

2Thessalonians 12-08-24a

This is Friday, the 24th of August, 2012. We're in the book of 2 Thessalonians and we'll resume tonight in verse 8. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and we will begin. Father, thank you for this opportunity to spend time together in the study of your Word, in fellowship, receiving the ministry of your Holy Spirit and experiencing the blessings that come through the gifts that are exercised in our midst through His power and enablement.

We thank you for this passage of Scripture and the truth that it contains. We ask your blessing on us as we study it together. May each of us see pertinent, meaningful and applicable things in this passage that will help us to live more closely aligned with your will, your plan and purpose.

It will be equipped for those good works that you have ordained that we should perform, that we will bear fruit and that we will be ready and useful to you on that day when the Lord Jesus returns for us. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, let's review our passage in 2 Thessalonians. You know the apostle is writing his second letter to this group, at least it's the second one that we have preserved. And he expresses his thanks for them in verse 3 and tells them that he uses them as an example to other people to whom he speaks in verse 4, specifically because of their patience and faith when they are persecuted and when they suffer.

And we know that they are experiencing both kinds of problem in their town. And he says it is a proper thing. It is a righteous thing that God will repay with tribulation those who trouble you and give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

And then where we pick up tonight, in flaming 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. Well, this is an easy passage to read through and go beyond looking for the good stuff.

When is he going to talk about the return of the Lord Jesus? When are we going to see the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God and so on? And we say, all right. Well, they're experiencing trouble. People are giving them a hard time.

Jesus is going to come back and get them and we'll go on from there. But there's quite a bit more here than might at first meet our eye. Now we saw last time looking at the concept of vengeance and the word vengeance Ek Dikeo, E-K-D-I-K-E-O.

You'll recognize the prefix there, the preposition at the beginning Ek, which means out from and

then Dikeo. This is our fundamental word group for right, righteousness, Dikaiois, Dikaioisune all come from this root. We have a verb Ek Dikeo and we have another verb Ek Dikazo.

And these are related but different verbs because originally Ek meaning out from or outside of and then Dikaiois, this was somebody outside the law. We have the word outlaw, the black hats, the guys who were out there being villains and then you have your good guy, your white hat, your sheriff going to find the bad guys. They're the outlaws.

But at some time in the history of the etymology of these terms, the meaning sort of changed around and instead of using Ek and Dikaiois to talk about people outside the law, it came to be used for what comes out of the law to deal with these people. This is the justice that comes out of what is right. So this is sort of the issuing forth.

This is justice coming out and our English word that translates it here vengeance is a little bit unfortunate because in English we cannot help but associate an idea of emotion with this. We say, well, he rode that horse with a vengeance. He attacked that problem with a vengeance and we've got an emotional component.

We're stirred up. We're angry. I want vengeance.

Well avenging and vengeance. This has more baggage with it than this word carries. It can mean vengeance.

It can mean to avenge. But even when it does mean that it doesn't carry this emotional vitriol this idea. I'm going to get you you rascal you it's just not in the word.

And again, you go back to the root. This is out from justice. This is the proper recompense.

And so I've looked around to try to find what I thought would be a good synonym after doing a word study on this to figure out what English word would really best convey this meaning and I settled on retribution retribution. It has the idea that you're going to even the scale that idea is there but vengeance is too emotionally strong. This is recompense or retribution.

It was used in the Old Testament, especially when they were translating the Hebrew terms that dealt with the Avenger of blood. Remember the Avenger of blood. He's the family representative.

What is the Avenger of blood out to do? The idea is in those early days before there was a fully developed justice system in Israel, the Avenger of blood would carry the responsibility to right the wrong that had been inflicted on a family. So it has a balance a justice and objectivity to it that our word vengeance doesn't really carry and even in the Old Testament when it says well the Avenger of blood will come. This is the one who will exact justice for this murder that was committed.

So in flaming fire, I don't know how you would say this. This is did to me. This is to give giving

retribution is how I would translate this and you have some versions you notice the first phrase in verse 8 in flaming fire.

Some versions actually attach this to the end of verse 7 when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire comma giving retribution in Greek. A lot of times these phrases kind of float free and they will just attach semantically in a number of different places. So is Jesus coming back with his mighty angels in flaming fire or is he giving retribution in flaming fire? Well, what does flaming fire represent in Scripture? This is God's justice, right? And we get a little bit of help here because Paul is thinking Old Testament thoughts here.

He's got some scripture in his mind. Keep your place here in 2nd Thessalonians, but turn back to Isaiah chapter 66 verse 15. We made a long journey through Isaiah and eventually arrived at chapter 66 not terribly long ago and you'll notice if your Bible is laid out like mine in the New King James that chapter 65 and most of 66 is formatted as poetry and it reads this way in Hebrew and they've done a good job of trying to suggest the kind of language in which these thoughts are expressed and it is poetic.

