Is there Justice in the World?

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Preacher: Tom Campbell

[0:00] Church program here which tells you who's going to be speaking throughout July and August, but Tom is speaking today and the very last one I think as well, isn't that right Tom, the end of August.

So do please be praying for all those who will be preaching. Some don't do it regularly and so it's a little bit more daunting. So pray for them in their preparation that God would not only speak to them but speak to us as a church.
So 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 1 to 12. Let's hear God speak to us as we hear his word.
Paul, Silas and Timothy.
To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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 every one of you has for each other is increasing.
Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. 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.
[1:29] 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.

God is just.
This includes you because you believed our testimony to you.
With this in mind, we constantly pray for you that our God may count you worthy of his calling and that by his power he may fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.
we pray this so 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.
[2:54] Tom, you want to come and speak? Can I pray for you first? It's always a delight and an encouragement to have Tom.

Many of you know Tom. Let's pray for him. And for us now. Father, we thank you for your people. We thank you for the gift that you give to us.
We thank you for Tom. And we thank you for his understanding of your word. And we ask now that you would fill him afresh and us with your Holy Spirit.
Please help him to speak your word carefully and clearly. And we pray for us ourselves that we would not only understand with our heads and our minds, but that our hearts and our lives would be changed and transformed.
And that we would be counted worthy of your people and of the kingdom that is to come. We pray this in Jesus' name.
[3:57] Amen. I just want to have to take some p And thank you for your point. Take it. I am sure you can't open it.

I am sure you don't have to take any signs. Come on. I am sure you don't have to take any signs. Justice. Justice. Justice.
Is there any in the world? I was a stickler for people who cheated. I hated injustice.
I hated when things went against the rules. Johnny mentioned the World Cup. It's nearly over. But for some, it might drag up old memories of injustice.
Five years ago. Thierry Henry. But now it just becomes a joke. We were watching the BBC coverage of one of the matches and they were reviewing a handball in the box.
[5:15] Thierry Henry said, no, not a penalty. His arm was there. Gary Lineker says, have you ever got away with a handball, Thierry? No, never.

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It's just a joke. Injustice. Luis Suarez. On the pitch. Bite another player. On the pitch, nothing happens.
But yet severely punished. Justice was done. And a large part of this passage is dealing with God's justice. Ultimate justice in the world.
Is God fair? Will he deal fairly with what happens in the world? Will people get away with their wrongdoing? So we need to remember the context that Paul is writing to in 2 Thessalonians.
Why is Paul writing to these people? It's a letter. Like we might receive a letter today. And there was a teaching that was coming from other people.
[6:15] Not from Paul. About when the Lord Jesus would return. And people were getting unsettled. Flick into chapter 2. It's just the next chapter. Verses 1 and 2.

Look at the context of this passage. So there was this teaching that this day of the Lord.
That Jesus' return had already come. But yet the Thessalonians were still suffering. So it's understandable why they might go to think.
Is God fair? I thought he said the suffering was going to finish. But Paul writes to reassure them. And encourage them. Amidst the suffering of persecution. So we're going to quickly flick back to Acts chapter 19.
Verse 1 to 7. So if you can flick back to Acts. This will give us a foundation. About the Thessalonian church. This is when Paul was first there. So Acts 19 verse 1 to 7.
[7:46] Or maybe Acts 17. Sorry, Acts 17. Okay, so Acts 17. Okay, so Acts 17. Okay, so Acts 17. When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and 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.
And then he said, 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.
But other Jews were jealous. So they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas, in order to bring them out to the crowd.
But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting, These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house.
[8:59] They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus. When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.

Then they made Jason and the others postpone and let them go. So we can see the gospel at work in this place called Thessalonica, a bit of a tongue twister.
But there was persecution that they were facing from those around them. So this letter, firstly, is a greeting from God's workers. Look in verse 1 and 2.
Paul, Silas and Timothy. As was Paul's custom, he opened his letter to the Thessalonian church with a greeting. The three, his team, that were in Thessalonica when they first heard the gospel.
He is now writing to them again, now that he is not with them. To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
[9:56] He addresses them as the church in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They are a group of people brought together and united by God and by the work of Jesus.

They are not a social club. This isn't a political party. It is a group of people brought together by the one and only God. And he gives to Jesus his full title.
Lord Jesus Christ. Which reminds us of all that we have in him. Lord and God over all. The man who died on a cross.
Who is the promised saving king who rose again. We could spend this whole time just looking at this one verse. But Paul wishes the great, in the greeting, he wishes the church grace and peace.
Again from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He repeats the phrase, grace and peace. It is only by grace that these people are saved and brought together.
[10:59] And the result is peace. And these things are from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is making very clear that these gifts are from them. And the Lord wants his church to

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have his grace and his peace and to experience that.

