

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
Audio Script – February 6, 2009

It's pretty much a given that suffering persecution is going to be a part of life. If that is so, would you rather suffer persecution for doing what is wrong, or suffer persecution for doing what is right? We think more about that challenge in today's Templates of Truth taken from II Thessalonians, chapter one.

Like most believers, I have suffered for doing the wrong things, and I have suffered for doing the right things in life. The believers at Thessalonica had learned what many of us have learned. No matter how much you strive to honor and please God with your life, there will always be someone around to challenge and oppose you. Paul was proud of these Christians because of their *perseverance and faith in the midst of all (their) persecutions and afflictions which (they) endured* (II Thessalonians 1:4). They must have asked the same question we often ask: "Why am I having to suffer this persecution levied against me?" Paul answered that question: *so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering* (1:5). We suffer often because of the dedication and commitment we have to our life's work invested in the Kingdom of God.

It should come as no surprise to us that we would suffer for doing God's work. Jesus forewarned us: *A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you* (John 15:20). Paul reiterated this teaching to Timothy when he affirmed: *Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (II Timothy 3:12). It's not a question of whether you will suffer persecution or not; it is a question of why. Peter, who also suffered for doing both good and bad things in his life, declared: *For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God* (I Peter 2:20). Suffering persecution as a result of serving and honoring God in your life is what Paul stated as *a plain indication of God's righteous judgment* (II Thessalonians 1:5). The late Dr. Adrian Rogers said it this way: "Any time you experience the approval of heaven, you can immediately expect the assault of hell."

We should expect to suffer for the bad choices that we make, but it never seems fair to suffer for doing what is right. When we do, our tendency is to become discouraged, give up and quit, or lash out in some form of revenge against those inflicting that persecution on us. None of those responses represent what the Bible teaches us. Jesus said, *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you* (Matthew 5:44). Remember that Paul was proud of these Thessalonian Christians because of their endurance, perseverance and faith in the midst of their persecution. As long as you and I remain faithful to God in the midst of our persecution, Paul gives us the comforting promise that *God (will) repay with affliction those who afflict you and to give relief to you who are afflicted* (II Thessalonians 1:6-7). God will take care of those who challenge, criticize, attack and malign you for your commitment and service to Him.

When we abandon this problem to the sovereign control of God, it frees us to pursue greater and higher things, namely: *that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power* (1:11). Turn those who afflict you over to

God, and then concentrate on that which God called and gifted you to do, and perform that work diligently in faith and power, so that God can fulfill every good intent for His will, plan and purpose in your life. That way, you will be found *worthy of your calling...(and) the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (will) be glorified in you, and you in Him* (1:12).

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

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