And so if you pick up at verse 12 for thus says the Lord, this is your this is your paragraph marker. So to speak your section marker thus says the Lord behold look. I will extend peace to her.

Well to whom this is Zion you go back to verse 5 and verse 10 rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her. So thus says the Lord I will extend peace to her Jerusalem like a river and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. So just setting this in its context.

What time frame are we talking about here in in history when God extends peace like a river to Jerusalem, where are we dispensationally where are we historically or prophetically as Jerusalem ever had peace like a river you could argue maybe in Solomon's day, but peace like a river is a millennial promise, right? So I will extend peace to her. In fact, there'll be a liberal River flowing out of Jerusalem where the the Mount of Olives split and so on and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. This is the subordination the subjugation of the earth to Israel in that thousand-year reign of Christ the Davidic King the throne of David will rule the world, but there will still be nations and the glory of the Gentiles will flow and he says you shall feed on her sides.

You shall be carried. These are the people. These are the the resuscitated Old Testament Saints will be carried on her knees and dandled in her lap and so on Jerusalem will be the capital city and the people of God who were faithful will be associated with Jerusalem in this nurturing fashion as one whom his mother comforts.

So I will comfort you and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. So time setting context is here. Now look at verse 14 to 15 when you see this your heart shall rejoice and your bones shall flourish like grass the hand of the Lord shall be known to his servants and indignation to his enemies.

Notice the first his is in italics there the hand of the Lord shall be known to his servants but indignation to his enemies for behold the Lord will come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind to render his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire for by fire and by his sword the Lord will judge all flesh and the slain of the Lord shall be many. Now if you're the slain of the Lord, how much time do you have in the Millennial Kingdom? You don't have any but there are others who are going to know his indignation and you see sort of a duality here. He's going to render his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire.

Now, what's the difference in his anger and his rebuke? The anger and fury of the Lord. This is going to be the judgment that takes people out. They are not going to be here.

They are the slain of the Lord. Now, let me just ask you do you see a difference between the fury and anger of the Lord slaying somebody and rebuking someone? Does it do any good to rebuke someone and then slay them is what I'm getting at. What is the purpose of rebuke? The Word of God is alive and powerful.

It is profitable for what? For doctrine, for reproof, rebuke, correction, and instruction. When you rebuke something you put it in its place. Jesus stood up from the boat and rebuked the wind.

Remember that? Peace, be still. He didn't slay the wind. He didn't make the wind go away.

He didn't evaporate the atmosphere. He rebuked it. He said wind, you're blowing too strong, cut it out.

It's a rebuke. You rebuke a wayward employee. You rebuke a child.

Why do you do that? It's a learning moment. It's a teachable moment. You're trying to improve future behavior, right? You don't, there's no point in saying, let me tell you all the ways you did that wrong and now I'm going to kill you.

There's just no point. So there are two groups here. This is my observation.

The hand of the Lord shall be known to his servants. The hand of the parent is sometimes known to his children, right? The hand can apply discipline, indignation to his enemies. There are servants and there are enemies.

Can a servant mess up and you rebuke the servant? You unprofitable servant. You've not done what you were supposed to. You beat your fellow servants.

I'm going to cut you in two. I'm going to portion you your lot with the hypocrites. He didn't kill him.

Cutting him in two is revoking his authority. It's like ripping off your epaulets. It's like breaking your quartermaster stick.

Broken in two. This is his authority, his station, his appointment as ruler. I cut you in two and portion you your lot with the hypocrites.

It wouldn't be any point giving him a lot with the hypocrites if he was actually severed at the waist, right? You know, there's no point giving you anything. You're, you know, you need to be buried in two boxes and not thought any more about. So my point here is in 66 15 of Isaiah.

God renders his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire. There is a judgment that is not unto death. We will stand at the judgment seat of Christ and the fruit of our lives will be subjected to fire and wood, hay and stubble will incinerate gold, silver and precious stones will survive, right? This is a fiery judgment applied to believers.

You can't burn wood, hay and stubble. If you don't have a flame, you can't cook it to death. You can't dehydrate it until it is no more.

It takes fire. It will burn. There are those who will be saved yet so as by fire because by the time the fire gets done with the fruit of their life, there's nothing left with their naked self.

They don't even have a scratchy white gown and a rusty old halo. They're just standing there, you know ashamed at his coming. Well, another passage that alludes to this is Psalm 79 6. You can leave Isaiah Psalm 79.

I love the subtitle of this in the New King James. It says a dirge and a prayer for Israel destroyed by enemies. Oh God, the nations have come into your inheritance your holy temple.

They have defiled and so on look down at verse 8. Oh do not remember former iniquities against us. This is post discipline post judgment, right? God has allowed the enemies in. They've ransacked and and and he says in verse 5, how long O Lord will you be angry forever? Will your jealousy burn like fire? This is God's fiery judgment on his own people pour out your wrath on the nations.

