

The Judgement

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Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 16th of February 2003. The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled The Judgment and is based on 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 3 to 10.

The little bits of paper that you have with you is twofold purpose tonight. One is that you have a chance to be able to write questions. Last week we gave you opportunity at the end of the service if you had any questions that you would write them down and they would be passed on to me and then I would try to answer them.

So tonight it's the same thing. During the sermon if something comes to your mind that you think might be a good thing to ask and you don't have the opportunity you might want to write that down. But also what we want to do at the end is we're going to just try and get you to try and memorise or be able to communicate to the person next to you the three steps thus far.

So you might have to pay attention tonight. Let me just answer the two questions that I had from last week. The first one was asking about the question of when we look around we see all these different churches.

If you remember, sorry for those who weren't here, we're talking about possessions and the way that we use our money and that we're looking at that whole area in terms of being an area where we can be very sinful in that we become very attracted to wealth and possessions.

[1 : 30] And the question was, well when we look at other churches we see some churches struggling with money and we see inequality amongst Christians and the question was can we do something about this? And I guess my response to it is is that the problem with sin is not just out there in the world.

As Christians we also struggle with sin and we do need to be rebuked and we do need to be continually being pressed to think about how we use our money both here in the church amongst each other and about other churches outside as well.

The second question was well how do I in fact actually use my money? How do I use my money generously other than just offering it up to God in prayer? Well I guess that really depends on you, your situation and I guess the money that you have.

It would be very easy for me to say right you must give 10%, you must give it to these mission organisations, you must only have three chairs not five because you don't need five. It would be easy for me to give you all these rules and regulations.

But the Bible in the New Testament in particular tells us to be generous. So stop and reflect. Are you generous with your possessions and money? The other thing that I guess I made the point last week was the fact of is it attractive to you?

[2 : 53] The whole area of working and money and possessions, is that your God? Is that what you serve? And I guess you're the one who needs to answer that. Well as we start tonight let me pray.

Father we do indeed thank you for your word that we may learn more about you. Father we pray that you will open our ears and our hearts to what you are saying. And Father we may relive our lives in accordance with that.

We pray this in your son's name. Amen. Well what if you're given a bit of Play-Doh and you made yourself a creature?

There he is. He's got two eyes there for those who can't see in the back and a nose. And you've made this lovely creature. But all of a sudden your creature comes to life. Just comes to life. It's fantastic. It's great. You've got this creature alive that you've made. But the problem is this creature looks at you and decides he wants nothing to do with you. He's got other things in mind that it wants to do.

[3 : 56] So you go to touch it and it slaps you on the hand. It bites you on the finger. It runs away. It spits its tongue out at you. What would you do to your bit of Play-Doh? Shotguns.

There was a shotgun answer there. Let me show you what I had on a video here. Let me show you Estado. Let me show you what I have to do and listen to the woman.

It's so hard when you see me and say when I do do that Hey, does it ever make you wonder what's on my mind?

I was only ever running back to your side I never cried, I just watched my life go by It's just a pack of lines, cause you're leaving me behind After this song is there nothing I'll keep Oh, I can't shout, you'll pretend you're falling asleep I live a lie, yeah, I believe in that you're my life It's just a waste of time, cause you're leaving me behind

Hey, there's not a cloud in the sky It's as blue as your goodbye And I thought that it would rain On a day like today Hey, there's not a cloud in sight It's as blue as your blue goodbye And I thought...

[6 : 25] What would you do? It was interesting talking to the kids where I played that in a school And they say, oh, I'd rip its arm off I'd put it into a cage so that it would learn to obey me I'd start all over again Two weeks ago we started our course on two ways to live And now let's see if this technology works This is good Two weeks ago we looked at the fact that God is the loving ruler of the world He made the world He made us rulers of the world under Him And we can see that by the picture there There we see God as the crown Over His world as ruler And us underneath Him ruling the world under Him And the Bible verse that sums this up best is You are worthy, O Lord and God To receive glory and honour and power For you created all things

And by your will they were created and have their being Then last week we looked at the fact Oh dear No, don't There we go No, hang on Sorry, two weeks ago we looked at the question But is that the way it is now?

