

WE ARE FAMILY: WHERE YOU ARE PERFECTLY SAFE

The Story of Jason

Jason stared at the makeshift barricade against his door. He rubbed his back and shook his head. “Will that keep them out?” Jason had been afraid when he heard the crowd gathering outside his window. He was scared when he heard them *pounding. on the. door.* The hinges started to wiggle. Then, BOOM! And just like that, they were inside, and the nightmare begins. “WHERE ARE THE MISSIONARIES?” “They’re not here.” “WHERE IS PAUL?” “They’re not here.” “WHERE ARE SILAS AND TIMOTHY?” “They’re not here.” Jason was telling the truth. There were no apostles in his house. So the mob grabbed him. Do you know how it feels to have your back scraped across your floor as your wife watches her man dragged out of his own house, kicking and screaming, the man she hoped would protect her? But that’s how they did things, those jealous Jewish leaders in the Greek city of Thessalonica. They dragged Jason into court, all the way to prison, and he paid his way out. So when he got home, Jason stared at the makeshift barricade against his door. He rubbed his back and shook his head. “Will that keep them out? What if next time they come back with torches? What if next time they take my daughter?” And Jason was afraid all over again.

Do you see why the Apostle Paul wanted to write a letter to the Christians in Thessalonica? He had visited them for three weeks, and then he ran for his life. But not Jason. Not those other Christians. They lived in the nightmare, and they wanted to feel safe. Paul didn’t write that they should tone down their Christianity. He didn’t write that they should start a militia. He wrote about judgment day. To give Jason peace in the middle of his nightmare, Paul wrote about the day when Jesus will come back and judge every soul, even you and me.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-7

Paul wrote about the persecutions facing the Thessalonians:

⁵ 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. ⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ 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.

That story from Jason is a true story about a real man named Jason; his story is in Acts 17. As I retold it, did you feel a sense of injustice or unfairness? Have you felt that in your life? So what will happen if Jason finds his security in the barricade on his door? They’ll break it down, or come in the window. What will happen if Jason finds his peace of mind, by arming himself and a militia of Christians? They’ll take him to court or slaughter him. Jason needs a peace of mind—and so do you—that can’t be destroyed by people, a security that doesn’t depend on a crooked court ruling in his favor, a peace that will survive even if the whole world is destroyed. Jason needs to know that God has judged him worthy of heaven.

So imagine his face when he opens Paul’s letter and reads, **“God is just... he will give relief to you who are troubled... and this will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven.”** That day is coming, when Jesus will come down from heaven, clothed in fire, and accompanied by angels, and he will wake up everyone who is sleeping in a grave so that the whole population of the history of the earth stands before him and he will make things right.

Judgement Day for Unbelievers

Here's what that means for Unbelievers:

⁸He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

This is what it's like for people who go to hell on Judgement Day. I'm going to let you see my heart about this: I wouldn't say I like these verses. I know that mob who hurt Jason had it coming. I know some people still hurt Christians today. But I don't like this. Everlasting destruction doesn't even make sense to me. If hell destroys people, then that should be the end of it. But this says when they've been destroyed it just keeps going and going. Other Bible passages describe it as a lake of burning sulfur. And this one says they will be totally cut off from every good thing God can do, forever. That's what Judgement day will bring for people who don't know God and people who don't believe the gospel of Jesus.

And I don't like that. It doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't seem fair to me, and I don't think I'm the only one. But here's the thing: When what I think is different from what the Bible says, I've got a choice in front of me. The option is: Who's your god? Go with what I think is reasonable or go with what God says, and if I pick what I think is fair, then I see my God every time I look in the mirror because I am number one, and God is number two. But think about this for a second. If I see my god in the mirror, then what will I see when Jesus appears in the sky to judge the world? If he's not my God then I'm not going to his heaven. The Bible directly addresses this! In Isaiah God said, **"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."** So here's the truth, when I hear about hell and God's judgment, I don't like it. But instead of believing what makes sense to me, I say, "Welp, I must be wrong about this one." Or even better, "I must be wrong about hell, but *why* don't I like what God says?" Could it be that I don't like God's truth because deep down, it makes sense? If God created this world, and we owe our whole lives to him, doesn't it make sense that he makes the rules? And if he says that sinners go to hell, he has every right to send them there.

Look around this world. See all the hatred, all the injustice, all the pain. Of course people go to hell! Look at us! And I, I make this mess worse in my own little way. So do you. Why don't I like the thought of hell? I know I belong there. It's not crazy that God sends people to hell.

The Injustice of the Gospel

But you know what is crazy? There's a part of this Bible that is so mind-blowing, it's unbelievable. What makes no sense to me is this, it's from Romans chapter 5. **"God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** It is crazy that God would love people who cause pain! It is absurd that God would see all of our injustices, all of our crime, and *know* that we deserve hell, but then he would dole out that punishment on his own Son! What's unbelievable is that someday soon Jesus is going to appear in the clouds and call us his "holy people."

But Paul wrote that Judgement day will happen ¹⁰**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.** God's love is unbelievable, but by some miracle, you believe it, and so do I.

And so on Judgement day, we will not be horrified. We will marvel at Jesus, who has come to give us relief from our troubles and to take us home.

Now do you see why the Apostle Paul wrote about judgment day for Jason?

You Are Perfectly Safe

Before we close, let's talk about some ways that we are like Jason. We may not have a mob at our door, but we still want to feel safe. But we don't try to be safe by barricading our doors. We lock our doors. And that's good! But locks can be broken. They don't keep you perfectly safe. We feel safe by getting a home security system. And that's good! In fact, I know a guy who does *not* have a home security system, but he found one of those yard signs that says "secured by ADT" and he put it in his yard to deter bad guys. And guess what, according to a study by Ackerman Security, some burglars actually do leave you alone just because you have a sign! But tornados don't care if you have a sign or a security system. They can't keep you perfectly safe. We try to feel safe by purchasing insurance policies so that when a tornado harms your home or health or car, you can have peace of mind. And that's good! But when Jesus comes back in fire and he will burn up your house and the insurance building! In the end, insurance won't keep you perfectly safe. But it's still good to use those things to protect the gifts God has given us. And you can calculate how much you value that earthly peace of mind. Just add up the cost of your home security system, plus the cost of all your insurance plans, plus the values of your emergency savings accounts. That's how much you are paying for peace of mind.

But here's the big question: how much do you value the peace of mind that will last through judgment day and beyond? How much would you pay to be safe when Jesus comes back? Here's the awesome truth— God charges no admission to get into heaven. It's as free as family. And while it doesn't cost you any dollars to be a member of your family, you do spend time and energy to keep your family relationships strong. It's the same with God's family. It is free to believe in Jesus, but you still spend time and energy to keep that faith strong. You read your Bible because **"faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the words about Christ."** (Romans 10:17) You **"don't give up meeting together here at church, but you encourage one another all the more as you see the day of Jesus approaching!"** (Hebrews 10:25) And you keep your eye on the sky. Like Jesus said, **"Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."** (Matthew 21:36)

And then when that day comes, you will see Jesus with your own eyes, and he will send his angels from one end of the earth to the other to gather all believers to heaven.

At the last judgment, Jason and you and me, we'll all have peace of mind because we'll be perfectly safe.

Jesus, come quickly!

Amen.