

(2 Thessalonians) the Righteous Judgment of God

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the righteous judgment of God and how it relates to suffering and persecution.

Duration: 57:12

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 1:6

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Divine Retribution"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of receiving the revelation of God and being accountable to Him. He emphasizes that those who do not take the step towards God and acknowledge His existence will be without excuse and face judgment. The preacher highlights that those who sin against greater light will receive a greater condemnation. He also mentions the reality of a judgment and the retribution that will come upon those who have persecuted God's people. The sermon concludes by mentioning the need for people to hear about the reality of God's judgment in order to be convicted of their sins and be saved.

Transcript

Second Thessalonians, this second epistle to the Thessalonians was written not long after the first, and it was written to comfort these young believers in their affliction and to assure them that they were not in the great tribulation, even though they were suffering intense persecution. That will come out clearly as we read through this epistle, but it was also written to remind them that the righteous God knew their plight. Now these believers in Thessalonica, much like the believers that Phil just told us about in Cuba, they were under intense persecution.

Probably like even we hear about in places like North Korea or in various countries where Islam is dominating. We heard last week about the three young schoolgirls that were beheaded by Muslim extremists. Unbelievable.

But the Thessalonians were experiencing intense persecution, and so Paul writes this to remind them that God knew their plight and would one day repay their enemies and give them rest. And he's going to be very blunt and very clear about that as we get into this epistle. In the epistle, Paul speaks of several things.

He speaks of the eternal doom of those who reject Christ. He speaks of the rise and the fall of the Antichrist. He speaks of the rapture of the church, and then he gives a lot of practical exhortation in the latter portion of the epistle.

It's a small epistle, smaller than the first epistle to the Thessalonians, which was of course five chapters. We just studied that. So there are only three chapters here in this epistle, and we will probably make our way through here in just three, maybe four weeks at the most.

So with that introduction, let's just go ahead and jump right into it. Paul, Silvanus, or Silas is another name for Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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. So Paul is just filled with thanksgiving as he hears the reports about this group of believers. He says we're bound to give thanks.

He's just constrained to give thanks to God because of that wonderful report of how they're growing in their faith and they're loving one another. And of course for those who are in pastoral type of ministry, there's nothing quite as thrilling as that. It's as John would say in his epistle that he had no greater joy than to hear that his children were walking in truth.

And as a pastor, when you see people growing in the faith and when you see God working in and through their lives, it just absolutely thrills our hearts to see that work of God taking place. And that's what Paul is expressing here. He says so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God.

So as Paul would go from place to place, he'd say, oh boy, have you heard about what God is doing in Thessalonica? Have you heard about how the church there is growing and being blessed and God is strengthening his people and they're loving each other? He would just go from place to place boasting about them and boasting about particularly their patience and faith in the midst of all their persecutions and tribulations that they endured. So Paul would boast about them and this would of course no doubt be for many people a great word of encouragement. For some people it might even be a slight rebuke.

Maybe there were some that were not going through nearly as difficult of circumstances, but perhaps they were floundering a bit or whining and complaining a bit. And then when they'd hear about what the Thessalonians were going through and how despite that they were fervent and passionate in their faith and following the Lord, it would be a rebuke in some cases. But of course for the most part I'm sure it would just be a great encouragement.

So Paul mentions here though the fact that they were persecuted and that they were going through tribulation and that they were enduring this. Now remember these were relatively young believers. Paul wasn't there in Thessalonica for all that long of a period of time, probably some months, you know maybe six months or so.

And he writes these epistles not long after his departure. So we're talking about a church that's maybe a year or two old. So we've got some relatively young believers here and they're going through this intense persecution.

But God is strengthening them through it. And he says, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God. So their endurance was manifest evidence that God was upholding them through this.

When we hear about persecution, and we experience it in limited forms here, but of course nothing like others have and do experience it. But when we hear about it, oftentimes we wonder how can people go through this kind of stuff? We maybe even are frightened a bit thinking, well I don't know if I could survive that kind of thing. But what we see here is that God, he gives grace and he gives strength.

And he gives an ability supernaturally for people to persevere under these kinds of circumstances. And Peter would tell us that. He would say that the spirit of glory and of God rest upon those who are being persecuted for righteousness sake.

So that's what Paul's referring to here. Their ability to endure under this intense persecution. That's the implication.

