

The Glory of Christ!

Call to Worship: Psalm 27:1-4

Hymn #131- *When Morning Gilds the Skies*

1st Scripture: 1 Kings 10:1-13

Hymn #218- *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*

2nd Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 1

Hymn #216- *Crown Him with Many Crowns*

Introduction:

The ultimate hope, consolation and comfort for the sincere Christian lies in that which is to come. In fact, we make good use of the word "hope," as a confirmation of this reality, don't we? The end of our faith has not yet been attained...we still "hope" toward that end; toward the complete reward in glory.

Now, the biblical idea of "hope," of course, is nothing like the world's flimsy view of "hope." The world "hopes" with the possibility that what they are hoping for, may never even come to pass. The world's hope conveys a meaning that is virtually similar to the idea of "wishing." "Well, I hope to graduate college." "I hope to be married some day and to have children." "I hope we win the ball game" or "that I win the bet." "I hope I get that job." You see, in these cases, there is always the possibility that that which is hoped for, will never be attained.

Biblical "hope," however, is sure and guaranteed. In fact, it is only called "hope" because it has not yet been fully realized or attained. But biblical hope rests on God's promises, making this hope a secure anchor for the soul, motivating us onward in the battle toward glory. Biblical hope never, ever disappoints. And biblical hope is further secured by a down payment. The Holy Spirit of God dwells within the heart of God's people, as a means of ensuring that the relationship that exists with God because of this indwelling, must and will reach completion. In fact, in Ephesians, we are told that, by the Spirit, we are actually given one portion of our inheritance in advance; a deposit, as it were, guaranteeing the full payment in due time. Biblical hope has already tasted the soup, and it continues to smell the wonderful aroma of the upcoming

meal. And all of this serves to comfort and console the Christian, especially as he makes his way through the difficult and often trialsome valley of this life.

Clearly, the Thessalonians were suffering from great persecutions and trials. And so, the Apostle Paul, as a means of further motivating their patience and their forward movement for the glory of Christ, seeks to encourage them in their perseverance, so that they will not become discouraged along the way, especially by the ongoing nature and magnitude of their present trials. They were doing well, but the Apostle wanted to refuel them with a reminder of the hope that they were working towards, so that what they could not presently see (but was absolutely certain), would continue to drive them forward, in the face of what they could see and feel, in their painful but temporary persecutions and trials. [Read verses 3-5 again]

You see, the sufferings, which were being experienced by the Thessalonian church, were not unto a vain end. Their ongoing faith, love and patience during these sufferings proved to be a tangible investment in glorifying Christ in the presence of the world. What they were hoping for had taken form and shape, by means of their response to their sufferings. The reality of their faith and the authenticity of their sincere hope were confirmed and strengthened, and so, the Apostle commends them for this.

But then, he moves on to further console them by reminding them of that which rested at the nearby finish line. He takes their faith by the hand, as it were, and draws them forward to the end and completion of their hope, namely, the eternal joy that is wrapped up in simply beholding the fullness of the glory of Christ, upon His return. And brethren, this will be the primary focus of our meditation for this morning.

I. Two Consequences of Christ's Return [Read verses 6-10]

Here the Apostle comforts and consoles the Thessalonians by reminding them of two certain consequences of Christ's return. First, those who have been persecuting and troubling the people of God will be recompensed according to their deeds. In other words, the just judgment due those who harm the people of God, will come. It may be postponed for the time; it may not be immediate, but it must and will come, because God is just. And then, secondly, the people of

God, who have faced suffering and trials in this life, will meet their eternal rest then. Though we suffer in Christ, in the present, rest (indeed, eternal rest) is soon to meet us when He returns. These ends must always be in view, in light of the present hardships and difficulties that will inevitably come upon the church.

But for the remainder of our time, let us look upon these two final consequences more closely, and especially the second one, as the great emphasis of our topic for this morning.

1) You will notice that upon Christ's return; when He is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, "in flaming fire, He will take vengeance" not only on those who *most directly* persecute the church, but "on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs. 8).

