

The Lord Revealed from Heaven

2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

Strong & Ready! (Books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians)

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Introduction: Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 5. I want to bring a teaching to you tonight entitled: “The Lord Revealed from Heaven!”¹

2 Thessalonians 1:5-12, “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 angels⁸ 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.”

I. The Hope of the Faithful (1:5-7, 10-12)

1. Relief from our enemies (1:5-6)

God’s Judgement is Obvious

Remember Paul said in **2 Thessalonians 1:3-4**, “your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.”

The evidence that you are worthy of the Kingdom (that you are converted) is that while you are suffering, your **faith** and **love** are growing.

2 Thessalonians 1:5, “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.”

¹Some of the outline and many thoughts for this study come from Howell, Mark (2015-01-13). *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) B&H Publishing Group.

Paul's Triad

Remember in 1 Cor 13, Paul says, "These three remain: faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love."

You have that triad here. There is faith and love, and then with the coming of the Lord we see hope.

Things Flipped Around When Christ Comes

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7a, "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."

Christians promised suffering. When Christ comes, everything will be flipped around. Throughout the world, Christians are dying for their faith. There is a very real rise in persecution and hatred for Christ even here in the USA. We are not guaranteed that things will remain peaceful for Christians in our country, in fact, the Bible teaches us the opposite. We are going to suffer for Christ – maybe even in our lifetimes. Be ready.

Acts 5:41 – Peter and John had been released from prison. They had been beaten for preaching in the Name of Jesus. They said, "We are obligated to obey God rather than men." And in Acts 5:41 it is written of them: "they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name [of Jesus]."

Rejoicing for Christ!

Imagine what the church in North America would be like if every time we were picked on for Christ's sake we said "It's wonderful to bear reproach for Christ's sake," instead of saying "This whole culture is going to Hell." The Thessalonians, and the Apostles, are Christians who are rejoicing that they are suffering for Christ's sake.

Habakkuk and David's Suffering

At some point in your life, the question, How much longer? has either passed through your lips or weighed heavily on your mind. The question relates to your inability to know if and when things will get better. This is especially true for God's people as they view the pain, affliction, and suffering that is often associated with following Christ. God's people have always desired to know "how long" until God would bring an end to such injustice, to right all wrongs, and to judge those who harm His followers. Listen to how the prophet **Habakkuk** asked this question:

"How long, Lord, must I call for help and You do not listen or cry out to You about violence and You do not save? Why do You force me to look at injustice? Why do You tolerate wrongdoing?" (Hab 1: 2-3).

King **David** had a similar question for God:

"Lord, how long will You forget me? Forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long will I store up anxious concerns within me, agony in my mind every day? How long will my enemy dominate me? Consider me and answer, Lord my God. Restore brightness to my eyes; otherwise, I will sleep in death. My enemy will say, "I have triumphed over him," and my foes will rejoice because I am shaken." (Ps 13: 1-4)

One Day Everything Will be Changed

But know when Christ comes, everything will be changed. God will grant us relief from our suffering!

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7a, "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.”

God Doesn't Settle Accounts Only in October

There is the story of an encounter between two farmers, one a believer and the other an atheist. At harvest time the atheist's fields were rich with crops while the Christian's fields produced a paltry little. The atheist taunted the Christian by telling him that apparently it did not pay to serve God. The Christian replied, "It does pay to serve Him, but you must remember that God does not always settle His accounts in October." One of the most difficult things to do when walking through painful times is to keep the proper perspective.

The Enemy May Seem to Have the Upper Hand

2 Thessalonians 1:6, "God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you." While apparently those who oppose the gospel and trouble God's people have the upper hand, behind the scenes God is orchestrating human history to accomplish His purposes. At Jesus' coming, God will bring final relief to all believers who have suffered at the hands of the ungodly. He is going to answer the prayers of His people who have cried out to Him, "How long until You judge and avenge our blood from those who live on the earth?" (Rev 6: 10). As one commentator rightly notes, though the Thessalonians' "present adversaries seem so powerful, there is One who is mightier than all, who will mete out punishment on their tormentors when He appears in great power and glory."²

2. Rest from our sorrows (1:7b)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8, "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 angels⁸ 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.”

God's People Must Not Seek Vengeance

It should be noted that God's people must not avenge themselves on those who attack them (Rom. 12:17–21), and that God's action is not one of taking vengeance but of upholding justice. God cannot be accused of acting unjustly or ungraciously towards them.³

Rom. 12:17–21, "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.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."²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

² Ryrie, First and Second Thessalonians, 99.

³ Marshall, I. H. (1994). 2 Thessalonians. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1287). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

3. Rewards for our faith (1:10-12)

2 Thessalonians 1:9-12, “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.”

The outcome of our faith is that we will be with Jesus when He comes. We will be glorified in Him.

1. We will be with Him when He comes.
2. We will serve Him until He comes.

The apostle John pointed to the day of Christ’s appearing: “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Glorified with Jesus!

