

Christ's Glory on Judgment Day

2 Thessalonians 1:3-12

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Introduction

In this morning's sermon, I want to show you something very glorious about Jesus Christ that many Christians today miss.

- They miss it because it is a subject that Satan absolutely abhors and he has been rather successful in getting the world to hate it in our day.
 - As a result of this, a lot of us pastors are hesitant to talk about it much, and lot of us Christians are embarrassed about it.
 - But giving way to such pressure deprives us of seeing one of the most glorious things about our Saviour and our God—something that we desperately need to see.
 - And it deprives Him of receiving the honour and glory from us that rightly belongs to Him.

The matter about Jesus that I want to speak to you about is found in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-11.

- It is His glory revealed when He come to judge the world at the last day.
- We are told about it in God's Word so that we can begin to glory in it now for His honour and for our joy.

Please give me your attention as I read this passage to you.

- I will begin in 2 Thessalonians 1:3 to give you the context.
- This is the precious word of the living God.

2 Thess 1:3-12: We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴ so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵ *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶ since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking

vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. ¹¹ Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹² that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless the reading of His Holy Word.

Intro: Did you notice how much the focus is on the glory of Christ being revealed when He comes to judge?

A. In verse 10 it says: **when He comes to be glorified in all His saints and to be admired among all who believe.**

1. This is expressed as one of the great purposes of His coming—to show off His glory.
 - It is not that anyone makes Him more glorious than He is.
 - He cannot be made more glorious than He already is.
 - But it is rather that He is glorified when we poor ignorant human beings who are clouded by sin are able to see the glory that is already His.
2. There are two things mentioned here regarding Him being glorified...
 - a. First, that He would be glorified *in* His saints—
 - That means that His glory will be seen through them—that by looking at them, people would see His glory the way they do when they look at a marvellous sunset or at the stars.
 - We are able to see the glory of God in His works, and His saints are one of His greatest works in which His glory can be seen.
 - They are like a mirror in which His glory is seen.
 - b. Second, it says that He will be admired *at* by them.
 - Rather than displaying His glory, this speaks of the saints as the ones who get to *see* His glory as they have never seen it before.
 - The word *admire* means *to wonder at* or *to marvel at*.
 - If you are one of His saints, you will be lost in amazement.
 - Jay Adams says: “In that day when you see Him, your mouth will hang open at His astounding glory. It will far surpass the stunning glory that briefly shone on the Mount of Transfiguration. Yet manifested there was the first glimpse of what it will be like in that Day.”

TRANS> What a splendid thing this is for us!

- There will be glory all around Christ with reference to us who know Him...
 - Glory seen in us and glory seen by us.

B. In verse 12, you will notice how Paul prays for the Thessalonians, **that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him**

1. Paul prays that what God said *would* happen in His saints *will* happen in the Thessalonians...
 - He is praying that they will be among the people who enhance the name of Christ—who make His glory known—who contribute to the revelation of His glory in that day because of the way they live now...
 - That they would live now in such a way that when He comes His glory would be manifested through them.
2. This whole idea of Christ’s glory is extremely important.

- It is the most important thing of all.
 - And the sooner you can see that, the better it will be for you.
 - Do you know that?
 - It's true.
 - When you see that the glory of Christ is the only thing worth living for, it centres your life in the right place.
 - You are not so worried about your comfort, your problems, your riches and pleasures—your life becomes centred and focused on Him.
 - And ironically, that is what makes you truly happy!
 - Like Jesus told us, when you lose your own life, you find your life in Him.
 - He actually found His life Himself when He came in human flesh by losing His life for the glory of God.

TRANS> But the focus of our text today is about how He will glorified in the Day of Judgment.

- And so for us who read about His glory that is to be revealed in His judgment,
 - it is an opportunity for us to see something of His glory as we come to understand this passage more fully.
- So let's look at three ways that His glory will be seen in His judgment according to 2 Thessalonians 1.

I. First, everyone will see His glory in the justice of His judgment.

- A. When most people today think about God judging the world, they think of it as something that is unfair—sort of harsh and unjust.
1. They think of it kind of like a parent losing their temper because they were having a bad day or just because they are kind of a cantankerous person and taking it out on their child...
 - It is something they need to apologise for.
 - Now the truth is that in our society we are really quite extreme (and by that I mean that we are extremely distorted) because we have the idea that there should be very little punishment for any wrong that is done.
 - For example, to execute someone for killing another person, in our eyes, is way too severe—or to punish an adulterer is unthinkable.
 - I mentioned before that Satan has had a lot of success in leading us into this extreme—just as he has led other societies into the opposite extreme, where they cut someone's hand off for stealing bread or something.
 2. But 2 Thessalonians makes it clear that when Jesus judges the world, no one will dream of challenging Him for it.
 - Everyone will be convinced, however much they may not like it, that His judgment is entirely proper and just.

