

2 Thessalonians (2): Comfort for the Persecuted (2)

Last Lord's Day we began our study of Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. In the first of the three chapters of this epistle the Apostle Paul set forth reasons for encouragement for Christians who were suffering for their faith and commitment to the kingdom of God. After Paul had expressed thanksgiving for their faith, love, and endurance in their afflictions, that is, their tribulation (1:3, 4), which we addressed last week, he pronounced God's the end and just judgment of their persecutors. He also set forth the great glory that their suffering for the kingdom will bring to them on that day (1:5-10). The Apostle Paul concluded this first section of his epistle with a voiced prayer for power and glory (1:11, 12).

Let us again read the first chapter of this epistle. This reading is from the New English Standard Version (ESV).

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. ⁴Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.

⁵This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— ⁶since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. ¹¹To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last Lord's Day we spoke of the common experience of Christians to undergo "afflictions." God has called us to enter the kingdom of God through "much tribulation" (Cf. Acts 14:22). Afflictions come to us in many ways and in varied forms. These Christians were suffering persecution, which is one specific form of afflictions. We emphasized this important spiritual truth, last Lord's Day, that the absence of afflictions in one's life is no indication of God's favor, for they are the norm of the Christian's experience. It is the enduring of afflictions, while growing in faith toward God increasing in love for the brethren, which are the indications of God's favor. It is when you exercise and exhibit "steadfastness and faith in the afflictions that you are enduring", that you have the evidence of God's great grace upon you. But it is very easy, but it is very wrong, to think that we may assess God's favor of us based upon what is happening to us.

I came across a good presentation of this principle in a commentary of this epistle by **Greg Beale**, who is presently the Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Here is how he introduced chapter 1 of this epistle:

What makes a person happy? Money? Beauty? Popularity? Such things may bring temporary pleasure but not long-lasting happiness. Unfortunately, our culture too often defines happiness by the rolling tide of circumstances that flow in and out of our lives: when we prosper materially, we are happy,

and when we do not, we are unhappy. Even many in the church believe that faithfulness to God brings a reward of material blessings and happiness and that God withholds blessings in response to unbelief. But is happiness a pleasure arising primarily from good material circumstances? Paul tells Christians in 1:3-12 what should ultimately drive them and give them pleasure and happiness. What motivates believers is also that for which they should be thankful. At the least, 1:3-4 (and perhaps 1:3-9) provide the basis of the initial thanksgiving at the beginning of 1:3. If we can plumb the depths of the basis of thanksgiving, we will uncover the root cause of right and good passions.¹

Again, in short, what should cause us most satisfaction is when the grace of God has been operative through all of our afflictions in our lives so as to produce growth in our faith and increase in our love for the brethren. This is what led Paul to be so grateful for this church at Thessalonica, as we read in verse 4, “Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.”

Let us move on in our study, considering 1:5-12. Here again is the outline of this first chapter:

- I. Salutation: grace and peace (1:1, 2)
- II. Courage for suffering saints (1:3-12)
 - A. Thanksgiving for faith, love, and endurance in tribulation (1:3, 4)
 - B. Judgment on persecutors and glory for saints (1:5-10)
 - C. Prayer for power and glory (1:11, 12)

After Paul’s initial “thanksgiving for faith, love, and endurance in tribulation” (1:3, 4), he addressed God’s...

B. Judgment on persecutors and glory for saints (1:5-10)

1. The evidence of the righteous judgment of God (1:5-8)

⁵This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— ⁶since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

The sentence of **verse 5** in our English translation begins with the demonstrative pronoun, “This.” A pronoun always refers to someone or something else within the context (its antecedent). Here the word, “this”, is a pronoun that refers to all that went before in verse 4. What, therefore, is “is evidence of the righteous judgment of God”? The fact and manner that God enables His people to endure their afflictions is evidence of the righteous judgment of God.

God is righteous in all of His judgments in history. “The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether” (Psa. 19:9). We may say to our God, “Righteous are You, O LORD, And upright are Your judgments” (Psa. 119:137). Indeed, “The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works” (Psa. 145:17). The psalmist could write, “Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments” (Psa. 119:164).

