

## LSB 2 Thessalonians 1

*5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 Since it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give rest to you who are afflicted and to us as well at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 executing vengeance on those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our witness to you was believed.*

We are immediately launched into a contextual discussion based on what has just been said previously in the opening verses. In other words, the situation described in the previous paragraph is the basis for what Paul describes here.

So let's take a moment to recall what Paul has just stated that frames these next words in vs. 5. And in vss 3 and 4 Paul thanks God that the Thessalonian Christians bear the 3 hallmarks of all real Christians. Faith, Love, and Hope.

Every true Christian, and there are millions upon millions of false Christians who will not be at that heavenly banquet, but the hallmark of real authentic Christians are these three realities that prove a new creation as children of God. A faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross to effectually forgive our sins. A resulting love for one another as brothers and sisters in a new separated from this world family. And a hope for all of those promises to be realized in the next world. We hope for the return of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who will transform us to a glory similar to His own.

Listen again to vss. 3 and 4 for those elements.

*3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is only fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another increases all the more, 4 so that we ourselves boast about you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.*

Faith. Love. Perseverance in affliction and persecutions, which is driven by a deep Hope in the appearing of Jesus. We literally hope for the future in which the evil insurrection of this planet is crushed and punished and all things are set right. *Thy will be done on earth, like it is in heaven.*

But for now, Paul makes a distinction in which the very persecution which the Thessalonians must endure, proves all of these things. This world is at war with God. And the persecutions and endurance of faith and hope by these christians is a vivid picture of front line battle happening.

And Paul takes that reality and expands it. What is happening first hand with the Thessalonian christians is a microcosm that displays the greater battle that is being played out in history behind the scenes. And Paul looks at the realities of perseverance and endurance at Thessalonica and he says, it proves everything.

Your faith and love and hope in the midst of trouble brought upon you by the enemies of God proves everything Paul has been saying. It proves that your faith is real. It proves that this world is at war with God and His children. And it proves that God is righteous to judge this rebellion ultimately.

Let's take a flight of fancy this morning and instead of looking at this particular microcosm of trouble and persecution against God's elect at Thessalonica, let's for a few moments back the camera way out, like one of those movie scenes that zooms out and out and out until finally you see the curvature of the earth and then the earth as a green planet in black space.

This is particularly meaningful this morning in view of a massive world

change taking place that we're all sort of in tune with in the UK. We as christians see God's hand moving in sovereignty upon His earth.

Lamentations chapter 3 makes a statement about the big picture that we do well to remind ourselves of often. We turn on our TV's and watch talking heads endlessly boasting about what they will DO. What will King Charles say he will do? What will Liz Truss say she will Do. What will happen next on the grand stage of this world.

Jeremiah the prophet brings to us the very words of God Himself. Here is what God has said;

*37 Who is there who speaks and it happens,  
Unless the Lord has commanded it?*

*38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High  
That both calamities and good go forth?*

*39 Why should any living person or any man  
Complain because of his sins? Lam. 3:37 - 39*

Not what goes forth out of mens mouths, but the absolute sovereign reign of God over all things is the cause of everything that happens in this world. Both calamity, and good are by God's command. He rules over all. Every atom in every molecule obeys his commands. Absolute sovereignty.

Do we get to complain about His choices, what He decrees and allows, both good and calamity. No we do not, because sin has removed us from any valid basis of complaint against the Almighty. Whatever He decrees, we deserve. And more so.

Never the less, the writer of Lamentations, in the midst of horrific events and hardships, the destruction and captivity of Israel by the Babylonians, tempers the events with these famous words that we sing until this day;

*22 The lovingkindnesses of Yahweh indeed never cease,  
For His compassions never fail.*

*23 They are new every morning;*

*Great is Your faithfulness.*

*24 "Yahweh is my portion," says my soul,*

*"Therefore I wait for Him."*

God is absolute Sovereign Monarch of everything. We are sinners who have no basis for any complaint. We fall back on the truths of the attributes of God. Ceaseless Lovingkindness. Unfailing compassion. Everlasting faithfulness for those who love Him and wait for His salvation.

