

**Justice Will Prevail  
2 Thessalonians 1:5-10  
Part Five**

Let us look at **2 Thessalonians 1:5-10**, “**This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (6) For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, (8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (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 testimony to you was believed.**” This text focuses on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Second Advent is when Jesus will come to set up His earthly kingdom. And when He comes there will be a two-fold impact.

The first impact that we have examined is that of RETRIBUTION. We asked three very basic questions concerning this topic. First of all we asked, “Why would Jesus pour out retribution when He comes to establish His earthly Millennial Kingdom?” The answer is, because it is just. He must punish unholiness. It is the right and fitting thing to do. We also asked the question, “Who will be the recipients of this retribution?” The first group mentioned in **V. 6** are those who persecute Christians. Then, in addition to this group, Paul mentions a much larger group in **V. 8** who are identified as those, “**who do not know God or obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**” The last question we asked was, “How was this retribution meted out?” **V. 6** tells us that the Lord will pay back the wicked with “**affliction.**” This payment of affliction will be “eternal,” which we see in **V.8**. This “eternal destruction“ or “affliction” as we saw in **Matthew 24:44-51** involved fire. I believe this, to most of us here this morning, would be a terrifying expectation but far more significant is what Paul shares with us in **V.9**. “**And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.**” How will retribution be meted out? It will be meted out with eternal pain caused by having been removed from the presence of God. Hell is a place where God has not established any evidence of His presence. It is a place where there is not the faintest glimmer of the glory of His power. It is a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth and utter complete darkness.

But there is more than RETRIBUTION being poured out on the wicked when Jesus returns. There is also RELIEF for the righteous. Look at **V. 7**, “**And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.**” The word “**relief**” (ANESIS) describes the release of a bowstring. In this life God’s people are being stretched. Certainly this was true for the Thessalonians. They were being stretched or pressured by their persecutors. But there was a day yet in the future when justice would prevail. Where not only the wicked would be the recipients of retribution, but the righteous would be the recipients of relief or rest.

In one sense we have already begun to experience rest. We have experienced “salvation rest.”

Jesus in **Matthew 11:28-30** said, **“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”** What is the rest that Jesus is offering?

He is offering a rest for our souls? Augustine understood this. He wrote in his famous “Confessions,” a book that was probably the first true autobiography, these famous words, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” When we come to Jesus by faith we are in effect saying, “Thank you Jesus for doing for me on the cross what I could not do for myself.” Embracing Him as our Lord, is in effect saying, “Jesus, I will take up my cross and follow you.” We are at that moment born again and will find rest for our souls. But even though this is true we are still pressured at every hand and still experience different trials. Salvation rest is a wonderful beginning, but there is more.

The Bible speaks of a millennial rest. In **Acts 3:19** Peter spoke to the children of Israel and said to them, **“Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing (Millennial rest) may come from the presence of the Lord.”** When Jesus comes at the second advent it will be a time of refreshment for the righteous who are living at that time, including righteous Jews. The world will be dramatically transformed. There will be a restoration of all things. The world will become what God had originally intended it. For a millennium, for 1000 years, there will be rest. A lion will lay down with the lamb, the deserts will bloom, streams will water the dry places, any sinful rebel will be dealt with immediately, and nations will be crushed if they get out of line. Will the church be there? And the answer is, of course we will be. We will be there in our glorified form having already been changed at the rapture.

But the millennial rest is only the opening act. In addition to this there is an eternal rest. In **Revelation 14:12-13** the Apostle John wrote these words, **“(12) Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. (13) And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ‘Yes’, says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”** These verses are speaking of a future time that theologians commonly refer to as the “tribulation.” Earlier in **Revelation 14** we are told that those who do not, during this time, take the “mark of the beast” will be put to death. Here is the Lord’s response to those who in obedience to Him refuse to worship the beast. He says, **“Write, ‘blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” ‘Yes’, says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”** Those who die in the Lord are described as resting from their labors with the rewards of their work following them. This is the same hope for the church. We know that if the Lord does not come to catch us up before we die that at the point of our death we will immediately go into the presence of God and enter our eternal rest where there will be no more tears, no more sorrows, no more pain, no more death.

When individuals come to the place where they know that they cannot save themselves and are willing to turn to Jesus for salvation, they will find peace with God. They will find salvation rest. And that is a wonderful thing. But beyond this, for each of us in this age there is the hope of

eternal rest. When Jesus comes at the second advent, He will not only be pouring out retribution but he will also be bringing relief to the righteous. We want to ask, as we did with retribution, three basic questions.

The first question is, “Why?” Why would Jesus bring relief at His second coming? The answer is found in **VV. 6-7**, “**For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted.**” The reason is simple. It is just.

First of all, when we consider this whole subject of justice we must understand who establishes what is just and not just. Certainly it’s not me. Certainly it’s not you. God is the one who establishes what is just and what is not just. Tozer said, “When God acts, He is just because He defines justice.” We need to come to a point in our lives where we stop arguing with God and simply seek to understand what He has said. We need to come to the place in our lives where we seek not to impose our thinking on God but rather to embrace the thinking of God.

