

Judgment is Coming • 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

I. introduction

A. Read Vs. 1-4

B. Humor Not Appropriate

1. We all like to laugh & enjoy some humor in a sermon.
2. Some preachers are quite funny; their message is sometimes like a **comedy routine**.
3. Today, however, humor is out of place. It doesn't fit our subject.
4. Say you get a call from the doctor's office after they've run some tests. Doc says he wants to see you ASAP.
 - a. The day of the appointment arrives. You check-in, & are called, not to an exam room—his office.
 - b. He opens a folder, reads a chart, takes off his glasses & looks at you with a serious expression.
 - c. Then tells you the **hard** news: It's cancer.
5. It would be **really bad form** if he then began telling jokes about terminal illness.
6. Well, [read Bible, take off glasses] I have some bad news: It's spiritual cancer & it's terminal. It's called sin.
7. It's time to face some hard facts; a truth many don't want to think about **but can't avoid**.
 - a. It's this: We live. We die. Then we stand before God.
 - b. First Earth, **then** Heaven **or** Hell. That's the path **for every one of us**.
8. The reason humor's not fitting today is because more than likely, there are people here or listening to this message, headed for hell rather than heaven.

C. Set Up

1. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians a few months **after** 1 Thess.
2. Word reached him the persecution that had driven him out of Thessalonica had gotten far worse.
 - a. Believers were losing their jobs.
 - b. Some had been arrested for spreading an unapproved religion.
 - c. Officials looked the other way when thugs pounced on & pummeled Christians.
 - d. It was open season on believers.
3. Despite the pressure, the Thessalonians remained **loyal** to God & **loving** toward one another.
4. Paul comforted this suffering church, telling them their faithfulness was **evidence** they were part of God's kingdom.
5. The world hated them **precisely because** they were no longer a part of that world.
6. This echoes what Jesus said in John 15; He said -
¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

II. TEXT

A. V. 5

1. Paul wanted to bring **some perspective** to the suffering Thessalonians.
2. Though the persecution was tough, it was evidence of their union with Christ. So he goes on in v. 5 -
⁵ which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer
3. Those tormenting them thought **judgment** was **theirs** to make **on** the followers of Christ.
 - a. It was the **opposite**: Judgment belongs to God.
 - b. And their persecution of God's people would bring His judgment **on them**.
4. The tables will turn. God has the last word.

B. Vs. 6-7

⁶ since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

1. Unlike human judges, God's judgment is perfect.
 - a. He sees all the evidence; nothing escapes His penetrating gaze.
 - b. No fancy arguments confuse Him.
 - c. He sees beyond appearances to the heart of every matter.
 - d. He even knows the hidden motives behind all that's done.
 - e. He can't be fooled or tricked.

- f. The verdict He renders in every case is a perfect application of justice.
2. Paul reminds the Thessalonians the day will come when they will be delivered & comforted while those who've poured **their wrath** on the faithful will have **God's wrath** poured out on them!
3. This happens when Jesus comes to **finish** what He began 2000 years ago.
5. And right here, I need to pause & explain...
- C. What Happened
 1. God created us to enjoy an eternal love relationship with Him.
 2. That's why He created us in His image. God doesn't want a pet; He wants a **companion**.
 - a. For love to be real, it must be **free to choose**. It isn't love if it's **forced**.
 - b. So God made us free to choose.
 3. The first man, Adam, exercised that freedom & turned from God to sin & self. We prove we were IN Adam & sinned with him every time we sin.
 - a. Here's the problem with that fateful turning away from God: God **IS** Life/Truth/Light/Good.
 - b. When we turn **from** Him, we turn **from all He is**. Turning from God means turning from
 - 1) Life to death,
 - 2) Truth or falsehood,
 - 3) Light to darkness,
 - 4) Good to evil.
 - c. Sin is a supremely foolish choice, a bad decision.
 - d. But here's the thing: **God honors our choice**. He doesn't override it.
 - e. To do so would be to undo the whole point of creating us in His image in the first place:

