

God's Righteousness in Believers' Troubles

Thursday, June 23, 2022 • Read 2Thessalonians 1:5–10

Questions from the Scripture text: Of what is their endurance of tribulation “manifest evidence” (v5)? For what is God fitting them? How are they learning to treasure it? What else is a righteous thing of God in v6? And to give what to whom in v7? When? What will Jesus’s return be like (v8)? On whom will He take vengeance? What does “not knowing God” look like? What shall they receive (v9)? From Whose presence? From what glory? How else will He be glorified (v10)? How did they get to be in the company of admirers?

How can believers’ afflictions be reconciled with the righteousness of God? 2Thessalonians 1:5–10 looks forward to the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord’s Day. In these six verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that God displays His righteousness both in the glorious fury that the wicked get from Him and in the glorious delight that His saints get from Him.

God is righteous to fit the justified for glory (v5). What are the Thessalonians’ patience and faith (v4) proof of? v5 says that they are proof of God’s righteous judgment in counting believers worthy of the kingdom. The patiently believing saints have been justified in Christ; Christ has earned the kingdom for them. And they are being conformed into the image of that same Christ, as God suits them for the kingdom to which they are coming and for which they are suffering. Believers must not underestimate the usefulness of trials in fitting us for glory (cf. Rom 5:3–5, James 1:2–4) and making us value glory as worth suffering for (cf. Rom 8:17–18, 2Cor 4:17). Troubles may tempt us to question the justice of God, but the reality is that troubles are a mechanism by which God justly prepares the justified for the glory that Christ has earned for us.

God is righteous to trouble troublemakers (v6). Even in our English translation, we can see the symmetry of God’s judgment. This is why v6 says that it is *righteous* of God to afflict the afflictors of His people. The extent of that affliction, we will see in vv8–9. Here, the point is that God isn’t being righteous only with His people as they are prepared for glory by affliction, but also with the wicked—none of whose actions will fail to be addressed.

God is righteous to end saints’ troubles and give them rest (v7). On the bright(er) side, even these necessary afflictions come to their end. That’s the “momentary” part of “light and momentary” in and 2Cor 4:17. “When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,” the time for His people’s suffering has come to a permanent end. The language of being “revealed” is a reminder that He is always there, always enthroned, always attended by those mighty angels. What should believers fear from men (cf. Ps 56)? Rest is coming. Perfect, permanent relief from all our troubles.

God is righteous to God-sized vengeance on God-sized sin (v8–9). Once the Lord Jesus has been revealed (v7), and this revelation is in “flaming fire” (v8), there is no ignoring Him ever again. Indeed, all who have not known Him as God will be punished by Him as God for having failed to “obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v8). When God reveals Himself as Jesus, the Savior of Sinners, it demands a response of trusting in Him and worshiping Him. There are some who have not known Him. There are others who hear of Him but don’t believe. The latter, of course are more culpable. Once He is revealed, they will be in His presence and glory forever, and they will be acutely aware of how completely they deserve the destruction that comes from His presence and from the glory of His power.

God is righteous to give God-sized blessing to God-justified saints (v10). Finally, that which makes hell unendurable for the unbeliever in v9 is what makes heaven heavenly for the believer in v10. Not only will the Lord be glorified in His saints, but He will give us the capacity to admire Him, and He will satisfy that desire. Those who have “believed the testimony” are those who have “obeyed the gospel,” and the Lord Jesus will be their delight for unending ages.

What troubles are you having right now? What are they accomplishing for you? How long will they last? What will you receive at their end? What will they receive who have afflicted you?

Sample prayer: Lord, we bless You for revealing Yourself in the gospel. Forgive us for when we harbor doubts of your fairness in our afflictions. Forgive us our impatience and discouragement. Grant us eyes to see Jesus by faith, and to wait until faith becomes sight. Forgive us for not admiring Him enough now, and sanctify us until the day that we will get to perfectly admire Him forever, we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP98 “O Sing a New Song to the LORD” or TPH98A “O Sing a New Song to the LORD”

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Second Thessalonians. Chapter 1, our portion. This morning is verses 5 through 10. These are God's words 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 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.

And to give you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, inflaming 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 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 So far the reading of Gods inspired in anerent word. One of the things that the Apostle was thanking God for about that Thessalonians and telling other churches about God's faithfulness and grace as evidenced.