You see, there are only two classes of people, from the standpoint of God: those who know Him and who obey the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who do not know Him, and who do not obey the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no "somewhere in between group." Do you see that here in the text? You are either with Christ or you are against Him. You either know, love and serve God and the purposes of His Kingdom, or you contradict and contend with it. You see, friends, the text is clear, isn't it? According to the Word of God, what will happen to those of you who never come to know God in truth, because you never come to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ in truth? You will be the object of Christ's vengeful wrath. The same Christ, who came in humility, born in a feeding trough, with no place to rest His head; the same Christ who came as a beloved Redeemer, who suffered and bled and died on the cross for sinners, will return as a mighty, warrior King, executing fiery vengeance upon all who have refused to repent of their sins, while embracing Him as their Lord and Savior. Now some people, in their great lack of wisdom and foolishness, may laugh and mock this reality in the present, but when He returns, the same people will be running for the caves, pleading with the hills to fall on top of them, and to somehow shield them from the wrath of this Christ. With Judas, they will wish that they had never even been born! Can you actually imagine a day when you will wish that all of your life; the great privilege of your existence would never have even taken place? Friends, the God who created you is serious, do you see that?

Notice, what the Apostle moves on to say in verse 9: "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes in that day..." What does the Apostle mean here by "everlasting destruction?" Does this imply annihilation? In other words, will God just dissolve you into a state of non-existence? Certainly, we might wish that were the case, but God's justice speaks otherwise. In keeping with all of the other Scriptural teachings on hell, everlasting destruction means eternal ruin, not annihilation. In other words, friends, if you die outside of Christ, or if you are not a true Christian when Christ returns, you will never suit the purpose for which you have been created. You will suffer eternal, conscious torment as a ruined and eternally marred, lost soul. As a wondrous, glorious creature, created by God, for the glory of God and in the image of God, you will be eternally barred from the wonderful, joyful presence and good pleasure of God; you will be exiled from His wondrous glory, and you will be cast into outer darkness, forever and ever and ever, where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth. The smoke of your torment will go up forever and ever! That is everlasting destruction and eternal ruin! Friend, if you are outside of Christ this morning, I would plead with you; young people, I plead with you, don't bury these truths, don't harden your conscience further against them. Don't make the most tragic mistake of remaining an unredeemed, unrepentant sinner, dangling in the hands of an angry, holy and wrathful God! God didn't subject His Beloved Son to the agony and torment of the cross because He takes sin lightly. Don't let the cross become your eternal, never-ending reality!

2) But there is a second, most glorious consequence of Christ's return, which will fall upon all who persevere in their faith; all who know God and who patiently obey the Gospel of Christ, abiding in Christ to the end. These will find eternal rest. All of the sanctifying trials and tribulations of this world, will pour into an ocean of never ending rest, peace and joy. And that end is right around the corner!

Notice, how the Apostle describes the return of Christ, from the standpoint of those who know God, and who obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: In verse 10, we are told, "...when [Jesus] comes in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed." When our Lord returns, brethren, He will be glorified in us; our faithfulness and our continual, persevering commitment to Him in the midst of life's difficulties and trials; our cross bearing and daily self-denial, will all speak loudly

to the praise of His glory! In the presence of His angels, He will be glorified in His saints; He will be exalted, praised and worshipped because of the fruit of His labors, invested in those whom He has called out of this world, on the merits of His atoning sacrifice and resurrection. "He shall see the labor of His soul [*the fruit of His agony*] and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). "In this [we] greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, [we] have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of [our] faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love" (1 Peter 1:6-8a).

