

“JOHN CALVIN: HIS PREACHING”

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Here are the first 3½ pages of John Calvin’s sermon on 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 “On The Final Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ”. The sermon is 16 pages long altogether.

ON THE FINAL ADVENT OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

God is just in giving affliction to those who afflict you, and rest with us to you who are afflicted, on that day when the Lord Jesus will manifest Himself from heaven with the Angels of his power, and in flame of fire, working vengeance against those who know not God, and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will suffer punishment: namely, eternal perdition before the face of the Lord, and by the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired by all believers, because our testimony to you was believed. (2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-10)

OUR LORD Jesus Christ must appear from heaven. It is one of the principle articles of our faith. His coming must not be useless. Then, we should look for it, waiting for our redemption and salvation. We need not doubt it. For that would violate all that our Lord Jesus Christ did and suffered. For why did He descend into this world? Why was He clothed in human flesh? Why was He exposed to death? Why was He raised from the dead and lifted into heaven? It was to gather us into His Kingdom when He shall appear. Thus this coming of our Lord is to seal and ratify everything He did and endured for our salvation. Now that should fully suffice to brace us up to resist all the temptations of this world.

But since we are so frail that we cannot place faith in what God says to us, St. Paul now uses a new argument to better confirm us in this hope, to which he had exhorted us in the person of the Thessalonians. God will not allow Himself to be thus despised by those who hold the Gospel in contempt, who do not take account of His celestial majesty.

He is not willing to permit His creatures to rise against Him and to resist Him. That is why we ought to be all the more confirmed in the hope of our salvation, since God is interested in it as His own cause. This point we should note well. Although God amply assures us of His concern for our salvation, our nature is so full of distrust that we are always in doubt. But when the teaching is set before us that God will maintain His right and that He will not permit His majesty to be trodden underfoot by men, it should fill us with assurance. Then it is certain that God gives us this grace of joining His glory with our salvation so that there is an inseparable bond between the two. Since God cannot do otherwise than maintain His majesty against the pride and rebellion of men, is it not infallibly certain that our Lord Jesus will come to give us release and rest?

Let us note, then, that Jesus Christ cannot maintain the glory of His Father unless He declares Himself to be our Redeemer. These things cannot be separated. We see the infinite love of God for His faithful ones, when He joins Himself in such a way to them that, just as He cannot forget His glory, so He cannot forget our salvation. When He employs His power to take vengeance on those who resist Him, He will all the more punish those who have afflicted unjustly His own. That is the intention of St. Paul when he brings out here that Jesus Christ will come even to take vengeance upon those who have not known God and obeyed His Gospel. It is as if he said, "Here are your enemies who persecute you. Now will you question whether God regards your afflictions to pity you and apply the remedy? Do you think that God does not take account of His glory and that He is not willing to maintain

it? Although adversaries afflict you because you adhere to the Gospel, God also in maintaining His cause will show Himself to be your protector.”

However, St. Paul here gives us other admonitions which are very useful to us. For when he speaks of the vengeance which is prepared for our enemies, he says, “Jesus Christ will come, even with the Angels of His power and in flame of fire.” And to what purpose? It is to confirm what he goes on to say: namely, that the enemies of the truth will suffer their punishment before God and before the face of His majesty. It is as if he said that we can never understand what will be the torment of unbelievers, just as also we do not see the glory of God, for when we speak of the glory of God we know that it is infinite. We cannot measure it, but we must be rapt in astonishment. Such is the horrible punishment prepared for all unbelievers, since God unleashes His power against them. For since His majesty is inestimable, their torment must also be incomprehensible to us. So much for item one.

Besides, when St. Paul speaks of infidels and enemies of God, he says, “They have not known Him,” and that they have not obeyed the Gospel, or that they have been rebels. This manner of speaking implies a very useful doctrine. For when one asks men, although they may be very wicked, if they wish to wage war against God they will say no. However, they do everything contrary to what they profess, since they are not willing to be fully subject to the Gospel. How can that be? It is said that we cannot obey God except by faith. So says St. Paul in both the Epistle to the Romans and in the book of Acts. Since faith is true

obedience and such as God requires and approves, it follows that all those who do not wish to believe the Gospel are rebels against Him and as much as they are able they rise against Him. If they protest that such is not their intention, the deed is such, all the same. By this we are taught that we cannot serve God acceptably unless in the first place we believe the Gospel and accept all that is contained there to humble us.

In short, faith is the principal service which God asks of men. It is true, however, that we must note that faith is not simple assent of the mind to what we are taught, but also we must bring the heart and the affections. For not only by mouth or by imagination must we accept what is said to us, but it must be impressed upon the heart and we must know that we are not permitted to set ourselves against our God. But with true desire we ask to adhere to the doctrine offered to us. Faith, then, is from the heart where it has its root and is not knowledge pure and simple. For if we were only convinced that the Gospel is a reasonable doctrine and meanwhile we did not at all relish it and perhaps it even displeased and angered us, would that be obedience? Certainly not.

Let us learn, then, in order to obey God, not only to regard the doctrine of the Gospel as good and holy, but to love it, and also to join reverence with love according to what David says of the Law, that he finds it more sweet than honey and more precious than gold or silver. We must, then, prize and hold in high esteem and take the doctrine of the Gospel above all that may be sweet and lovable to us. When we do that, then God will approve our obedience. That is the peculiar service He asks of us....