So we could choose love; Choose Him.
 4. Ultimately, & I mean that in **the most literal sense**, ultimately, that's what life is about!
 - a. The big choice, the one decision it all boils down to is What are you going to do with God?
 - b. The big question in life isn't Who will I marry? Which house do I buy? What career will I make?
 - c. As monumental as all these things are they pale in comparison to this Do you **believe** in God?
 - d. **Really** believe? With a faith that consistently affects your choices?
 - e. You see, it's **not enough** to believe in God's **existence**.
 - 1) The **devil** knows God exists. / It isn't intellectual assent to God's existence that's the issue.
 - 2) What turns belief into faith is **trust**. / It's taking God at His Word & **obeying** Him.
 5. God has given us a **defining issue** to determine whether or not we trust in Him. It centers on a tree.
 - a. Adam failed at the test of the 1st; The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil.
 - 1) He was free to eat **whatever** he wanted.
 - 2) There was only one prohibition; a single, solitary tree he was forbidden from eating.
 - 3) How long he ate the **approved** diet, we don't know.
 - 4) But one day he ended up before the banned tree & ate
 - 5) Adam turned from God's will to his own & dragged the entire human race with him.
 - 6) He became a slave to sin & death.
 - 7) Since children of a slave are also slaves, Adam's descendants are born into slavery to sin & death.
 - b. The One exception was Jesus.
 - 1) Born to a woman, He's human. / But conceived by the Holy Spirit, He's no slave.
 - 2) Jesus was the 1st truly free human since Adam.
 - 3) Though the devil tried mightily to get him to sin, Jesus remained faithful & lived a perfect life.
 - 4) He went to the cross where He paid the guilt of **our** sins. / The death due us, He took.
 - 5) In Jesus' death, all the righteous requirements of God's justice are satisfied.
 - 6) That's why His last words were "It is finished = Paid in full."
 - 7) That his death **paid for our sins** is proven by His rising from the grave.
 - 8) If Jesus **remained** in the tomb, He'd **still be paying** for our sins.
 - 9) His resurrection means the **requirements** of divine justice are **satisfied**.
 - c. God can forgive us, not because He winks our sin away, but because **Jesus paid it all**- All to him we owe. Our sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.
 6. So now, for **all** human beings, it's **once again** the choice of a tree The cross upon which Jesus died.
 - a. The **difference** between the 1st & 2nd trees is that Adam's failure doomed **all** to sin.

- b. Jesus' success redeems **only those** who put their trust in Him.
7. **Because**, remember, it's **all about love**; which is a choice.
 - a. God created us for an **eternal** love relationship with Him.
That relationship **begins** here, then **moves** to Heaven.
 - b. What makes Heaven—Heaven, isn't golden streets & pearl gates.
 - 1) It isn't undying flowers & a crystal river.
 - 2) It isn't the most beautiful music & colors & beauty ever imagined.
 - 3) What makes heaven a place of eternal bliss is that God is there.
 - 4) It wouldn't **be** heaven w/o Him.
8. But there are people, millions of them, who **don't want God**.
 - a. They think they want to go to heaven but only if there are places in it where God isn't.
 - b. Listen God is not the **mayor** of heaven.
 - 1) There isn't a city hall where He keeps an office, out of the way.
 - c. Heaven **IS** the unrestricted, fully-realized, maximally-enjoyed, presence of God.
9. The LAST PLACE people who don't want God want to be, is Heaven.
10. What I wish they understood is that the **only alternative** to Heaven is Hell.
 - a. And Hell is **precisely** what they've wanted. Only, once they get it, they'll realize with eternal regret they were fools to want it.
 - b. You see, Hell is God giving the lost their desire to exist **w/o Him**.
 - c. But remember – God IS Life, Light, Love, & All that is Good. // Hell is the **absence** of all that.
11. Right now, in His grace, as God waits for the lost to turn to Him, He gives them a measure of Good, a taste of Love so hopefully they'll come to their senses & turn to Him.
 - a. The pleasures God built into this life are **hints & invitations** to the greater glory of eternity with Him.
 - b. The person who says “No” to God all his/her life, **will in the end** get what they've wanted.
 - c. **Either** we spend eternity **in** Life, Light, Love, & All Good. Or an eternity **without** them.
 - 1) Conscious existence w/o life.
 - 2) Utter darkness / 3) No relationship / 4) Not a hint of pleasure.
 - d. If your concept of hell is Spring Break at South Beach, boy have **you** got it wrong.
 - e. Hell isn't a raucous party. It isn't hanging with your peeps.
 - f. Jesus described hell as outer darkness where there is nothing but weeping & the grinding of teeth that marks massive regret.
 - g. People in hell aren't kicking it with their pals; **they're totally alone**.
 - h. Hungry with no food, thirsty with no water, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, feeling nothing.
 - i. Tormented with the realization they are there by their own choice & nothing will change – Forever!
12. The Bible student may object to this description of hell, because Scripture calls it the Lake of Fire & fire is a frequent idiom for hell.
 - a. Does that mean there's a **literal fire** burning in Hell? Possibly.
 - b. **More likely**, fire is mentioned because it's something everyone can relate to as a picture of the torment the lost will suffer.
 - c. Getting burned is an intense pain most have experienced at one time or another.
 - d. But just as our descriptions of the glory & beauty of Heaven fall short of the real thing, our descriptions of hell fall short as well.
 - e. The torment of hell won't be LESS than burning; it will be WORSE!
 - f. What could be worse than the **complete & eternal absence** of the love & goodness?
 - g. I for one, would take fire over that, ANY DAY!
13. Let me be clear – The **only way into Heaven**, is to repent of your sin & believe in Jesus.
 - a. The **only way to avoid Hell**, is to put your trust in Christ, Who died for your sins & rose again from the dead to give you new life.
 - b. There's no **purgatory** where people go after they die to work things out, or where relatives can light candles to shorten their loved one's stay.
 - c. There's no **reincarnation** where you get to tweak your karma until you're finally good enough to merge with the cosmic consciousness.