And last week we looked at the fact That we all reject the rule of God All of us We try to run our own life the way that we want to Without Him And you can see that there by the little crown on our own head Rather than God's head The reality is We fail to reveal ourselves Society or the world by our rebellion We make a terrible mess How does the Bible put it?

There was no one Oh Can we go back to that one? One more That's it There is no one righteous Not even one There is no one who understands No one who seeks God All have turned away Oh, come on Is it working now?

What will God do about this rebellion? What will God do about our rebellion? If you open up your Bibles We are going to look at that In the context of Paul writing his letter To the Thessalonians The Thessalonians was a church That was set up by Paul himself It was a very important town Thessalonica It was very important It was established about 300 years before Jesus It was a very important place Because it had a deep anchorage Which meant that lots of ships could come in there It was sheltered But not only that It was a great trading route Many of the great trading routes Came through Thessalonica There were many great resources around It was one of those cities That was very important Paul recognised this And he plants a church there We see in Acts 17 He arrives And he starts proclaiming to the city About Christ Well there are many that do turn to him But he stirs up a great tension

[9 : 43] The government and the leaders Want nothing to do with him And his message And so they catch Jason Who's been looking after Paul and Silas And they bring him before the council And they threaten him Well Paul's life is in great danger And he flees But he has established this church It became the Christian centre For the mission in Macedonia It was very important That Paul protect his interests there And keep on encouraging them So he writes the letters Of the Thessalonians One and two Thessalonians In particular our letter Letter number two The second letter of Thessalonians He's writing about two particular issues One issue is Is that the Thessalonians Have false teaching Coming around them About when Christ would come again And the second area was That many of them were idlers Sitting around doing nothing Let's have a look at our letter today

In verse three Like many other Paul's letters He starts with a thanksgiving Let me read verses three and four We must always give thanks to God For you Brothers and sisters As it is right Because your faith Is growing abundantly And love of everyone of you For one another Is increasing Therefore we ourselves Boast of you Among the churches of God For your steadfastness And faith During all your persecutions And afflictions That you're enduring Paul starts by giving thanks to God He thanks God The way that God Is working in this church Two things in particular The way their

faith is growing And secondly The way that their love Is growing for each other Paul thanks God for this But then he goes on In verse four To say that he is So encouraged by them That he starts boasting To all the other churches He boasts about the fact That they have For their steadfastness In faith Particularly in the face Of persecution Now I have not come under Great persecution in my life

I'm grateful for that But it was interesting Talking Peter At the men's breakfast Speaking about What it was like in Nigeria And he spoke about Some of the The persecution And the affliction That happens there In Nigeria And Jacob spoke about it When he was here Last year How you could be stoned For being a Christian Killed Spat upon Having the government Against you I find it very hard To imagine Sitting here In Melbourne Feeling very comfortable But the church At Thessalonica It was under Great persecution Yet they continued They survived And so Paul continues To encourage them And write this letter In verses five Through to ten Which is the main part That I want to look at Tonight He expands his thoughts On this persecution And he also looks at The way that they are To endure But also Their destiny Of both them And their persecutors Let me read verse five This is evidence Of the righteous Judgment of God And is intended To make you worthy Of the kingdom of God For which you are Also suffering Also suffering Paul starts At the beginning Of this By saying That Starts by talking About this suffering That they are Undergoing This persecution And he describes it As God's righteous Judgment The righteous Judgment of God Now this seems A little bit difficult How can The righteous Judgment of God Be seen In their Persecution It's difficult To understand We always understand That persecution Is evil And that we want To avoid it As Christians We want to avoid it But the New Testament Gives us a different Perspective That God allows us