This was intense. Their ability to endure was a manifest token or manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer. So they were suffering on behalf of the kingdom.

They weren't suffering so they could be part of the kingdom. They were of course already part of the kingdom. But they were suffering on behalf of the kingdom.

Now this whole idea of suffering of course is something that is a real challenge for us. It's something that we do not adapt to well. It's something that we for the most part would probably prefer to avoid if at all possible.

One commentator that I was reading today had something to say on the subject of suffering and I thought it was so significant that I wanted to read it to you tonight word for word. Listen to what he said. He said, To us the fact of suffering seems to deny rather than to prove that God is working out his righteous purpose.

The New Testament does not look on suffering quite the same way as do most modern people. To us it is itself an evil, something to be avoided at all cost. Now while the New Testament doesn't gloss over this aspect of suffering, it does not lose sight either of the fact that in the good providence of God, suffering is often the means of working out God's eternal purpose.

It develops in the sufferer qualities of character. It teaches valuable lessons. Suffering is not thought of as something that may be avoided by Christians.

For the Christian, it is inevitable. The Christian is ordained to it. The Christian must live out his or her life and develop his or her Christian character in a world which is dominated by non-Christian ideas.

His faith is not some fragile thing to be kept in a kind of spiritual cotton wool, insulated from all shocks. It is robust. It is to be manifested in the fires of trouble and in the furnace of affliction.

And not only is it to be manifested there, but in part at any rate, it is to be fashioned in such places. The very troubles and afflictions that the world heaps on the believer become, under God, the means of making the believer what he ought to be. Suffering, when we come to regard it in this light, is not to be thought of as evidence that God has forsaken us, but as evidence that God is with us.

Such suffering is a vivid token of the presence of God. It's so powerful, but it's so true in that we do generally tend to think like that, don't we? We don't think of suffering as manifest evidence that God is with

us. As a matter of fact, whenever we suffer or somebody else suffers, the first thing we generally think is, what's happened? Why is God forsaken me? How come the Lord isn't delivering me? How come he hasn't kept me from this or got me out of this predicament or this dilemma that I'm in? And that's just the way we tend to think, especially in our culture.

We live in a culture where we have perfected the art of ease and comfort. And we've lived much of our history as a nation seeking to make life problem-free. And we've done a fairly good job at it.

But we must not forget, as this author says, suffering is part of God's plan for his people. I don't care where you live, it's inevitable. You're not going to avoid it because it's through suffering that God builds character in our lives.

And he's not going to let us get away with being shallow people. He's going to do a work in us. Tonight, as we were singing that song that Scott wrote, your grace is sufficient for me.

And that one part there where it spoke of how the trials, what do they do? They drive us to our knees. And in our weakness, we collapse to our knees. But it's when we're there that we really find that's where our strength lies.

You see, strength lies in my dependency on God, not my dependency on me. And when we suffer, when we're afflicted, when we're persecuted, when we're powerless against forces that are coming against us, it brings us to the end of ourselves. And it brings us to a place of utter reliance upon God.

And therefore, it brings us into a place of strength. But we resist it. We fight against it.

We try to avoid it. And in our minds, as I said, we tend to think that if somebody is suffering, it must be because there's some secret sort of sin in their life or something like that. Not so.

Not so. That was the situation with Job. You remember Job's affliction? You remember his suffering? God said concerning Job, He said, there's not a man like him on the planet.

He's the most righteous man on the earth. But when his friends came and observed the intense suffering that he was going through, they knew he was a righteous man in one sense because they knew him, but they thought, okay, there must be something in Job's life that none of us are aware of, something in Job's life that he's kept hidden, something that only God sees. And now God is bringing about a judgment upon him because of that secret sin in his life.

That's how they reasoned. They could not grasp the possibility that somebody could really be righteous with God and still suffer the way Job was suffering. And so, you know, they would come along and they would give a few words of comfort.

But then before too long, they would just drift into that accusatory sort of position and condemn Job. But when we get to the end of the story, we find that they were wrong the whole while. And Job was indeed a righteous man by God's own testimony.

But he suffered. He suffered intensely. The Thessalonians, they were suffering, but God was with them and he was giving them grace in the midst of it.

And the grace was to the extent that a powerful testimony was going out from this community of believers. And, you know, that's what happens. It's when we suffer and we lean upon the Lord and his grace

sustains us.

