2 Thessalonians 1:10 On that day when he comes to be glorified among his saints, and to be marveled at among all those who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

This is such an awesome and marvelous text. In that same light is also a rather frightening and blunt text. Clearly we are being told the way things are. Clearly we are being reminded of the awe and might, the right and justice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without any doubt it is a text that we need to pay attention to especially in the light that many of today’s liberal Christian Churches point blank deny what is revealed in these words. Why? They will tell you this is “Pauline” theology. The implication of those words is that Paul usurped and directed the teachings of Jesus in his (Paul’s) way. Should we believe this is true?

Only if you wish to deny the very truth of “verbal inspiration.” This is a teaching of God’s Word that tells us that every jot and tittle of the Bible is God’s Word, given to the holy writers by the Holy Spirit of God to testify to the truth of Jesus. For instance, Jesus told his disciples in his discourse on Maundy Thursday evening: **“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I told you…he will guide you into all truth.”** Peter testifies to this truth in the words: **“We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.”** Paul speaks of this when he says **“We also speak about these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual truths with spiritual words.”**

As we contemplate all of these things we believe what God has revealed, that the Bible is HIS WORD and does not contain any contradiction or error. It is exactly what we are to know, how we are to know it and everything we are to know. Romans (1:16) clearly tells us: **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”** What all of this boils down to is that it doesn’t matter if Moses, Jeremiah, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, Paul, Peter, or Jude is the writer of a book. What matters is that all of them wrote exactly what and how the Holy Spirit of God inspired them to so that no matter the man, we have the Word of God, the truth and power of God for our eternal life and salvation. We believe all that God’s Word declares. We believe every promise and every revelation is God’s truth for the salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. To believe anything less than that is to undermine, destroy and reject the Savior that God has sent and thus even God himself! Simply put, “If the Bible says it, it is true!”

Let’s wrestle with the truth that is laid out before us. Our theme will be: **GOD’S RIGHTEOUS VERDICT.**

To begin this important topic we need to first back up and speak of what God has done in the first place. God, in love, promised to send a Savior and then when the time was right God sent his Son Jesus into our world to be our Savior from sin. Note that! Jesus came to be our Savior from sin. He came to be the atoning sacrifice, the sacrifice that would appease the anger and just declaration of God that **“the soul who sins is the one who will die.** (Ez 18:4). Indeed, the book of Romans (6:23) tells us, “**For the wages of sin is death.”** Simply put, if you can die, you have a sin problem and if you have a sin problem then you need a Savior!

Jesus is that Savior. I have said many times before what Jesus has done. He came to live the perfect life we could not and then Jesus went to the cross to pay for, yes, to atone for our sins. Not just some of them, but all of them. Jesus died to pay for the sins of the whole world. He took upon himself the perfect justice of God and suffered the wrath of God against all sin. All for us. All so that we could be restored to God, redeemed by Jesus that we might be called the children of God and heirs of eternal life.

There are so many passages that tell us of this wonder of Jesus. John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”** Later in the gospel of John (14:19) Jesus gave us the pivoting point of his work: **“Because I live, you also will live.”**  1 Peter catches this wonder of Jesus; (1:3) **“By his great mercy he gave us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”** Or finally that great section from Romans (3:21-22) **“But now, completely apart from the law, a righteousness from God has been made known. The Law and the Prophets testify to it. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and over all who believe.”**

There is the truth of Jesus. He came to be righteous, pure, holy, and undefiled. But he also came to fulfill all righteousness, that is to be the atoning sacrifice for us and all the world and then by the wonderful and simple gift of faith, to declare that believers are “righteous” before God. Righteous because they bear the righteousness of Jesus. Righteous because they have been forgiven and God, for the sake of Jesus will remember their sins no more. If you are going to speak of God’s righteous verdict, then it must start with Jesus and what He has done. Jesus has become righteous for us.