Look at this that do not know you. He says pour out your wrath on the nations that do not know you and on the kingdoms that do not call on your name for they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his dwelling place. So Jacob has gotten disciplined.

He's been rebuked, right? But the psalmist says now it's time for these scourge nations to get their recompense to have God's anger put out on them. Oh do not remember former iniquities against us. Let your tender mercies come speedily to meet us for we have been brought very low verse 9 help us.

Oh God of our salvation for the glory of your name and deliver us and provide Atonement for our sins for your names sake. Why should the nations say where is their God? Let there be known among the nations in our sight the avenging the retribution. This is not emotional this there is an

injustice that has been perpetrated.

There is blood that has been shed and this blood cries out from the ground for recompense. So there is a and in the Septuagint you've got an echo usage here. So those who do not know God turn forward to Jeremiah.

This is our last passage to look at in this regard Jeremiah chapter 10 verse 25. You look at verse 19. Woe is me for my hurt my wound is severe, but I say truly this is an infirmity and I must bear it.

My tent is plundered and all my cords are broken. My children have gone from me and they are no more. There is no one to pitch my tent anymore or set up my curtains.

For the shepherds have become dull-hearted and have not sought the Lord. They shall not prosper their flocks are scattered. The noise of the report has come a great commotion out of the north country to make the cities of Judah desolate a den of jackals.

Oh Lord. I know the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

Oh Lord correct me but with justice not in your anger. Lest you bring me to nothing notice. This is what happens to the nation's God's anger.

God's wrath God's fury. This is those who are the slain of the Lord, which are many and he says don't judge me in your anger. That's reserved for those that you're going to wipe out.

That's the unbelievers those who do not know you. Oh Lord pour out your fury on the Gentiles who do not know you. And on the families who do not call on your name for they have eaten up Jacob devoured him and consumed him and made his dwelling places desolate.

So we've seen this idea now two or three places in the Old Testament. Here's the upshot. Here's the conclusion of the matter in second Thessalonians.

When we are looking at the flaming fire. Accompanying the Lord Jesus when he is revealed from heaven. This is the fire that surrounds the throne of God.

This is the fire in which the seraphim dwell. This is the burning coals that cleanse remember that one burning cold was taken and put on the prophets lips. Oh, I Lord.

I'm a man of unclean lips. He's purified. It is a purifying fire.

The judgment purges and cleanses and takes away that which is not in accordance with God's righteousness in flaming fire. He's going to do two things when he comes back. What is the Lord Jesus going to do at his second coming? What's going to happen? How many classes of people are on the earth at the second coming church is gone, right seven years after we leave he's

coming back two kinds of people on the earth.

What kind are they? You got you've got your Old Testament class Saints those who have come to faith during the tribulation. And who else everybody else all the godless enemies in the Valley of Armageddon, right? So what is Jesus going to do? He is going to slay them their blood is going to run as high as a horse's bridles. The slain of the Lord will be many and they are unbelievers.

Now, what else is he going to do when he comes back? He's going to raise all of the Old Testament class Saints from Old Testament days and those who have been martyred in the tribulation period those souls under the altar. Oh Lord, how long until you? Provide a dick. Oh, it's the word in Revelation for the souls under the altar when it says, will you avenge our blood? Will you get justice for our blood? Well, God's going to do that.

The Lord Jesus is going to do that. So there are two different classes of people who are judged. There are those who do not know God and I would argue that that's who Paul has in mind here with his Old Testament knowledge kicking in flaming fire taking vengeance.

Giving retribution literally to those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel turn with me back to 2 Corinthians chapter 10. This is a real oft quoted passage, but if you look at it in its context people are not really doing it justice when they quote it. Chapter 10 2nd Corinthians.

I Paul myself and pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ interesting what Paul will invoke at different times when he says I plead with you. I beseech you therefore brethren remember in 12 of Romans. I beseech you therefore brethren by what by the mercies of God here.

He says I plead with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ whole different basis for argument who in presence am lowly among you but being absent and bold toward you people were saying that Paul had a lot of bold words when he wasn't there to have to stand up to actual people but but in when he was actually there he was too nice. He was too kind. He let people run over him and so on and that well, he speaks real bold words in his letters wait till he gets here and you know, we'll we'll argue with him.

We'll answer his points. You know, we can't argue with his letter because he doesn't respond, you know, he's he sent the letter and it just stands there talking and we've got good points to make in rebuttal and he's not here to counter our rebuttal and when he comes he's we're will cow him into silence with the strength of our arguments. This is what they're saying these people that do not submit to apostolic authority and are trying to steer the Corinthian Church astray.

So he says and he started this is sort of tongue-in-cheek. He says I'm beseeching you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. You know, people are accusing Paul of being meek and gentle.