And what he was doing in the Thessalonian church and the Thessalonian believers was that they were patiently and believably suffering enduring persecutions and tribulations. So in verse 4, immediately proceeding our passage today. He said, so that we ourselves both of you among the churches of God, for your patients, and faith and all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.

Now, one of the things that bothers people and bothers believers in the midst of their troubles, in the midst of their trials is the appearance to our ignorance and even unbelief and sinfulness the appearance to our ignorance. That God is not being righteous and that, of course, is something that we are wrong to think and wrong to question.

But there can be a difficulty even when we believe that God is righteous, but can't see how God is being righteous. And so it's a mercy of God, to give us several explanations of how he is being righteous in the midst of our troubles. He doesn't owe. Those explanations to us.

We know that he is from his word, but he gives them to us, because he is good and merciful. And since he tells us about these demonstrations of his righteousness and evidences of His righteousness, to use the the language, at the beginning of our passage, then it's our duty in the midst of trouble to say, God, is being righteous and to set our minds and hearts on those displays of God's righteousness that come in the midst of the persecutions and tribulations of His people.

So he's giving us here, something that is fuller than what Job. Had Job knew that at the last even after he had died and his flesh had decomposed, he would be resurrected. And he would behold God, He knew that his Redeemer lived and yet there was much about the righteousness of God in the midst of troubles.

And in the purpose of his troubles that he was still learning One of which we will see right in verse 5 in our passage is that God was teaching Job more about himself. You remember at the end of Job's trials, the he said to the Lord that his knowledge of God beforehand was like, you know, hearing a rumor or hearing with the ear but the knowledge of God that he had as a result of his troubles.

And as a result of his encounter with God that came upon the heels of his troubles that knowledge was like knowing God face to face. And so you see, one of the first ways that God is being righteous in our troubles, is that he's using our troubles to fit us for glory.

He's using God you is righteous to use troubles to fit the justified those who are right with God through faith in Jesus to fit them for glory. So our passage begins, 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.

So, the great worthiness with which we are worthy or righteous before, God is the obedience of Jesus and the righteous person of Jesus counted in our behalf. His sacrifice having put away our sin. Then also his obedience and his righteous person are counted in our behalf. But God doesn't just, it doesn't just count us righteous in illegal way.

He also, then fits us for the kingdom to which we are looking forward. The kingdom for, which, we are willing to lose all in this world, in order to have that, which is perfect and that which is eternal. And so, we are willing to suffer for that kingdom. And suffering is a means by which he prepares us for that kingdom.

Many places in Scripture that he teaches us. This Romans 5 verses 3 through 5 and James 1 versus 2 through 4 are a couple of the most famous. So Romans 5, not only that but we also glory in tribulations knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope.

And hope does not disappoint us because the love of God has been poured out or spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us And then James chapter 1 my brother encountered all joy when you fall into various trials knowing that the testing of your faith.

Produces patience but let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing. And so there is a usefulness of trials in the purifying process. You can't actually increase in perseverance or patients or endurance, unless you are going through something that is difficult. And the Lord does ween us off of this world dependence upon it or delight in it by trouble and trial.

So, the first way I got is being righteous in our troubles. As he's preparing us for glory. Has Jesus? Not earned heaven for you and has Jesus not earned for you. The holiness that is necessary to actually enjoy. Heaven God is not enjoyable apart from holiness. As we are about to find out in a couple of verses.

When we consider what hell is So verse 5, God is righteous to fit the justified for glory In the second place, God is righteous to trouble troublemakers. And you can just hear that in the words of verse thing, verse 6, since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.

So the Lord is righteous in taking exact note of everything that has done and repaying with exactly appropriate. Reciprocal justice. We must never think that anyone is getting away with anything. It's just not true and he uses the mirroring of the language to communicate, the justness of the punishment.

And, of course, there are troubling us and they're going to be troubled by God for the trouble, that they give us in measure. Corresponding to how much they have troubled us, but they haven't even bigger problem. We are in union with Christ. And so what the in in so much, as they have done it to the least of those who are Christ's brethren us, they have done it unto Christ.

And so it will be repaid to them as as having been done to the god, man, but they have even bigger problems than that as we are going to find out when we get to verses 8 to 9. But God is righteous to trouble troublemaker. So, one way he's righteous is that he's using our troubles to fit us for glory to give us that which Jesus has earned for us.

And that which we are patiently by grace. Looking forward to second way he is and will exactly, and justly punish. All that is done. Third way. God is righteous to end our troubles and to give us rest since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those trouble, you verse 6 and then verse 7, and to give you who are troubled rest with us.

