

# JESUS' RETURN BRINGS JUSTICE FOR EVERYONE

## THE APOSTLES CREED - Part 5

### Ben Rudolph

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Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you here this morning. Please turn in your Bibles to II Thessalonians Chapter 1 as that is where we are going to be today. We are going to be talking about the return of Jesus. Are you excited about that? Now the return of Jesus can involve two different things that normally we want to stay away from, because whenever we talk about the return of Jesus whether you have been a part of church for a long time or a short time, I think there are two kinds of things we want to avoid. The number one thing is confusion. I think a lot of times when it comes to the return of Jesus we have made it more complex than it really needs to be. I am not sure about you but I grew up in a church where there were charts on the wall that talked about Jesus coming back and the things He was going to do when it happened. And there were all these terms like pre-tribulation, post-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and dispensationalism and there was this confusion that comes along with the subject of the return of Jesus.

Now only do we have confusion but I think there is also a little bit of craziness that goes along with the return of Jesus. I mean the Christian crazy uncles of our faith are the date setters. Do you know what I am talking about? The people who say, *'Oh this is the date when Jesus is going to come back.'* This week there was a headline on the Christian Post, which is a website I go to every once in a while to get news that is going on in the Christian world. There was this guy on the Jim Bakker show, so take it with a grain of salt, and he predicted that there was going to be an asteroid that hit the earth I think in 2029, or something like that, and it was going to catapult the world into the tribulation.

And if your friends saw that who don't go to church you need to tell them not to pay any attention to that. So we have the confusion and we have these crazy date setters. So let's just kind of put all of that aside and let's just remember the clarity I think we need. Number one – every Christian believes that Jesus is going to come back someday, that there is going to be a bodily return of Jesus no matter if you are pre-millennial, amillennial, post millennial, pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation or post tribulation. Now I personally am pan-millennial. And what that means is *'whatever pans out, that is what I am.'* (Laughter.) Because we just don't know.

There are enough good godly Christian people that range all along the scale with when and how Jesus is going to come back, but we can get so caught up on the when and the how of His return that we forget really why is He coming back. And if He is coming back what significance is His return to my life today. I mean is Jesus' return just something we kind of put in our front pocket and say, *'Well, when it is time, it is time,'* or how should it have significance, how should it impact the way I live today?

There is a reason why all Christians believe in the return of Jesus. And that is because Jesus said He was coming back. He told us that He was coming back. In Acts Chapter 1 not only did Jesus say He was coming back, but the people that saw Him ascend into heaven and who gave eyewitness accounts of what they saw, they heard Him

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say He was coming back the same way. As Jesus is ascending there were angels there and they said just as Jesus ascended that He would return one day. So every Christian generation, every generation of followers of Jesus, that have ever lived on the face of this planet, whether you are American, Chinese, African or European, no matter where you live, or what culture you are a part of, or what government you are under, every generation from the time of Jesus' ascension has believed that the time has to be close for His return. Everyone believes the time has to be close.

My grandmother is 93 years old and every time I talk to her she always says, '*It has to be close. Jesus' return has to be close. Have you seen the news? It has to be close.*' And sometimes we can believe it is close and there is nothing wrong with believing it is imminent, because the return of Jesus is imminent, but we need to take a step back to try and understand why it is so important that it says in the credal statement He was going to return. What is the impact of that on our lives today? Why was it necessary to believe in this doctrine?

When it comes to the return of Jesus I want us to look at II Thessalonians Chapter 1. Now there are lots of passages we could have looked at. We could have looked at the end of Revelations, and I know some of you would have loved that because it is awesome, right? There is some crazy stuff in Revelations. Or we could have gone to II Peter Chapter 3, and we will visit some of those verses later. We could have gone to Matthew Chapter 24 and 25 which has Jesus' own words referring to His return.

