

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Last Judgment; November 6 & 7, 2022

We like to be safe. If you are working outside in your yard, and if you begin to see lightning getting closer and hear thunder getting, and if you begin to hear the storm sirens going off, and if the sky is getting darker and darker, you may go inside your house. If you are even smarter, you might go down into your basement. It is there that you know that you are safe. You go to bed at night. You lay your head down on your pillow, you may go right to sleep. Why? You know that you are safe. You change the batteries in your smoke detectors when the time changes. Why? You want to feel safe. Americans spend annually about 21 billion dollars on security systems in their homes. Why? They want to feel safe. Yet, we all know that there is no guarantee that we will be PERFECTLY safe in our homes. The security systems on our homes may warn that someone is breaking into our homes, but it may not perfectly stop that from happening. Smoke detectors may warn that a fire has started, but it may not PREVENT a fire from starting. Yet, we all like to feel safe.

The Apostle Paul wanted the Christians in Thessalonica to feel safe. It was a very new congregation. The Apostle Paul began the congregation on one of his missionary journeys. Paul had only been there for 3 weeks. Over those weeks, God had blessed his work. In the book of Acts, we are told that **“on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.”** (Acts 17:2-4)

But there were some people from Thessalonica that were not thrilled at Paul’s success. What did they do? **“They rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city.”** They wanted to send Paul a very powerful message – you are not welcome here! Not only did that start a riot in the street, they went after some of the people who been part of this new group of Christians in Thessalonica. One of those people was named Jason. They broke through his door, and dragged him out demanding that he tell them where Paul and his companions were. “They’re not here.” Jason was telling the truth. There were no apostles in his house. So, the mob grabbed him and tossed him into jail. (Acts 17)

This new group of believers convinced Paul and the others to leave Thessalonica. So, he did. He made his way down to Berea. Eventually, as another group of believers began to grow there, the same **“bad characters”** from Thessalonica found about Paul being in Berea. Once again, he found himself fleeing for his life. Do you see why the Apostle Paul wanted to write a letter to the Christians in Thessalonica? He had visited them for three weeks, and then he ran for his life. He wanted to encourage these new believers. Even though Paul had been forced to flee, the believers in Thessalonica did not. They were beginning to face extreme pressure. Instead of destroying the church, it got stronger. Throughout these two letters to the Thessalonians, Paul writes about how much his heart was filled with joy because of them.

In the verses right before our text, Paul writes: **“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.”** They were a model congregation for the early Christian Church. They were growing in their faith. They were loving one another. Yet, these believers were suffering on account of their faith. Yet, Paul knew that over time, they might not always feel safe. They might even question themselves saying: *“Is it all worth it?”* There might be some who would feel that it wasn’t fair how they were suffering for Jesus.

Therefore, Paul wanted them to feel safe in Jesus. He wanted them to know that even though they were suffering now, they were safe in God’s Kingdom when Jesus would return. (Look at your bulletin.) **“All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is 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. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be**

glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.”

Today, we focus on the theme of **“Last Judgment.”** If there ever was a Sunday that should include fire and brimstone, it should be this Sunday. Correct? If there was ever a Sunday that fear should be pounded into people’s hearts, it should be this Sunday. Correct? That’s not what Paul is doing here. As he speaks about that Last Day, he wanted them to know that they had nothing to fear. His heart was filled with joy because of the strength of these Thessalonians’ faith. He wanted them to look forward to that day when Jesus was going to return to this earth.

He wanted them, that even though they were going through incredible amount of suffering, they would be safe in Jesus. They were children of God. They were redeemed by the blood of Jesus. They were perfectly safe in him. He wanted them to know that when God returns, they were going to a place that would be perfectly safe. They didn’t have to wonder or worry what the verdict might be announced by God on that day. They were not guilty, and they were safe.

Jesus wants you to know that comfort as well. We may not be facing the same kind of suffering these Thessalonians were going through. Yet, there will times that we may question God. There might be times that Satan is just pounding on you. There will be times that you will be afraid. Yet, God wants you know that you are PERFECTLY SAFE in him. Walk with Jesus, and you will be safe. Amen.