Boy, that's when the unbelieving world really looks on and says, I need to hear more about your Christian faith. You know, there's so much in the church today that's really almost the complete opposite of that isn't there. I mean, there are entire ministries, huge ministries today that are built on the foundation of positivism.

And they'll tell you right up front, we're only going to speak positive things. We want people to only hear a positive message. We're not going to talk about troubles and difficulties and trials, and we're not going to talk about sin and judgment and those things.

That's not positive. We want to get a positive message out. They're doing a tremendous disservice to people because regardless of what your message is, life is independent of that.

Life is going to be full of difficulties and better to just face that reality and be ready for them when they come, then live in denial that they'll never come or assume that if they do come, this can't be God's will. It must be a lack of faith or the devil's attacking or something like that. This is part of the life of the believer.

Acts 14.22 says, We must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God. In Philippians 1.29, Paul said, To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake. It's been granted to you.

It's been given to you as a privilege. Boy, that's an interesting perspective on it. You get to suffer.

That's what Paul's saying. It's been granted to you. But you see, if we understood the glory that is to come like the apostles when they suffered for Jesus, we would rejoice.

We remember when they were taken and they were beaten and they left that experience rejoicing and thanking God that they were allowed to suffer. For the name of Jesus, they had the right perspective. They had the eternal perspective.

Now, he goes on here and listen to what he says. He says, Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you. There have been many persecutors of God's people throughout the ages, and many of them have met with great judgment even in this life.

Of course, those who maybe have seemed to get by don't get by at all because this is not the end of the story, is it? I think of somebody like an Adolf Hitler who, in a sense, sort of seemed to anyway get away with most of what he did. Responsible for the deaths of so many people, but he himself was never really personally touched so much by the war. It was only in the final days as he was hidden there in that bunker in Berlin that things got a bit tough for him and ultimately, finally, just took his own life.

But in a sense, you almost feel like that's an injustice. This guy got away with mass murder. You think of somebody like Idi Amin who slaughters 500,000 of his countrymen, most of them Christians.

And then he's given exile among his Muslim friends. And he lives out the rest of his life in a plush hotel right there beside the swimming pool and all of that. But of course, that's not the end of the story.

These men, the moment they close their eyes on earth, they open them to a rude awakening, to say the least, to a judgment. There is retribution that will come upon those who have persecuted God's people. Remember in Revelation chapter 16, there we read about how I think it's the third angel pours his vial out

upon the waters and the waters are turned into blood and the angel cries out and says, righteous and true are your judgments, O Lord.

For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets and you have given them blood to drink. The angel says, this is right. This is righteous.

This is the kind of retribution they deserve. So there's judgment coming and he says, he will give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. So Paul, of course, Paul was writing with the expectation that Christ might return even in his generation, but that didn't happen.

And yet these people, the Thessalonians that he was writing to, of course, they ultimately were able to enter into that rest that God had for them. I think the church itself eventually came out of that period of persecution and went on for quite some time without it. But of course, the ultimate rest is in the presence of the Lord in his kingdom.

And those who were persecuting them, we don't know historically actually what might have happened to them in this life, but we do know that again, they died and will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ as their judge. But Paul is looking at this really, he's looking at it in the context of the second coming of Jesus Christ and the great persecutions that will be going on in the world leading up to that. And I think that many of the persecutions going on today would probably fall right into this category here because I think we are very close to the second coming.

But listen to what he says. He says concerning Christ who is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 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. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

All these words are so descriptive and really quite alarming, frightening if you take them seriously, which of course everybody ought to take them very seriously. These pronouncements of judgment are so severe that some commentators, believe it or not, you would assume a bible commentator would be a Christian of course, some commentators have said this isn't really, this was interjected by a later writer. This is inconsistent with the God of the New Testament.

We don't see the God of the New Testament as a God who takes vengeance upon sinners. That's it's kind of an Old Testament idea. And so they actually question whether or not these statements should be here in this epistle, casting doubt on whether or not Paul really wrote them and saying that somebody else probably interjected them at some point.

But this is just a complete unwillingness to look at the facts. The New Testament is very clear, just as it's more clear than the Old Testament as a matter of fact, about the coming judgment of man. And as I've mentioned to you before, Jesus himself, believe it or not, Jesus spoke of judgment and damnation and eternal punishment.