But II Thessalonians is a passage that I believe God has led me to, and we will be reading in Chapter 1 this morning. Now I and II Thessalonians were letters written by the Apostle Paul to the church of Thessalonica. Really these are the first letters that Paul wrote that became Scripture. We believe that I Thessalonians was the first letter that Paul ever wrote that became a part of Scripture. So for Paul's experience in Thessalonica we need to go back to the book of Acts. And we see there that Paul goes to Thessalonica where he leads a few people to Christ. But other people don't like it and they are very antagonistic toward him. They stir up a crowd and they attack Paul and kick him out.

So what scholars and theologians believe based on the evidence we see in the book of Acts is Paul was in Thessalonica for no less than three weeks and probably no more than three months. Can you imagine going to a new city where there has never been a Christian and you establish a church in three weeks to three months and then you are gone. It is insane.

So Paul is writing the first letter and it is all about making sure their faith is established. And in every chapter of I Thessalonians and even in II Thessalonians there is a mention or a reference to the return of Jesus Christ. And this is one of the things that Paul is trying to emphasize to this new young church that is unsure theologically if they believe in the fullness of what the gospel is. And the fullness of what the gospel teaches is that Jesus will come back again.

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So let's look in II Thessalonians Chapter 1 and verses 3 through 12. It says: *“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.”*

So Paul has written them a letter and they have written back a letter to him and this is now his response to them. He said he loved hearing about the growth that is happening and the maturity of the followers. He loved hearing about the love they have for one another. But one of the things I want to point out is that the thing that Paul was most proud of was the way that they were steadfast in their faith even in the midst of the afflictions and persecutions. The persecutions that Paul experienced personally was still being experienced by this church. They were still being attacked, they were still being maligned, and they were still suffering, whether it was from loss of jobs, or even physical harm for following Jesus. This was their story.

Listen to what Paul says to comfort them in the midst of their afflictions in verse 5: *“This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God.”* Notice this is what he is saying, *‘Your persecution, your suffering, your afflictions, the things that you are experiencing are a result of the people around you seeing your holiness. They see your righteousness, they see your faith and it brings conviction on their lives to know that there is a different judge; there is a different king that you live under. And that is why you are experiencing persecution because just your presence is convicting and reminds them of the judgment that they will one day face.’* Isn't that fascinating?

Wonder why people don't like the name of Jesus in public? Wonder why they allow every other faith system into the schools but you cannot mention Christ? It is because the presence of Jesus brings judgment. Let's continue on in verse 5: *“This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering – since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power, 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.”*

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In this passage we have something that is declared very clearly, very prominently and that is when Jesus returns He will return to bring justice to this earth, to bring justice to humanity, to bring justice to creation. God is a God of justice. And here is the main point I want you to take away from today – Jesus' return will bring justice to everyone. Jesus' return means justice for everyone, and His justice is good.

Listen we all love talking about Jesus and some of the qualities and characteristics of God and His nature. We even sang about that this morning, rich worship, rich theology about God's holiness, goodness, power and love. We sing and we talk about those things and whenever we think about the kindness of God, and the goodness, power and love of God, we are all like, *'That is awesome.'* But how many times do we sing or we reflect upon the justice of God? It says there in verse 6, ***"God considers it just."*** And all throughout Scripture we see on display that God is a God of justice. He is a God of justice.

Now what does the justice of God mean? I think the best definition of God's justice is explained in verse 5. It says, ***"This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God."*** God's justice equals His righteous justice. Let's break up those two words a little bit to kind of understand what Paul means by this. Righteous is declaring something good or evil. It draws a line in the sand that says, *'Listen, this is what is good and this is what is evil.'* God established good and evil at the very creation of the world. We see this in the six days of creation because after God created something He called it 'good.' And later He called it 'very good.' He created a tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and when Adam and Eve took of that fruit it wasn't just because they were looking for something else to eat. No, what they were saying was, *'I want to be free of God's definition of good. I want to be in charge. I want to have the good life apart from God. I believe I can have an existence of goodness apart from the person and the presence of God Himself.'*

So when sin is at its root is when you and I want to be arbitrators, the judges, the kings, the authority to be able to call something good and to call something evil. And the righteous judgment of God is not only God being the one defining that line of good and evil, but also the judgment means the declaration of it. God doesn't just know what is good and evil, but He will one day divide it by putting everything good over here and everything evil over there. Jesus talked about this telling us when He came back He would divide the sheep and the goats, which is a reference to Ecclesiastes Chapter 34 when the same analogy is used. The whole point is when Jesus comes He will bring a dividing line to humanity. And the dividing line is going to do two things. It is going to be punishment for evil and reward for those who believe in Him. So Jesus' return will bring justice to everyone.

