

Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan

November 10, 2013

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

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.

Complacency sometimes gets people into trouble. How so? I would imagine you've seen the trouble it causes your favorite sports team. Your favorite sports team races out to a big lead. Everything they do goes right. Everything their opponent is doing goes wrong. It looks like the lead is insurmountable. It looks like your team can't be beat. You start to relax and look forward to the victory celebration. You become complacent since victory is almost guaranteed.

The players on the team sense it too. They think nothing can go wrong. It is their day. They can relax. However, the other team doesn't see it this way. They know they still have a chance because it is early in the game. They start to chip away, chip away, chip away and suddenly before you realize what has happened the other team has the ball. They are down by a point with a chance to score and win the game. The victory you were celebrating and expecting is now in doubt.

Big leads aren't the only things which make us complacent. Time can make us complacent too. Maybe it is the amount of time we need to sign up for something like the Youth Rally next summer. We can think to ourselves that early bird registration starts in three months and we have until the end of March to get the discount. We don't need to be concerned about fund raising or planning because it is so far away. But what could easily happen? We don't get signed up until after April 1 and miss the discount.

We can get complacent at work too. We can think we have plenty of time to get something done. We can coast and take our intensity down a bit. Yet, what happens when we do this? We find ourselves scrambling to get things done since we took it too easy. Get the picture? Complacency is something which is common to everyone. It produces smug self-satisfaction which can get us in trouble. It happens if you are an athlete, fan, a kid going to a youth rally or someone working on a project.

Complacency is something which troubles us in everyday lives. We get and understand this fact. But what about our spiritual lives? Is complacency something which we need to guard against? Is it something we need to fight against? Our lessons today talk about Judgment Day. Judgment Day is a day which doesn't feel like it is going to happen anytime soon. Today looks and feels like yesterday. Yesterday feels like the day before and on and on and on. Life becomes one big blur of sameness.

What happens when all the days feel the same? It feels like Judgment Day will never come. It makes us complacent. How does God combat this feeling? How does he keep us sharp and on the lookout for Judgment Day? **"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."**

God keeps us sharp and focused spiritually by allowing troubles to come into our lives. He knows what happens when we become complacent. He knows we get lazy in our spiritual lives. He knows we become complacent when everything is going right for us. He knows we start looking to ourselves and our abilities rather than to him and his love. He knows complacent Christians are weak and easy targets for Satan.

God allows troubles into our lives to bring us closer to him because they are signs we really are God's children. He uses earthly troubles to remind us that earth isn't our home. Heaven is our own home. Did

you catch this promise in our reading? It says, **“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.”**

Paul tells us our troubles are evidence that God’s judgment is right. Our troubles and sufferings are signs we are worthy of God’s kingdom. I was recently talking with someone who picked up on this idea about suffering. This individual noticed God’s children have always been under attack and persecuted. We can look at what happened in the Old Testament. God’s prophets were murdered and killed by their own leaders during Old Testament times.

Jesus was killed by people who persecuted him. The early church was attacked and subject to bloody persecution. We can look at our world today and see times haven’t changed. Christians all over the world are suffering because of persecution. Christians in Egypt and Syria are being attacked by Muslim extremists. Christian churches in Pakistan are being bombed. Christians are being persecuted and driven out of Iraq.

What about Christians in America? Will we be subject to persecution? Yes. We will be subject to persecution. We might not be killed, but people will mock us. They will make fun of us. They will try and get us fired. They will try and give us a bad name. They will call us bigoted and intolerant when we say sexual relations are reserved for a married man and woman. They will call us stupid because we believe God created the world in six days.

Satan won’t let persecution be the only attack we face. He will appeal to our sinful nature. He will tell us that if God loves us he would make things easy here on earth. He will tell us God could stop our problems if wanted to, but he doesn’t. Why? Satan will give us three options. The first option he will give us is that God doesn’t like us. The second option is God enjoys laughing at our troubles. The third option is God can’t stop our problems because he isn’t strong enough.

Our sinful nature listens to this and agrees. It looks at the world and thinks it is a good and comfortable place. It reasons that if God doesn’t do anything about our troubles then he must not care what happens here. Besides, if he is a loving God he won’t punish us later because he didn’t stop our troubles when we were close to him. Our sinful nature fights to make us complacent in this world and kill off our faith.

How can we combat against this complacent attitude? God needs to sharpen our focus spiritually. He needs to allow even more troubles to shake us out our complacent attitude. These troubles will remind us of the truth Paul promises us. **“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

majesty of his power 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.”

Paul promises trouble and sorrow are part of a Christian’s life here on earth. They are something we can expect because we live in a sinful world. However, it doesn’t mean it will last forever. Paul assures us, **“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 majesty of his power.”**

God promises he will punish the unbelievers who have persecuted his church. Judgment Day will not be a fun experience for them. He will do away with them forever. They won’t have a second chance. They won’t be able to bargain for their lives. They will be made to suffer because they rejected him. What about us? What will happen for us on Judgment Day? **“God is just. (He will) give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well because you believed our testimony to you.”**

What was the testimony Paul and his companions brought to us? They told us about Jesus Christ crucified for our sins. Paul’s testimony assures us we are God’s forgiven children because Jesus died to take away our sins. We are fully forgiven because God has declared us not guilty for Jesus sake. This forgiveness is not cheap. It is hard earned since it took Jesus’ blood, sweat and tears to earn it for us.

What is the best part about this forgiveness? We don’t need to try and earn it because it is God’s free gift to us. It will cause us to marvel on Judgment Day, **“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.”** Does this truth mean we can rest easy and not worry? Yes. Does this truth mean we can become complacent and lazy in our faith? No.

God will allow troubles to come into our lives to help us combat complacency. These troubles which come as a result of our faith assure us we are really God’s children. Why? **“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.”** They assure us we are worthy of God’s kingdom because we haven’t become complacent in our faith. Amen.