And that is for us today. Not just in Thessalonica, but today. So that is the initial greeting. So Paul goes on in verses 3 to 4. In giving thanks for God's work.
Here we have Paul seeing the need to give thanks for God's work. Which was an answer to prayer. What does it say? 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. Flick back to 1 Thessalonians 3. Which was a former letter that Paul wrote to the same church.
And look at verse 10. This is Paul speaking again. Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.
[12:08] Verse 12. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else. Just as ours does for you. So their faith is growing more and more.

And their love for one another is increasing. And Paul seeks the need to give thanks for this answered prayer. He prayed for them. And he's seen the fruit of this prayer.
And he's so thankful to God for us. And we too need to be thankful people. Now, as I was brought up, as you may know Ross and Joy, I was always taught to say thank you.
After everything that I did, I had to say thank you. It's a great thing to do. It's a great habit to have. I would finish gymnastics. I have to say thank you to my coach. I leave my friend's house. I have to say thank you for having me.
I have nice spaghetti bolognese. Guess what? I have to say thank you. So this is a great attitude to have. But I suggest it's not exactly the same with God.
[13:09] But that it goes much deeper. I could say thank you, even if Ross's spaghetti wasn't very nice. Or even if I had a rubbish time at gymnastics. But with God, we need to be people with hearts of thanks.

We need to be thankful, always thankful for what he's done. Not necessarily having to pray the words thank you after each blessing or after each good thing in our lives.
But we need to have hearts that are thankfully aware of God's good blessings and gifts. So we see here Paul tells us about two vital aspects of the lives of the Thessalonians.
Their faith in God and their love for each other. These are the things he's giving thanks for. So relationships aren't static things. It's true that we can say we're in a relationship with someone or we're not.
We might say I'm in love with someone or I'm not in love. But Paul highlights the growing nature of Christian relationships. So firstly with God.
[14:14] Faith in God needs to be growing. Yes, we can have faith or not have faith in God. But it's not enough to simply have faith in that you have it or you don't.

It's a growing thing. As some of you know, I got married nearly three years ago to the wonderful Grace. But marriage isn't just about the ring on the finger.
I'm married now. That's it. It's not just about signing the legal piece of paper. That's done. Official. Marriage. It's a life of growing together.
In love for God and for each other. It's not a static thing. It's not a status. But it's a growing relationship together. And we need to be people who are growing in faith.
What a challenging thing. Think about it in your own heads. Where were you at with the Lord this time last year?
[15:16] Maybe five years ago. Maybe ten years ago in your walks with the Lord. Did I grow exponentially in my faith in a few months?

And then just leveled off and was happy with that? No, we need to be striving to grow in faith in our wonderful God. We should never stop growing in faith until that day where faith is no longer needed.
And we'll be with the Lord forever. And the second aspect that Paul is giving thanks for is that relationship with other people. We need to be people who are growing in love for each other.
As fellow believers in Jesus, we need to love our brothers and sisters. Which I'm sure we say we do. And maybe sometimes it's in the sense that because we have to.
Or we love them because they're our family in the Lord. Well, we need to be growing in our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to love his people more and more.

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[16:21] Not just put up with people, but really love them in an increasing way. Others people's needs have to come first. This will get worked out in different ways, but it's a love that needs to be worked at.

Not just assumed. Of course I love my church family. Of course I love my Christian brothers and sisters. But are you increasing in love for them?
Look in verse 4. Among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you're enduring.
So Paul tells us that through their perseverance and faith, in the face of persecution and trials, they're serving as an example to other churches.
Paul and his team in fact boast about the church in Thessalonica in other churches, as they put their faith and love into practice, despite the trouble that they are experiencing.
[17:20] In our churches, are we serving as examples to others? Not that we should boast about ourselves, but in Karagline.

Are you a church that we can boast about when we go back to Middleton? Look at what they are doing for the Lord. And can you here in Karagline boast about what we in Middleton are doing as we seek to serve the Lord there?
So we see Paul giving thanks for God's work in his church in these ways. So the next thing Paul moves on to, and this is the big section of the chapter.
This is God's justice and the justice of his work. And we can't look at it thoroughly, but we will try to address some of the issues. So let's look at verse 5.
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.
[18:23] So the Thessalonians' faith, their growing love and perseverance in the midst of persecution is evidence, Paul says, that God's judgment is right.

God saw the situation they faced, the persecution, and his judgment was that the Thessalonian believers would be blessed even though they suffered.
God saw that they were doing what was right, and he gave them the grace to grow in faith and love and to persevere.
Look at the first part of verse 6. Paul moves on to very, no messing about with Paul, very concise, very clear. God is just.
God in his very nature is just in who he is and in all that he does. What does just mean? It's almost like you feel God is just, just what?
[19:25] Maybe that's how we sometimes use the word in our culture today. But it means it's right or fair. It's an adjective that describes something that's based on or behaving according to what is morally right and fair.