Let's talk about justice this morning. Let's talk about God's justice. Now I will be honest because this is uncomfortable for some of us. We don't like to talk about justice a lot because of how it makes us feel. Maybe it reminds us of our sin, but the

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reality is we cannot ignore it. So this morning we are going to look at the need for justice, we are going to look at the nature of justice and then we are going to look at our response to God's justice. That is the need for God's justice, the nature of God's justice and our response to God's justice

Here is something that Paul makes exceedingly clear, that God will one day punish evil with this righteous judgment that he talks about. Listen to what he says again in verse 6: "***Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you.***" And it says in verse 8: "***His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.***" And then in verse 9 it says: "***They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction.***" You see here these very clear terms where God is talking about punishing evil someday.

Listen that is a good thing, right? The idea of punishing evil is a very good thing because that is not just a God thing, it is a humanity thing. One of the greatest examples of the image of God and humanity is when we see evil in the world it bothers us. And it doesn't just bother us but we want to see justice. I mean how many times have you looked at the news this week and you shook your head and your heart broke? Over the last couple of weeks people talk about hearing over the news about that mother in California who murdered her children, or about the guy who killed his grandparents and the grandchildren. And we hear these stories of sex trafficking victims and it just breaks our heart. Week after week, day after day we hear these stories of evil. And it doesn't just break our hearts in sorrow; there is something inside of us that says, '*Something must be done. Something must be done against the evil in the world.*'

I love that they are having 90's night here. Jason and I were children of the 80's and 90's. When I was younger we had some really good action flicks. I am talking of Arnold Schwarzenegger's movies, and Sylvester Stallone, Steven Seagal, and Jean-Claude Van Damme movies. Do you know what I am talking about? I grew up with those movies and those guys. I don't know what they are acting in now, but when those guys were the main characters in these movies, every movie was the same. It went like this – there are some really bad dudes, and they are oppressing and they are hurting a bunch of nice, innocent people. But there is this tough guy that comes to town and he is going to make things right. And in every single movie, there is a montage at the end where there are just things exploding and people are just falling down dead everywhere. And what are you doing as you are sitting there? You are yelling, '*Get them.*'

Jean-Claud breaks someone's arm with his elbow and you are laughing and applauding. Are we sick? Why are we cheering about bones breaking? Why are we cheering about explosions and people being mowed down with machine guns? What is it inside of us that enjoys that? Do you know what it is? It is justice. In our own limited understanding of justice, when we see someone defeat evil and punish evil, we cheer. And God cheers as well. We should cheer the justice of God because God's justice is

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good. It is not just for the people who oppress, it is for the people who are being oppressed.

Look what it says in verse 7: “*and to grant relief to you who are afflicted.*” Then it says in verse 10: “*When He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.*” See God’s justice isn’t just about punishing evil; it isn’t just about giving relief, but it is a reward of what we are due because of our sins. God’s justice is good and we need His justice. Every single one of us needs His justice because we have all experienced injustice in our lives.

Some of you may have been treated badly at your workplace, others have been treated badly by a spouse or by a former spouse. Maybe you were treated badly by a friend. There are things that we experience in life both small and large. Maybe it happened at a bank, or at a grocery store or even with the deepest relationship that we have. We need to understand that when we are treated unfairly and we are treated unjustly one of the great comforts of the justice of God is knowing that God is the one who will bring vengeance. Verse 8 says: “*inflicting vengeance.*” We don’t have to be the one that carries that. We don’t have to be the one that is the arbitrator of vengeance; we can trust ourselves to God who judges justly.

