

**SERMON THEME: FACING THE END WITH SOBRIETY**

**SERMON TITLE: GOD WILL BRING JUSTICE FOR YOU BY PR ALBERT LOW**

**SERMON TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:1, 5 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup>Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you...

<sup>5</sup>Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

### **PROLOGUE**

- Today's sermon is to give an outline on 2 Thessalonians, and it can be represented by two verses, and a main point:
  - 2 Thessalonians 3:1 – Hope and faithfulness for persecuted Christians, and in gospel sharing.
    - Recall in previous sermons, the society at large were living in sin and needed salvation, and the early Christians were persecuted and lived a difficult life.
    - Hence, Paul asked for the Thessalonians to pray for him and his companions, that they may bring the gospel to the pre-believers rapidly and glorify the word of God.
    - Similarly, we are living in a troubled world today, hence the need for us to spread the gospel rapidly too, for the people who need it.
  - 2 Thessalonians 3:5 – Patience and lucidity in waiting upon the Second Coming of Christ
    - Paul addresses us personally.
    - Love comes from God, and Paul is asking us to seek after and to feel the love of God, no matter the difficulties we face.
    - Paul wants us to have the patience in waiting for the second coming of Christ; not to be caught up with seeking signs and getting embroiled in confusion from deluded speculations.
    - We are to wait patiently for the second coming of Christ.
  - *God will bring justice to His people, as we:*
    - *Hold onto our hope in Christ and remain faithful through persecution and in our Christian Mission.*
    - *Wait with Confidence for Christ's Second Coming.*

### **A. "JASON OF THESSALONICA" – LINK BETWEEN THESSALONIANS 1 AND 2**

- Thessalonica was a thriving city, but was also riddled with sin, much like our world today.
- Paul came to Thessalonica to preach about Jesus as Messiah, and also to start the Church in Thessalonica.
- This teaching was not well received, resulting in Paul's eviction, and he went to Berea.
- However, even though he was evicted, his thoughts and heart remained with the Church in Thessalonica.
- He sent Timothy to visit and check on the condition of the Thessalonian Church, and got news that the Church was growing, but was also facing increased persecution.
- *This is because Christianity is counter-cultural, regardless of the times – Secular vs Christ's way of life.*
- Paul taught and encouraged the Thessalonians to stand firm.

- Get encouragement from the past:
  - Look at our pioneers and learn from their experiences.
  - Form relationships with each other and build a strong nurturing community.
- Be encouraged by the future:
  - There is Hope.
  - Christ is coming back (Second Coming).
- In-between the past and future (our current days):
  - Encourage and support each other.
- *We need to stand firm, to avoid falling into Satan's trap, and know that God will bring justice for us.*

## B. GOD WILL BRING JUSTICE TO HIS PEOPLE

- Paul is a special leader, with intense love and connection for the Thessalonians.
- He sent Timothy twice, in a short span of time, to check on and to encourage the Thessalonians.
- Timothy came back with the same report on church growth and increased persecution.
- Hence, Paul wrote a second letter consisting of 3 chapters:
  - Hope despite persecution.
    - Suffering is participation in God's Kingdom.
    - Jesus' return will bring final justice to His people.
    - Relational distance from Jesus is the ultimate tragedy for the disbelieving hearts.
  - The Day of the Lord.
    - The return of Jesus will be preceded by obvious and recognizable events, and should bring hope and confidence to His people, not fear.
    - Paul reminds the Thessalonians not to fuel apocalyptic speculation.
    - He writes to bring them comfort, and as a reminder on Jesus' teachings (Mark 13).
    - The Thessalonians are reminded to also stay faithful until Jesus' Second Coming.
  - Challenge to the "Idle".
    - The "idle" are people who refused to work normal jobs to support themselves in ways that would allow them to serve the Lord.
    - This resulted in chaotic personal lives as they worked jobs with possible moral conflicts and a lack of steady income (Roman 'Patronage').
    - Paul reminded the Thessalonians of his own example, where he worked to provide for himself, so that he can serve the Thessalonians free of charge.
    - He encouraged the Thessalonians to imitate Jesus' self-giving love – To work hard so that their lives can benefit others.
  - This letter from Paul reminds us that what we hope for shapes what we live for.
    - *We hope for God to bring justice for us as we live even under persecution for Him.*
  - The belief in Jesus' return and the hope for final justice:
    - Is not to drive speculation about timelines.
    - Is to inspire hope and faithfulness in our devotion to Jesus, especially for the persecuted Christians.

## C. GOD BRINGS JUSTICE FOR US EVEN NOW

- For Christ to bring justice 'for' us means that:
  - We are sinners, yet Christ died on the cross to redeem us – He has justified for us.