- The Larger Catechism is correct in Question 89 when it says *What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?*
- And answers it: *At the day of judgment, the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand, and, upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences, shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them...*
 - And then it goes on to speak of how they will be cast out and punished with unspeakable torments in body and soul forever...
 - But what I want you to notice is that the sentence will be pronounced *upon clear evidence and full conviction of their own consciences.*
 - It will not merely be that they will not be able to challenge the LORD because of His authority, but also because it will be clear to them and to everyone else that His judgment is just and right.
 - They will see the absurdity of complaining of about any injustice in it.

B. Let's look at some of the things that will help everyone to see the justice of God's judgment.

1. First, we will be able to see that it is just because God will let wickedness grow to maturity next to godliness for all to see.
 - a. There are certain times and places where He lets this happen so we can see where each of them end up.
 - 1) For example, He did that in the ancient world before the flood.
 - The wickedness of man was allowed to grow and mature over a period of about 1500 years with relatively little restraint—in conditions of very long life, fruitfulness, and prosperity...
 - And the result was that people became intolerably wicked—so that the earth was full of violence, immorality, and idolatry...
 - Women were even cohabitating with demons.
 - 2) And God did a similar thing with the Canaanites whom He destroyed for wickedness by the hand of Israel.
 - They were already wicked and idolatrous in the days of Abraham, but God explained to Abraham that He was going to wait for 400 years before He destroyed them because their iniquity was not yet full.
 - And He did wait—for 400 years.
 - 3) And with Israel, He did the same kind of thing.
 - Even though they killed His prophets and the righteous people that were among them, He waited until 70 AD to destroy them...
 - In Luke 11:49-51, He explains how that by waiting for sin to mature, He makes it clear that He has been just in His judgment.
 - **Luke 11:49-51: Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' ⁵⁰ that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this**

generation, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.

- The last straw was when they persecuted Christ and His apostles.
 - Then it was clearly seen what they were truly all about—what might not have been so clear in former years was now very clear.
 - They hated God Himself and cut off His Son who He sent to save them.
- b. This is something that God did especially at Thessalonica.
- 1) He worked in the Thessalonians, as we have seen in previous sermons, in such a way that they were exemplary in their godliness...
 - an example to all of what service to Jesus Christ should look like.
 - As it says in verses 3 & 4, their faith grew exceedingly and the love of every one of them abounded toward all of the others...
 - And all of that even despite all the tribulation and persecution that was being heaped upon them.
 - 2) And that persecution came from those who likewise were growing in wickedness—to a very high degree.
 - These persecutors hated these saints, not because of any wrong in them, but because they hated God so much.
 - They stand out as an example of what unbelief becomes if it is allowed to grow without restraint.
- c. Do you see how this will contribute to clarity on the day of judgment?
- 1) When God judges them and gives rest to His saints, it will be patently obvious that He has done the right thing.
 - That is why Paul says that their suffering tribulation and persecution is: **v. 5-7: manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶ since *it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels...***
 - No one will be able to look at God's judgment and say, "now that was unrighteous."
 - When the light is turned on all that has been done, it will be crystal clear that God was in the right to judge them.
 - 2) And not only them, but it will also be clear that all who have rejected God have the same root in them.
 - Even though the wickedness of earlier generations did not grow up to such a high degree of corruption,
 - the same corruption is in the earlier generations and is actually what the present generation built on—so that all deserve to be judged together..

- And even though people in other places (like Corinth) did not go as far in their persecutions because God used the civil magistrate to restrain them there,
 - it will be evident in the day of judgment that they are cut out of the same cloth and have the same potential for corruption if given the opportunity.
 - It will be plainly obvious that the judgment of Christ is right.
- 2. And besides all this, the justice of His judgment will be clear from the fact that their hatred was against God the Father and God the Son.
 - a. This was shown in the way they treated God the Son when He came and dwelt among us.
 - They could not tolerate Him or bear for Him to live on the earth even though they could find no just grounds for punishing Him—except for His truthful statement that He was the Son of God.
 - They hated Him, as He told them, because their deeds were evil and they did not want the light around to expose them...
 - And they hated Him, as He also told them, because they were of their father the devil who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.
 - b. Yes, Paul shows us here in Thessalonians that their wickedness of these persecutors has its roots in the fact that they are rejecters of God...
 - Severe punishment is appropriate for them because, as he says in verse 8, **they know not God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.**
 - *Not knowing God* is not mere ignorance—it is a rejection of God even though we all have an innate sense of Him...
 - It is the rejection that Satan called for when he told us that we should do what we want instead of obeying God...
 - And to *not obey the gospel*—that is to reject the way of reconciliation that God has provided for sinners through Jesus Christ.
 - There is no excuse for rejecting Him when He has provided an atonement through His Son.
 - There is no excuse for it—it is an act of pure hatred of God.

