

2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 August 2026

Preacher: Billy Joe Calvert

[0:00] Okay, we're in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. We're going to pick up in verse 5. If you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God. We're going to read down to the end of the first chapter, which gets us down to verse 12.

The Word of God says, 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.

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 and to us as well. When the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. 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.

To this end, also we pray for you always that our God will count you worthy of your calling and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you and you in Him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1:30] Let's pray. Father, we thank You for this day. We thank You for the opportunity of gathering together with the people of God in the house of God to read and hear the word of God. So now, O Father, we pray that You would speak with clarity.

We pray that You would speak with simplicity. And we pray that the truth would take hold of not only our minds but also of our hearts. Lord, that You would speak Your word into our very being and that by doing so, we would become conformed and transformed to be more and more like You.

In all matters, we ask that Christ would be glorified in our time together. And we ask it all in Your sweet and precious name. Amen. You may be seated.

As we were beginning to go into the book of 2 Thessalonians, I reminded you that every chapter of 1 and 2 Thessalonians has a reference to the second coming of Christ.

Here, we find that reference at the end of the first chapter. Now, we do know that in their original writing, they were not broken up into chapter and verses, but rather it was one continuous letter.

[2:43] And if we were to read it as such, we would see that throughout that letter, if we were to read it in one setting, we would see that throughout this letter, Paul continues to bring up this matter of the coming again of Jesus Christ.

It is something that is on the very forefront of his mind in 1 Thessalonians. It is something that is still on the front of his mind in the penmanship of 2 Thessalonians, and it is a reasoning for why he is writing this second letter to the church at Thessalonica.

We will find by the time we get to the end of the letter, in which we call chapter 3, that there are some adjustments that need to be taking place in the immediate, in light of, the delay in Christ's coming.

It is the two earliest writings of Paul by the assumption of many people, including myself, and that Paul is writing very early on in his ministry, his public ministry, and he is anticipating and expecting the soon coming day of the Lord, that his efforts in ministry and his labor among the churches are in connection with the reality of that day.

He has used it not only as a motivation to continue to press on, but as a stimulus to remain faithful. That does not mean that by the time we get to the end of Paul's life and we read his latter letters that he anticipates it any the less.

[4:07] Rather, there is this same excitement, this same coming, this same maturity, that the day of the Lord can come at any given moment. And Paul is continuously bringing that up.

In 2 Thessalonians, we have seen, we find the theme to this book in the last two verses of the second chapter. And if we were to put it in a nutshell, it is Paul is writing, trying to encourage and equip the church to remain faithful in the work.

They are being encouraged in the work. They are being encouraged to remain steadfast, to be fully devoted to the work that the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has given them to do.

Paul is often writing in light of this occupation. He is often writing in light of this reality. That the saints of God, while they have been entrusted with the work of God that has been prepared, as our brother said already this morning, before we were even in Christ, he had good works prepared for us to walk therein, the saints of God are continually being encouraged to remain faithful, to not fall short.

Why? Because we are prone, we are so desperately prone to discouragement, we are prone to abandonment, and we are prone to giving up the reality that we have a work to do.

[5:33] And if we're completely honest with ourselves, any good excuse will do. If things are going so well, we think, well, I must not be needing to pay attention to my devotion to the work he's given me to do, if we're looking at the blessings around me.

If things are going so difficult, we say, well, how could I ever do it? Because it is such a trying and desperate time. But the good news is, is the word of God answers believers in every one of those situations.

It is the church at Thessalonica that was not gifted with a majority of time, or an extended period of time with Paul. As a matter of fact, he was removed from them very early on, after the establishment of that church.

And he left a church behind in a city that was not very receptive of it. We are told in the first four verses that they are doing their labor of love and their works of faith, and they are growing in their maturity in a rather hostile environment.

It is not that the city of Thessalonica loves them and is so excited because they have a church proclaiming the truth among them. Rather, the city of Thessalonica is antagonistic against them and is trying to quieten them.

[6:41] And so Paul is encouraging them to remain steadfast. Some of them sway one way or another, and we will get to that later. But here, I want you to see the encouragement that comes from that soon coming day.

The encouragement of the soon coming day. When we refer to the day or the day of the Lord, it is the day of the Lord's manifestation to the watching and anticipating world.

It is the day of the Lord's revelation for who He is, and all of the world will see Him in a moment.

And it is that day that Paul is continuously looking forward to.

And here, he is trying to encourage the church to remain faithful in light of that soon coming day.

You say, Well, Pastor, it has been nearly 2,000 years since Paul has written these words.