Here is another thing – God’s justice shouldn’t just comfort us this morning, and some of you are going through some very difficult things right now. You are experiencing injustice and the comfort that God’s justice should bring you is very good and very true. But also God’s justice should confront us, because as much as we have experienced evil, and we have experienced sin against us, there is not a person in this world that is not also guilty of evil. We are all guilty of sin. When I think about people that want to define good and evil, every single one of us in this room have made the same offense before God. We have told God that we will be the one to define good and evil. In fact it might be the greatest sin of all. We might look at our lives and think, ‘*I haven’t really done anything that bad compared to other people.*’

I believe the greatest sin is the sin of rejecting the authority and the goodness of God when we want to be the one in charge so we get to define what is good and what is evil. And when we do that, we inherently will call evil things good. And when we call evil things good and we act out on that idea of goodness that we have created in our own minds, that is sin. That is an offense against God. And God’s justice reminds us that we deserve justice.

We deserve the justice of God, and yet that is why Jesus came. That is the good news, the good news is that you and I as much as we deserve the righteous judgment of God know that Jesus came first and foremost to be the person who could stand in the gap and say, ‘*I will receive the righteous judgment of God on myself for your sins, for your evil, for your offenses.*’ The justice of God is good, and we need it. We need it because we have been oppressed, and we need it because we ourselves have committed evil.

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Jesus is the one who stands in our place to absorb the wrath of God and to set us free so that we no longer have to face the justice of God. Now we can embrace it for all of its goodness. That is the need for justice and we all need the justice of God, and also the world needs the justice of God.

Let's talk next about the nature of justice. Here is the thing – how God applies His justice to the world is not how we would apply justice. If it was up to me to apply justice there are a lot of drivers around me whose cars would just flip over instantly. If I didn't like what they did, they would be soon out of my way. That is how I would execute justice so you wouldn't want me on the road executing justice on people. We have to understand that we have a skewed view of justice. We may have a sense of it, but it is God who has a perfect sense of it.

Here is something that we need to see - there are three parts to the nature of God's justice that I want us to see this morning, and each one of them confronts our understanding of how we would apply justice. Look in verse 7 again for the first one. It says: ***“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God.”*** So there is this idea of fire that is always present in the Scriptures when talking about the return of Jesus. The fire will be present.

So what is the big deal with fire? I mean does this mean that God is going to have a blow torch? What is this flaming fire all about? I think it explains two things. Keep your place in II Thessalonians and turn to II Peter Chapter 3 where Peter is talking about the return of Jesus. People have written him saying that it has been thirty years since Jesus left and Peter keeps on saying that He is going to come back. They are starting to doubt the Jesus returning thing.

Now it is almost 2,000 years later and He still hasn't returned. What do we do with that? Peter has a great explanation of that. We are not going to read the full text here but I want us to look at verse 10 specifically in II Peter Chapter 3. It says: ***“But the day of the Lord,”*** and the day of the Lord in both the Old Testament and the New Testament refers to the day when Jesus returns to bring justice to the earth. That is what it means in lots of books in the Old Testament when it talks about ‘the day of the Lord.’

***“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”*** Right there we can see this idea of fire again. And this fire talks about the completeness of God's justice. Here is what it means – it means that whatever evil is in the world will be burned up. The earth will be set on fire and the fire will purge the curse of sin. It will purge the evil that has been done to this planet, and to humanity. It is like when you heat up a rock to get the dross out of it so you can see the pure and precious metals in it, and that is exactly what God is going to do to our planet and to humanity.

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But fire is not only used to purge, it is use to bring light. And Peter says this in II Peter Chapter 3: “***And the works that are done on it will be exposed.***” We need to understand that in the complete justice of God there is no one who will be able to hide anything from Him. No one will be able to cover anything up. We are masters of covering up and hiding our sins because of our shame. But we need to understand that there will be a day that God will bring everything to light. Those people who are not under the blood of Jesus, those people who do not know God, who don't believe in the gospel or obey the gospel, those people who have not already taken care of their righteous judgment through the cross, they will face God.

