

God Will Reward The Just And The Unjust

Man is upon the Earth for a purpose. He is created by God and in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; John 1:1-3). He is directed by God's word, the Bible (Acts 20:32). God has a home prepared for the soul of man in eternity (Mat. 25:46). Man's purpose while upon the Earth is to glorify God in the church that Jesus built (Eph. 3:21). People will be rewarded at the great and final judgment according to their work in fulfilling the purpose God gave them. Some will be deemed by Jesus to be just in fulfilling their purpose and many will be judged unjust by their failure to glorify God (Mat. 7:21-23).

Many texts plainly teach this truth and must not be ignored. Those who do the will of God will be saved. Those who think they do God's service by doing what seems good to them, in sincerity, will depart from the final judge, unknown to Him (Mat. 7:21-23). Those who performed what seem to be small acts of goodness will be saved while others who neglected these *small things* will be lost eternally (Mat. 25:31-46). God will reward the just though they may have hard lives in hard places (2 Pet. 2:9). He will reward those who turn away from Him and go back into the world (2Pet. 2:20-22). God will bless all men though they are few for their obedience while millions perish for their disobedience (Gen. 6:5-8). God knows how to judge the just and the unjust because He is omniscient, all knowing (2 Pet. 2:9). God is able to judge the just and the unjust because He is sovereign, holy and totally just in his being (Rom. 3:4, 23-26). God will judge the just and the unjust because He has so declared (Isa. 46:9-10).

Let's look at the text before us and see the judgment of God. In 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 we see the awfulness and the grandeur of the final judgment. The major points we immediately see teach us that God is righteous, his judgment sure and the

saints sharing in His glory. In contrast there will be a terrible punishment to many by the way of flaming fire. At first glance it may appear the basis of this judgment is the mistreatment the wicked cast upon the church of Christ but this is not so. This mistreatment is the result of their willful state of mind toward God. There are two categories of those punished that stand out for our warning: Those that know not God and those that obey not the Gospel. Some may take comfort that they have not mistreated members of the Lord's church; but there is no comfort if they are not members of the Lord's church! Some may find comfort in having been baptized into Christ, being added to His church; but there is no comfort if they have lost their knowledge of God effectively by not doing his will! The saved that Jesus brings into His glory and rest actively know Him and are active members of his one church.

Persecutions and suffering find active Christians (2 Tim. 3:12). Those that endure these sufferings patiently are worthy of the kingdom of God, the church of Christ. Their suffering is a token, evidence, of their worthiness to God. This is part of the criteria of His judgment. Hebrews chapter 11 lists many individuals that suffered greatly for the cause of Christ. Think of these examples: Noah being mocked; Abraham commanded to kill his beloved son; Moses leaving the treasures of Egypt; those that faced the sword, the fire, the battle, the lions, tortures, scourging, imprisonments, stoning, and being sawn asunder. It is said of these who endured suffering for the kingdom of God will be judged worthy of the kingdom of God. Also that this world is not worthy of these saints (Heb. 11:38). God is just and gives rest to those saints thus troubled. God is just and will recompense the troublemakers by punishing them in flaming fire.

Some look upon this act of God as shameful and look upon Him as some mean, vindictive, tyrannical bully seeking

revenge because He can. These who look upon God in this manner "know not God". The word *recompense* simply means to pay back. You would want a person to recompense you if they had borrowed one thousand dollars from you. And yes it can be used in a negative sense meaning to punish one who has committed an offense. Again, you would want recompense if a person robbed you of all you possessed. The police, the court, the judge would be your friend but the instrument of punishment to the offender. God is going to set the record straight and give to the offenders what they justly deserve. God is completely just. Again, the word vengeance in our text does not describe a tyrant. It means to meet out justice to all parties. It is the act of defending one person from another. One person finds acquittal and the offender finds punishment. God is completely just.