But the righteous ways of the Lord are not always apparent to us. Through human observation and reasoning, it might be rather easy to conclude that the Lord is not righteous in all His ways in the history of His world. Our knowledge of the righteous ways of God is largely a matter of faith. We believe what the Word of God declares concerning God. The Holy Scriptures declare that the Lord is righteous in all of His dealings, and we believe it so. We believe it is so, even though we may not see a great deal of evidence with our physical eyes. If we look out at the world and the history of the world as it unfolds, if we interpret the

¹ Greg K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 181f.

world through our own finite reasoning which is governed by our fallen hearts, evidence that God is righteous in His ways in history may scarcely be perceived by us. We may conclude quite easily that this world is a chaotic place, with little that falls out in history that suggests a good and righteous God is controlling history. But evidence does exist “of the righteous judgment of God.” Paul reasons that the manner in which the Lord enables His people not only to survive tribulation, but to thrive spiritually through their tribulation is itself evidence of the righteous judgment of God.

Paul declared that the purpose the Lord called His people to suffer afflictions was so that they would show forth that they were worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they were suffering. Paul wrote of their suffering, “that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.” The reason that they were suffering was due to their belief in and proclamation of the kingdom of God. They believed and proclaimed that Jesus was Lord, that God had inaugurated His promised kingdom when He raised His Son from the dead and gave Him kingly authority over all the world. The advocacy and proclamation of the kingdom of God was an offensive message that confronted people everywhere that if they were not obedient citizens within this kingdom to the Lord Jesus. Those who fail or refuse to believe on Jesus as Lord will be judged and damned when the Lord Jesus returns.

We read of the reaction and rejection of the kingdom of God in the account of the evangelization of Thessalonica by Paul and others. In Acts 17:5ff we read,

⁵But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. ⁶But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. ⁷Jason has harbored them, and *these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king-- Jesus.*” ⁸And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. (Acts 17:5-8)

Paul was arguing that “the righteous judgment of God” was evidenced in the perseverance of these Christians through their persecutions. God brought them through their afflictions so that “may be considered *worthy of the kingdom of God*”, for which they were suffering. Now no one is worthy of the kingdom of God when he first enters the kingdom. His entrance into the kingdom is not due to merit on his part, but due to the merit of Jesus Christ on behalf of His people. Entrance into the kingdom of our Lord is not due to our merit, but due to His grace. But after we have entered the kingdom through faith in Jesus as Lord, over the course of time the Lord enables His people to become worthy of the kingdom. He causes them to become worthy of the kingdom as they live for the kingdom and endure in faith when suffering for the cause of the kingdom.

The idea that the Lord makes His people worthy is a common idea in Scripture. This is a work of God sanctifying His people, enabling them to become worthy. We read that...

(1) He enables His people to be worthy of God Himself. 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 read,

¹⁰You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; ¹¹as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, ¹²*that you would walk worthy of God* who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

(2) He enables His people to be worthy of His calling them unto salvation. We see this later in this first chapter of this epistle:

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... (2 Thess. 1:11)

(3) He enables His people to walk worthy of the Lord Jesus.

⁹For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰*that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God... (Col 1:9-10)

(4) He enables His people to walk worthy of the gospel.

Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, (Phi. 1:11)

(5) And here, He would have His people become worthy of the kingdom of God, of which they are citizens.

“...This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered *worthy of the kingdom of God*, for which you are also suffering” (2 Thess. 1:5)

This kind of life has been described as “a life of patient, joyful discipleship even in the face of life-threatening abuse of those hostile to the faith. Such lives are sure evidence that God’s judgment is right.”² And so, The Lord who enables His people to live lives worthy of the kingdom into which He has called them, is evidence of the righteous judgment of God.

But the perseverance of the saints by the grace of God is only partial evidence of the righteous judgment of God. We see in **verses 6 through 10** that *further evidence of God’s righteous judgment will be manifest when the Lord Jesus returns to deliver His people and to punish their tormentors*. Again, our passage reads,

⁵This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— ⁶since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thess. 1:5-8)

One day the Lord will bring an end to the suffering of His people, but then the suffering of those who caused His people to suffer, will begin, and will continue unto eternity. We read in verses 6 and 7 that that God regards Himself to be just “to repay with affliction those who afflict you” and also “to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us.” There is precedence in the Old Testament for God’s favourable dealings with His people and His wrath upon their enemies. Long ago when God initially called Abraham to Himself, He gave this word:

Now the LORD had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.
²I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.

² R. C. Sproul, *The Reformation Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 1902.