To undergo persecution And suffering That God allows These things To happen to us So that it may Produce character That it may Refine our faith And as we see There in verse five Make us worthy Of the kingdom Some difficult Words to hear In verses six And seven He goes on To talk more About his Just judgment What is his Just judgment Let me read Verse six And seven For it is indeed Just of God To repay With affliction Those who afflict You And to give Relief to the Afflicted As well To us When the Lord Jesus is revealed From heaven With his mighty Angels He says there In verse six And seven He starts talking About God's Judgment And we see it In two ways He will repay Affliction On those Who afflict Them God will Punish The second Thing is there We see that God will bring Relief To the afflicted These are the

[14 : 47] Two sides That we see here In this verse Of God's Just judgment So let me Make the first Point tonight About the Question What will God Do about this Rebellion The first Point that I Want to make Is God Will punish Evil doers Paul makes it Very clear Here He will Afflict Bring affliction On those who Afflict The Christians At Thessalonica Well that's the First thing That I want to Say from these Verses The second Thing is About what Will God Do about Evil Is we see That God's judgment Is an aspect Of his character Have a look There in verse Five The way that It describes God The righteous Judgment of God In verse Six Indeed Just of God Here we see That God Is righteous That his Judgments are Righteous That God Is just When we start

Thinking about This whole area Of wrath and Judgment from God We must remember That it comes From his Character The fact that He is Infantly Holy The fact that He is Infantly Just That he is Righteous And pure We must Remember that This is a part Of God's Character God is not A God who Is irrational Capricious Arbitrary Malicious Spiteful His wrath And anger His judgment Is not like Human Judgment Or wrath It is a Divine Wrath He is a Judge Who judges Justly Well then My first Two points God will Punish Secondly It's a part Of his Character Because of His infinite Holiness And justness The third Point I want To make Is Is the third Point that's Made here Is when Will this Occur When will God's Judgment Happen Look there At the End Sorry In verse Seven In flaming Fire Inflicting At the End of Verse Six There And to Give Relief To the Afflict As well To us When the Lord Jesus Is revealed From heaven With his Mighty Angels In flaming Fire When will Jesus When will God bring About judgment When Jesus Is revealed When Jesus Is revealed In power It will Happen This is an Important Affirmation For the Church There They're Living in A culture Where there Are many Gods And temples To other Foreign Gods They're Speaking About Jesus And God Who seems To be Not seen These words Would have Been greatly Encouraging Jesus Will be Revealed One day What appears To be unseen Will be seen And made Clear Jesus Is not Jesus May be Hidden But he Is not Absent Notice Also The way That Is when Jesus Comes From Heaven The way That It's The time When judgment Will happen Is when Jesus Comes From

Heaven Just to Pick up A little Point Here It's a Place Of Authority In Heaven Jesus Comes In Authority This is Picked Up in The second Part There Where he Comes In Blazing Fire He Comes With His Mighty Angels He Comes With Great Authority When Will God's Judgment Occur When Christ Is Revealed In Power We Move On To Verse Eight There We See The Purpose Of This Powerful Judgment Of God Inflicting Vengeance On Those Who Do Not Know God And On Those Who Do Not Obey The Gospel Of Our Lord Jesus What

Is The Purpose Of God's Judgment To Inflict Vengeance To Punish But Notice Who The Judgment Is Upon Is Upon Those Who Do Not Know God Well It's Very Easy To Say Well We All Know A Little Bit About God You Know We All Sort Of Trust In God But It's Not Just The Mere Failure To Recognize His Existence That There Is A God But It's Also The Rejection Of The Way That He Chooses To Reveal Himself The Second Part There We See That God's Judgment Is For Those Who Do Not Obey The Gospel Of Our Lord Jesus The Way That God Has Revealed Himself That Is Who This Judgment Comes Upon Well Verse Nine Goes On To Talk About And Describe This Judgment This Vengeance Let Me Read Verse Nine These