He says well, you remember the Lord Jesus said of himself. I am meek and lowly. So, you know before you start condemning someone for being meek and lowly just remember the Lord Jesus self-described.

I beg you that when I am present, I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. This is a this is a great point. Paul says look don't think we're walking according to the flesh.

You wait that you wait till you see the kind of boldness with which we're going to be bold when we face these people who think it's all about the flesh because it's not though we walk in the flesh. We do not war according to the flesh. Don't think you have to win an argument.

Don't think you have to clinch a debate. Don't think that you have to best somebody in a discussion. The warfare in which we are engaged and by the way, the testimony and the witness that we are challenged with in this life doesn't depend on eloquence.

It doesn't depend on being able to answer every question or put away. What about the heathen? What about those that have what about little babies? What about what about what about that's warring according to the flesh. You don't debate somebody into Salvation.

You don't debate somebody into believing in God. You don't debate somebody out of believing some false religion. We're not walking according even though we're in the flesh.

We don't war according to the flesh. If you want to impress someone with the truth quote Scripture keep going back to the Bible. Doesn't matter what their question is doesn't matter.

If you answer the question doesn't matter what their debating point is. Well, did you know that the animals won't actually fit on the Ark? Did you know that the Earth is not 6,000 years old? Ignore that stuff. Don't get into a war of words.

Don't get into a fleshly debate. Anybody can debate both sides of the thing and never get anywhere. Do Republicans debate Democrats into becoming Republicans? Do conservatives debate liberals into becoming conservative? We do not use fleshly weapons.

Paul says, we walk in the flesh and there's people who think that everything depends on the flesh, but we do not war according to the flesh. Look at verse 4. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They're not fleshly.

It's not glibness. It's not eloquence. It's not knowing one more debate argument than the other guy.

It's just like playing chess. You know, you're doing an opening. Whichever one of you knows the opening one move better than the other guy is going to get an advantage.

You know, the other guy runs out of gas. He's trying to do Ruy Lopez, but he can only remember the first six moves. Do you remember eight moves? Well, you've got him nailed.

You take control of the center of the board. You're going to open up some lines. You're going to kill some pawns.

You're going to squeeze his king into a corner, and then you're going to go in there and execute him. You just know a couple of more moves. Well, this is all debate is, and you don't get anywhere.

He says, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. These people that think I'm a little short, bald, hook-nosed, squeaky-voiced apostle, and that I'm unimpressive in person don't understand the way this warfare works. Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds.

This is the strongholds of self-satisfaction, of self-righteousness, of arrogance, of the suppressing of the truth and unrighteousness. God's weapons pull those strongholds down. How much strength did it take the Israelites to get the walls of Jericho to come down? All they had to do was walk, blow a few horns.

Priests blew the horns. People just marched, right? How much strength did they have to have to get those walls to come down? God's power was mighty for the pulling down of that stronghold. All they had to do was be obedient and trust that God would do the heavy work.

I don't understand why we've got to march every day for a week. I don't understand why we've got to march seven times today. What's this marching going to do? Lack of faith, lack of obedience, they wouldn't have won the victory.

They were faithful. They were consistent. Joshua told them, no talking in ranks.

They marched in silence. It's not easy when you've got that big of a crowd, especially when you're marching around the same route seven times. People want to talk.

They want to pass the time. Joshua said, silence. And so this eerie crowd, seven times around, all the people in Jericho peeking over the wall, it's spooky.

And by the time the walls actually fell, those people were totally psychologically incapable of any kind of resistance. It was like an army of the dead marching outside. And in reality, that's the army of the living.

They are the army of the dead. Pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments. God's power, mighty in God, casts, it doesn't say answers arguments, rebuts arguments, refutes arguments, counters arguments with compelling boatloads of facts.

It says, casting them down. It throws them down on the ground, stomps on them. Every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Debate an atheist, you'll know exactly what this verse is talking about. Exalting itself against God. Just this visceral, vituperative, vitriolic hatred, oozing out.

And you run into these people. Exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. It's a thought war.

It's a spiritual war. It is a faith in God war. Well, what does this have to do with our passage? Verse six, being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

There is disobedience that is going unpunished while we are still called to obey. The psalm farther along says, you know, I don't understand why I'm suffering this stuff and there's others who are going unmolested, even though they're in the wrong. And then it says, well, farther along, we'll know all about it.

Farther along, we'll understand why. Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine. We'll understand it by, you don't have to wait till by and by.

You can understand it right now. Paul says the disobedience is going to be dealt with when your obedience is fulfilled. We are called upon to be obedient while there is disobedience around us.

It's a test. Ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. We're going to pause here and take our break, but there's a lot more to verses eight and nine in First Thessalonians chapter one and we'll pick up with it as soon as we come back.