We see in the book of Revelations Chapter 20 that there will be what is called ‘the great white throne of judgment.’ At that moment when Jesus returns and He sits up His throne, He will have books brought to Him and those books will be read, and every single human act on the face of the planet will be revealed. I don't know how long that is going to take, but it will probably be a pretty long time. Can you imagine you going through that because nothing will be hidden and everything will be exposed? This is the idea of the completeness of justice. It is also the completeness of our salvation because if Jesus' blood covers all our sins, and if we are in Christ, we never have to face the great white throne judgment. We never have to face a book with every single sin we have ever committed because Jesus already bought those sins and paid for them.

There is another book at the great white throne of judgment and it is the book of life. If your name is in the book of life, you won't face the great white throne of judgment. And this idea of fire, of coming in fire talks about the completeness of His justice. There is also something else it talks about and that is the eternalness of His justice. Look at verse 9 again: “***They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might.***” Listen, this is the part of this passage, the part of our faith that I don't like to talk about. I don't like talking about hell. I don't like talking about the punishment of eternal destruction. Some of you have no problem with that doctrine; you don't have any problem with hell. Maybe that is because you know people who need to be there.

But I think generally there is this tension that we all feel that if God is loving, God is good, then why would He send people to hell? And I have to be honest with you and tell you that I struggle with it as well. I struggle with the idea of a place of eternal torment and punishment. I struggle with that personally, and maybe it is because of my personality. But here is what I have to do – and what all of us have to do – we have to take the Word of God and make it our authority. Whether or not I want to believe in something or not, I can't twist and manipulate the Word of God and make it say something that it does not say. In fact I would say this – if anyone is clear about the idea of eternal judgment - it is Jesus. Jesus talks about the final judgment after He returns and He says this when talking about the punishment, “***And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.***” I can't twist that into anything else because Jesus said it.

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Jesus is my Lord and the Word of God is my authority so I must obey and I must conform my beliefs to the Word of God. I know that culturally it is hard for us to accept that. Maybe some of us grew up in a church and we heard a lot of hellfire and brimstone preaching. Independent Baptist fundamentalist preachers loved talking about hell. Have you ever been part of a church where they just couldn't wait to tell everyone about hell? And I think there is a danger that many times when we grew up in churches or we meet people who lead with hell that when it comes to telling others about trusting in Jesus there can be a problem. I love the book of Romans where Paul says in Chapter 2 verse 4: *"It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance."* It is the kindness of God.

I think many times we have swung so far on the pendulum that we lead with hell and we shouldn't do that because you can get a lot of people making decisions about Jesus, but they are not true disciples of Jesus when you lead with hell. I can't remember if I have shared this story before or not, but my dad was visiting somewhere and some guy picked him up from the airport. And this guy told my dad that they had just had this great revival with fifty kids accepting Jesus in their children's church a few weeks before. And my dad thought that was just awesome, so he asked him what happened. And the guy said he had dipped a Barbie doll in lighter fluid and then lit her on fire. He held the burning doll in front of the kids and said, *'This is what happens to you if you don't accept Jesus.'* He said that every kid came forward to accept Jesus, and it was a beautiful thing.

Now they came forward but I don't know if they came forward for Jesus. See, we have to be careful that we don't lead with hell, but in our response, in our reaction of not leading with hell, I think many of have just stopped talking about hell. We have stopped talking about the reality of a place of punishment. Sometimes it is our culture, sometimes it is our upbringing, but we just can't let our history determine what is truth.

