

1 Thessalonians 2:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Analysis

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost—

kōlyontōn hēmas tois ethnesin lalēsai hina sōthōsin (κωλύόντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν, 'hindering us from speaking to Gentiles that they might be saved'). Israel's covenant purpose was blessing nations (Gen 12:3); preventing Gentile salvation inverts this calling. Eis to anaplērōsai autōn tas hamartias pantote (εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας πάντοτε) means 'to fill up their sins completely'—a judicial hardening where God gives rebels over to sin's fullness (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), storing wrath for final judgment (Rom 2:5).

For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost (ephthasen de ep' autous hē orgē eis telos, ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος)—ephthasen (aorist, 'has come') indicates decisive arrival; eis telos means 'to the end/fully/finally.' This likely anticipates Jerusalem's destruction (70 AD), Jesus's predicted judgment for killing prophets (Matt 23:32-38). God's patience has limits; persistent rejection fills the sin-measure, bringing eschatological wrath. Yet even this judgment serves redemptive purposes, provoking Israel to jealousy (Rom 11:11-14) and preserving a believing remnant (Rom 11:5).

Historical Context

Paul writes around 50-51 AD, two decades before Jerusalem's destruction. Yet he announces wrath's arrival as prophetically certain. Jesus predicted the temple's destruction (Matt 24:2); Paul sees Jewish opposition filling the measure of judgment. AD 70 brought catastrophic fulfillment: Roman armies besieged Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, killed over a million Jews, dispersed survivors. This tragedy fulfilled covenant curses (Deut 28:49-68) but didn't nullify God's promises—a remnant preserved faith (Rom 11:5), and the gospel spread to Gentiles as prophesied (Isa 49:6).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you reconcile God's patience with His judicial wrath against persistent rejection?
2. What does the tragedy of a covenant people opposing their covenant purpose teach about religiosity without genuine faith?
3. How does understanding divine judgment as sometimes redemptive (provoking to jealousy, preserving remnants) affect your view of God's character?

Interlinear Text

κωλυόντων	ἡμᾶς	τοῖς	ἔθνεσιν	λαλῆσαι	ἵνα		
Forbidding	us	G3588	to the Gentiles	to speak	that		
G2967	G2248		G1484	G2980	G2443		
σωθῶσιν	εἰς	τὸ	ἀναπληρῶσαι	αὐτοὺς	τὰς ἀμαρτίας		
they might be saved	to	G3588	fill up	them	G3588 sins		
G4982	G1519		G378	G846	G266		
πάντοτε	ἔφθασεν	δὲ	ἐπ'	αὐτοὺς	ἡ	ὀργή	εἰς
always	is come	for	upon	them	G3588	the wrath	to
G3842	G5348	G1161	G1909	G846		G3709	G1519
τέλος							
the uttermost							
G5056							

Additional Cross-References

Acts 17:13 (Parallel theme): But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

Acts 14:19 (Sin): And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Matthew 23:32 (Parallel theme): Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Acts 14:5 (Parallel theme): And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

Acts 13:50 (Parallel theme): But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

Mark 16:16 (Salvation): He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Galatians 5:11 (Parallel theme): And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Malachi 4:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 (Salvation): And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Acts 13:45 (Parallel theme): But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.