When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. And so, believers who are in the midst of trouble, may sometimes think that they are small in the eyes of God or escaping his notice or That they are not having the the best part of God's goodness.

But the rest that we are coming into is the rest that the apostles have with us, is the rest that the Lord Jesus himself has Remember, he had his own troubles, he had the shame and the suffering and the wrath of the cross and the humiliation of continuing under the power of death for three days before his, he is now exalted.

And so it is with us and with the sorry with the apostles who is the with us in verse 7 and with the Lord Jesus Christ. And with his mighty, angels, verse 7 and the suffering Thessalonian believers are alerted to the fact or taught in verse 7, that our troubles are for a limited time.

There's particular number of troubles that are appointed to us. And when they're done, they're done. And we come into the rest and the glory that belongs to holy angels, that belongs to the Lord Jesus himself. That belongs to the souls of the just made perfect. That is the same rest that the apostles are going to.

And so, we think about the righteousness of God in the rest, that is coming. And the fact that are troubles are exactly numbered, that's one of the things we'll be hearing. Lord willing Acts chapter 9, on the coming. Lord's Day that the Lord Jesus knew how many things Paul would have to suffer for his name.

It's an exact quantity and every time you have you go through a day of suffering or a moment or suffering or an experience of suffering, that's one less day.

That's one less moment. That's one less experience and that one has gone forever. It's a limited quantity and when you get to the end, it's the end no more suffering.

No sorrow, no sin, praise God. And of course, the more you kill sin, the more you grow and righteousness, the the higher, the proportion of your sins, you have gotten through until you get to the no more. And we want to have as little thin as possible out in front of us but our sufferings are numbered and God is righteous to end.

The saints trouble and give them rest. The one of the glories of God will be when you have come out and you have your white, your white robe. And here's time of suffering is done and it says these are they who have come out of their great tribulation and God who exactly numbered what you would have to get through.

And then he ends it forever is displayed, as the righteous protector and sustainer and sanctifier and glorifier of his people, okay? So the righteousness of God in using our troubles to fit us for glory, the righteousness of God in His justness, in repaying, all who trouble us the righteousness of God, in limiting, our troubles and giving us rest when they are concluded.

And then the righteousness of God in the wrath of God, When Jesus appears with his mighty angels and all the saints are perfected, and all of them have come into their rest. There are people for whom that is not good news. Because as he appears is revealed from heaven exposed from heaven, all those who have pushed down on the knowledge of God, and all those who have heard, the gospel of Jesus Christ, but have pushed down on the knowledge of Jesus will now have permanently exposed to their site.

They will never, again, be able to deny unto themselves, the existence of God or the existence of Christ. They will, they will now be like the demons who believe and shutter. There are those who insist on not believing and they're unbelief, takes that action of the will to push down suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

And this happens both with the general revelation of God and the special revelation of God in Jesus in the gospel that God, the Son became a man in order to save us. And so he says, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God on the first in the first place.

And on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the second place. Now, there's no such thing as a true atheist. We heard that a couple weeks ago and the midweek sermon in Romans, right? God has made his divinity known in the creation and God has put the knowledge of him.

Made himself known to each man in that man. In in the man himself. And so those who do not know, God are those not who never heard of God or never had an opportunity. No, scripture says they are without excuse those who do not know. God are those who have suppressed the truth and unrighteousness.

Their sin is against the glory of God and therefore their punishment will be as great as the glory of God. While there's a corresponding sin against the gospel and my dear children, You must not let yourself spiritually sleepwalk through this life that the Lord has given you put in you in a Christian home, putting you in his church so that you hear the gospel of Jesus over and over and over again.

But fail to come to him to turn from your sin and trust in him. Because if you do not trust in Jesus, then you will be in both of these categories. Not only verse 8, those who do not know God, but those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord.

Jesus Christ. Now not everyone has heard preached that Yahweh. The Lord has become the man. Jesus in order to save and that he is the promised profit, like, Moses and great high priest and forever, King, Son of David. The Christ but you have heard it and it demands a response and if you don't turn from your sin and trust in Jesus, then your hell will correspond not only to having pushed down on the knowledge of God.

But having rejected, the Savior, who is preached to you? Here's a good Savior. He went to the cross or willingly, then we have ever come to him for salvation. So great is his love as he gave himself for sinners and so, come to him turn from your sin, trust in him.

