

1 Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 15

II Thessalonians – Part 2

I. Exposition of Chapter 1 (continued).

A. Verse 5 – “...which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;”

1. This verse must be understood in light of **verse 4**. Remember **verse 4** commends them for their patience and faith in the midst of persecution and tribulation. The words “**manifest evidence**” is one word in the Greek and means: “**to show, to demonstrate, the means by which one knows that something is a fact**”¹ It seems that Paul is saying that the fact that the Thessalonians held onto their faith and patience, in spite of the opposition, is evidence of God’s “**righteous judgment**”. Leon Morris gives clarity to this verse:

“There is a difficulty in that the ‘persecutions and trials’ seem on the face of it to deny rather than to prove that God’s judgment is right. But we should not understand the evidence to be the sufferings... It is not the persecutions but the attitude of the Thessalonians in their troubles that is the decisive thing. Such constancy and faith could come only from the action of God within them, and if God has so inspired them this is clear evidence that he does not intend them to come short of the final attainment of the kingdom.”²

2. “...that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.” – Based on other Scriptures, we know that none of us are made “**worthy of the kingdom of God**” because we earned it by suffering through tribulations and persecutions. In fact, we know that we are NOT justified by any works which we have done or any achievements that we’ve attained to, but by faith in the grace of God. (**Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:8-10**). Robert Thomas writes:

“Future judgment will recognize the worthiness of those suffering for the sake of the kingdom of God...It will not be self-earned but a gracious divine impartation resulting from the decision to believe in the Lord Jesus (1:3, 10; 2:13; 1Th 1:8), who himself earned the believer’s forgiveness of sins and eternal life by dying a sacrificial death (1Th 5:10). The worthiness of the Thessalonian believers had already been established before persecutions came. Their firm stand in the face of persecutions (v.4) confirmed their relationship to God and was a pledge that their worthiness will be openly declared by God himself.”³

B. Verse 6 – “For it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,” – With this verse, the apostle Paul begins to predict and describe the punishment that is coming to those who oppose, or persecute the Thessalonian saints and all true believers in Christ. The word “**affliction**” means: “**to cause someone to suffer trouble or hardship**”.⁴ This was meant to be an encouragement to all believers that, one day, justice will be served to those who do not repent and believe as well. Warren Wiersbe writes:

“Certainly, the wicked who persecute the godly do not always receive their just payment in this life. In fact, the apparent prosperity of the wicked and difficulty of the godly have posed a problem for many of God’s people... As Christians, we must live for eternity and not just for the present. In fact, living ‘with eternity’s values in view’ is what makes our Christian life meaningful today. We walk by faith, and not by sight.”⁵

C. Verse 7 – “...and to you who are being afflicted to give rest together with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,” – This verse, along with **verses 8-10**, deal more specifically with what this “**affliction**” upon the unbeliever will look like at the second coming of the Lord.

1. The word “**rest**” means; “**relief as a cessation or suspension of trouble and difficulty**”⁶ Another word commonly used to define this word is “**relaxation.**”⁷
2. “...when the Lord Jesus is revealed...” – The word “**revealed**” means; “**a disclosure, revelation, manifestation, appearance**”⁸ Notice other usages of this word:

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 340.

²Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Volume 13: 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.)

³*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Robert L. Thomas, (Zondervan Publishing, 2006)

⁴Louw and Nida, 244.

⁵Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 194.

⁶Louw and Nida, 245.

⁷James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 12.

⁸*Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary*, William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett, Jr. (e-sword version 1993).

“...so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,” – I Corinthians 1:7
“...that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” – I Peter 1:7

3. “...revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...” – An “angel” is “a messenger, envoy, one who is sent”⁹. We saw in I Thessalonians 4:16 that He will come with the “...voice of an archangel...” and Jesus said:

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” – Matthew 24:30-31 (cf. Matthew 25:31).

D. Verse 8 – “...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. “...in flaming fire...” – Most scholars seem to agree that this is an expression of God’s judgment. Often, God’s holy presence is described as fire (cf. Exodus 3:2; 19:18; 24:17). “For our God is a consuming fire.” – Hebrews 12:29.
2. “...taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel...” – The word “vengeance” means: “to punish, on the basis of what is rightly deserved”¹⁰ No one is going to be judged unjustly. Everyone who ends up in hell and the Lake of Fire will be rightly deserving of it. There are two categories mentioned here:
 - a. “...those who do not know God...” – This would refer to any person who did not receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
 - b. “...those who do not obey the gospel...” – This would refer especially to those who heard the Gospel but refused to obey it by believing on and receiving Christ. Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“At that time the Lord Jesus Christ will punish two classes of people: those who are ignorant of God (Rom. 1:18–32), and those who ... do not obey the gospel (cf. John 3:36). The guilt of those in the latter group is the greater because their privilege is greater. God’s judgment is perfectly just.”¹¹

c. Also see Revelation 19:11-21.

E. Verse 9 – “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

1. The word “everlasting” means: “without end”; “never to cease.”¹²
2. “...punished with everlasting destruction...” – The word “destruction” does not mean annihilation, it means: a state of utter ruin or destruction¹³ Leon Morris writes:

“Destruction means not ‘annihilation’ but complete ruin. It is the loss of all that makes life worth living. Coupled with *everlasting* (better ‘eternal’, as RSV), it is the opposite of eternal life.”¹⁴

3. “...from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” – Thomas Constable writes:

“Separation from the Lord’s presence (lit., “face”) is the essence of eternal punishment. On the other hand being in the Lord’s presence will make heaven, heaven. A Christian’s hope is to see and be with the Lord; the judgment of unbelievers is to be eternally inaccessible to His presence (cf. Rom. 1:18; 2:5–9; 6:21; Phil. 3:19; 1 Thes. 1:10; 4:17).

The majesty of His power is the visible splendor of the Lord’s presence. The Lord’s power will be manifest in a majestic display (cf. Rev. 19:11–16). Unbelievers will be forever shut out from the Lord’s presence and His power.”¹⁵

A more accurate translation is, “They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,” (English Standard Version)

⁹Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

¹⁰Louw and Nida, 489.

¹¹Thomas L. Constable, “2 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 715–716.

¹²Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

¹³Louw and Nida, 231.

¹⁴Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Volume 13: 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.)

¹⁵Thomas L. Constable, “2 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 716.