He spoke of it more than any other New Testament writer. So those who would say that, well this isn't really consistent with, you know, New Testament theology, they haven't really taken a serious look at their New Testament. You don't have to look far.

I don't know what in the world they're reading, what parts of it, skipping quite a major portion of it, because this is definitely part of God's message to this world, that there is a judgment that is coming. And you know, I think that this is one of the things, as I was mentioning a moment ago, the attitude among so many today of the positive message, this is one of the reasons why the church is powerless, I think, to affect any lasting change on the world. People are not being told the truth, the whole truth.

Now the theory is, you know, when you get somebody to come into your church, you don't want to scare them away with hellfire and damnation preaching and all of that sort of thing. So you want to just give a positive message so they can keep coming back and eventually, through a process of time, they'll kind of get the whole picture and they'll get saved. But you know, some people are only going to get saved by having the hell scared out of them.

That's the reality. Some people, that positive stuff doesn't mean a thing to them. They just think, oh, this is... what is this? Some people have to hear about the reality of the judgment of God.

Their hearts are hard. They're insensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and it's through the Word of God coming to them and the reality of the fact of a judgment that God will bring this sometimes to them in a powerful way, convicting them of sin so they can be saved. Much of evangelism that's going on today downplays or dismisses the issues of sin.

There's a very well-known evangelistic program. It's very, very popular in Britain, came out of Britain, and gained quite a bit of popularity around Europe and is even somewhat popular outside of Europe. And there's a lot of positive things about it.

Positive things, yes, of course. That's the premise of it. There are a lot of good things about it even, and I've read through it and kind of studied it and analyzed it.

And says some great things on certain points, but the one missing element in the program is dealing in any kind of serious way with the issue of sin. It's for the most part just completely skipped over. You go from just a little bit of, you know, testimony about who Jesus is historically, a great chapter on the person of Christ and his resurrection, and then you just sort of go from that right into, okay, now this is how you do the Christian life.

But there's not any significant emphasis on the cross, and there is little to no mention of sin. But sin is still the big issue. That is the primary issue.

And until sin is faced up to and dealt with, there is no relationship with God. A person is under the wrath of God until their sin is dealt with. And the terminology that Paul uses here is frightening terminology when he says that God will take vengeance on those.

Now the word vengeance, the word rendered vengeance, has no association with vindictiveness. We need to understand that. We're not talking about a God who's going to, you know, be vindictive toward a person.

We're talking about a righteous judgment, an absolutely righteous judgment. The word has the idea of a firm administration of unwavering justice. It is the inflicting of full justice on the criminal, nothing more, nothing less.

It is giving to the sinner exactly what he deserves for his crimes against a holy God, taking vengeance upon those. Notice the category. There's two categories here.

Those who do not know God is one category, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not everybody in the world has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Did you know that? That's a fact.

There are people that have never heard the gospel. There are people right here in Southern California that have never heard the gospel. There are certainly many people around the world who have never heard the gospel, but know this, they're not excused because they have not heard the gospel.

Notice he's taking vengeance upon not only those who haven't heard the gospel, but also upon those who do not know God. What's he talking about? Well, in Romans chapter 1, we're told that every man is without excuse because there has been given to every single human being a general revelation of God. There's not a person on the planet who has an excuse for their atheism, according to the scripture, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even as eternal power and divine nature, so that men are without excuse. That's what the apostle Paul says. So every person has an inner testimony of the reality of God.

There's an internal sense, an innate sense within each person who comes into this world of the reality of a supreme being. There's an innate sense in every single person that there are things that are right and there are things that are wrong, and then there's a whole external world, the world of creation, that is shouting out to people every day the simple message, where there is a creation, there must be a creator. So those who reject the general revelation of God will be judged as well.

Those who fail to respond to the general revelation of God, of course, never get then the specific revelation necessarily. The general revelation is enough to lead a man to then seek after the more specific revelation. Once a man responds to general revelation, he opens himself up to receive greater revelation.

I've met people, heard stories, read about people who, in their world, wherever they were, in a jungle perhaps somewhere, or often a nation dominated by another religious perspective, they suddenly came to the reality through that inner testimony and just looking at the world around them, there's got to be a God. And that God must have something to do with me personally. And as that person genuinely and sincerely takes that step in that direction toward discovering who that God is, guess what happens next? God in some way gets the gospel message to him.