- While we are lost, we still serve and seek God to the best of our abilities. Yet, we get persecuted and spurned – He will justify us for our faithfulness.
- Real life instances of God’s justification for His children’s faithfulness.
  - Vietnamese friend with a family business directed towards serving God:
    - He received two missionaries, an act considered as criminal offence, when God spoke to them, warning of the authorities’ arrival, allowing them time to escape into hiding at a neighboring country.
    - During the years of hiding, he felt persecuted and alienated for preaching the gospel, and faced many difficulties in life as well.
    - God spoke to him one day, about returning to Vietnam, to serve God there.
    - He believed imprisonment awaited him, and God’s plan was for him to serve after the supposed jail term.
    - Upon his return to Vietnam, he realized that the law had changed, and he was no longer considered a criminal under the new laws – he is a free man.
    - *God justified for him and his family, for their faithfulness and perseverance through persecution.*
  - Pr. Albert’s personal testimony (ICF HCMC):
    - Before starting ICF HCMC, life was good with no substantial challenges.
    - After founding the church, the devil first attacked his health, with all kinds of ailments, to a point when the doctors told him he might not survive an episode of combined heart attack + kidney failure.
    - He was discharged just a week before the church’s first anniversary, when Pr. Albert’s chauffeur met with an accident and was paralyzed from neck down – the devil started attacking people around him.
    - A family friend suddenly contracted cancer and passed on.
    - His grandson, Jaden was born prematurely with a severe brain stroke, and doctors were certain he would be wheelchair bound through his life.
    - Today, Jaden is a normal and healthy P5 student.
    - *God has justified for Pr. Albert and his family through all these attacks.*
  - Difficulties the church faces today:
    - Same sex marriage: The world celebrates such union, in contrary to religious teachings.
    - LGBTQIA2S+: 16-year-old Josh Alexandria was dismissed from a Catholic school when he shared during a class discussion, of his belief that marriage should only be between a man and a woman. His parents had to employ legal defense when Josh returned to school despite being dismissed and was arrested by the police for trespassing.
    - The Church of England has given priests the authority to bless same sex marriage, but the Archbishop of Uganda wrote a rebuttal in response – It is just a play on words (‘to bless’ vs ‘to officiate’), but in practice, it carries the same weight in recognition of the union between the persons involved.
- Paul calls on us to stand firm, in the face of persecution and pressure to conform to the world, because God will bring justice for us (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

## CONCLUSION

- We are to face the end with ‘sobriety’, and there are two concepts to this word:
  - To be sober (don’t get drunk), and to abstain (don’t drink, so you don’t get drunk).
  - In seriousness, in a serious state of mind.
- We are reminded of sobriety throughout the Bible.
  - 1 Peter 1:13 (MSG)
    - <sup>13</sup> *Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.*
    - We are living in a troubled world, but we are to be clear and level headed, remembering our identity as children of God.
    - Because God IS holy, hence as children of God, we are called TO BE holy.
  - 1 Peter 5:8 (MSG)
    - The devil is ever ready to attack; we will be challenged and persecuted but we must keep a firm grip on our faith and endure, the challenge will not last long.
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:6
    - We are reminded to remain sober.
  - Quote from MacArthur:
    - “LIVE our life...We have been delivered from...darkness...taken out of the night of sin and ignorance; ...Christians are in the light, should not sleep in spiritual indifference and comfort, but be alert in the spiritual issues around them...but to live alert, balanced, godly lives under the control of the truth...”
- When we live in Christ, we have no choice, life will be challenging as Christ had been challenged.
  - We must endure (2 Thessalonians 2:15).
  - Those who don’t follow Christ’s teachings, will face consequences (2 Thessalonians 2:8).
  - We are encouraged in our endurance (Hebrew 12:1-2).
- We are to nurture ourselves and each other and prepare for the Day of the Lord.
  - Continued sanctification is necessary (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
  - Sanctification is a journey/process – it helps us strive to be purer and purer each day.
  - We continue to be anchored in our faith in God, pray unceasingly, and be thankful.
  - Let there be daily renewal in our lives (Galatians 2:20).
  - As we embark on our sanctification journey, God will bring justice to us.
  - This Lent let us remember:
    - Live
    - Endure
    - Nurture
    - Thankful

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Reflect on the time(s) when you were 'persecuted', when you were spurned, mistreated, misjudged, rejected, or broken. What did you do and how did God bring Justice to you? Give details, not just 'I prayed', share with someone what did you pray for, how often, feelings, inspirations, and any 'outside' help.
2. Paul had a 'good' life (powerful, wealthy, knowledgeable) but his life went 'downhill' (mobbed, jailed, beaten) after he followed Christ. Is it worthwhile to follow Christ? Why? How did God bring Justice to him?
3. How would you encourage someone to stand firm in the face of 'persecution'?
4. How prepared are you for the second coming of Christ? Explain.
5. Reflect on the good times you had. What did you do and how did God lead you? Give details, not just 'I thank God' but how were you connected to God? Were the good times Justice from God? Why?