And if it was soon coming then, and we have not seen it yet, then how do we answer that? Well, the good news for you is we've just finished 2 Peter, and you can go read the end of 2 Peter where it says, That do not count God slow about the keeping of His promises.

[7:48] That 1,000 years is like a day, and a day is like 1,000 years. So in the economy of God, it's only been a couple of days. And yet we're sitting here with the reality that it is coming, and it is coming soon.

Now, we do not declare that because we are looking around the world going, Oh, He must be coming soon because look at everything that's going on. We do not say that because of the tragedies that we hear about or the tragedies that we witness or the fallacy that we see of everyone around us.

We say that He is soon coming because the Word of God declares that it is so. That we ought to live with the realization that today could be the day.

And that ought to be an encouragement to us to maintain our work. So as we do so, I want you to see a number of things. I want you to see it from the passage we have before us, and you will understand why we went back and read verse 5.

We needed to read verse 5 again so that we could see the repetition of it that is found in verse 11. Because that day brings with it the first matter is an expectation.

[8:57] There is an expectation that comes with that day. Now notice what the Word of God says. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment.

Now what is? Let's go back to verse 4. Therefore we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

So He's talking about the persecution and the afflictions and everything they have going on and their perseverance therein, their consistency. Then He says, this is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God.

So you'll be considered worthy of the kingdom of God. In verse 11 it declares this, to this end we also pray for you that for you always that our God will count you worthy of your calling.

So there's this repetition of a phrase in just a few verses. First, that the matter of their endurance throughout the persecution and trials is a testimony that they are considered worthy of the kingdom of God.

[10:06] And the prayer of Paul and Silas and Timothy was that God would count them worthy of their calling. So here's the expectation we can have in light of that coming day.

It is the expectation that whatever God is doing in our lives is in order to make us worthy of not only our calling but of the kingdom in which we will enter into.

Now we have to be careful how we look at this. I'll tell you that in a phrase and then we'll kind of open it up just a little bit. It is that God may count us worthy of our calling and consider us worthy of the inheritance which we are about to take part therein which is the kingdom of God.

Now the temptation is to say, well, if I'm thinking about that in a normal language that means that what I do then determines my ability to inherit the kingdom of heaven and then it becomes a works-based salvation.

Now notice who Paul is writing this to. That's important. We have to understand the introduction. Paul is not writing to non-believers.

[11:16] It says in verse 1 to the church. To the church. Right? And the church is the ecclesia, the called out ones, those who have been called by Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Even in the passage before us throughout the first chapter there is this repetition of our Lord Jesus Christ. So this phrase of being considered worthy or being counted worthy is not something in which we will go to a non-believer.

Listen friend, if you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior there is nothing you can do to be considered worthy of the kingdom of God. For all of our righteousness is like filthy rags.

All of our good deeds are useless. Nothing can do for us. We have nothing good to be counted worthy. Now that's not anything derogatory about us.

That's just the truth of who we are. Over and over again scripture tells us that the heart of man is desperately wicked. There are none that are righteous. No, not one. There are none that are worthy for he is holy, holy, holy and we are not.

[12:19] But to the church, to the believer, to those who know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, Paul is encouraging the believer in Christ, the redeemed, that what God is doing in their lives, even the persecutions, the trials, the struggles, the temptations, that these matters are there so that they will be considered worthy.

Now to be worthy means to be fit for. And when we think about that for just a moment is that they may be fit and fashioned for the kingdom of heaven.

And that they may be fit to fulfill their calling. This is no longer about personal worth. This is about personal fitness.

Being so positioned that we are fit to do what he's called us to do and fit and fashioned for what he's going to give us in eternity.

And when we think about that, here's the expectation that what God almighty is permitting in our lives, that in his sovereignty will work in such a manner that it will fashion us to do the work he's called us to do and it will fit us to be prepared for the kingdom of heaven.

[13:51] Said another way, I have never met a genuine believer that the longer they live, that this statement that I'm about to say is not true of them, that the longer they live, the more they are ready to be in the presence of Christ.

They have this growing longing to be in his presence, this desire to be in eternity, to be fit for the kingdom. Why? Because the trials and tribulations and sufferings and sorrows of this world are fitting them to be in the kingdom of heaven.

They know that this world is not their home. They know that this place is not a place of eternal existence. They know that this thing is but temporary and it is but dust that is passing away, that this is a tent of clothes that we will cast off and we'll be fit and fashioned for him for all of eternity.

This veil of flesh I'll cast off and rise and join my everlasting prize. Why? Because they understand the reality that the longer they walk with Christ, he's fitting them and fashioning them for something more.