The punishment for the offender, the sinner, is couched in harsh terms to make us understand the severity. While "flaming fire" and "eternal destruction" seem like the harshest of terms, they are not the worst mentioned. Separation "from the presence of God and the glory of His power" needs to be considered by every person living. Every living person has hope, potential to repent, obey and be saved because God is near (Deut. 30:14). Every person is blessed with some need fulfilled and comfort received because God is near (Mat. 5:45). He even cares for us in our basic necessities with His creation (Mat. 6:25-33). After the judgment of God on the troublemakers, the unjust, God will not be near them. Thus there will be no hope, no blessings, no change and no salvation. There will be only torment and that eternally. Now add the flaming fire to get the fullness of the scene.

But why is the punishment so harsh? God is sovereign and He need give no reason. Yet he has given reason though we may not fully comprehend. The punishment is commensurate with the offense. God is

completely just. His saints have been "troubled". This is not a trouble such as a flat tire on the way to work. It is not a trouble even as though a family member has been wounded by another. It is not a trouble such as even you being beaten, robbed and left for dead, maybe incapacitated for the rest of your life. This trouble is the rejection and wounding of the sovereign God who first loved you to the point that he gave his only begotten Son to die a cruel death so you could live. Those "who know not God" refuse to know. The heavens declare His glory and the universe shows his craftsmanship (Ps. 19:1). This leaves every person without excuse to know God exists and to seek Him (Rom. 1:20). Some who "know not God" do so by choice. They ignore the evidence of the Bible and the creation around them or explain them away by fanciful theories (Rom. 1:25). Some who "know not God" changed their affections to the creation while denying the creator (Rom. 1:22-23). Some that "know not God" were simply selfish, ungrateful and not thankful to God, thus not glorifying Him. Some who "obey not the Gospel" sit through thousands of sermons of truth but are not moved to obey (Heb. 4:2). Some who "obey not the Gospel" are stubborn and spiteful (Acts 7:51). Some who "obey not the gospel" intend to someday (Acts 24:25). Many of all these people could be called *good* by worldly standards, where evil abounds. Now think of the persecutions that have been waged against the church of Christ. Christians are members of the very body of Christ (Eph. 5:30). He is the head and we are the members (Eph. 5:23; 1:22). When Christians are torn, maimed and mutilated so is Christ. When Stephen, the faithful martyr, was stoned, Christ stood watching (Acts 7:55). When Saul persecuted the church he was persecuting Christ (Acts 9:5). The church of Christ is the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). Every offense against Christians is against the very bride of

Christ. Christians are the family of God who live and walk as the dear children of God (Eph. 4:32-5:1). When Christians suffer at the hands of the unjust the very family members and children of God are suffering. Now how harsh should the punishment of God be on the unjust?

God is completely just. Therefore the reward for the just shall be as pleasing as the reward of the unjust is harsh. It starts with being ever present in the company of God and all the redeemed. Living with no distraction of temptation because there is no sin there (Rev. 22:15). There is no preparation for another judgment. The whole family of God united together to speak, live in majesty and praise God eternally (Mat. 8:11).

Do you know God? Study the Bible. Have you obeyed the gospel? Study the New Testament. What did Jesus say one must do to be saved (John 8:24; Mat. 10:32; Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16; Rev.2:10b)? What did the New Testament writers record about the process of salvation (Rom. 10:13-17, 8-10; Acts 2:38; Eph. 5:1)? What did people do in the beginning to be saved (Acts 2; 8; 16)? Every sin may be forgiven, no matter the quantity or the magnitude, except for speaking against, rejecting, the Holy Spirit (Mat. 12:31). The revealed Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit. To reject the work of one is to reject the one. Do not speak against the Bible, God's word. Obey the New Testament, God's word. Be saved today. Be at judgment so all who have ever lived may admire and glorify Christ through you (2 Thes. 1:10).

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the 27th Annual Mid-West Lectures, "God's Precious Promises." To hear or view the complete lesson go to www.kc-cofc.org/2009Lectures.htm or contact the 39th Street Church of Christ 15331 East 39th Street Independence, MO 64055-4240 USA

God's Precious Promises...
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