- d. It's Earth, then Heaven or Hell. The cross of Christ is the dividing line.
 - 1) Believe in Him & your path heads toward Heaven.
 - 2) Reject Him, and your path leads to Hell.
 - 3) But here's the thing – you **have to** decide.
 - a) This isn't a poll where you can say, Yes, No, Undecided. It's Yes or No.
 - b) To be undecided is to say "No" because **everyone is already on the path to hell**.
 - c) That's the path we're born on.
14. In just a bit, we're going to give you an opportunity to put your faith in Jesus . . .
- D. Vs. 8-10
 1. But let's finish our text. Paul spoke of Jesus coming with His angels to rescue His people & punish those persecuting them.
 2. He now describes that judgment -
 - ⁸ 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. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.
 3. V. 10 – "When He comes in that Day."
 4. Whether it's the Second Coming, or we go to Him in death, the point is
We're ALL going to stand before God for review.
 5. If that day were today, would Jesus be your Merciful Savior or Wrathful Judge?
 6. That day is coming for all of us. No one can avoid it.
 7. What are you counting on for gaining entrance to Heaven?
 - a. That you're not a bad person?
 - b. That because God is loving He'll just wave you on in?
 8. What about what Jesus said; that you **must be born again** & that believing in Him was the **only way** to eternal life?
 9. Are you right & Jesus was wrong? If you think you'll get to heaven any way but faith in Christ, that's what you're saying.
 10. Sin is cosmic treason & God hates it because it harms those He loves. He **will** judge it.
 - a. There are 2 great moments of God's judgment of sin.
 - b. Paul mentions one of them here – the **future** judgment when God pours out His holy wrath on the lost & they are punished for their sin.
 - c. The other great moment of judgment is **past**, at the cross of Christ.
 - d. If you believe in Jesus, then all your sin was put on Him and He suffered in your place.
 - e. If you don't believe, then you bear your own sin & will experience the wrath of God.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Exam
 1. Final exams are coming up soon in school.
 2. There was a theology professor at a Bible college some years ago who passed out the final exam for his class.
 3. He told them to be sure to read the instructions, then start the exam.
 4. The students went to work, but it was obvious only a few of them had done what the professor said.
 - a. While most of the students started at the first question, a few read the instructions as directed.
 - b. Those instructions said this.

Throughout this semester we have talked at length about the Gospel of Grace. Salvation is not something we can earn; it is the gift of God, a gift He gives only those who believe in Christ. To illustrate this truth, if you want an A on this exam, put your full name at the top of the page with a cross by it. Do NOT answer any of the questions. Wait 15 minutes, sitting quietly at your desk, then turn in your exam. To NOT follow these instructions will result in an F, no matter how well you answer the questions.

- c. Only a handful of the students got an A; the rest flunked.
5. God says who & who doesn't get heaven. And He's made it absolutely clear.

6. It's through faith in Jesus Christ.