

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 *All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might ¹⁰ on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

In That Day

1. Relief for believers
2. Destruction for unbelievers
3. God is glorified

1945: Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. 49,221 dead; 58,839 wounded.

1968: Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War

1976: Big Thompson Canyon River Flood in Colorado kills dozens

1993: Mississippi River floods. 38,000 homes destroyed.

2001: Terrorists hijack commercial jets targeting the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and one other unknown target. Over 3,000 dead.

2004: Earthquake and tsunami in the South Pacific kills more than 225, 000 people in eleven countries.

2005: Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans and much of the south leaving over 1800 dead.

2008: Super Tuesday tornado outbreak in the south

2012: Hurricane Sandy battered the east coast

2016: Hurricane Matthew damaged Georgia and the Carolinas.

2019: 9 killed in Mexican cartel shootout

A. D. 33: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Lk 21:28) We live in a world electric with the ominous. Disasters make the pages daily. Signs abound that Jesus could return at any time. Yet, Jesus doesn't tell us to hang our heads in sorrow or cower in fear. Instead, he says look up. Look up with anticipation. Look up with eagerness. Why? In that day, there will be relief for believers, destruction for unbelievers and God will be glorified.

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. Is that something to look forward to? It was for the Christians at Thessalonica. "It was in Thessalonica that the first Gentiles were killed in the Roman Empire . . . The first crucifixions, the first burnings, and the first persecutions of Christians began there." (Donald Barnhouse quoted by Thomas Klusmeyer in unpublished essay)

In Japan, we have an active mission effort. There are missionaries sharing the gospel with much success. Quite often, when a Japanese person comes to know Jesus, he is ostracized from his family. Imagine how it must feel to have mom or dad tell you that they hate you; to have your grandfather curse you; or your grandmother spit in your face because you believe in Christ.

Martin Luther said, "Looking at the Christian community with the eye of human reason and reflection, no more wretched, tormented, persecuted, unhappy people are in evidence on earth than those who confess and glory in Christ the crucified. . . [God] allows them to remain prostrate under the weight of the cross, while others in the world, particularly their persecutors, live in the enjoyment of honor and fortune, of happiness, power and riches, with everything moving to the fulfillment of their desires." (Sermons of Martin Luther, Vol. 8, p. 380)

But what does Paul say of them? *All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.* When the world makes you feel like a loser for living your faith, remember God's judgment overturns the world's verdict. He has counted you worthy of his kingdom because Jesus' worthiness covers you through faith, that faith which the world hates. That very faith that suffers at the hand of the world is the same faith that claims Christ's worthiness as your only hope and salvation. His worthiness covers our sinfulness. Face the world, confident of God's judgment that counts you worthy because of Jesus.

My brother and I used to box and wrestle, especially when our parents were gone. Now, he was much older than me and sometimes he would pin me and then just lay there with all his weight across my chest. With all that weight on my chest, it would be hard to breath and I just wanted him off. I wanted relief. All the pressures and troubles and persecution that comes to us in this life will be relieved by the coming of Jesus. We will get relief from the pressure of our own sinful

nature. We will get relief from a world at odds with our Christian confession. We will get relief from the devil's attacks. That's something to look forward to.

Every sin, especially those habitual sins, are like that pesky little brother poking you in the side making us doubt our faith, doubt that Jesus died for us, doubt God's verdict, doubt God's forgiveness. And those doubts rob us of joy. Those doubts rob us of optimism. Those doubts threaten to rob us of faith.

Don't take your eyes off of the cross. Let us have a faith that looks at the cross of Jesus Christ. In him and in him alone we are worthy because God counts Jesus' worthiness on us. As we look at the cross, we can be optimistic as we look forward to Judgment Day. Look at it this way: Are we one more day removed from the vitality of youth or one day closer to paradise? Is it another health problem or a step closer to relief? Is it the loss of a loved one or another believer waiting to welcome you into heaven? Jesus' cross gives us optimism as we look forward to that day.

In that day, there will be relief for believers, but just the opposite for our enemies. *God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.* For the Christians in Thessalonica who were enduring persecution, That day is payback time. Those Christians were in no position to do anything about the persecution. They couldn't take people to court or call in the police. They had no recourse but to endure it. But that day meant their tormentors would now suffer God's Judgment.

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. This is hell: everlasting destruction and being shut out from the Lord's presence. It is the end of hope.

If you doubt hell's existence, look at yourself in the mirror. Are there wrinkles? Do you feel the pressure of time passing? There's nothing natural about the aging process, and there's nothing normal about death. People don't die just because stuff happens. We die because God says so, because we live in a moral universe where things fall apart because of sin. How especially devastating death is for those who deny God's love, who suppress the truth. Sin is real. Hell is a reality.

This is all lost on the person who won't face the problem, who suppress the truth of sin and grace. A sighted person can see the room is dark and will wish for a light. A blind person doesn't care. God is coming to throw the light switch. The spiritually sighted are thrill by the news. They can't wait for it to happen. The blind are wondering what all the fuss is about. God is coming to throw the light switch and we will all find ourselves before the judgment seat of God's final justice.

In that day. In that day believers will have relief; unbelievers will experience eternal destruction and God will get the glory he deserves. *On the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.* In catechism class, the day that elicits the most questions, is when we are discussing the end of the Third Article and what it teaches about judgment and eternal life. We just had that class this week. I am often asked what we will do in heaven. Paul tells us here what we will do. We will glorify God. We will marvel at his love. One writer suggested that when we get to heaven, the first thing we will do is not pepper God with a bunch of questions. Instead, he said we will just say "Oh! Now, it's all clear."

Heaven is a continuous marveling, wonderment, being amazed. The earthly can amaze us only for so long. As we age, we really begin to feel that, don't we? Nothing really amazes us anymore. But the amazement, wonder and marvel of heaven has no bound, no limit, no end.

When I was young, heaven bothered me a bit. The idea of eternity made me crazy. That also came up in catechism class this week. The truth is we can't understand it. We are creatures of time. We exist in time. We can't think of anything but time. Heaven is eternity where there is no time. We can't understand that now, but we will experience it then in complete joy.

In that day. May we remember that day. May we think about that day often. May we live for that day every day. In that day God will be glorified for the salvation which he has given to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. In that day we will marvel at God and his plan and his love. In that day we will have relief from all the troubles of this life and we will have an eternity to enjoy it. In that day.