2 Thessalonians 1:9-12, “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.”

John Stott says that to be glorified is like an electrical current coming through a lightbulb. The light bulb is useless without the current.

So when Christ comes we will be displaying His glory! What a day that will be!

II. **The Fate of the Lost (1:6, 8-9)**

God’s judgment is just (1:6).

2 Thessalonians 1:6, “since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you...”

God’s justice demands that He will always do what is fitting and right. Thus God is completely consistent when He promises to reward the righteous with rest and the unrighteous with judgment.

A. W. Tozer explains, “Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more; and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation. As gold is an element in itself and can never change nor compromise but is gold wherever it is found, so God is God, always, only, fully God, and can never be other than He is. Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so. God is His own self-existent principle

of moral equity, and when He sentences evil men or rewards the righteous, He simply acts like Himself from within, uninfluenced by anything that is not Himself.”⁴

God's judgment is fearful (1:6, 8-9).

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, “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. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...”

The language that Paul uses to describe God’s judgment is vivid: “affliction,” “punishment,” and “destruction.” None of these words carry even the slightest nuance of hope concerning the eternal destiny of those outside of Jesus Christ. The words also appear to indicate an increasing intensity in judgment:

- Affliction carries the idea of tribulation or pressure.
- Punishment or Vengeance indicates full and complete punishment.
- Destruction points to ruination and “implies the loss of all things that give worth to existence.”⁵

God is Right and Good

God’s vengeance does not flow from His desire to exact revenge; His vengeance flows from His desire for justice. In fact, as Morris notes, the Greek word translated “vengeance” contains a root word that means “right,” and that root, translated “righteous,” is found in verses 5 and 6.⁶

This means that even in His vengeance, God is doing what is right. God is not on some egotistical “power trip” to put all of His enemies in their place. He takes no delight in that.

Ezekiel notes that God takes “no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezek 33: 11).

God's judgment is final (1:9).

2 Thessalonians 1:9, “They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...”

Game Over

Before we conclude with this final thought, let me help you to get a picture in your mind that will enable you to grasp the seriousness of what Paul is saying in verse 9. Think back to a time when you were watching your favorite football team attempt to mount a last-minute drive to win the game. You cheer them on as your star quarterback manages the clock perfectly while methodically moving your team down the field for a last second come-from-behind victory. Needing a touchdown to win, your quarterback throws a screen pass to your lightning-quick

⁴ Tozer, Knowledge, 87– 88.

⁵ Rienecker and Rogers, Linguistic Key, 606– 7.

⁶ Morris, First and Second, 203.

running back. You cheer excitedly as he zigzags among the defenders and heads for the end zone, but just before he can cross the goal line he gets tackled. You glance over at the clock and notice that time has expired. Your first thought is to quickly scan the field in search of a yellow penalty flag in hopes that your team may get one more play. But hope suddenly gives way to reality when you realize that the game is over and your team just lost. If you have watched enough football games, then you know exactly what I am talking about. It is a sick feeling to know that your team was that close to victory but will not be afforded the luxury of running another play. The game is over.

Now I want you to think about something much more serious. In verse 9 Paul vividly reveals the ultimate fate of every person who does not know God and does not respond in obedience to the gospel of Jesus. Listen to the finality of these words: “They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (1:9). When Jesus comes again, He will pronounce final and ultimate judgment on those who do not know God. Unlike football, there will never be another game or another season with a chance to make up for the shortfall. It’s game over— forever! This is “eternal destruction” away from God’s presence forever (Rev 20: 11-13).

Description of Hell

Jesus repeatedly taught about a place of eternal ruin and destruction called hell. He described it as a place of

- “eternal fire” (Matt 25:41),
- “eternal punishment” (Matt 25:46),
- eternal “darkness” (Matt 22:13),
- eternal pain (Matt 8:12), and
- eternal separation (Luke 16:19-31).

What Makes Hell Hellish

However, of all the biblical descriptions portraying the horrors of hell, perhaps none is more striking than the one Paul gives at the end of verse 9 where he speaks of eternal separation “from the Lord’s presence,” and “from His glorious strength.” Though the darkness, fire, anguish, and pain will make hell unbearable, the total absence of God’s presence is what makes hell what it really is— hell.

Conclusion

Ask this question: If Jesus will be glorified in His saints at His coming, then why not start glorifying Him now? Of course, this was exactly the point of Paul’s prayer in **1:11-12**, “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.”

Be the Church!

Considering the glorious future that God has planned for His people, we should be looking for every conceivable opportunity to make His name great among the nations. Perhaps a good place to begin is by reevaluating the what, the why, and the how of church. Admittedly, this will not an easy task, but if believers exist for the purpose of glorifying Jesus by fulfilling “every

resolve for good and every work of faith by his power (vs 11),” then they must reach beyond just doing church— they must be busy being the church.

What if it Were Today?

Revelation 1:6-8, “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 22:20-21, “He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”