

The Crown of Righteousness

by E.L. Bevir

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following God's path and living in the power of the Holy Ghost, and the reward of righteousness that awaits those who love Christ's appearing.

Scripture: Acts 19:10, Acts 20:24, Acts 20:29, Acts 20:32, Acts 24:25, Acts 28:16, Acts 28:30, 2 Timothy 4:8

Topics: "Persecution", "Righteousness"

Description

E.L. Bevir preaches about the apostle Paul's unjust imprisonment and impending death, highlighting the lack of justice he faced from both the Roman Empire and fellow Christians. Despite being deserted and neglected by many, Paul remained devoted to the Lord, exemplifying the heavenly virtues he preached. The sermon emphasizes the importance of staying true to the Christian path, even in the face of unjust treatment, as the ultimate reward and crown of righteousness come from the righteous Judge, Jesus Christ.

Transcript

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2 Timothy 4: 8

It may be well to look, though not for the first time, at the circumstances of the apostle to the Gentiles when he wrote thus to Timothy. He had been unjustly imprisoned; he had committed nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

He was anticipating an unjust capital sentence from the iniquitous head of the Roman Empire; and from the Emperor down to venal procurators there was not for him a shadow of justice in the whole earth.

A Felix may have trembled as Paul spoke of righteousness, temperance and imminent judgment, but there had been no administration of justice; even had much learning made the accused man mad, there was no pretext for the unfair imprisonment and condemnation.

Some suppose Paul's first arrival at Rome to have been about A.D. 62, and that about A.D. 64 he was released from imprisonment; then a second time apprehended about A.D. 66. But this does not change the question. That the preacher of God's righteousness and grace could find no justice at the hands of the world is not to be wondered at; but in the second Epistle to Timothy, injustice is to be found in quarters where it is least expected, that is, in those who bear the name of Christians.

It is sad to think that a great number of those who bore the name of Christ behaved unjustly to the one who had brought them the very truth they professed, and had suffered pain and tribulation of every kind in bringing it to them.

A life of entire devotedness to the Lord and to the church of God had been repaid by the world with the scourge, chains and prospective death; and by the great number of those he had so devotedly served, Paul had received nothing else than cruel neglect and desertion. All they of Asia had turned away from him. Is it then possible for Christians to be unjust? I believe it is possible, unless we go on with God in the present power of the Holy Ghost, not only to abandon the true path of a Christian upon earth, but to unjustly condemn one who shows it forth in his life. The great thing to be noticed in Paul is that he practised what he taught.

He had announced the heavenly position of the Christ, and all connected with it, and his whole life had been a visible example of his preaching.

Here was a man who could be perfectly calm and confident in the midst of reverses and loss, who sought no honours for himself, who behaved in very trying circumstances as a citizen of quite another country (of heaven itself); who had been characterised since his call from on high and extraordinary mission, by a heavenly aim, and by the virtues which are found in a heavenly Christ, and not in Saul of Tarsus.

He had carried out the precept of the Lord Himself, that it is more blessed to give than receive; while showing the greatest forbearance and patience with all men, he had kept firmly to his call by the Lord of glory; he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision.

And on every side he was deserted. Where was to be the reward of this devoted service, of the patient suffering he had endured?

The Lord, the righteous Judge, had reserved the crown for him; there could be no doubt as to His appreciation of all.

There is one tribunal where just rewards shall be given to such as deserve them, and we must not be astonished if the world ignores it.

The more terrible thing is that Christians should ignore it; and though it may seem very sad, I have no hesitation in saying that whenever there has been a wrong direction taken, those who follow it do not like the just retribution of the just Judge at His tribunal to be spoken of. Appealing to Caesar is one thing; appealing to Christ is quite another. Let us notice "all those who love his appearing". May God awake the consciences of us all, for we long to see Him appear in His glory who was crowned with thorns, insulted and crucified here.

Our expectation is to see Him in the place which is justly His, and to see in that day all true service rewarded, justice fully established, the crown of righteousness given to those who shall have shared His rejection and followed His steps in an unjust world. May we all be awakened to serve Him with true purpose of heart until that day!

E. L. B.

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