So God is just. He is right and fair. So I'm going to try and ask a few questions as we look through these verses. Okay, so is it fair that God's people suffer?
Look at verse 6. God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.
God won't let the persecutions that these believers are facing go unnoticed. He says he will repay those who are doing the persecuting.
Those who persecute God's people won't simply be let off the hook. Their defiance of God will not be tolerated by him. We hear stories of Christians around the world, don't we?
[20:36] Suffering unimaginably for their faith. How is that fair or just? Well, Paul teaches us here that those injustices will not be left unpunished.

Those who persecute others, the unjust acts of people, will not simply be swept under the carpet and forgotten. In fact, he goes on to say that those who are now suffering will be given relief.
What an encouragement to these people and to those who are facing persecution. But how do we respond to persecution? I certainly, myself, don't find myself in the sort of situations that the Thessalonians would have been facing.
Remember in Acts. Jason was dragged in front of the courts. Called to account. Riots in the city.
I certainly don't face the struggles of Christians in Syria. China. North Korea. You have been threatened. Told you must convert to a different religion.
[21:42] You must adhere to our rules. Or face death. Imprisoned. Beaten. Executed. So for our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted like this for their faith, we need to help.

The Lord commands us and tells us that we can help. Look at Hebrews chapter 13. Verse 3.

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Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison. And those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.
We need to be people of prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters. And not only of prayer, there's a way we can take action. There are organizations we can write to.
We can advocate for people who are suffering. And this is a challenge to me. This isn't something I've thought about to do. But we need to be the people who speak up for those who are being persecuted and suffering.
[22:49] Okay, so that's our suffering brothers and sisters. But are we persecuted? Yes, I think at times we are. I think it's different. I think we suffer in our schools.

I think we suffer in our workplaces. I think we suffer with our families and with our friends. Because we choose to follow Jesus. It's different, but we suffer.
And it's a relief for us to know that God will bring relief to all those who are suffering for Jesus. So God will not let these injustices go unpunished.
But when will God demonstrate this justice? This is the next question. I started this morning with a question about justice. Is God fair? Well, God's word so far has told us that he is.
Those who are persecuting God's people will be punished. And those who are being persecuted will be given relief. That sounds, on the balance, fair. Well, if we simply looked at the world from a purely human perspective, we might begin to think that God is not fair.
[23:58] That he's not just. But what does God's word say? That's what's important. Not what we say. Not what we see. But what God's word says. Look in verse 7.

The second part of verse 7. 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.
So when will all this happen? Well, the truth is that he's already shown his justice in what Jesus has done. But yet there is a day that is coming that his justice will be enacted against all those who have yet been unpunished.
We don't know the exact date or time of when God is going to write all things, bring about his kingdom of peace. But we know that it will happen when Jesus returns.
[25:07] When he returns, when Jesus is revealed, that will be the end of history. As Christians, we believe that history of the world is linear.

It's a line. It doesn't go in circles. We don't get recreated every time and it goes on and on for all eternity. God created. Man sinned.
Jesus came to save us. We're waiting for his return. And with his return, the world as we know it will come to an end. Revelation is a strange book in our context.
We sometimes don't understand the images, but it can be helpful to listen to the picture language that John uses. Listen to his description of Jesus' return in Revelation chapter 19.
Verse 19. I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.
[26:18] His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the word of God.

The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.
He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has the name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
God will bring about this justice with Jesus' return. But who will be punished? So is it fair that God's people suffer?
When will this justice come about? Who will be punished? Well, let's look at the truth in verse 8. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
[27:38] The Lord will punish those who do not know Him. The Lord will punish those who do not know Him.

If we reject the glorious gospel of Jesus, then we face His unavoidable punishment.

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It cannot be avoided, and it's terrifying. It will be those who don't obey His gospel. The amazing gospel that is saving us.
That is saving those who believe. But what will this punishment be? Look at verse 9. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, and shut out from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His might.
Isaiah says the splendor of His power in one version. Everlasting destruction. Shut out from the presence of the Lord. A punishment of being faced with an eternity of separation from the presence of the Lord.
[29:05] All that is good, all that is right, all that is enjoyable, will be removed. And only the opposite will remain. Forever. So how on earth is God just in doing this?