*³I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* (Gen. 12:1-3)

God promised that He would bless the one who blessed his people and that He would curse the one who cursed His people. Now most Christians regard this to be a promise to physical descendants of Abraham only, to ethnic Jewish people, and the promise is often extended to the nation state of Israel. It is commonly claimed that our nation, America, will only be blessed of God if we support the nation of Israel, for God has said of the Jews, “***I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.***” And although historically it can be shown to be true in the Old Testament, that when and while Israel as a nation was in relationship with God under the Mosaic covenant, this is not true with the onset of the new covenant in Jesus Christ. But even in the Old Testament this promise of God’s blessing was intended principally for those who are in a saving relationship with God through faith, as Abraham was, not because they were the physical descendants of Abraham. That this is so is clear from Genesis 12. Immediately after God said to Abraham, “***I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you***”, He said to Abraham, “And in you ***all the families of the earth shall be blessed.***” The blessing that God promised to those who bless Abraham is extended to the Gentile nations of the world, even “all the families of the earth.” And here in 2 Thessalonians 1, the apostle wrote that God will bless these Christians for cleaving in faith to Jesus Christ, living for the kingdom of God, even as He will curse them that curse Christians, members of the Kingdom of God. God’s promise to Abram, “***I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you***”. Is most clearly seen in His dealings with His church and with those who are opposed to His church.

Now we know that God manifests His justice in history, but also know that He does not always manifest justice in history. Much justice is missing in history. But at the end of history, full justice will be administered to all the world for all the events of history. God will do so when Jesus Christ returns at the end of the age and brings judgment upon the world. Then the Lord Jesus will render full and complete justice. His people will be delivered from all of their afflictions, even as all of their tormentors will suffer His vengeance upon them. Again, when will this take place? **Verses 7 and 8** tells us, “***when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.***”

When the Lord returns, He will deliver His people from their oppressors, then He will pay back to them according to their dealings with His people. We see that His intention to render justice is set forth in the prophecy of Isaiah:

¹⁴Justice is turned back,
And righteousness stands afar off;
For truth is fallen in the street,
And equity cannot enter.

¹⁵So truth fails,
And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.
Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him
That there was no justice.

¹⁶He saw that there was no man,
And wondered that there was no intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.

¹⁷For He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloak.

¹⁸According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay,

Fury to His adversaries,
Recompense to His enemies;
The coastlands He will fully repay.
¹⁹So shall they fear
The name of the LORD from the west,
And His glory from the rising of the sun;
When the enemy comes in like a flood,
The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. (Isa. 59:14-19)

When the Lord returns, He will be “revealed from heaven.” John foresaw this in **Revelation 19:11-18**.

¹¹Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and² clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

Now notice how the enemies of His kingdom are described: He will inflict “vengeance on those who do not know God and on those *who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*” We often set forth the gospel as God’s “offer” of salvation to a lost world. And this is true and right that we do so. But there is a sense in which the gospel of the kingdom is not an offer to be saved from sin, but rather it is a command to be obeyed. Again, the ones who will be damned will be those “*who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*” When we present the gospel to the lost, we should do so with the imperative that they have a responsibility to obey God in believing the gospel. To fail or refuse to believe the gospel is disobedience and rebellion. Consider the force of the command of the gospel in many places in Scripture. Here are a few:

Mark 1:14f. “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. *Repent, and believe in the gospel.*’”

Acts 2:38. “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 17:26-30. “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ ²⁹Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. ³⁰ “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, *but now commands all men everywhere to repent*, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

1 Peter 4:17f. “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those *who do not obey the gospel of God?* ¹⁸And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

God has commanded all people everywhere to repent of their sins and believe upon Jesus Christ as Lord. To fail or refuse to believe the gospel is disobedience to God’s command. To fail to believe the gospel is disobedience which will damn unbelievers on the Day of Judgment. Here in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 Paul wrote that when the Lord Jesus returns, He will be “*revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*”

2. God’s punishment of those who afflict His people (1:9-10)

⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, ¹⁰when he comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thess. 1:9, 10)

The Day of the Lord, when Jesus returns, will be the Day of all days. It will bring our salvation; it will bring the horror of God’s vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel. John wrote of the terror that the world will face, He speaks of the Day of the Lord in the present tense, in order to heighten its importance, in order to give weight to its severity:

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15-17)

The future Day of the Lord was foreshadowed in the Old Testament through God’s temporal judgment upon the wicked. Zephaniah was a prophet to Judah and Jerusalem who encountered the wrath of God through the Babylonians whom God had sent to destroy them. In this description of this historic event that took place in 586 BC, we have a foreshadowing of what the final Day of the Lord will like when Jesus returns to judge the world.