How good it is to be up in the cheap seats watching the great drama of this world unfold, outside of what is happening and will happen, because we have been called out of this world, into the Kingdom of God. But we watch it all unfold, knowing that the end has already been stated by the mouth of YahWeh

Daniel the prophet interpreted a vision, a dream, given to Nebuchadnezzar by God that shows the big picture of all of the dramas of the kingdoms of this world and the ultimate conclusion of all things. In the vision all of the one world powers is foretold beginning with Nebuchadnezzar up until Rome. And finally a revived Roman empire of iron and clay that is still coming. Here is the big picture;

*31 "You, O king, were looking, and behold, there was a single great image; that image, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was rising up in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32 The head of that image was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*

36 *“This was the dream; now we will say its interpretation before the king.*  
37 *You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given*  
*the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; 38 and wherever the*  
*sons of men inhabit, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He*  
*has given them into your hand and has made you rule with power over*  
*them all. You are the head of gold. 39 But after you there will arise another*  
*kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will*  
*rule with power over all the earth. 40 Then there will be a fourth kingdom*  
*as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like*  
*iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. 41*  
*Now in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of*  
*iron; it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of*  
*iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 And as the*  
*toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so some of the*  
*kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 And in that you saw*  
*the iron mixed with common clay; they will combine with one another in*  
*the seed of men; but they will not cling to one another, even as iron does*  
*not combine with clay.*

44 *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will cause a kingdom*  
*to rise up which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left*  
*for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it*  
*will itself stand forever. 45 Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of*  
*the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the*  
*clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king*  
*what will happen in the future; so the dream is certain, and its*  
*interpretation is trustworthy.”*

Where are we at in this vision today, right now. We are at the end of a great parenthesis, the church age, which corresponds with Iron which was Rome and that age continues until after the church is removed, and the final state of one world rule, the Iron and the Clay together takes place during the 7 years tribulation period.

But the stone cut out without hands is Christ, and He will come back to this world and crush all of the authorities to reign, and He will set up an authority to reign, that will last forever.

Since Adam, Satan has reigned on this earth through men, the vast long history of reigns of sinful men with Satan the deceiver behind it all, until the Stone cut out without hands arrives and grinds all of those sinful reigns to nothing.

That's the big picture, and we stand outside of it, removed from this world by God who has called us out of this world to belong to Him, but we're still in this world, aren't we, and we watch, and wait, and proclaim the King of Kings and the forgiveness available in Him. We are bystanders watching the drama unfold, knowing ahead of time who wins, and who is ground to dust and blown away like dust out of a threshing floor.

Zoom back in to the microcosm of the elect at Thessalonica who were called out of this world to belong to Jesus, and the result, the world has rejected them, the original cancel culture, and the world they live in is at war with them. Every kind of mis-treatment and trouble has come upon them, because, because, they are separated from the world and belong to God.

My hope is that with all of that background, with the big picture in evidence, the words of Paul in vs. 5 make perfect sense. Again the context of vss 3 and 4, they are enduring persecution and trouble with perseverance. And Paul says;

*5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.*

Paul says to them, your troubles and persecutions and endurance in hardship is a picture of the bigger drama and the judgement that is coming. Paul tells them their suffering is directly related to, and caused by their

placement by God, out of this sinful world, and into His glorious kingdom.

Their endurance proves their worthiness. Endurance and perseverance in hardship has for centuries been the overwhelming proof that faith is real.

We find ourselves in a unique situation in the 2000 years of being christians in a hostile world. Christians fleeing the hostility of the old world came to the United States, the new world in order to live unencumbered as christians. And a government was designed that gave christians a chance to live in this world without the constant persecution and cost of being separated out of the world and belonging to Christ.

In my seventy years in that nearly 250 year experiment christians have remained christians, but the society and culture that we dwell within, in this land, has changed from a welcoming one to a hostile one.

The unique thing is that we have for so long in this land enjoyed freedom from harassment and persecution which followed the church everywhere it went, that we are faced with something old, that is brand new to us. For the first time in 250 years, between a third and a quarter of that spanned by my lifetime, being a believer in and follower of Jesus, who places himself under the authority of the Word of God, may actually come with a cost.

Perhaps the free ride is over? We shall see. Threatening clouds are definitely on the horizon. Will Jesus rescue us quickly, or will persecutions and troubles that were normative to all christians throughout the church age but which we never experienced suddenly be thrust upon us?

Paul tells the Thessalonians, persecution is normal and it proves your worthiness, the reality of your faith, under pressure. That would be a new thing to American christians.