TRANS> All of that is going to be quite evident when Jesus judges.

- No one will be able to accuse Him of injustice.
 - Quite the contrary—everyone will know that His judgment is right.
 - That is the first way that the glory of Christ will be seen in His judgment on that day.

II. **Second, everyone will see the glory of His power when He judges the wicked.**

A. Just as we saw that no one would dream of accusing Him of injustice in that day, so also no one will dream of resisting His power.

1. When His power is revealed—resistance will be unfathomable.
 - It would be like trying to stand in front of an avalanche and hold it back.
 - It is entirely beyond the realm of the possible.

2. We should already know of this power.
 - His eternal power and divine nature are clearly revealed through the things that He has made...He called them into being by the word of His power.
 - This is not a power that human hands can resist.
 - It is the very power that upholds the universe today and that holds you up.
 - But we are ignorant of His divine power revealed in creation because we have suppressed it, not wanting to acknowledge the glory of God.
 - but Thessalonians shows us that His power will be revealed in the day of judgment so that everyone will see it clearly.
- B. Look at some of the ways that His glorious power will be revealed.
1. First, in verse 7 it says that our Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.
 - That He will be revealed means that we will see Him as He is.
 - That He comes from heaven will be a thing awesome on its own...
 - And He will have these angels of His might that will carry out His work of judging—of gathering the wicked and casting them into the Lake of Fire.
 2. But even more, He Himself will be clothed with flaming fire (v. 8).
 - We are told in Hebrews 12 that this glory will make the glory revealed at Sinai as a very small thing—even though it terrified the people and even made Moses to quake and tremble at the time...
 - But it was a mountain of fire and shaking that could be touched.
 - When Jesus comes, we will see Him as a flaming fire that is beyond the things of this world.
 - He will come in this fire to take vengeance on those who hate God—
 - as we saw before, those who do not know Him and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - It will be a display of awesome majesty and power such as has never been seen before.
 3. His power will be seen in punishing the wicked with everlasting destruction.
 - You can see where it says that in verse 9 & 10 of the wicked: **These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe.**
 - a. There are two ways that the phrase “from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power can be understood.”
 - 1) It can mean that they are cut off **from** the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...
 - 2) Or it can mean that the everlasting destruction comes **from** or **by** His presence and power...His presence brings their destruction.
 - 3) It seems like the second way is better.
 - It is certainly true that the wicked will be cast into the outer darkness and away from the comfortable presence of God,

- but the idea here seems to be that the presence (coming) of the Lord is the cause of their destruction... His power will be displayed when He appears.
 - In Isaiah 2:10, the Greek version of the Old Testament uses almost the same words with this meaning when it says: **Isa 2:10: now go into the rocks, hide in the ground, from the presence of the terror of the LORD and from the glory of His strength.**
- b. The destruction that is in view here is not annihilation.
- Because of our embarrassment about this that I spoke about before, some would like for it to be annihilation...but it is not.
 - Destruction here rather means that they will be ruined forever—
 - Jesus made it clear in His teaching that punishment did not cease when He said things like He did in Matthew 18:8: **If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.**
 - Or in Matthew 25:41 where it says: **Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:**
 - Especially when it is compared to Revelation 20:10 where God describes this place as the place where: **they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**
- c. But when we are no longer clouded by thoughts that this might not be just—and, as I showed you in the previous point, no one will think that on the day of judgment—
- We will be able to admire the tremendous glory of Christ’s power in judging His enemies—some of them that seemed so strong.
 - Truly we will marvel at Him.
 - We will be in awe when we see His marvellous strength.

TRANS> But there is another thing that will be clearly seen when He judges...it is something that we looked at last week...

III. Third, we will see the glory of His grace to His people when He comes to judge.

A. We will be gripped by the reality that there were people in the world who were counted worthy to be so much a part of His kingdom that they suffered for Him.

- This is mentioned a couple of times in our text because it is such a marvellous thing and will be recognised for how marvellous it is when He comes.
1. You can see it in verse 5 where it explains that the believers at Thessalonica are obviously people who ought to be avenged and brought to a place of rest...
- Obviously they are worthy because they were so much a part of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish that they were suffering for it.
 - The Lord will certainly look after those who were so obviously a part of His kingdom that they suffered ill treatment for Him.