[19 : 50] Will Suffer The Punishment Of Eternal Destruction Separated From The Presence Of The Lord Of The Lord And From The Glory Of His Might They Will Be Punished They Will Have To Pay The Consequences And How Will They Pay The Consequences It Is Described Here As Everlasting Destruction The Duration Everlasting Eternal A Conscious Eternal Torment What a Terrible State A Terrible Terrible State Many Throughout History Have Found This Concept Of An Eternal Conscious Torment Of Punishment Unbearable They Cannot Reconcile This With God They Find It Just Incomprehensible

That God Should Act Like This So Instead Of Trying To Work Out What The Bible Has To Say They Water The Bible's Message Down One Of The Groups At The Moment That Is Doing This Is A Group Who Believe In Annihilation They Twist The Bible's Passages To Say That In The End Those Who Are Under God's Punishment Will Be Annihilated Sure They'll Be There On The Judgment Day And They Will Be Punished In Hell But After A Certain Time They Will Be Annihilated They Base This On Many Different Things They Look At The Way The Bible Speaks Of Destruction And So When The Bible Speaks Of Destruction They Automatically Think That It's Total Destruction They Talk About The Image Of Fire And The Way That Fire Devours Utterly They Look At The

Way The Bible Speaks About An Age And An Age Can Be Just A Short Time They Talk About That Punishment The Punishment Even Being Annihilated Well It's Still For Eternal They Still Being Punished For Eternal They Find It Very Difficult They Cannot Bring The Doctrine Of The Love Of God With The Idea Of Eternal Hell Of Conscious Torment They Cannot Believe That It Is Fair That Someone Would Undergo Such Punishment For So Long They Work So Hard At It Trying To Water Down The Bible's Message They Twist Scripture They Ignore Parts Of It They Have A Weakened Understanding Of God's Holiness God Is An Infinitely Holy God They

Also Have A Weakened Weakened Understanding Of Sin They Don't Think That That Sin Is As Depraved As It Is They Take The Edge Of The Severity Of God's Divine Judgment Off Yet As We Read Through Jesus Teaching It's What Jesus Taught It's What Paul Taught As We See In The Next Verse We See There The Way That It Also Talks About The Way That God Will Separate Be Separated From Them What's The Point Of God's Separation If They're Going To Be Annihilated Anyhow The New Testament Describes This Torment In Many Different Ways Let Me Read A Few To You In Matthew 3 Unquenchable Fire Matthew 13 A Fiery Furnace Jude

Verse 13 The Blackest Darkness That Has Ever Been Reserved Forever Revelation 21 A Lake Of Burning Sulfur Matthew 8 Characterizes It As That Of Weeping And Gnashing Of Teeth Mark 9 Speaks Of It As A Worm That Does Not Die And A Fire That Is Not Quenched In 2 Peter It Is Those Who Are Condemned To Dungeons And Bound By Everlasting Chains And One Of The Most Horrific Scenes Depicted In The Bible Comes From Revelation 14 Let Me Read Then Another Angel Came Out Of The Temple In Heaven And He Too Had A Sharp Sickle Then Another Angel Came Out From The Altar The Angel Had Authority Over Fire And He Called With A Loud Voice To Him Slug Same

[24 : 56] AMA aggregation ■ Came Passing over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth and he threw it into a great winepress of the wrath of God.

And the winepress was trodden outside the city and blood flowed from the winepress as high as a horse's bridle for a distance of about 200 miles.

In the second part of the verse there we see that it is not just eternal destruction but it's also separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

Here we see where it talks about the fact that God gives what they want. We saw in our first talk that God is the one who gives every good thing.

He is the source of all light and pleasure and friendship. He sustains everyone. God gives all these good things. And in our rebellion against God we say go away.

[26 : 11] I don't want you to tell me what to do. Leave me alone. And this is what God does. To be cut off from him means death and hell.

God's judgment against rebels is an everlasting godless death. God gives them what they want.

You want to be separated from God and his goodness?

You will be. For eternity. To give some balance to this it may appear that this whole thing is passive.

That God just sits there and lets them have what they want. God's anger is not just a passive anger.

