

**THESSALONIANS***Life Group Study Guide | Holy Cross Church***WEEK OF Nov 4 - 8****OVERVIEW**

This week as we start the second letter to the church of the Thessalonians it's helpful to recap where we are in our series. We have been witnessing an ongoing conversation between the Apostle Paul and the Christians in Thessalonika. They are brand new to the faith and they have a lot of questions, like new believers would. What happens when you die? When Jesus comes back, what will it be like? What happens to people who don't know Jesus when they die? And, how are we to make the best use of our time as we wait for Jesus to return?

And the subject of Paul's introduction to this letter is clear: Judgement day.

**READ**

Read through our passage for this week, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.

**STUDY & APPLY**

1. What does Paul see in the the church that is filling his heart with gratitude to God?
2. Paul thankfulness is directed to God and not the Christians? What do you make of this?
3. In Scripture, there are many moments of judgment, which are at the same time moments of deliverance for those who have clung to God in faith. When Jesus returns there will be a "flip-flop" of our present state. Those who are afflicted, yet cling to Christ in faith, will be eternally comforted. Those who are comfortable, yet reject the gospel, will be eternally afflicted. In vs. 5-10, Paul describes for the Thessalonians what future justice and the coming of Jesus will look like. **How would these words deeply encourage these young believers in the midst of their present suffering?**

4. Someday, every single human being will have to stand before God and satisfy the demands of an absolute justice. Paul clearly states that those who have trusted in the good news of the gospel of Jesus will enter into eternal joy in the new creation and all those who rejected the gospel will be eternally condemned. Christians typically use this fear-based rhetoric to make non-Christians think about their readiness to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. However, Paul's main audience are fellow Christians who may fall into complacency about the final judgment. We are not to appear as people who began to believe in the gospel but never got around to working out what it means in practice.

**Quote from the sermon:** *“Faith in God is not a technique to master or a formula to carefully execute. Faith in God is foremost a pouring out of our soul to God for help. What we need most in our life is not greater Christian character but a deeper cry of faith.”* **How does the language of Paul's prayerful challenge in verses 11-12 shape our perspective on how we live out our faith today? What effect should this have on our hearts?**

### **GROUP REFLECTION**

Judgement day is a day of judgement that has yet to come but there is also a judgement day that has already happened, in the past. This judgement started at the cross. It was there, that Jesus was judged not according to his deeds, but ours. It was there God cursed his son and set us free. It was there our sins were nailed to the cross, not part of them, but all of them. It was there that Jesus was declared guilty so that we could be declared righteous, not based on any good that we have done, but based on the perfect righteousness of Jesus, offered graciously to sinners.

The only way we will be able to marvel at Jesus when he returns is to trust that we are worthy of the kingdom of God because God has judged Jesus instead of us. And if we believe that then we can be confident that God is on our side, that he loves us, and that he knows what he is doing even when we don't know what he is doing. We all need a Savior. This is what this means: No one will ever be good enough to earn God's pardon of judgement. Yet, no one is bad enough to be beyond the reach of God's forgiveness. All who look to this Savior and marvel in faith at what he has done, seeing punishment due to us placed on him, are treated as if we had never sinned and loved as if we have never done anything wrong.

**Take time to reflect on the implications of 2 Thessalonians 1:1–12 for your own life today. Consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in his gracious promises.**

### **PRAY**

Spend a few moments praying through your response to question 10. Pray prayers of thanksgiving and praise, of the longing for justice, or for the faith to believe in the complete working of grace in your life or in your community.