

1 Title Page

2 Scripture Reading

- Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. (2 Th 2:1–2 NIV)

3 Scripture Reading

- Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. (2 Th 2:3 NIV)
- He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Th 2:4 NIV)

4 Scripture Reading

- For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. (2 Th 2:7 NIV)
- And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. (2 Th 2:8 NIV)

5 Scripture Reading

- But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. (2 Th 2:13 NIV)
- He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Th 2:14 NIV)

6 Scripture Reading

- So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. (2 Th 2:15 NIV)

7 Divine Judgment

- Dark clouds in the sky. Flashes of lighting. Angels blowing trumpets. Jesus returning to judge the earth.
- A scary scene, no doubt about it.
- Nevertheless, for the Apostle Paul this was no fantasy.
- He wanted the Thessalonians to prepare for an apocalyptic event that was fast approaching.

8 Divine Judgment

- Christ was returning. Judgment was at hand.
- Jesus was soon to be revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Th 1:7–8 NIV)
- The threat of divine punishment was very real for the Thessalonians.

- And very close.

9 **Scientific Research**

- A team of international researchers has discovered that people who believe in divine judgment tend to act less selfishly toward other people.
- In addition, “they are more likely to adopt behaviors that can create and support large-scale cooperative institutions, such as trade and markets.”
- A person who fears God is more likely to play by the rules.
- And when people play by the rules they can accomplish great things together.

10 **Scientific Research**

- To test this, the researchers set up experiments in Brazil, Fiji, Mauritius, Siberia, Tanzania and Vanuatu.
- Almost 600 people participated, from Christians to Buddhists, to those who believe in ancestor worship.

11 **Scientific Research**

- Each person played a pair of economic games in which they were given the chance to cheat or play fair.
- The researchers discovered that if a person rated their God as moralistic and punishing, they tended to be more fair to strangers and those they didn't know.

12 **Scientific Research**

- Participants who believe in a moralistic and punishing God are about five times more fair than people who don't think about God in this way.
- Divine punishment or (the fear of the Lord), it seems, can make us better people.

13 **Pastoral Dilemma**

- When the Apostle Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, there were many Christians who were filled with “doom and gloom”—fearing that they had missed the rapture and now were objects of God's wrath.
- To keep the Thessalonians from panicking, the Apostle Paul clarified to them not to believe everything they read on the Internet.

14 **Pastoral Dilemma**

- However, he still emphasized, judgment is indeed coming and the enemies of God will indeed be destroyed.
- Moreover, Paul also assures the saints that they are chosen by God through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and belief in the truth.
- Therefore, they shouldn't have anything to fear as long as they continue to stand firm in the faith.

15 **Pastoral Dilemma**

- This reminds me what the Apostle Peter said in his Epistle, . . .

- But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (2 Pet 3:10 NIV)
- Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives . . . (2 Pet 3:11 NIV)

16 Balance

- Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul does an amazing job of keeping justice and love in proper balance.
- He makes it absolutely clear that Jesus along with his angels will inflict “vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (1 Thess. 1:8).
- He leaves no doubt that God’s order will be restored when Jesus steps in and destroys the one called “the lawless one.” (v. 8).

17 Balance

- But all of this talk of divine judgment is intended to help us, not hurt us.
- It reminds us that God is in control, and that the justice of God will prevail.
- In other words, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that God is just, and that divine judgment will correct all of the wrongs in the world.

18 Balance

- But Paul keeps this message balanced with the assurance that God is loving, and that the Lord will save all those who are walking in the way of Jesus Christ.
- It is when we remember both of these important truths that we are able to be the people that God wants us to be: men and women
 - who play by the rules,
 - act unselfishly, and
 - cooperate with others.

19 The Hope of Justice

- In his book, *The New Faces of Christianity*, Philip Jenkins writes that during the horrors of the Cultural Revolution in China, Christians turned to the book of Revelation more than any other book of the Bible to give them hope.
- The same can be said of churches today that are in territories controlled by radical Islam.

20 The Hope of Justice

- Even in our own country, our values and principles seem to be always on the attack by our media, educational system, and culture.
- In other words, when Christians come to the place where they truly realize that they are aliens and strangers in this world, the promise of God’s justice gives us both hope and encouragement.

21 **God's Character**

- Changing gears for a moment, let us consider the nature of God.
- In Romans 11:22 we read, Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.
- In this verse, we have two basic truths regarding God's character. His goodness and His sternness.

22 **God's Goodness**

- In regards to God's goodness we have . . .
 - His love,
 - His compassion,
 - His patience,
 - His abundant mercy, and
 - His unwillingness that any should perish.

23 **God's Goodness**

- Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. (Psa 118:1 NIV)
- The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, . . . (Nah 1:7 NIV)
- The supreme expression of God's goodness is found in the Cross where God's great love for mankind was shown in the giving of His Son for our salvation.
- As the Apostle Paul says, It is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance. (Romans 2:4).

24 **God's Sternness**

- It is quite proper that we should be constantly mindful and grateful for God's goodness to us all, but not to the point where we overlook His sternness.
- Throughout the Scriptures we find repeated references to God's justice.
- He cannot overlook or tolerate sin and will not leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3). His eyes are too pure to look on evil and He cannot tolerate wrong (Habakkuk 1:13).

25 **God's Sternness**

- Although He is a God of patience and not willing that any should perish, there comes a time when His patience is exhausted and punishment is issued out to the guilty.
- Men can misinterpret God's longsuffering (patience) to mean that He is indifferent to wrongdoing.
- But we are warned that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31) and that God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28).

26 Justice & Love

- How, then, could a God who is so loving and yet a God of justice find a way to bring sinful men into fellowship with Himself?
- The answer is in the Cross of Christ where love and justice meet.
- Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be an atoning sacrifice for sin (1 John 4:10).
- At the same time, God's justice is satisfied, in that His indignation against sin was borne by the Lord Jesus on the cross.

27 Conclusion

- However, this does not mean, we no longer need to fear God.
- We still need to keep ourselves in God's love by faithfully, as new creatures in Christ, set apart Jesus as Lord of our lives.
- As we do, we show that not only do we love God, but also respect His justice against sin as well.
- Love and justice. When we keep them together, we are strong in every good word and work.