He is a God who is angry at sin and also the sinner. We have all heard the cliché God hates the sin but loves the sinner. Well that's half true.

[27 : 13] Well that's half true. Yes God does hate the sin and God does have love for us but let us not be too quick to force our sin from ourselves.

God hates sin but the Bible also says that God hates the sinner. There was a sermon that I was reading by Jonathan Edwards and the whole sermon really picked up this picture of God and his anger towards sinners.

He spoke of sinners being a loathsome venomous hideous creature. The description is just incredible the way that he describes it.

I was going to read it but I thought better of it. But don't be deceived. God hates sin and the sinner.

Yet at the same point God seeks out their salvation. God seeks out in love to bring them back. We'll speak more of this tension between God's love and God's wrath.

[28 : 34] A little bit today but a little bit next week also. Well Paul finishes off this section in verses 10 through to 12. He speaks of the glory and the honour that all believers will give to Jesus.

They'll give it to him because of his execution of his judgment on that day. And then in verses 11 and 12 he then informs them of his prayer for them.

His prayer that they will continue to grow and not give up. when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marvelled on that day among all who have believed because our testimony to you was believed.

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

These are very difficult words that we've been looking at tonight. Paul writes these words to the Thessalonians to encourage them to encourage them in the face of persecution to ensure them that justice will be done.

[29 : 50] But he also does it gives his teaching to correct some of the false teaching of the day.

There was a group called the Epicureans that claimed that there would be no final judgment.

It had been a delay already therefore it wouldn't come. But the rest of the book speaks on that later on. Paul speaks out against this.

Judgment will come and it will be final. Well let me make a few points to conclude. The first thing that I want to talk about the first thing I want to state here is is that I think that our language to describe the horror of this state is very inadequate.

Most of our thinking has been shaped by pictures by the Simpsons by so many different things our picture of hell. There was a very godly lecturer at the theological college that I attended and he was speaking on the issue of hell and its nature.

We asked him a few more questions and tried to push him on what it was like and he became very agitated and a little teary and he said that it was not good to dwell on.

[31 : 13] Such was the horror. Such is the inadequate way of being able to describe the full picture of hell.

He felt so weighed down by it that he would not speak about it. Even the way the Bible describes it it doesn't go in full detail. It gives us just little glimpses.

Our language and our pictures the things that we have in our mind are inadequate to state the horror of this state. Feel the seriousness of this.

the seriousness of sin. Last week I spoke of the seriousness of sin. Feel its weight tonight. See the way that God views sin.

A minister was asked in Sydney he looked when he saw all the people walking around how he felt about that and he said he just couldn't allow himself to do it.

[32 : 20] he could not bear the thought of thinking of these people the many people that were around him and where they would go. Feel the weight of it.

Eternal conscious torment. It is a state that cannot be brought back from. It is permanent.

It is irrevocable. there is no second opportunity to escape from it. So serious is sin and God's wrath that he had to send Jesus to take the punishment for us.

That he had to send his only son to take the punishment. You see this is where God's love and his wrath meet. How do we reconcile this God of love and this God of wrath?

We see it most clearly in the cross but more of that next week. Let me just say we need to be very careful the way that we read scripture.

[33 : 29] It is important that we remain faithful to scripture even to the hard parts of scripture. We must not minimize it. We must not take away the awfulness of the punishment that awaits there for those who are untouched by God's redeeming grace.

We must read God's word and not water it down. We must take it seriously. If you do not know Jesus and you do not know that you are saved, can I say there is a God who does love you, who reaches out to you.

Turn to Jesus. For those of us who know of Jesus and are living in sin, may tonight affect our behaviour.

May we feel the weight of God's wrath. For those of us here who know these things, may it motivate us to go and tell others of the good news of Christ.

Father, we do pray that you help us to come to a clear understanding of your wrath. Father, we pray that it may impact us in our lives, that we may bring you honour and glory in all that we do.

[34 : 54] Amen.