“I will utterly consume everything
From the face of the land,”
Says the LORD;
³“I will consume man and beast;
I will consume the birds of the heavens,
The fish of the sea,
And the stumbling blocks along with the wicked.
I will cut off man from the face of the land,”
Says the LORD.

⁷Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD;
For the day of the LORD is at hand,
For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice;
He has invited His guests.

⁸“And it shall be,
In the day of the LORD’s sacrifice,
That I will punish the princes and the king’s children,
And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.

⁹In the same day I will punish
All those who leap over the threshold,
Who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

¹⁴The great day of the LORD is near;
It is near and hastens quickly.
The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter;
There the mighty men shall cry out.

¹⁵That day is a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of devastation and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,

¹⁶A day of trumpet and alarm
Against the fortified cities
And against the high towers.

¹⁷"I will bring distress upon men,
And they shall walk like blind men,
Because they have sinned against the LORD;
Their blood shall be poured out like dust,
And their flesh like refuse."

¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold
Shall be able to deliver them
In the day of the LORD's wrath;
But the whole land shall be devoured
By the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make speedy riddance
Of all those who dwell in the land. (Zeph. 1:2f, 7-9, 14-18)

The Day of the Lord will be a day of great distress for the world of unbelievers, even as it will be a day of great deliverance for the Lord's people.

Now in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 we read that unbelievers "will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might." The "punishment of eternal destruction" is not a statement of the annihilation of God's enemies, that due to His justice they cease to exist. "Destruction" here is alienation from God through eternity, even "away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might." Here are the comments of **William Hendriksen** on this verse:

The attention is once more focussed on the cruel individuals who, in their hatred of God and of the gospel, make life hard for sincere believers. They are *such people as* who will pay the penalty of *everlasting* (actually never-ending) *destruction*. The very fact that this "destruction" is "everlasting" shows that it does not amount to "annihilation" or "going out of existence." On the contrary it indicates an existence "away from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

While "everlasting life" manifests itself in the blessed contemplation of the face of the Lord, sweet fellowship with him, closeness to him (Rev. 22:4; cf. Psa. 17:15; Matt. 5:8), a most wonderful togetherness (1 Thess. 4:17), "everlasting destruction"-- which is the product of God's *vengeance* -- is the very opposite. Just as the "blessing" of Esau consisted in this, that his dwelling would be *away from* the fatness of the earth, and *away from* the dew of heaven (Gen. 27:39 correctly translated), so the

punishment which all the persecutors of God's people will suffer will be everlasting existence *away from* Christ, banished forever from his favor.³

The word, destruction, is one used elsewhere to refer to the fate of those who die apart from Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:3. "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden *destruction* comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."

Matthew 7:13. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to *destruction*, and there are many who go in by it."

Romans 9:22. "What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for *destruction*..."

Here are the comments of **Thomas Manton**:

In all these places, by 'destruction' is meant eternal damnation, called sometimes perdition or destruction, 1 Timothy 6:9; sometimes corruption, Galatians 6:8; meaning thereby, not an abolition of their being, but of their well-being. Annihilation would be a favour to the wicked; then they wish they never had a being, or might presently cease to be. No; the substance neither of their souls or bodies is not annihilated, but shall be upheld to all eternity by the mighty power of God; but it is a destruction and loss of all their felicity and happiness.⁴

Verse 10 speaks of the return of Jesus Christ in a day in which the damned will begin to suffer everlasting destruction and in which He will be glorified in His saints. Verse 10 suggests that when the Lord returns there will be a general judgment of all humanity, both of the redeemed and of the damned.