I love what a famous apologist said when dealing in the western world. He said, *"I go to universities and preach across America and Europe and they always have a problem with God sending people to hell. When I go into the Middle East and I go to India and China they don't have a problem with God sending people to hell; they have a problem with God sending sinners to heaven."*

I think cultures have either a very strong sense of justice or they have a strong sense of grace. Western Christianity loves grace, grace is awesome and we can preach on grace every week. But while we don't like to talk about the justice of God there are places in the world where they love the justice of God and they have a hard time with God's grace. We all love the picture of Jesus that fits our perception of Him.

One of the first two Bibles I owned as a child had a picture on the cover of Jesus holding and petting a lamb. And this picture of Jesus has him looking like He just loved this lamb. It made me think He was so nice and kind and we all want a cuddly Jesus. My other Bible had a picture of Jesus sitting down with children all around Him. I love child friendly Jesus petting the lamb and sitting with children. I love that Jesus. But guess

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what, there is also a picture of Jesus in the book of Revelations where there is a sword coming out of His mouth. What do we do with that? I can't accept one without the other. I have to take the fullness of the revelation of who Jesus is and I have to conform my mind and my heart and my will to that revelation and not the other way around. We can't cherry pick the parts of Jesus that we want to worship and obey.

There is another thing that we see here in II Thessalonians. In verse 10 it says: ***“When He comes on that day.”*** Remember we talked about ‘the day of the Lord.’ The day of the Lord is when justice comes on that day. That means that the timing of God is different than our timing. Yes, I don't understand it all; there are times when I would say I think He needs to come back now because the world can't get any worse, the problems can't get any greater. But there is a reason why God has withheld His hand and Jesus has not returned.

If we go to II Peter Chapter 3 and verse 9 it says this: ***“The Lord is not slow to fulfil His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”*** There is a reason why He is withholding His coming back. Jesus is saying that He is withholding Himself because once He comes back that is it, that is the end, the door is shut, and no one else can repent, no one else can enter into a relationship with Him. That is when the final judgment happens, and His withholding Himself from coming back is not because He has forgotten the world or is oblivious to the evil; it is because He wants every single human being to have the opportunity to come to Him.

And the moment that the final count of those who come to know Jesus happens, that is when He will return, and not a second sooner. The reason why Jesus has not returned yet is because His timing is perfect. The nature of His justice is complete. It is perfect in timing and it is eternal. So we must look at the nature of His justice and we must always conform ourselves to His definition and His boundaries of what it is and submit ourselves to that.

So that leads us to our third point and that is our response to justice. What do we do with the reality that God is just? The return of Jesus will happen and He will judge the living and the dead. What does that mean for us today? Let's look again in II Peter Chapter 3 and verse 11 talking about the return of Jesus. It says: ***“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness.”*** In light of the return of Jesus, how should we now live?

Now go back to II Thessalonians Chapter 1 and verse 11 where Paul says: ***“To this end.”*** To the reality of His return, to the reality of His vengeance, to the reality of His righteous judgment, to the reality that He is going to come one day not to just judge evil but to rescue the righteous. ***“To this end,”*** what does this mean for us today? ***“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power, so that the***

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*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.”*

There is a response to His justice that we have to understand. And the first response we must make is this – repent. Remember that I said we were all in need of His justice and we are also in need of salvation from that righteous judgment if we don't want to suffer eternal punishment for our sins. And to repent doesn't just mean feeling bad for your sins, to repent means to turn. So there is only one way to escape the righteous judgment and vengeance of God and that is to turn from our sins, turn from our own sense of what is good and what is evil, and accepting Jesus' sacrifice as the means by which He has taken that righteous judgment from us.

If you are sitting here this morning and the return of Jesus brings fear to you, if the word justice causes you discomfort in your soul, if the idea of standing before the great white throne of judgment and having every single thing that you have ever done read to you before a righteous judge causes you anxiety, and you don't know if you are someone that is going to happen to, then I want to encourage you today to talk to someone about this. You don't have to leave here in fear of God's justice anymore, but justice can become a comforting thing to you.

We have counselors that would love to talk with you and they are in our Prayer Room. When you leave here today just turn to your right in the foyer and you will be able to see the Prayer Room. People will answer any questions you have and they will pray with you about this idea of how to find yourself free from the justice and judgment of God that requires repentance. Maybe you need to do that this morning.

