. God's rest for believers- The Thessalonian Christians were persecuted and had tribulation; and God used it for His glory. But the time of persecution would not last. A day of rest is promised for every believer.
 - i. Matt 11:28-29- Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
 - f. In contrast with unbelievers in Hell- Revelation 14:11, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night..."
 - g. Guzik points out in his commentary a comparison with V. 8-9- Flaming fire...absence of God's presence, and Daniel's 3 friends
 - h. One of the saddest phrases in the Bible- "from the presence of the Lord." Sad that many live like that today, and will live that way in eternity!
 - i. V. 10- Because our testimony among you was believed: This shows the difference between one heading towards judgment and one heading towards glory. (v. 8)
 - j. Paul believed the testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it changed his life. How about you?
- III. The name of Christ glorified- v. 10-12
- a. When He comes- v. 10
 - i. Which phase of His coming is it?
 - ii. Most likely at the Revelation/Second Coming when the earth is judged
 - b. This is our main goal in life- to bring glory to Christ- "He must increase, I must decrease."
 - c. This is our highest honor
 - d. This is what the world needs to see!

Conclusion:

- Persecution and trials often help us glorify God- illustr silversmith's fire

The Refiners Touch

There was a group of women in a Bible study on the book of Malachi. As they were studying chapter three they came across verse three which says, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." This verse

puzzled the women and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God.

One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study. That week the woman called up a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest in silver beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that, in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest so as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot - then she thought again about the verse, that He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. For if the silver was left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's the easy part -- when I see my image reflected in it."

If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has His eye on you and will keep His hand on you and watch over you until He sees His image in you.