He's worthy of your faith and he will your trust in him. Will be safe. No one who trusts in him will be lost. You shall be saved. You shall be forgiven and everyone who trusts in him will be made. Holy and come into the perfect happiness of heaven forever.

But those who have heard this gospel and reject the truth about Jesus, they will experience verse 9. These shall be punished with everlasting, destruction from the presence of the Lord. And from the glory of his power, the problem for sinners in hell is not that God does not there.

That is a lie that has been taught by a man named George MacDonald. And there was a man named CS Lewis who followed George McDonald and saying that. And there's a man named Tim Keller, who has followed CS Lewis and saying that, that is not what the Bible teaches about hell.

There's even a very popular English translation that some people in our church use which inserts the word away. Incorrectly attaching it to the preposition in this verse so that their translation says these shall be punished with everlasting. Destruction away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of his power.

Not only is that just incorrect Greek translation. It is incorrect, theology. According to the Bible, can you really be a way from the presence of God? Is there anywhere that he is? Not does not Psalm 139 when it is teaching, especially on where God is Say, if I go down into seal, you are there and is this not talking here in second Thessalonians 1 about when Jesus is revealed in his glory and he comes in fiery vengeance.

The problem of sinners in hell is the same thing that is the pleasure of saints in heaven, the glory of the Lord. Jesus Christ, and his glory, as the one whom they have denied as God and whom they have rejected as Savior, His glory will expend itself on them forever and they will know themselves to be His enemy and they will know Him to be there enemy and they will receive that everlasting destruction.

That comes from being in his presence and from being in the glory of his power, In the presence of the glory of his power. Now, Aren't you glad that part of the righteousness of God is to make you holy before that day. So that when you are in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and when you experience the glory of the Lord Jesus, you will do.

So with none of the sinfulness that plagues your heart and mind now but your experience will be that in verse 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 the Lord Jesus will be your delight.

His presence will not be a pain to you, If you have turned from your sin and you trusted in him, he has made you holy than the day when he is revealed. And you start to, as I start to, because we will increase in perceiving and experiencing His glory forever, because it's infinite will never exhaust the subject.

But as you start to experience the immediate knowledge of him and his glory, It will not be with dread and destruction. Like what comes on the wicked? In verse

9, It will be with admiration. We will wonder at him and delight in him and offer him. Praise. We will, we will have an experience of him that is beyond our ability to imagine.

And part of the amazing glory, and joy of that day, is that he will be glorified in his saints. We will be reflecting his glory. This is what John is getting at first John 3, when he says, what will, what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears, we will be like Him and therefore everyone who hopes thus says the Apostle purifies himself even as he is pure.

So God is righteous. Not just to take God's sized vengeance on God's sized sin. We think we have trouble. Now they are troubles are for limited time B. Our troubles are infinitesimal by comparison to the trouble that we deserve for having been sinners and fallen short of the glory of God.

And so he's righteous to take God sized vengeance on God's sized sin, but he's even righteous to give God sized blessing to God. Justified saints that we who have believed in Jesus will have the glory of Jesus himself and the sinless enjoying of that glory. As we admire him forever that we will behold the Son and we will know Him with a human parallel to the knowledge that God has in himself.

We of course are not going to have divine knowledge but what is that knowledge and fellowship and delight that God has had in himself. Father, Son, and Holy, Spirit forever. And the last day we will have a creational analogy parallel to it as God gives us to delight in the sun to admire the Lord Jesus.

Even having been made glorious renewed in into his glorious image. The really are not words by which to communicate the content of this verse 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 do not miss that.

Do not trade that glory that admiration that, increasing and unimaginable delight forever and ever do not trade it for any pleasure in this life or attempt to have less trouble in that life. Especially since that trade comes with having the trouble of the wicked, that verse 9 describes forever and ever.

I'm sorry for eight and nine, describe forever. Let's pray. Oh, Lord, help us. We are not able even with these descriptions with the obvious sensableness of the gospel and of trusting Christ. We are not able to make our hearts turn from sin and rest in him and look forward to this blessing and escape this trouble.

But you owe God, give faith. And so we completing with you for that work of the Spirit, that he would take these things that make sense to those whose minds are working properly and that he would not give us over to a debased mind but that he would that he would give us that renewed mind to have this word.

Take root in our hearts to be implanted, the implanted work, by which you save, our souls, make us Lord. And all of our troubles and all of our persecutions to bless your name as righteous for the many evidences and reasons of your righteousness that we see, in this portion of your word, for which we thank you.

And all of, which we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.