Of course, this righteousness of Jesus is to be found in our lives. We are to hear, to believe in the verdict of God that every one of us has been declared innocent of sin because of Jesus. We have forgiveness in Jesus, because of our faith in Jesus. Remember and grasp that our faith is the work of the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit, sent by Father and Son, calls, gathers us in the one true faith. Without that work of sanctification we are dead in sin and lost to God. For those who received this gift of faith from God, what a blessing! Did you catch how our text first highlighted this faith that counts for so much? Consider that first line, verse 5 of our text. It said, **“This is evidence of God’s righteous verdict that resulted in your being counted worthy of God’s kingdom, for which you also suffer.”**

Needless to say we are going to have to ask “What is the evidence?” Here is where context is so important. The evidence is given in the verses that precede our words. Verses 3-4 give us the evidence of faith. They say, **“We are always obligated to thank God for you, brothers, as is fitting, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love that each and every one of you has for one another is increasing. So we ourselves boast about you in God’s churches in regard to your patient endurance and faith in all your persecutions and in the trials you are enduring.”**

What is the evidence? A faith that is **“growing more and more.”** No doubt this faith is growing because of the power and wonder of God’s Holy Spirit working in the life of these people to keep and strengthen them in the faith. What evidence was there of a growing faith? Because at the same time, as a result of the saving Gospel of Jesus **“the love that each and every one of you has for one another is increasing.”** The result of faith in Jesus is a growing love among God’s children. It stands to reason, as faith grows, so our love, care and compassion for each other grows, the fruit of faith on display.

But did you catch that slightly ominous note in this section? Faith is growing, love is increasing…all the while persecution and trial is underway. This is not a situation where life is good and because I am so wonderful God has given me everything I want! This is a case where persecution, perhaps even death of loved ones is taking place. Trial and tribulation abounds for those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Despite that, faith was growing and love increasing. Here is the grace and mercy of God in action. How God in his power and wisdom can use all things for the sake and wonder of souls and their salvation. Never forget that. Even in your troubles and trials God is with you and God is working to help you be all the more, sure of the salvation you have in Jesus.

So, these believers in Thessalonica are indeed the “righteous.” They are righteous because of Jesus and the faith given to them by the Holy Spirit. Cleansed of sin, adopted as heirs, renewed in true life these Christians are being blessed. Blessed with the treasure of heaven and the gift of eternal life. Blessed with the certainty that **“Our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed.”** God’s love and salvation is ours in Jesus and frankly, nothing else matters but this wonder and truth of Jesus.

Yet this is a world that doesn’t care. Because of God’s righteous verdict God has drawn some very distinct lines. Those lines are not hard to discern or beyond our grasp. God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, makes it clear that the benefits of Jesus, his forgiveness and gift of eternal life is given to souls only and because of faith in Jesus. That’s all that God asks of us. Faith in Jesus. Again, note that this faith in Jesus does have its fruits of faith, does produce the desire in us to hate sin and live a God pleasing life…but it is not the fruits of faith God will be looking for. God will be looking into our heart for faith. To see if we have trusted and relied on the work and redemption of Jesus or if we have determined that we can save ourselves.

That’s what the unbelieving world does. It determines that faith and salvation are what we do and how we do it. It does that in so many different ways. One way is that people determine that Jesus came into this world just to show us how to live and what to do. They view Jesus as the example of the good life, of the righteousness we are to strive for in life. Trust me, there is a difference between Jesus the example of righteousness and Jesus the very source of righteousness.

Or the world determines that Jesus is just one of many religions that man has psychologically developed to make this world seem and feel better. So no matter what faith you are or what religion you follow, as long as you are good and filled with love and…well, not as bad as some people out there, you will be okay and God, whoever he is, will let you in. Life is just a free for all and we are the masters of our fate. Yet this is false!

There are those in the world that totally reject and ridicule any idea of God, heaven or hell. They deem all religion as phony and unscientific, the very epitome of superstition and ignorance. This group will be hostile to you. This group are the ones who will “trouble” you. This group almost always claims to be tolerant but all they mean by that is that if you be quiet and don’t speak of this Jesus stuff and keep your harmful religious foolishness to yourself…then they will tolerate you.

What does our text say to such who reject God or who do not believe the Gospel? God’s Word says, **“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his powerful angels, he will exercise vengeance in flaming fire on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Such people will receive a just penalty: eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from his glorious strength.”**

Honestly, I don’t think God is being unclear there! We can go back to what I started with, you can go back and declare that this is only the idea of old fashioned, unloving, backward religious fanatics and thus is a part of the Bible that you can reject and scorn. Me, I am going to put my trust and faith in God and in his ability to reveal his truth in the Bible and even his authority to do so. I am going to believe these words and encourage you to the same. For to reject these words is to invite the very truth you reject to be a part of your life.

I am content with God’s righteous verdict. We can either believe the Lord or reject his truth. The result of rejection is not pretty as our text makes clear. The result of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior is awesome, holy, gracious, and eternal. God, grant us eternal life with you, because of Jesus. Let your grace be poured upon us that no matter what trial or difficulty we cling to you and your truth found in Scripture. Amen.