We have a great picture of that in the 10th chapter of Acts. You remember Cornelius, he was a Roman centurion. And he had been stationed evidently in the land of Israel for many years.

And he had come under the influence of Judaism. And he began to believe, unlike the vast majority of his fellow Romans who were pagans and idolaters, he began to believe that there was really one true God. And that belief that there was one true God, and then moving in that direction, and as he had a bit of revelation, he gave alms to the poor and began to adjust his life toward that revelation.

What's the next thing that happened? God sent the more specific revelation to him through Peter. And one day as he was praying, an angel appeared to him and said, send for Simon, whose name is Peter. And he will tell you words by which you and your family will be saved.

And that is a picture of what happens with every person who takes that step toward God as they come to the consciousness through the inward and the external revelation of creation. As they come to the consciousness, there must be a God and I must be accountable to him. But those who never do that, they are without excuse.

And they will suffer the judgment that's mentioned here, along with, and even, I think, obviously more severely, those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These will receive a greater condemnation because they sin against greater light. Now, we don't know exactly what that means.

In Luke chapter 12, Jesus definitely teaches that there are degrees of punishment. We don't know. He doesn't really elaborate on it.

He just simply lays it out in one of his parables. But from that, we derive that there are indeed levels of punishment. And we know the principle, the Lord stated it over and over again, to whom much is given, much is required.

The greater the revelation, the greater the responsibility. God said to Israel through the prophet Amos, because you alone I have known from the nations of the world, therefore, I will punish you. You see, they had the great privilege of being God's covenant people, but that great privilege brought a great responsibility.

And when they rebelled against God, his judgment upon them was more severe. And so, likewise, for those people that have heard the gospel, for those people that have lived in a country where the gospel has gone out freely and they've had access to it, they could get in their car and turn on the radio and there it was blaring in their ears. And those that turned that off and said, shut that up.

I hate that. I don't want to hear any of that. Oh, those are the people that are adding insult to injury when it comes to their own situation eternally.

And notice what he then says. He says that these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. That is heavy stuff.

These will be punished with everlasting destruction. Now, there are some who deny that hell is a place of everlasting destruction or a place of everlasting punishment. The scripture uses words like destruction, uses words like perish.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. And so, those who hold the position that man will not be eternally punished but rather will at some point be annihilated, they say, you see, perish means to go out of existence. But the Greek word that's used to translate our English word or that's translated into our English word perish is never used to speak of anything going out of existence.

It's used many times in the New Testament and many times it's translated perish and the very context itself makes it clear that he's not talking about perish in the sense of vanishing, gone, non-existent. It's just a way of referring to something that is utterly ruined. That's the idea behind it.

Something that is utterly ruined. Destruction means the utter ruin of that particular thing and that's what's being spoken of here. There is this punishment that will come and it is everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

That's what hell is. Hell is being cast away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. You know, sometimes people say and maybe you've heard people say this, oh man, there's no hell.

We're living in hell right now. Earth is hell. Life is hell.

No. Hell is hell. It's a real place and it is a place, Jesus described it as, he described it in different ways, of course, and I think it was certainly metaphorical to a certain extent, but the metaphor has, there's something that the metaphor is implying.

So Jesus described hell as outer darkness. That's what we're talking about here. That they are removed out from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

You see, everything that a person knows is all connected to the Lord Jesus Christ and the glory of his power. Everything we've ever experienced is connected to that. You can't be disconnected from it in this life, but you can be disconnected from it in the next life and that's the horrific thing.

That's the frightening thing. You know, you've probably heard people scoff at the idea of hell. They mock the idea and they, you know, I've heard many people and you see, you know, little sayings written here and there, but people talking about the great time that they expect to have in hell.

I've heard people say things so foolish as, why would I want to go to heaven? None of my friends are going to be there. Why would I want to go to heaven? It's boring. I want to go to hell where all the fun is happening.

It's a party place. Well, that is utter stupidity because hell is being cast away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Everything that we know, every good thing, every pleasant experience, every desirable thing is all a result of the glory of God's power.

It's all because God created it and hell is being forever removed from all of that and Jesus described it not only as outer darkness, but he said outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth because being cast out of the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power results in an eternal anguish. A person lives in an eternal state of anguish. This stuff is inconceivable.

You know, the Bible doesn't give us great detail about hell. It just simply tells us it's there and you do not want to go there. But isn't it true that all of us, and I'm including myself in that, that we sort of just don't think that much about it? It's almost like we don't really believe it.