And if you don't have that longing in your hearts, then you do not have the expectation of being made worthy. If we can live contently in this life and say, oh, well, as long as I have my blessings here, I'm okay.

[15 : 15] And as long as everything here is going great, this is smooth sailing. It'll be just like the days of Noah. They were eating and drinking and marrying and giving one away another in marriage and all things were going well and then all of a sudden it came to an abrupt end.

God, in his sovereign, unfailing work, here's an expectation.

What he's doing in the life of the believer, of the redeemed, is he is fitting them for eternity. You say, oh, why's it got to be so hard?

Why's it got to be so difficult? Oh, God, why can't it just get easy? Why can't we get a little bit of a break? Why can't I have just a little bit of relief? And the whole time the Spirit is inside of us whispering, there is an eternity of relief in the kingdom of heaven.

Now you're anticipating something more than what you can gain in this life. Here is the expectation that pushes us forward to that day. that on that day, everything, every longing, every matter in which I've longed for and hoped for will come to reality on that day.

[16 : 31] You say, well, pastor, what does it mean about being counted worthy of your calling? Well, he has called you in light of eternity. And the work he's called you to do is to labor in light of eternity.

And if you're not having a growing longing for eternity, then you're not going to tell anyone else about it. And you're not going to share the hope you have in Christ.

And if your hope is identifiable to everybody around you, they can say, well, sure, life's going good for him because look at everything he's got or look at everything she has and look how easy it is and look at all that.

And there's no need to have the peace that passes the understanding of the world. And there's no need to have the joy in the midst of the struggles and the trials. If it all works according to the world standard, then how can we fulfill our calling?

I'm not saying that we should seek out suffering. But we do make this testimony that in the midst of those things where sometimes all we're doing is enduring is the expectation is that God is fitting me for eternity.

[17 : 41] He's fitting me for the kingdom of heaven. And that's an expectation we can have in light of that day that we may be considered worthy.

That we may be considered, if God is giving us the kingdom of heaven and the ability to sit with Christ on the throne and the name written in stone which no man can change.

And yet we would desire more to be here and to stay in this temporary place of existence. Are we really being considered worthy of what he's about to give us?

Are we just pursuing him for what he can do for us here? This is why we have so much difficulty at times in our life because God wants these things and the expectation is that what God is doing, he's doing it intentionally and he's doing it purposefully and he's doing it practically so that we can anticipate him.

So that leads us to the second matter and that is the anticipation. What can we anticipate on that day of the Lord? What anticipation do we have if our expectation is that we will be ready for the kingdom when he finally calls us there and that in light of that kingdom we will be laboring for him with a kingdom mindset until he calls us there.

[19 : 10] What anticipation do we have? It says for after all in verse 6, I love this transition, for after all, it is only just. The legacy center says it's only right.

It's only just or right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you and some of us go, amen, I can't wait until that day that I'm ready for God. So what we say, here's the first anticipation we can have.

We anticipate that on that day the justice of God will be seen. We may not see it now but on that day the justice of God will be seen.

Why? This points all the way back to the book of Leviticus. In the book of Leviticus, I believe it's in the 19th chapter of Leviticus, it's either 1918 or 1819, I believe it's 1918, where God says that I will oppose those who oppose you and I will stand with you and I will be the enemy to your enemies. That's a promise. You say, oh yes, that's a promise to the nation of Israel, right? But it's also a testimony to the character of God. And while we do not name and claim Israel's promises, we do claim the relationship to God's character.

[20 : 17] And if God promised his children that I will be an enemy to your enemies, then guess what? That's a promise that extends to us. We are his children. We are the apple of his eye. He delights over us. And he has told you, I will be an enemy to your enemies.

And you say, well God, I want to see it now. And what he says, on that day, the first thing you can anticipate is that it is only just that God would do so. that none of his people suffer in vain and people get away with it.

There will be a day of God's justice and there will be a day that the reality that he stands up and says, it is only right that I do this, that he will repay with affliction those who afflict you. But here's the greater anticipation and to give relief to you who are afflicted.

There is coming a day of relief and a day of rest and a day of realization where we're like, yes. And to us as well, Paul says there's coming a day of relief not only to you but to all of us that on that day, the day of the Lord, he will be just in what he does but he will also be good and kind in the relief that he gives to his people.

It will be a day of sweet relief and release where we no longer carry those burdens and we say, yes Lord, thank you for this. We anticipate this coming.

[21 : 37] And it says that on that day he will always be dealing out retribution to those who do not know God or obey the gospel. It's a day of judgment.