The second response is we need to entrust. If God is perfectly just then we must entrust ourselves to the One who judges justly. I love what it says in I Peter Chapter 2 and verse 23. Peter is talking to a group of Christians who are being persecuted about Jesus. Peter says this: ***“When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Him to Him who judges justly.”***

Some of you right now want to bring the hammer of vengeance and justice on someone in our life. Some of you may be being mistreated by a family member or a boss or a friend or neighbor, whatever it is there is something you have received and you think God is not acting fast enough. You think He is not doing enough for you to be able to see that He is doing something about it, and because you don't see God doing something you want to do something yourself. And that is not good.

You and I will always mess up the justice of God when we get in God's way. We have to learn to entrust ourselves. Listen, God may have given you a position of authority to execute justice, righteous judgment on people, like a parent with their kids Or God may have given you a position of authority to execute righteous judgment like a boss with an employee. But for most of us that is not what we are talking about. We are

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talking about dealing with the emotions of feeling betrayed, suffering the injustice, the afflictions of this world. Do we have the patience, do we have the wisdom to say, *'God I am entrusting you with this problem. I am being treated unfairly. This is costing so much money. This isn't right, God.'* We can cry out to God, but here is what we have to do – we have to believe that even in the midst of our suffering, in the midst of our injustice, there will be a day, there will be a day when it is made right. And God gets to decide that and not us. God decides that. We need to begin entrusting Him this morning.

Number three is we need to display. As Paul is explaining this he says, ***"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith."*** Remember Paul is talking to the people who were being persecuted because of their very existence and because they were reminding people of God's justice. And Paul is saying not to back away from that but to lean into that. Not being obnoxious, but don't stop living out the righteousness of God, just live it out, just display the glory of Jesus to people. Because maybe it is your life, it is your living testimony that reminds people that you live under a different authority; you live under a different king. You don't define good and evil by your own standards but by God's standards. And people in this world need to see that. They need to see people who display the glory of Jesus.

Let's not run and hide. I think there are a lot of Christians today when we think about Jesus returning and we think about how bad the world is getting and we just want to cower in our corners, show up to church once or twice a week, and just become 'the holy huddle of Jesus' in our world. That is not obeying Jesus. Our world will face judgment. Do we love others enough to display the glory of Jesus?

Lastly, we need to declare. Let's declare the truth of God's righteous judgment. Let's declare the truth of the reality of the fullness of Jesus' character. Yes, let's declare His love, let's declare His kindness, let's declare His goodness, let's declare His holiness, let's declare His wisdom, but we must also declare God's justice. We can't be afraid of that. We have to repent, we have to trust, we have to display and we have to declare God's justice is good. Jesus' returning means justice for everyone and it is good.

Three questions I want to leave you with this morning and then we are done. Number one – does the return of a righteous judge lead you to fear or joy? Where are you on that? Does Jesus' return lead you to fear or joy? That should tell you whether or not you believe in the goodness of His justice or whether or not you are saved from His justice.

Number two – how will you entrust your injustice to His justice? And maybe you need to pray about this every day. *'God, this is bothering me. You have to take it today.'* Maybe sometimes we will need to do that ten times a day, but we need to take the injustices of the world and say, *'God I believe vengeance is yours, that you will repay in*

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*the right time and in the right way all evil thoughts in me. It is yours because Jesus is the one who paid it and He is the one who knows how to execute it perfectly. I am just going to rest in your justice.'*

Number three – how are you living in light of Jesus' return? How are you living in light of Jesus' return? Are you scaling back your testimony? I believe that as the world gets darker, the light of a righteous life shines brighter. It is not to be our hope that we just kind of blend in. That is not when Jesus asks us to do. He asks us to be salt and light, to be a city on a hill. Our lives are to display the righteousness of God and point to someone greater than ourselves. Are you doing that? Are you living like that? Or are you stepping back from that?

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*