You know, we do believe it, of course, but we don't really believe it. I think if we really, really believed it like we probably ought to believe it, it would probably radically change our lives. It would radically change the way we think about sinning for sure.

Now why do we have this sort of light attitude towards sin? It can only be explained by the fact that we don't really, really, really believe that there is a judgment against sin. But Jesus went out of his way to make sure we understood this stuff. Remember what he said? He said, if your hand offends you, cut it off.

That's serious. If your eye offends you, pluck it out. Why did he say that? He said, because it's better to live life maimed than to go into hell with your whole body.

That's how horrific this is. That same commentator that I quoted from earlier had another very powerful comment on this particular passage here. He said, the immense seriousness of this thought should not be

minimized.

Those who oppose the things of God here and now are not engaged in some minor error which can easily be put right in the hereafter. They are engaging in that defiance of the will of God which has eternal consequences. Life here and now has a high and serious dignity.

In particular, the facing up to the gospel invitation is a choice fraught with the most solemn and lasting consequences. You know, I've often thought that very thing. Life is serious, and man needs to take it much more serious.

It's a serious, serious thing to shun the gospel. The gospel is a royal invitation. Now, we don't live under a monarchy, and there are very few real monarchies today.

There are a couple still. You know, if you live under a monarchy and the king summons you to his palace, you know what you do? You make sure you're there because you don't want to incur the wrath of the king. Now, in our democratic society, as it's called, we think we can just do whatever we want.

The people rule. Well, it's not really true, is it? We think we rule. We think we're invincible, and then a little hurricane comes along and shows us real quickly that isn't really the case, is it? Or an earthquake happens, and it shows us real quickly.

You know, I've often thought about that. How is it that we can be so foolish as to think we're invincible and to be so callous in our attitude toward God when he could simply blow on this planet and blow us all right off of it? You know, what if we had winds that actually reached up to when they hit the land 250 miles an hour, 300 miles an hour? You just blow everything right off the face of the land. But there's this insane pride in man that he can somehow play fast and loose with these kinds of things.

This is the height of insanity. So, royal invitation, and to disregard it is to pronounce your own eternal death sentence. That's what's happening.

And, you know, we're living in a time when people basically just reject the whole idea of judgment. They reject the whole idea of hell, say it's not a reality, it's a fairy tale, and on and on and on. You know, that doesn't make it go away.

It doesn't make it go away. For a long time, people said the earth was flat. Did that do anything to the shape of the earth at all? No, it never became flat.

And people can protest all they want. But Jesus Christ, the man who has proven authority because he did what nobody else did, he rose from the dead, he said there's a hell. And he said many are going to actually end up there.

Straight is the gate. Narrow is the way that leads to life. There's only a few that find it.

For broad is the gate and wide is the road that leads to destruction and multitudes travel it. And so Paul, he says this is what's coming. This is what those who reject Jesus Christ have to look forward to.

They are going to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. When he comes in that day to be glorified in his saints and to be admired among all those who believe, when he comes in that day to be glorified in his saints, now that's where we come back to ourselves. Isn't that a wonderful thing? Jesus is going to come someday to be glorified in his saints.

This is an amazing statement, really. And later on in this epistle, Paul will say another amazing thing. He will say that God has called us to the obtaining of the glory of Jesus Christ.

Again, that is fairly incomprehensible. But he's coming to be glorified in his saints. Jesus is coming to be glorified.

He's going to be exalted. He's going to, you know, we of course have the book of Revelation and we have the word here in verse 7. Jesus is revealed from heaven. The idea is that Jesus has been hidden.

His true identity has to a large degree been hidden. It's been veiled. The revelation of Jesus Christ means the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

And there's a day coming when he is going to be unveiled in all of his glory. And in that day, everyone is going to see him for who he really is. But here's the wild thing is that in the midst of that glory, we are going to be glorified with him.

He's going to actually be glorified in his saints. And when you think of it in the context of what we're talking about here, you're talking about people who are being persecuted, people who are hated, people who are despised, people who are cast out, people who are being trampled down. It's those very people that he will exalt to inherit the earth.

It's so wonderful. God's plan of retribution. It's so right.

It's so just. It's just like you would think it should be. He's going to take the weak and the poor and the despised and the rejected and all of those people that have been turned out and persecuted and cast out because of their love for him.

