

II Thessalonians 1:6-10

"IT IS ONLY JUST"

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"Who said that life was fair?" That particular question has become a cliché. Usually it is said to someone who has just complained about how unfair something is. "Well, who said life was fair?"

I do! I believe that ultimately, life will be fair. Oh, I know that life is full of things that are not fair right now, but in the final analysis; when all has been said and done; when everything has fallen into place and eternity begins, life will be fair. In fact, it will be fair and then some.

The wise man said, "I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness" (Ecclesiastes 7:15). It isn't fair!

Poor, suffering Job said, "I loathe my own life; I will give vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; let me know why Thou dost contend with me'" (Job 10:1,2). It isn't fair!

So the complaint of unfairness isn't new. But even in what seems to be the most unfair of life's circumstances, "the just shall live by his faith." In today's often unfair and unjust climate, when the wrong is glorified and the way of righteousness scorned; when truth seems of so little importance, being outweighed by a person's special interests; when God's people are mocked and ridiculed and sometimes cry out, "It isn't fair!"; then we must ask the question, "Who said life was fair?"

And then we must answer, "God does!" Notice our text: "For after all, it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His

power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed - for our testimony to you was believed." (II Thessalonians 1:6-10).

AFFLICTION AND RETRIBUTION

"For after all, it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you... when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution..." (II Thessalonians 1:6-8a). There was a time when the most unfair act of all was inflicted upon the most innocent One of all. Jesus was cruelly murdered by ungodly men. He had told Peter that He could have called down twelve legions of angels to deliver Him, but chose rather to face the cross and die for our sins. But there will come a day in which King Jesus will return, and this time the legions of angels will be with Him, and no enemy shall stand before Him. No bonds, no beating, no mocking; but rather a rendering of a just judgment. Life, at last, will be fair.

TO THOSE WHO KNOW NOT AND OBEY NOT GOD

"...dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." (II Thessalonians 1:8). These are not two different groups, but the same group described in two different ways. They "do not know God" and they "do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." What about those who do "know God" but just never have bothered to obey? Sorry, the Scriptures recognize no such group. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15). This kind of love is not merely something felt, it is active. It includes the way we react to another. If we truly love the Lord, then we react to Him by doing what He says. How tiresome it is to hear people talk of being saved apart from obedience of the gospel; of "just loving the Lord with the heart" as if love for God can possibly be separated from the way we treat Him. It cannot. Those who "obey not the gospel" will receive retribution, and anyone who says otherwise is contradicting the Lord Himself. Life, at last, will be fair.

THE SUPREME PENALTY

"And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..." (II Thessalonians 1:9). This "destruction" spoken of here is not "annihilation", as some would have us believe, but rather "banishment." Such banishment from God's presence brings complete ruin. A part of this final retribution consists of banishing those who have refused God in their lives from the presence of God. It seems as if they are getting what they have wanted all along! They did not want God's presence, and God is therefore withdrawing it. But we are reminded of the old saying, "Be careful what you ask for, you may get it." There will be no shout of joy from the lips of the condemned on that day. Instead, horror and dread as they realize that along with God's presence, they are being banished from any association with His goodness and glory (Hebrews 10:30,31). The universe will never have been so dark and foreboding as it will be as these misguided souls enter into an eternity without God; but it is an eternity that they have chosen for themselves. Life, at last, will be fair.