So in an attempt to do this how does the Bible answer the question, “How can God bring relief to people such as ourselves and still be just?” The just penalty for sin was exacted when Christ our substitute died for us on the cross. **Isaiah 53:7** says, “**All we like sheep have gone astray but the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.**” God’s justice demanded that our sin must be paid for. Christ’s death paid for our sin. Therefore when we come to Christ by faith and embrace Him as our Lord and Savior we can be forgiven because the righteous demands of God’s law had been met by Christ.

When we get to heaven God is not going to say, “You don’t deserve this.” Certainly we did not earn it but we do deserve it. Not because of us but because of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. When we get to heaven God is not going to say, “I hope you know that I am bending the rules. But I am going to let you in anyway just because I am a good guy.” The Lord has not bent any rules in giving us the hope of heaven. His rules have been meticulously followed. If this were not the case then certainly He never would have sent Jesus into this world to die for our sins.

When we get to heaven we don’t have to go in by the back door. We will march boldly in the front door and into God’s throne room. Why? Because it is just.

The next question that we want to ask is, “Who?” Who will receive relief? Let us look at **V.7**, “**and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.**” Paul sees these Thessalonians as receiving relief. Isn’t this what it says? “**And to give relief to you who are afflicted.**” But it isn’t just the Thessalonians. Paul also includes himself and his companions Silas and Timothy. The verse goes on to say, “**and to us as well.**” They were all suffering for their faith, the Thessalonians and Paul, Silas, and Timothy. We should expect nothing less. We cannot be followers of Jesus and not take up our cross.

Isn’t this what Jesus said? In **Matthew 16:24** He said, “**If any man wishes to come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me.**” I understand that we may not be spit upon,

we may not be beaten, we may not be jailed, we may not be crucified. But we can suffer the loss of our comforts. We can extend ourselves into ministries that challenge our comfort zones, we can expend ourselves in our service to our brothers and sisters in Christ for their encouragement and for their betterment. We can risk the rejection of the world as we boldly and persistently share the gospel of Christ.

There should not be anyone here this morning that is not being pressed and pressured as a result of their desire to follow Christ and to please Him. There should not be a single person here that should not be comforted by the thought that one day not only the Thessalonians, not only Paul, Silas and Timothy, but even you and I will one day find relief.

Let me ask you a question. Have these Thessalonians as well as Paul, Silas, and Timothy at this present time found relief from their earthly trials? And the answer would be yes. They have found relief. How did that happen? They died and they entered into the presence of the Lord.

This leads us to our third question. If they have already entered their heavenly rest how will the second advent of Christ bring them relief?

It is obvious that there is some kind of relief that these individuals are going to experience that they had not experienced up to the time of this event. And I believe that it is the working out of justice in the earthly sphere. It reminds me of **Revelation 6:9-11**, **“And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar, the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; (10) and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, o Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwelt on the earth?” (11) And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow Servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.”** This is the time of the tribulation; a seven year period following the rapture of church. During this there will be many righteous individuals who die for their faith and, though they are described in **V. 11** as at rest, there is still a pressure pushing upon them and that is for what? Justice! When would they get relief from this pressure? At the second advent. But not only would they get relief, but also the Thessalonians and Paul, Silas and Timothy. This will be a time when there will be an accounting.

This is the whole point of Paul’s remarks to the Thessalonians. Paul wants to reassure these believers that are suffering while the wicked are prospering that one day the tables will be turned. One day there will be justice. The justice that will be poured out will happen in a negative way but also a very positive way.

Let us look at **V. 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 testimony to you was believed.”** Paul mentions two things of a positive nature that will happen in respect to the righteous.

**“When He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day”** is the first thing. What does this mean? God is going to be glorified through us on that day in a way that has never been done before.

Hopefully, even today we are bringing glory to God. This is our purpose as a church. In **1 Corinthians 10:31** it says, **“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”** We are to show off Jesus and His mighty deeds in and through our lives even in the most mundane things. We are to put God on display. In other words, we are to **“Let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our father in heaven.”** The truth of that matter is that just like Christ, when He was in this world the first time was veiled, so are we. Yes, we can put God on display, but not fully. At least not yet.

When Jesus is revealed to the world at the Second Coming so will we. We will have not only the righteous character but a glorified body. This will for the first time be seen by the world.

Thessalonians who had been persecuted by the world and treated like the scum of the earth will be unveiled to the world. Paul, Silas, and Timothy who were treated like the offscourings of humanity will be there. Hopefully as the bride of Christ we will be there. This will be a day of justice not only for the retribution poured out upon the wicked but also because the mighty works of God will be seen in and through us by the world in a way that had never been seen before. But in addition to this there is another very interesting statement.

**“And to be marveled at among all who have believed.”** Not only will the Lord be exalted as He is glorified in His saints but the righteous themselves will be marveled at. It will be as if when we look at one another on that day with the Lord and His mighty angels at this great outpouring of the justice of God we will be saying, “look at what he or she has become!”

How many of the righteous throughout time will be there? Everyone will be there. Isn't that what the verse says, “and to be marveled at among all who have believed”. And Paul just wanting to emphasize the certainty of the presence of the Thessalonian Church adds ..... “for our testimony to you was believed”.

## CONCLUSION

Justice is not a small inconsequential thing. And though the righteous throughout the centuries have suffered while the wicked have prospered, it will not always be that way. This morning you have the opportunity to make a long-term investment decision.

This morning you can choose, rather than living for this life and the things of this world, you can choose to live for Christ and the things in the world to come.