Matthew Henry wrote of the fate of the damned on this last day:

To such persons as are here mentioned the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ will be terrible, because of their doom, which is mentioned, v. 9. Here observe, (1.) They will then be punished. Though sinners may be long reprieved, yet they will be punished at last. Their misery will be a proper punishment for their crimes, and only what they have deserved. They did sin's work, and must receive sin's wages. (2.) Their punishment will be no less than destruction, not of their being, but of their bliss; not that of the body alone, but both as to body and soul. (3.) This destruction will be everlasting. They shall be always dying, and yet never die. Their misery will run parallel with the line of eternity. The chains of darkness are everlasting chains, and the fire is everlasting fire. It must needs be so, since the punishment is inflicted by an eternal God, fastening upon an immortal soul, set out of the reach of divine mercy and grace. (4.) This destruction shall come from the *presence of the Lord*, that is, immediately from God himself. Here God punishes sinners by creatures, by instruments; but then he will take the work into his own hands. It will be destruction from the Almighty, more terrible than the consuming fire which consumed Nadab and Abihu, which came from before the Lord. (5.) It shall come from the *glory of his power*, or from his glorious power. Not only the justice of God, but this almighty power, will be glorified in the destruction of sinners; and who knows the power of his anger? He is able to cast into hell.⁵

³ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1955, 4th printing, 2007), p. 160f.

⁴ Thomas Manton, *The Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 20 (Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), p. 255.

⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 6, p. 403.

I suspect that there is no one who can fathom the horrors of hell that await all those who are strangers to Jesus Christ. They will be banished from the presence of the Lord forever. Here is a description of the loss the unsaved will suffer. Of hell, Manton wrote,

(1) It is a great punishment in itself. To be expelled from the presence of the Lord is to be deprived of an infinite good; they lose the favourable presence of God, the sight of Christ, the company of the blessed, and their abode in those happy mansions which are in Christ's Father's house. Hell is a deep dungeon, where the sunshine of God's presence never cometh: Psalm 16:11, "In thy presence is fullness of joy." This they are deprived of. How grievous was Paul's departure to the disciples! When he told them, "Ye shall see my face no more;" they wept: Acts 19:38, "Sorrowing most of all for the words he spake, that they should see his face no more. Surely when Christ shall tell the wicked so, what a torment will it be to their minds! Better lose all things than lose the presence of God.

(2) They shall have a full sense of the greatness of the loss. A wicked man now careth not for the light of God's countenance; he is blinded by the delusions of the flesh, and looking altogether to visible things, he hath no sound belief of the things that are invisible; but now he comes to understand the reality of what he hath lost, and what was mere matter of faith before becometh an object of sense. Punishment openeth their eyes, which sin hath shut. Besides they have no natural comforts to divert their minds, no plays, or sports and pleasures, no pleasant meats, nor drink, nor company, which now draw off their heart from better things, and solace them in the lack of them; but now there is nothing of this left.

(3) The loss is irreparable. They are banished out of God's sight for evermore. Despair is one ingredient in the sorrow of the damned; all hopes are cut off of any more being admitted into God's favourable presence. There are many ups and owns in a Christian's experience, God hideth His face that He may afterward show it more gloriously; but this curse is never reversed against the wicked... Hell is a region upon which the sun shall never shine; the wall of partition between God and them shall never be broken down; his fiery indignation they may look for, but not His comfortable and gracious presence; that is reserved for the saints.⁶

We read that Jesus Christ will be "glorified in His saints." He will be glorified by His people when they sing forth their praise to Him as their Savior and King. He will also be glorified by His people when His great grace is manifested in their resurrection and glorification in His presence. He will be glorified in them when He renders judgment upon all those who had afflicted them in this life. "When He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

We also read that when the Lord Jesus comes, He will "be marvelled at among all who have believed." We do not presently see Him as He is. We do "see" Him in faith, but we do so in less than a clear manner, as Paul once wrote, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). On that day we will marvel greatly of our Lord Jesus. We cannot fathom the glory that we will behold in Him on that day.

C. Prayer for power and glory (1:11, 12)

¹¹To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul prayed for these Christians, praying always for them. He prayed specifically that would enable them to live in a manner worthy of their calling. Now as before, Paul was not speaking of them becoming worthy in order to receive is calling, for that is not possible. God had called them effectually unto salvation, then Paul prayed that they would become worthy of the calling that the Lord had extended to them.

⁶ Manton, vol. 20, pp. 258f.

He also prayed that the Lord would enable them to fulfill every resolve they had to serve the Lord. He prayed that the Lord would enable them by His grace so that “the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified” through them.

May the Lord enable us to understand and embrace this world view of Holy Scripture that we have unfolded before us. May He give us great grace to glorify Him in all of our afflictions, even as we wait the day of our full and final day of deliverance. And if any of us are still in unbelief, may the Lord show us clearly that our failure to believe the gospel is an act of defiant treason against Jesus Christ, whom the Father has made both Lord and Christ. May He give each of us fresh grace to repent and believe the gospel.

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 5:10f)
