

## 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/2thess/2thess-1/2-thessalonians-16-10/>

*The Thessalonians should bear in mind that God will properly repay those who are attacking them. Eventually, there will be relief and peace for believers when Jesus comes back to earth and deals out judgement: rewards to the faithful and recompense to unbelievers.*

Paul continues his explanation about how God will reward believers for enduring suffering: *For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well.* It seems Paul is saying that God is orchestrating circumstances in such a way as to allow each person to show their true colors, so that everyone gets their just due. In this case, *those who afflict* the Thessalonians are going to be repaid with *affliction*, and the Thessalonians who are suffering for the name of Christ will receive *relief*, just as Paul and his companions expect to receive *relief*.

Many places in scripture make clear that God's wrath is poured out upon those who choose sin by allowing them to get what they want. God gives them over to their own desires, to become enslaved/addicted to their own passions (as in Romans 1:24,26,28; James 1:14-15). In the case of the Thessalonians' abusers, God will judge them in a way similar to how they have persecuted the Thessalonians. *God will repay with affliction those who afflicted the Thessalonians.*

It seems that God's justice most often falls into one of these two categories:

1. allowing people to choose self-destructive consequences, or
2. visiting the same harm upon abusers that they wished to visit upon others. This fits the principle Jesus spoke in His Sermon on the Mount:

"For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."  
(Matthew 7:2)

God can dispatch justice at any time, but is certain to judge the earth and all that is in it after Jesus returns, which Paul will address in greater detail in Chapter 2. The *relief* in righteous judgement that He will bring with Him will certainly come *when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.*

The *flaming fire* of Jesus' presence represents God as the judge of the world. God is often described as fiery, "for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29, Deuteronomy 4:24). God's judgment is often represented by fire (1 Corinthians 3:10-17; Isaiah 66:15-16; Hebrews 10:26-27; 2 Peter 3:7). God's judgement fire will consume the afflictors, His adversaries, but not His people (Hebrews 10:26-27). For God's people, His judgment fire will burn away the unrighteous work for those who come into His presence to receive rewards for deeds done while living upon this earth (2 Corinthians 5:10). As Paul told the Corinthian believers, speaking of the Judgement Seat of Christ:

“each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

(1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

The fire described in 1 Corinthians is likely the fire of Jesus’ presence (Daniel 7:9-10; Revelation 22:5).

In this life, those who seek comfort by avoiding persecution instead of enduring persecution as a faithful and courageous witness will still be saved from eternal destruction; God will never reject His children, and will always be their inheritance (Romans 8:17a). However, they will experience destruction of all or part of their inheritance reward (Colossians 3:23; 2 John 1:8). They will be in heaven, but not enter the kingdom and fully gain its benefits (both now as well as in the new earth).

The path to this greatest of rewards is to follow God’s will, which Paul made clear is for our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Paul detailed what sanctification looks like in both letters to the Thessalonians:

1. Sexual purity—serve rather than exploit (1 Thessalonians 4:3)
2. Hard work, “If you don’t work, you don’t eat” (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:10)
3. Judge yourself, not others (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12)

Each of these paths brings difficulty while living in this world. Serving others is inevitably “rewarded” by being offered more opportunities to serve. Fulfilling responsibilities will typically bring even greater responsibility. Telling the truth often brings rejection. We can either embrace this life as a proving ground for a great inheritance, or squander it as Esau squandered his inheritance, preferring instead a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:31-34; Hebrews 12:16-17). This biblical picture demonstrates the importance of having the discipline to wait for a greater blessing later. Esau enjoyed his stew, but it was only a momentary pleasure. Years later when it was time to assume the mantle as leader of his family, he was passed over, having sold his birthright. In the same manner, we can make choices that bring momentary pleasure and comfort in this brief life, a comparative wisp of vapor (James 4:14), and lose the reward of sharing Christ’s throne for having overcome the difficulties of this world, as faithful witnesses (Revelation 3:21).

When Jesus returns, He *will be revealed from heaven*. This is consistent with what the angels told the disciples after Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives, telling them:

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”  
(Acts 1:11)

When Jesus returns to earth, He will set foot on the Mount of Olives again, and this time the Mount will split in two (Zachariah 14:4).

When Jesus returns, He will return *with His mighty angels*. The word translated *angels* here means “messengers.” It could refer here to heavenly angels, as seems to be the case in most instances when the word occurs in scripture. If this is the case, it seems the armies of Revelation 19:14 that accompany Jesus when He returns to earth include heavenly angels. It could also be that this term could include saints of God who return with Him.

When Jesus returns, He will begin *dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*. The word *obey* is translated from the Greek “hypakouō,” which means “listen to,” so these are unbelievers who did not listen to the *gospel of our Lord Jesus*, they rejected the message and the call to believe in Him. They did not receive the free gift of eternal salvation. Using the picture of John 3, they refused to “look at the snake on the pole” and therefore chose death (John 3:14-15).

*These people who do not believe in Jesus will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*. The “lake of fire” is the ultimate destination for those who reject the free gift of God to be fully forgiven based on the death and resurrection of Jesus (Revelation 20:15). It is the lake of fire into which both death and Hades will be thrown, as well as the devil and his angels, along with the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:20; 20:10; 20:14).

Thankfully, Jesus paid the way for us to avoid this terrible fate. We can avoid the lake of fire and choose heaven as our eternal home by recognizing that we face death because of the poison of sin, and have enough faith to look upon Jesus, hoping to be delivered (John 3:14-15).

For believers, this return of Christ will be a wonderful moment, especially in light of the suffering that we can overcome, *when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed*.

Paul is trying to motivate the Thessalonians to continue to withstand the persecution they are experiencing. God will judge those who persecute believers; we just have to wait, but it will happen. Jesus is a flaming fire of judgement. But when Jesus returns to earth, *He comes to be glorified*. And this glorification will be *in His saints*. His people that have faithfully endured will apparently be a part of Jesus’s glory. “Glory” (Greek “doxa”) means something or someone’s essence is being observed truly (1 Corinthians 15:40-41). Paul says something similar with respect to his own reward in the presence of Jesus in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”  
(1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)

It seems a substantial reward in heaven will be the joy of seeing others who have succeeded in being faithful witnesses, in particular those whom we have mentored along the way. In the case of both Jesus and Paul, there seems to be a sense of parental pride in the spiritual accomplishments of their children.

Apparently believers will be given new eyes to see Jesus in a new way, perhaps because they have been resurrected with new bodies, for Jesus will *be marveled at among all who have believed*. The phrase *all who have believed* indicates that this is a reward that will be given to all believers. This makes sense, given that every believer will live forever in the presence of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>6</sup> For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,<sup>7</sup> and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,<sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,<sup>10</sup> when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.**