

Recompense & Relief at His Revealing

2 Thessalonians 1:5–12

I. Intro

- A. We are in a time of weariness...
 - 1. When will we finally get peace and rest?
- B. We are in a time of distress...
 - 1. When will justice finally be seen?
- C. These emotions are not new to us, but common to every generation of believers. Maybe we have experienced seasons of rest and relief in the USA, but our family around the world has long suffered under illness, famine, difficulty, and the boot of oppressive regimes → What does God's word have to say to us about it?

II. *[5] This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—[6] since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, [7] and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels [8] in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9] They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, [10] when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. [11] To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, [12] so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

- A. *Reminder: Paul wrote this 2nd letter to the Thessalonians to encourage them to stand firm in faith, hope, and love in the midst of persecution, to clarify some questions regarding future events (eschatology), and to rebuke some lousy behavior that had taken root due to bad eschatology.*
- B. In the second half of chapter 1, Paul is trying to encourage the church that God sees their affliction, that he isn't powerless or dismissive towards it, and that he will do something about it
 - 1. That being said, he isn't going to do something about it YET because he has a plan and purpose for it today and in the future
 - 2. Nonetheless, they should take comfort knowing that God will right every wrong and wipe away every tear when Jesus finally returns.
 - 3. Let's look a little more closely.
- C. The righteous judgment of God does three things in this passage:
 - 1. The righteous judgment of God perfects believers.**
 - a) *[5] This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering*

- b) Last week: Growing in faith, love, and hope in the midst of the best of times and the worst of times is evidence of God's righteousness at work in you.
- c) Suffering is also the means by which God "makes us worthy" of his kingdom

2. The righteous judgment of God repays the afflicter

- a) *[6] since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you*
- b) Some facts:
 - (1) 43K Christians killed, 18.5K abducted, 17.5K churches attacked in Nigeria since 2009!
 - (2) A friend told me a story of a MBB whose son was killed in Germany 5 years ago coming back from a college graduation. He was killed by white supremacists for being Arab. He was also hated by colleauges for turning away from Islam.
 - (3) All across the world from China to Washington DC Christians are persecuted, hated, stepped on
 - (4) What is our role?
- c) Vindication, retribution, recompense, retaliation, revenge... all of these are to be exercised by God, not by mankind
 - (1) Romans 12:19 - Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."
 - (2) So let's talk about the wrath of God...
- d) Who is classified as wicked, the one who will receive God's wrath?
 - (1) *inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*
 - (2) The afflicter
 - (a) This is obvious. The persecutor, the oppressor, the one who most seemingly deserves wrath will get it
 - (3) Those who do not know God
 - (a) Greek word normally translated to see, to perceive with the eyes or any of the senses, to discern, to ascertain, to discover
 - (b) Fitting that Jesus says the Pharisees saw him but were blind... they didn't see the Christ
 - (c) Fitting that Jesus said they were deaf... always listening but never hearing
 - (d) Fitting that Jesus spoke in parables so that they would hear but not discern
 - (e) Those who do not know God are not simply those who never heard about him (them too). Those who

do not know God are those who know ABOUT him but do not KNOW him.

- (f) Those who do not know God will be afflicted with wrath.
- (4) Those who do not obey the gospel
 - (a) To obey the gospel is to believe in and surrender to what Jesus said and did.
 - (b) It is to acknowledge that Jesus is who he says he is (King and Christ), that he did what he said he did (paid the full price for sin), and that he will do what he said he would do (come back to judge the quick and the dead)
 - (c) To not believe is to disobey the King
 - (d) Those who refuse to believe will be afflicted with wrath.
- e) What sort of affliction awaits the wicked?
 - (1) *inflicting vengeance... [and also] [9] They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,*
 - (2) Vengeance - literally meaning "to give full punishment"
 - (a) If Adam and Eve's single choice of rebellion was enough to curse the world with sin and death, curse the ground with toil, and remove them from paradise, how much "full punishment" will there be for those who have willfully embraced a lifetime of rebellion?
 - (3) Eternal (everlasting) destruction - Hell; The absence of God's presence and glory.
 - (a) The term does not mean extinction or annihilation, where one would cease to exist, but the loss of everything good and worthwhile
 - (b) Immediately, the word is used to describe the impact of terrible sexual sin (1 Cor 5), but here it is used to describe an eternal, everlasting state
 - (c) The punishment for these three groups of people is not extinction, where you die only to enter into nothingness, but eternal separation from the love of God, which is tantamount to endless suffering

3. The righteous judgment of God grants relief to the weary

- a) *[7] and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us,*
- b) Paul knew what it meant to suffer for Jesus
- c) He is telling this church the same thing that he tells himself → hope and wait for the ultimate rest and the final reward that comes in the future

- d) He knew that his soul would be at rest when Jesus came because his enemies would be removed (the final enemy being death)
- e) He knew his soul would be at rest b/c there would be no more laboring in the flesh
- f) He knew his soul would be at rest b/c finally he would enter into the eternal "sabbath" with Jesus
- g) He knew his soul would be at rest b/c then all the prophecies of old would be fulfilled and God himself would wipe away every tear
- h) This is the rest and relief that we have to look forward to → eternity with our love, a perfect utopia, Immanuel

D. When will all this take place?

1. *...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven*
2. When Jesus is revealed from heaven
3. *with his mighty angels [8] in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance... [10] when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed*
 - a) To be glorified... To be marveled at... He wants to be famous. He wants us to stand in awe of just him
 - b) We don't need more therapeutic deism. We need to look at our king...
4. When will that be? Next chapter
5. What do we do in the meantime?
 - a) *[11] To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, [12] so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - b) Paul prays that...
 - (1) They would grow in Christlikeness (made worth)
 - (2) God would bless their desire to do what is good by faith (Kingdom laboring)
 - c) He prays for these two things because he knows they are God's will and he knows that they will result in:
 - (1) God's grace being clearly visible to all
 - (2) Jesus Christ being glorified in their midst

III. Conclusion:

A. Big Idea: Not until Jesus is finally revealed will we receive the relief and recompense that we desire. Until that day, we must grow in our faith and not grow weary in doing good, that the grace and glory of Jesus would be clear to all.

- B. I recall being terrified of death, afraid to suffer the judgment of God
1. Indeed, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31)
 2. Hell should give you pause

- C. It is not popular to talk about hell because people want to tell you all about the love of God, but let me be straight and honest
1. The love of God satisfies an eternity of punishment that you deserve
 2. The love of God sent the Son of God to die in your stead
 3. The love of God pardons criminals, rapists, gossips, and liars and makes them sons and daughters
 4. The love of God sends the wicked to hell so that the family of God will no longer be tarnished by threat or stain of sin
 5. The love of God demands the justice of God, the jealousy of God, and the wrath of God upon sin
 6. God is not two dimensional. He is multifaceted beyond our comprehension. Let us not put him in a box.
 7. Hell is real. Time is short. Sin is catastrophic. Judgment is coming. Bend the knee to king Jesus and ask for his forgiveness.
 8. And weep in wonder, marvel at his magnificent grace that he would call US children of God after all we've done, said, and thought
- D. This is the plan of salvation as seen in the gospel of Jesus and it is beautiful
1. Have you surrendered your life to it yet? You can today, and you can respond publicly to that faith by being baptized

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What do you feel most desperate for today and why - rest and relief or recompense?
- Do you feel weary today? Remember Jesus' words - "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Spend time surrendering your burdens to Christ and asking him to give you rest.
- Philippians 4:8 encourages us to think about whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable and God will give us peace. How can you focus on these things this week instead of the stresses of life?