And brethren, He will be admired; He will be marveled at, by all those who believe! His own will not flee to the mountains! They will stand there, reveling and marveling in the glory they behold, in their returning Christ! And brethren, the joy, and the overwhelming sense of awe that will fill our souls that day is something we can hardly begin to appreciate right now. Yes, we have tasted the soup. Yes, we have smelled the aroma. But when the full course of Christ's glory is beheld by us, His people, our lives will take on a whole new experience, that will never end. We all love the thrill of some moment of excitement, don't we? The thrill of watching our favorite quarterback launch a football toward the end zone, sitting at the edge of our seats, waiting to see if the receiver catches it. And when he does, that moment of awe, throws us up in the air with a sense of amazement and excitement. We love to be amazed and dazzled, because God has hard wired us that way. That is an intricate part of the worship experience. But when Christ comes, that thrill, that excitement, that joy will be incomprehensibly greater and without end. For, the One whom we have loved and not yet seen; for the One with whom we have begun to have an imperfect, cloudy fellowship, in this life, will come to us...and we will see Him as He is, without the inward distortion of sin interfering with our vision, and we will marvel, and we will be like Him, complete and holy in the most perfect sense. "For now we see in the reflection of polished bronze, dimly, but then face to face. Now [we] know in part, but then [we] shall know, just as [we] also are known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

Perhaps, one reasonable, and yet, imperfect way we can illustrate this, is by considering what happened to the Queen of Sheba, when she had come to visit and question King Solomon. Back in Arabia, she had heard many glossy rumors about this king; about the glory of his prosperity, riches and wisdom, but she could hardly believe it. And so, she took a great company

of servants/soldiers with her, and decided to go to see King Solomon first hand. And when she had poured her heart out to him with very difficult questions and received his profound answers; when she had experienced the glory of his wisdom first hand, and when she had seen the glory of the temple of God, of Solomon's house, of the order and dress of his servants and of all his kingdom, we are told she was breathless. She was utterly dumbfounded by the glory of what she had seen. Now hear her actual verbal response: "Then she said to the king: 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness'" (1 Kings 10:6-9).

Now brethren, those words were spoken to Solomon, and we know full well where all of his glory came from. And Solomon, shortly after this, fell into gross, gross idolatry. But what of the glory of the greater and perfect Solomon, who heard from God Himself, audibly, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!" I have a strange feeling, brethren, that when we are no longer restrained by remaining sin; when our weak faith becomes sight...when we behold Christ in all of His glory, we will say, "Wow! I knew this was true, but the half was not told to me! Your glory, O Lord, far exceeds what I even imagined on my best day in this life! Brethren, that is a vision; that is a joy, to die for! On that day, we will see the One who has a greater faith than Abraham, a purer heart than David, more humility than Moses, greater strength and power than Samson, and infinitely more wisdom and glory than Solomon. What these men excelled in, simply pictured in some small way, the far more perfect and complete glory of our blessed Savior!

And for those of you who are outside of Christ, I can only say, "Come and see; come and taste and see the goodness of the Lord! If only your eyes were opened to the truth, you would say, "Though I have heard so much about this Jesus, I never really believed, but now that I have tasted of His glorious fellowship, I am breathless! The reality of His person, the glory of His amazing love for sinners, the wonder of His grace and power...all of these things have taken hold

of my heart, and have shifted my whole life in another direction. And now, the Christ whom I once saw as nothing more than a fairy tale, is everything to me, and I long for the experience of seeing Him face to face, with pure eyes and a wholly sanctified heart!

You see, all of the joys and wonders and glories of this world, wrapped up in one great ball, are but smaller than a pebble, compared to the glory of Christ! And so, it all comes down to this then, friends. What will your response be, on the Day of Christ's return? Will you run for the hills, full of great terror and anxiety, pleading for the mountains to fall on you and to shield you from the great wrath of the Lamb of God? Or will you stand in awe; will you stand with your eyes and heart fixed on the glory and splendor of the marvelous Savior, whom you have come to love, longing for His appearing, which has finally come? May God be pleased to bring many here into the sphere of the second experience! For this is the Christian's great hope; a sure hope, comfort and consolation, in the midst of a life full of trials, tribulations and many sanctifying sorrows.

AMEN!!!

Benediction- Hebrews 6:10-20.