And we hold on to that for just a moment because not too many people want to anticipate the coming day of judgment but the day that brings us relief is also the day that brings condemnation. Reminder, this is an encouragement to stay in the work. Because so often I have cried out, God I just want a little relief.

And here in this passage he reminds me, but the day that I bring you relief will be the day that I bring everyone else condemnation. And are you really ready for that?

So he helps us to anticipate this. There is a day coming. And in that day there's an exaltation. Because it's the day of the Lord.

[22 : 53] It's not the day of us. We have an expectation that God is doing something mighty in our lives. And he is fitting us and making us worthy of the kingdom of heaven. He's making us worthy of the calling he's given to us in the kingdom of this world.

And our anticipation is that there will be a day where he will come do what is right and he will give us relief and he will bring condemnation and judgment to those who do not know God nor obey the gospel.

But that comes in light of the exaltation. And friend, listen, we are not the ones being exalted. Because look at what the word of God says.

When the Lord Jesus will be revealed. And here's the exaltation. He will be revealed from heaven with mighty angels and flaming fire.

Now I know there are some translations, the King James, New King James, and there's a couple of them, maybe the NIV, I'm not sure, that want to put this flaming fire with the retribution of God. They want to say that what Jesus is doing in flaming fire, he is bringing condemnation.

[23 : 52] But I believe that is putting it in the wrong place. The flaming fire in context is in reference to the angels because it's displaying the power of the angels here. Now that's just a matter of where you put the comma at in a sentence, okay?

So sometimes grammar matters because you're either talking about how severe his judgment is or how mighty his angels are. And if we read it in its original language, I believe that it is the angels that are being magnified here, their angels are coming in flaming fire.

And you say, why does that matter? Because they are his angels. And if his angels are angels of flaming fire, then who must he be? Right? This is showing the power of Christ.

He who came lowly and gentle as a babe laid in a manger and rode on the fold of a donkey on the day when people were crying out, Hosanna, and was hung up on the cross and gave up his life. But when he comes again, he's coming with angels of flaming fire because he's not coming in meekness. He's coming in strength. He's coming in glory. He's coming in power. He's coming in prestige.

[24 : 52] He is coming with the glorious power he has had from eternity past and will continue to have in eternity future. He is coming as he always has been.

He is not just coming, but he's coming with authority. He's coming with power. He's coming with glory. He's coming with might. And he's not going to be veiling it. He came once veiling his glory in the robe of humanity that on the Mount of Transfiguration, the glory shined through.

But there will no longer be the need for the glory to shine through because the robe of humanity is no longer there. We will see him as they had seen him in the past, but it will be the glorified Savior who always has been.

And the angels, his messengers, will be flaming angels of fire so that we will know exactly how powerful he is. It is a day of exaltation.

It is a day of not only realization, but admiration. It is showing him for who he is. And when he comes in that way, then he will deal out retribution and condemnation.

[25 : 59] Then he will bring out judgment upon those. And notice the phraseology here, and I'm trying to be careful in doing this. I don't always do it. Sometimes I slip. It is not those who did not believe in God for the Satan and his angels believe and tremble, but those who do not know God nor obey the gospel.

You can believe in a heavenly being. You can believe in an almighty. But the question is not, do you believe? The question is, do you know him? And you know him by obeying the gospel.

And those who do not know God nor obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ will be condemned. Notice what the word says here. And you need to underline it and you need to hold on to it because this is a big rock issue, if there ever has been one, because people believe in annihilation and people believe in temporary punishment and some people believe that everybody will eventually make it to heaven.

But that's not what this glorious, powerful being does. Notice what he does. He condemns them to what? Eternal destruction. Eternal destruction.

Eternal destruction. Heaven and hell are a matter of eternal destiny. I don't preach it very much.

[27 : 14] I'm not one of these hellfire and brimstone pastors, but when the passage says it, we acknowledge it. The same phrase used for our eternal existence and glory is used for the condemnation of those who do not know God.

It is an eternal destruction apart from the glory of his presence. And we do not need to lose sight of that.

And this is why Spurgeon would cry out, Oh Father, if men must be condemned to hell, may they do so over our begging and pleading bodies. And may we not be found wanting in the work of rescuing the perishing.

We would love to believe in annihilation or even in the reality that everybody eventually makes it there. Why? Because that frees us from the work. That frees us from the responsibility.

This own week, I was reminded of the passage in Ezekiel. Ezekiel 33, 9. That if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, then the sword will come and they will be carried away in their own sins and they will die.