What would be the wise thing to do? Get serious about your faith, perhaps. Send down deep roots. Hurricanes have a funny way of showing what was solidly rooted and remains after the storm, and what was not really solidly

grounded in the earth. Storm clouds are definitely on the horizon. What will we do to be ready?

*5 This (endurance and perseverance under trouble and persecution Paul says;) is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 Since it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,*

The whole question comes into focus here. Is it right for God to punish those who hate Him and are at war with Him?

The situation at Thessalonica is but a micro view of the larger picture. The whole world lies within the power of the evil one and is at war with God. Thessalonica is just one little bit of real estate that is representative of the whole earth.

Is God righteous to judge the world at war with Him. Yes, He is a righteous judge. He created the world. He owns the world. The world is at war with Him. Full rebellion. And the world hates their rightful Lord. They love their sin.

God would be fully righteous to simply come and crush the whole thing. Wipe the decks clean. Throw every breathing sinful creature into hell. It's what we deserve.

Not only that, but God would be righteous to do it without warning. He owes this rebellious world nothing. We owe Him worship as Creator of all things, and instead of worship and glory, we are rebellious sinners. But God illustrates His righteousness and the world's wretchedness by not only warning of coming judgement, but by providing a way of forgiveness.

God sent His Son Jesus to die on a cross, in our place. Redemption is available. A highway back to God, forgiven of your rebellion, is opened up and beckons any who will come. God gives every man time to repent.

That act of free forgiveness compounds the guilt of the rebellors who hate God and magnifies the demand for His righteous judgement. The world that hates God and can't quite get to Him to spit on Him and revile Him, *can* get to His children, and they have not only rejected His offer of free forgiveness, they torment those who belong to God.

God would be righteous to judge the rebellion without His gracious offer of forgiveness, and without sufficient time to repent, but He is doubled down righteous to judge this world who rejects Him, hates Him, loves their sin and has trampled under foot His Son who died in their place.

God's rightness in judgement is compounded! Magnified many times more. He didn't have to make a way of escape. He didn't have to give men time to repent. All of those graces, when they are rejected, only magnify the judgement that is rightly due.

That's Paul's point. Judgement is due. Even more so since those who already deserved judgement show their defiance and hatred by troubling and persecuting Christians.

*6 Since it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give rest to you who are afflicted and to us as well at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,*

Right now the children of God are the afflicted and the haters of God are at relative rest and ease. They're winning, we're losing. But when Jesus comes, those tables will be reversed.

We will enjoy rest with God for eternity. Blissful rest and fellowship with the Creator who designed us to be in fellowship with Him and worship of Him. But the world will receive the judgement that they are due.

I thought this week about this idea of rest. What does that mean? Well I can give you a little light from my own experience. My body and my fallen

soul are tyrants. They want me to do evil things continuously and my quickened now alive spirit that dwells in Christ is in a continuous non stop battle with the old me.

My body wants me to eat too much, sleep too much, watch idiotic things on TV too much, every possible dis-honoring thing, is what it wants. I have to tell you, it wins far too often.

On the day that my new eyes see Jesus, all of that will be behind me. I'm sure that "rest" means much more than that, but it certainly doesn't mean less. *This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise, to seize the everlasting prize, and shout while passing through the air, farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer.*

*6 Since it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give rest to you who are afflicted and to us as well at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,*

In vs 7 the word for revealing, the revealing of Jesus arriving from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, that word is apokalypsei. It's the word used for the working title of the final book in your bibles. The Revelation.

I was visiting with Greg Snyder this week, I made a picture of him and Loren together and we enjoyed visiting. And since my antique camera was in use, Loren asked me if I did any solar photography. And I explained that no, I'm not really very interested in the vast reaches of space with all that's out there because this book tells us it's just a curtain of separation between God and us.

The apocalypse, the revealing is when the skies will be rolled up like a scroll and Jesus the Christ will be revealed in overwhelming glory, a flame of fire, coming to judge this rebellious world. It is the time when men will cry out for the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

That's the event Paul is referring to here in vs. 7. ***That*** revealing. When the skies roll up like an old worn out manuscript scroll, and Jesus is revealed in judgement. Terror like no terror ever even conceived of before. Judgement.

*8 executing vengeance on those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

*Sow to the wind, and reap the whirlwind.* Hosea 8:7 says. Carry out your little pipsqueak torments and wars against God's elect. And the whirlwind will come in a flame of fire to execute vengeance for every sorrow of affliction on His elect.