How is that fair? How is that fair? How is that fair? Well, because of our rebellion, the most heinous of crimes that we hear on the radio, down to what we see as the most smallest of sins, are both deserving of this punishment.
That's the seriousness of sin. But the Lord has provided a way for it to be paid for us. The gospel of the Lord Jesus, that's why it's good news, is that Jesus died to take our punishment.
He rose again in victory over death and sin. And through faith in Jesus, our punishment is taken. And there's no more to be feared.
But it does need to be paid. That's why it's fair. Either by us, or by Jesus. Sin never goes unpunished.
[30:26] But we don't have to face it ourselves. Look in verse 10. Look at the outcome for those who do believe. 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. Jesus will be glorified in and marveled at by his people.
Those who believe. Instead of being shot out from the presence of God, we will be with him forever. Paul writes in a similar way in his first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 4.
After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever.
Forever. Look how Paul is encouraging the Thessalonian church. Verse 10. This includes you. You will be counted amongst these holy people.
[31:36] Why? Because they believed the gospel that Paul presented to them. Paul and his team told them the gospel, and they believed.

Now I recognize that there's a lot to digest in here. Where do we stand before the Lord? Before the Lord Jesus? Where do our family and friends stand?
We need to plead with them. We need to urgently be praying for them. Now this may be slightly unusual, but I just want to take a minute just to reflect where we are at.
How urgent it is to come to Jesus in faith, and to plead and pray for others to do the same. We need to take a minute just to do the same. So we've seen Paul's greetings from the workers.
We've seen thanksgiving for all that God is doing. And we've seen the amazing justice of God and his work and the amazing good news about that justice.
[33:13] And finally, we can see Paul praying for God's work. Look in verses 11 and 12. With this in mind, we constantly pray for you.

That our God may make you worthy of his calling and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.
We pray this so 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.
He prays that God would make them worthy of his calling of God's calling in their lives. Now, not that they would need to earn in any way that they would need to be worthy first.
That was a free gift. That was the grace. Not because of what they could do or did but they needed to live up to that calling of following Jesus.
[34:21] God is working in us as one author puts it to narrow the gap between what we were when he called us and what we should be and shall be.

Like Johnny mentioned at the start we one day will be like Jesus and with Jesus and we need his help in that. By his Holy Spirit we need to pray for God's changing work in us.

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We need to be praying for this for each other so that we will be getting to be more like what we should be like Jesus. More like him in how we love God in our faith before him in how we love others in how we care for those in need in how we pray.
And the second thing Paul is praying for so the first is that they will be worthy of his calling. The second is he's praying for the power of God would bring about the good desires and deeds of his people.
Well he say he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We need to be people who pray that the Lord would use us in this world.
[35:43] This is a challenge to me because I'm not very good at praying. I get caught up in how I'm feeling or whether I should pray or I shouldn't pray. That's rubbish.

We need to be people who pray for God to be working powerfully in us and in this world. we need to change and the world needs to change and only God can do it.
So we need to ask. But why did Paul pray? Why should we pray? Verse 12 We pray this so 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.
So that the name of Jesus would be glorified in us and we in him. Amazingly it's not just when Jesus comes back that he will be glorified in his people but in fact that process begins now it's already begun when his people who live here when we live lives that are worthy of his calling when we're seeking to grow in faith and love when we act in the ways that we should act speak the things we should speak we're bringing glory honour fame to Jesus' name in our lives his name the phrase he gets a good name from us he gets the glory through our lives and amazingly when we do this we in turn will be seen as people being made more and more into the image of God through faith in Jesus we ourselves are glorified in him through union with him
God's people are seen in their true humanness as the image of God life as it is meant to be can be seen through lives lived for Jesus but it's all by grace look at the second part of verse 12 according to the grace grace of who of our God God and the Lord Jesus Christ we need the Lord's help to glorify his name and so we need to pray for his grace and help the grace of our Lord of our God so we began by thinking about whether God is fair and God's word is very clear that who God is and what God does is just and fair and right for all of time and we can give thanks for God's work we can rest in that justice of God and in his work and be praying for the work that God is doing in this world in closing listen to the words of Deuteronomy chapter 32 verses 4 and 5 the song we sang earlier is based on these words
[39:07] I will proclaim the name of the Lord oh praise the greatness of our God he is the rock his works are perfect and all his ways are just a faithful God who does no wrong upright and just is he father we thank you for your word I pray that you would give us an insight and understanding as we deal with things that are very difficult to swallow as we look at the reality and truth of what your word says Lord we thank you for all that you are doing in us in our lives Lord we thank you that you are fair that our very beings cry for justice and that is who you are and Lord thank you that through your fairness you have provided a way in

Jesus to be safe through faith in the Lord Jesus and Lord we pray now for your continued work for work in our lives for work in the lives of our friends and family who don't know you for work in our schools in our works that people would see you and that you would be glorified in us Lord we thank you for your precious word please let us always be in us and learning from us for your glory Amen to our find Amen to our people photos van with parents and■ 10 wives to our children to their children in learn well and about are in nature themselves it areffective going to our mad

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