[28 : 28] But I will require the blood from the watchman because he did not blow the trumpet.

Friend, continue to blow the trumpet. Blow it, blow it, blow it, blow it, blow it. I don't care how many people get tired of hearing the sound.

I don't get tired of how many people think about it. And I had to respond to an individual who was getting tired of me saying things. And I said, the blood will be on me if I don't blow the trumpet. So I'm going to keep blowing it, get used to it.

I don't want that blood. I want to be, as Paul would say, free from the blood of all men. For I have not failed to declare the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's not judging. That's the reality that in light of eternity and in light of his exaltation, I must continue to do the work and so too must you.

And we see this. That in that day of exaltation, he will bring the eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his presence and the glory of his power.

[29 : 37] But that's not all the exaltation. Because he exalted in his appearance, he's exalted in his judgment. But friend, he is most exalted in the saints.

Do you notice this? When he comes, if you're in a habit of underlining, you can underline, when he comes to be glorified in his saints.

That is our salvation. While it gives us an expectation and an anticipation, we have the expectation because of salvation that he's doing something to fit us for heaven.

We have the anticipation that someday we will get relief. But our salvation exists for his glory. That on the day of exaltation, he is glorified in the saints.

You say, what do you mean by that? I mean that when he comes again, the thing that's going to give him the greatest glory is that we will look around and go, I cannot believe he redeemed those people.

[30 : 46] And I will be in the front of the line. His blood was sufficient to atone for my sins. He has redeemed me for eternity in his presence.

He gives the glory, not me. He is glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among his people. Have you ever thought about that?

How awestruck we will be when we see the saints go marching in and we'll see the number of the redeemed and we'll go, I cannot believe that he's redeemed all these people.

I cannot believe the efficiency of his work. I cannot believe the magnificence of his blood. There's people I never thought would be there, but they're there. Why?

Because of Jesus Christ. I never thought I would be in this throng of people going to the throne of God, but here I am and it's because of the blood of Jesus Christ. The greatest exaltation of Christ is the salvation and redemption of his people.

[31 : 47] Your salvation exists for his glory. And if it exists for his glory, then there's the fourth thing, there's the preparation.

If he is coming to be glorified in his saints, then there's a matter that the saints need to keep in mind now as they are being encouraged in the work.

And Paul gives us a good transition because he says in verse 11, to this end. That is a good way of saying, because this is so, that when he comes, he's going to be glorified in his saints and marveled at among his people because you believed our gospel to this end.

Because this is the exaltation of Christ, this is why we're praying for you on an ongoing basis. This is why we continue to lift you up. This is why we want him to count or make you worthy.

That's another way of translating that word count, to make you worthy of your calling. He says to this end, we always pray that our God will, and let's just skip ahead of some commas, that our God will fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.

[33 : 07] He says, I'm praying that our God will fulfill every desire for goodness and every work of faith with power. Now what he's implying here is that the saints were crying out, God, help us to walk in goodness.

That is wholeness. Help us to walk with sincerity. And he says, we're hoping that you would pursue goodness. How do you pursue goodness? Not by your labor, not by your work.

He would say later on, according to the grace and mercy. Right? You pursue it by leaning into Christ and drawing closer to him for he is good. And you're not giving up on the work.

You say, Lord, give me a work of faith. And Paul says, we're praying that you would have the work of faith with power. And so what he's saying here is he's saying, we're praying that every day that you, that God will fulfill your desire to be more like Christ and to do more for Christ and to do it with power.

Why? So that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you. Here's the good news.

[34 : 21] It is on that day of exaltation he will be glorified in us. But until that day, he can still be glorified in us.

Through our desire for goodness and work of faith with power. And if we're trying to be encouraged in the work, know this.

We do not find encouragement because we think, if I do good, I will be glorified. We know that we will never do good. But the greater encouragement comes from this.

That if God will fulfill, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, my desire to walk close to him and to labor faithfully for him that he may be glorified.

That's a prayer God wants to answer. And that's a work we ought to be pursuing. Of being more like Christ. Desiring goodness.

[35 : 26] Not of our own benefit. Not from our own well. But from the well of his grace. God, make me good so that I can do the work of faith, whatever it is you're calling me to do by faith, with power.

In humility, but with power. Give me the work of faith with power so that Christ is glorified. And this is the encouragement we come, we have from that soon coming day.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you. We thank you for your word. And we thank you for your faithfulness to that word. Father, we ask that you would help us to walk before you with sincerity, with truth, with purpose, and with holy desires for your glory.

And Lord, may you be magnified in us. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.