It's as if the world is trying to throw some sand at God's eyeballs and God responds with the entire Gobi desert of sand at 150 mph hurricane speed.

The world is at war with God, and it will be absolutely righteous and just when God comes in vengeance to repay this world by waging war against this world in flaming fire. Horrific judgement. But it doesn't stop there. The terrors of those horrors are hardly describable. But it gets worse. That's just the beginning of eternal judgements.

Consider for a moment the category of those upon whom the vengeance of God comes. *on those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

And the world would quickly say, why is it my fault that I didn't know God. How am I responsible for not knowing God. And we read in the Bible the answer to that question;

Romans 1:18 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who **suppress** the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of*

*the world His invisible attributes, both His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

The creation you dwell in and the air you breathe, and the intelligence to be aware of both of those things is enough evidence that God will require your judgement for not worshipping Him who created you and gave you breath in a warm and welcoming world to enjoy. He did all of it.

All are without excuse. Men willfully do not know God because they prefer their sin. And those who have the gospel available to them and have no interest in forgiveness or knowing a perfect and Holy Creator are doubly damned.

Men go to great lengths to not only ignore the truth before their very eyes, but especially in this generation moreso than perhaps ever before, men work hard to actually suppress the truth.

It's hard work to invent something like evolution of the species in order to reject God. Very hard work and actually requires more faith than ours. But men willfully will do that so that they can reject the Creator.

It's incredibly hard work for a girl to stand in front of a mirror and say, I'm not a girl, I'm a boy. Or a boy to stand in front of a mirror and say, nope, I'm actually a girl. That's where we are at in willful suppression of the truth God put before the eyes He created. Wretched, vile, guilty, rebellious sin.

*9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might,*

Folks, this is hell. Jesus spoke of hell more than anyone else. John the apostle warns us of hell in the Revelation. Disclosing more distinct information than what Jesus spoke of.

We don't think of Paul warning of hell very much. But here Paul does.

And he comes on strong. Those who torment God's elect will be tormented forever in God's vengeance.

You say, well it speaks of destruction. Finality. yes, but no. Destruction yes, but there's the little problem of this word eternal. You say, is that fair and equitable punishment. And the answer is: it is if God the Creator says it is.

*who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?* Ro. 9:20

The fact that God offered forgiveness and redemption but we hated Him and loved our sin makes it doubly equitable and fair. Separation from God is what we wanted. Leave me alone and let me sin. Go away, God. So He does.

Eternity in utter isolation and separation. Alone. In thick darkness. Isolation. No light, no sight, although your eyes could see, if it weren't utter blackness, in continual destruction torment, in burning heat. You asked for it, You got it, Toyota

*9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our witness to you was believed.*

The excruciating despair of the isolation in black darkness and burning destruction for eternity can only be compared to it's opposite. It only means something understandable in comparison to the opposing truth.

For those who have believed, we will be In Him, In His glory and we will marvel at Him forever in rest and joy inexpressible.

Words and descriptions can only begin to describe the unimaginable horrors of solitary confinement in black thick darkness and torment of heat

forever. And words and descriptions fail to describe the joy of our utter rest in perfection of righteousness, not our own, given to us by Jesus as we will be IN Jesus, with Him for eternity and we will be IN Him when He returns to this earth in indescribable glory.

Words fail. The horror is too horrible, and the glory is too glorious for our little minds to comprehend.

But I love how Paul ends this section. All of the glory and rest forever in righteousness, present with God, is because of not what any of us did, it is because of faith. We heard the witness of those who watched the Lord Jesus die and then were present when He rose up from the dead and returned to heaven. And we believed the good news that if we repent of sin and believe that His death purchased for us, LIFE, we will be saved from the wrath that is coming upon all who dwell upon the earth.

*for our witness to you was believed*

How I pray that if there is any one in the sound of my voice hearing this message, today, or perhaps even in the future, that you will believe. Many witnesses saw Him. He rose up from the grave that He did not deserve. It was the grave YOU deserved. He entered it in your place and offers you His righteousness.

He rose from the grave to prove that every word of this book is true. More than 500 witnesses saw Him alive after the cross and the grave. Believe. It's actually willful hard work to NOT believe. Don't do that. Give the life that belongs to Him, back to Him, in repentance and acknowledgment of His Lordship, and He will forgive you and welcome you out of this world and into His family. Forever. Believe it!