- You don't willingly suffer for a kingdom that you are not a part of.
 - By this they show that they really are counted worthy to be a part of His kingdom—that they really are a part of it.
 - The people in the early church often spoke of what a wonderful thing it is be counted worthy to suffer for Christ.
 - They were rightly taken up with the idea that suffering for Him meant that they were truly connected to Him and His kingdom.
 - They knew that they were blessed to be persecuted as their Master was and that their reward would be great in heaven.
 - Remember in Acts when Peter and John returned from being punished for speaking about Christ and they immediately thanked God that they were counted worthy to suffer for Him?
 - And do you remember how Paul said that God had granted it to us not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him?
 - What a marvellous thing it is to be that closely and that fully associated with Him!
2. And then you see where this idea of being counted worthy is mentioned again in verse 11 where Paul prays that they will be counted worthy of their calling—the calling to be His people.
- Yes, there are people out of this fallen sinful human race who are counted worthy to be His own people.
 - When His glory and majesty and purity are displayed on the day of judgment, that will seem more marvellous than ever!
 - It will seem marvellous because we are all sinners—and the judgment will show (as we have seen) how bad the wickedness that is in man truly is.
 - But here are these people that are counted worthy to be part of His kingdom!
 - Here are people that clearly give evidence that they have been changed—that they really do love God and really are living for Him.
- B. But how did these people ever get to be for Christ when all people are naturally against Him?
- It is not natural for us to be for Him, so how did this happen that these people are so much living for Him that they are willing to suffer for Him?
 - You know the answer to that, don't you?
1. It was all by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.
- Paul prays in verse 12 that **the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.**
 - That is a complicated sentence, but let me see if I can explain it.
 - God's grace refers to His work in us that transforms our lives so that we are willing and able to serve Him.

- Instead of being of those who hate Him, we are those who serve Him—we serve God as our God because God and Jesus have reconciled us.
 - It is the work He does in us through the Holy Spirit as the one who baptises us with the Spirit—He gives us a heart that loves God in place of our old heart that hated Him—He makes us zealous for good works.
 - So you see, Paul is praying that the LORD would so work in the Thessalonian believers that when Jesus comes,
 - He will be glorified in them as a people who were so much a part of His kingdom that they suffered for it.
 - It would be clear that Jesus changed them by His grace—so that He would get the glory for it and they would have the glory of belonging to Him...
 - that He may glorified in you and you in Him...
2. Verse 11 shows what His grace actually does in them to make them those who are rightly avenged and given rest...
- a. By His grace they fulfill the good pleasure of *His* goodness—
 - This needs some explaining because of the translation...
 - the word *His* is not in the original text—that is why it is in italics.
 - So it is better to omit it and read it that Christ enables them to fulfill the desire they have to be good—the good pleasure of goodness—or the desire to be good.
 - Because Christ has changed them, they have God’s law written in their hearts and they want to obey it—and He enables them to fulfill that desire.
 - They are able, in terms of verses 3 and 4, to grow in faith and abound in love—and they are able to do this even when they are opposed by these enemies of Christ in their community.
 - As a result of going on despite all the persecution, they make it clear, as we have seen, that they ought to be avenged and given rest with the apostles of Jesus.
 - They are living for God by grace—they are worthy of reward.
 - b. This is also referred to as *fulfilling...the work of faith* in verse 11.
 - Because they believe, they have come to God to serve Him—even when they are persecuted.
 - Their service is *the work of their faith*—as those who know that Christ has made them to be His people through the cross.
 - Just think of it—He, the very Son of God, was so gracious that He came here and died for their sins—all so they could come to the Father and start living for Him—and now they are doing that.
 - They heard His call to come to Him for the forgiveness of sin that they might have everlasting life, and they have come and now they are living for Him—that is the work of faith.
 - He had made them His people—and because they believe, they live for Him and are willing to die for Him.
3. So let me sum up what Paul is praying for in verses 11 and 12...

- He is praying that the Lord would so work in the Thessalonians that they would so live for the Lord that everyone would know that He has saved them.
 - He prays that there would be no doubt about it that they are worthy of being considered to be His people.
 - And that Christ would get the glory for saving them by His grace on the day of judgment.
- What an excellent prayer this is!
 - That the Lord would work in you now so that you would so live for Him that He will be glorified for the work that He has done in your life.
 - Do you want the glory of His grace to be seen in you?
 - I hope you do.
 - His glory is the most important thing—it is the thing to focus your life on.
 - There is nothing else worth living for.

Conclusion: When He comes to judge, everything will be brought to light and He will be glorified.

- The glory of His justice will be seen in rewarding His people and punishing the wicked.
- The glory of His power will be seen in punishing the wicked.
- And the glory of His grace will be seen in the work that He did in us to make us His people.