He's going to take them and he's going to elevate them to the position of ruling and reigning. And all of those that have persecuted his people for all of the ages are going to be punished with everlasting destruction, cast out from his presence. And so he's coming to be glorified in his saints.

And I love this. And to be admired among all those who believe. You know, as we gather together and we lift our voices and worship, you know what we're doing? We're admiring the Lord.

But again, today we do that in a fairly secluded atmosphere for the most part. I love to get out in public. That's one of the things I think is so great about doing our baptisms where we do them and doing a public baptism because we get to admire the Lord right out there under his beautiful heaven and right in front of everybody else.

But he's coming to be admired by all of those who believe. And we'll just be standing there in utter admiration of our Lord. This is him.

This is Jesus, just like we said, just like we believed. He's here. You know, when you're reading through the gospels and you're reading through some of the incidents in the life of Christ and, you know, some of the things that he does.

I was listening to Jack Hibbs on the radio yesterday, I think it was, as I was driving around. And he was telling the story of when the woman was brought before Jesus, you know, supposedly caught in the very act of adultery and they wanted to stone her. And so, you know, he goes through the whole story there.

Jack, I don't know if you've listened to him yet. He's on at 11 on weekdays, but he's a very excitable person. And, you know, but it was such a, I think, a great picture of what probably really happened when Jesus said, you know, the Pharisees brought this woman and the Pharisees were self-righteous.

They were hypocritical. And the average person would have sort of looked at them like, probably like, you know, I wish somebody could put these guys in their place. So Jesus, of course, he did that on several occasions.

But you remember what he says, they want to stone her to death. He says, okay, he that is without the sin among you, let him cast the first stone. And of course, they couldn't do anything.

But, you know, Jack sort of envisioned people just going, yes, right. You know, Jesus. And that's it.

When the Lord comes back, that's the thing. You know, people today and there, you know, there are many people that are just more or less indifferent. But there are there are some serious blasphemers in this world today, aren't there? There are people who go out of their way to mock Christ and to blaspheme him and to say unthinkably wicked things about him.

And unless they repent, these are the ones that are going to be punished with everlasting destruction. But when it happens, we're going to say right on. That's right, Jesus.

That's the admiration that will be given. 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 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. So Paul encourages them.

I know you're suffering and I know it's. I know it's difficult. But your testimony is living proof that God is with you and he has given you the grace to endure this.

And don't worry, there's retribution coming. God is going to right the wrongs in this world. He's going to do it and it's going to be a glorious day.

But in the meantime, we keep serving him. We pray for those that are in difficulty. We trust in that same grace of God that he's going to sustain us and bless us.

And we realize that through these things that we pass through, that they're all allowed by God. They pass through his sieve, so to speak, before they ever reach me. And they're only there to build godly character in our lives in preparation for eternity.

You see, this is a thing we only think generally in terms of time. And oftentimes when we go through something and you know, you hear people say, well, this is for your benefit. And then you go through something and you think, how on earth can this benefit me or how can this benefit me? But the reality is we have to see beyond this life.

It's not merely for this life. These things that we live through and experience and go through here in the world, these are preparatory for the life to come. God's building character in you, not just for now, but it is for now.

Of course, he wants you to be a godly person. But he's building character in you with eternity in mind. And he's going to sort everything out and we can rest in that.

Lord, we thank you that we can rest in that. And we thank you, Lord, that there is a day coming when you will make retribution and you will right the wrongs. Lord, we thank you that in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Christ.

We thank you, Lord, that you are coming again and that we will be glorified along with you. And we will be there with you when you return, admiring your greatness, astounded by your glory. And Lord, may we be caught up in that today as well.

Lord, may we in these days admire you, be glorified through you working in our lives. And so, Lord, here we are. Work your plan and purpose in us.

And Lord, we think of the many that are on the road to destruction. And somehow, Lord, we pray you would awaken them to the peril that lies ahead. And perhaps, Lord, even with ourselves, we need to speak to somebody about that and just be honest with them.

Give us the grace and the wisdom to be able to do that. And Lord, even more personally for ourselves, Lord, forgive us of our sins and help us to see how sin is an utter offense to you and how you've called us to live holy. Help us, Lord, to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light.

Help us, Lord, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and not to make provision for the flesh. In his name we pray. Amen.

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