

The 2nd Coming of Christ

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Date: 05 December 2010

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[0:00] Take your Bibles. Let's turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in just a couple pages before in 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

We also thank God continually because when you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of man, but as it actually is the word of God.

May God give us grace to accept it this morning in that manner. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. I'll begin reading at verse 3.

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

[1:09] 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. On my kitchen wall, probably like most of you, there's a calendar.

[2:23] Right now it has a picture of an old man, a young boy and a dog, and they're all riding a sled. The old man is ecstatic, and the boy is amazed, and the dog is terrified.

And underneath the picture is the calendar. And on the calendar is written in ink all the names of the people that are coming over to our house this month.

And every month is the same. The picture is different. The names are different. But people are coming over. There is another date on my calendar.

And there's a date on your calendar. And we didn't write it in ink according to our schedule. But God has written it on our calendar according to his schedule.

Someone is coming. Jesus Christ is coming. We can't change the date. When he comes by, we can't pretend like we're not home.

[3:26] He's coming. And we will meet him. And you will meet him. Why is he coming? What will his coming be like? What will he do with us?

Those are the questions that Paul answers in 2 Thessalonians. And no more important questions could be asked or answered. Because there's no more important date in your life than that date.

Some people say that your wedding day is the most important day of your life. And others say your life totally changes when your first child is born. And weddings and births will pale in comparison to that day on your calendar.

And everything will stumble into insignificance on that day. So those questions are important to ask. Those important... Why is he coming? What will his visit be like? And what will he do with me? And we see those answers in our passage in 2 Thessalonians.

[4:40] And so I'd invite you to look at that passage. On Sunday evenings, we've started a series on 2 Thessalonians. And we saw that God was at work in Thessalonica.

At that church. God was at work and Paul was thrilled to see it. He saw their growing love. He saw their faithfulness. Their perseverance. And it encouraged their heart.

His heart. And so Paul said in verse 5 that this is all evidence of God's righteous judgment. That you end. It's evidence that you'll be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.

And so your perseverance is proof positive. It's clear evidence that on that last day, God will count you worthy of heaven. And so now in verses 6-10, Paul turns his attention to that approaching day. When God's righteous judgment will be revealed. And he turns his attention to that day on my calendar. And that day on your calendar.

[5 : 45] That day on the world's calendar. When Christ will judge the world in righteousness. And in verse 6, we see why he's coming.

Why Jesus is coming. He says God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you. And give relief to those who are troubled. And to us as well.

That's why Jesus is coming. He's coming for justice. And in our culture, I am convinced that justice gets a bad rap.

It's a word that has a hard feel to it. Justice is an uncomfortable word. We like forgiveness. We like peace. But justice?

Justice feels hard. It almost feels barbaric. We talk about therapy.

[6 : 40] We talk about rehabilitation. We want to rehabilitate criminals. And fix them. But justice just doesn't seem good enough.

But only people who have not suffered will talk like that. And only people who have lived sheltered lives feel free to talk about the barbarity of justice.

But people who have suffered gut-wrenching injustice have no problem thinking and talking about justice. And Paul wasn't one of those sheltered people.

He had been stoned for his faith. Been beaten for his faith. He had lost everything for his faith. And the Thessalonians knew it too. And so they were under persecution.

They knew what persecution felt like. And so justice was not a bad word. It was a good word to them. They had no problem hoping in God's justice. And we can see the same thing if we go into heaven.

[7 : 42] We go under the altar. And what do we see? We see just men who have been made perfect. And what are they saying? They're not crying out for rehabilitation.

And they're not crying out for therapy. They're saying, How long, O Lord? How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the earth and avenge our blood?

And so to the suffering, to the persecuted, this is good news. God is just. He is fair. And how does He show His justice?

Well, you see it there in verse 6. He will pay back trouble. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you. That is justice.

It's payback. And the word in the Greek is taken right out of the vocabulary of the courts. This is not some sort of street brawl vengeance.

[8 : 45] This is the payback of justice. And that's why Jesus is coming. He's coming because there's unfinished business. There's certain payments that need to be made.

And He comes to pay back His enemies. And notice that payback is in kind. Trouble for trouble. It's an eye for an eye.

A tooth for a tooth. And the enemies of God have troubled Him. And they have attacked His people. And so now He attacks them. And so it's gone on long enough.

It's time for vengeance. So God's people have turned the other cheek. And they have stood by and watched husband shot and wife raped.

And they have prayed while their houses were burnt down. And they have watched as their families have been killed. And they have meekly stood by as their property has been taken away.

[9 : 49] And they have prayed as their dignity was stolen from them. And they have cried while their parents fell under machete blows. But it's gone on long enough.

And Jesus is coming to pay back His enemies for the way they have treated His bride. And He comes back to give His bride relief.

He will give relief to you who are troubled. Relief. Rest. And the way He gives His church, His bride rest is by getting rid of her enemies.

And so the pain has gone on long enough. The torment has gone on long enough. And Jesus comes to give His bride rest from her enemies. And so for too long, she's wandered homeless.

And for too long, she's gone hungry. And too long, she has suffered. And now, the justice of God says, it's over. The holy ones, the saints, they must have relief.

[10:51] And that is justice. See, justice is not only the paying back of the wicked. It's also the rewarding of the righteous. It's the rewarding of the righteous.

On September 10th of this year, Salvatore Gunta received the Medal of Honor, the highest military award in the United States. In October 2007, he was out on patrol in Afghanistan.

And Taliban soldiers ambushed Salvatore and his fellow soldiers. And in the engagement, Salvatore ran straight into the face of enemy fire to rescue his fallen squad leader.

And then later, at the same event, he saw two insurgents dragging off one of his fellow soldiers.

And on his own initiative, he ran after them and rescued his wounded comrade.

And I don't care what you think about the war on terror and all that, but Salvatore Gunta showed extraordinary courage to run into the face of enemy bullets, to run after and rescue.

[12:04] And so that kind of valor must be rewarded. And so, justice was served. Justice was served when he received that award.

See, justice is not only the punishment of the wicked, it is the reward of the righteous. It's the vindication of the righteous. And so, God is just and his people must have relief.

They must be rewarded. And Jesus is coming to deal out justice. Jesus is coming to make justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

That's why he's coming. What will his coming be like? It will be shocking. It will be overpowering.

Overwhelming. 2 Thessalonians bears testimony to the power of words. That so much horrible terror could be fit into words.

[13:11] Just look at the language. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

So, Jesus will bring justice when he is revealed. It will come at the revelation, the apocalypse, the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

See, now Jesus is hidden. He came. He died. And the world goes on. Much as it did before. So, the kingdom of God is growing, but it's growing like yeast and bread.

You can't see it. It's invisible. And the kingdom is invisible to the eye. Jesus Christ is ascended to the throne. But the world goes on.

The earth does not see him. And so, this time of the year, we celebrate Christmas. We celebrate the advent, the first coming of Christ. But Christmas comes and goes, and people don't realize what we're celebrating.

[14:10] There's no thought about Jesus Christ in it at all. Their celebration is empty of Christ because their hearts are empty of Christ. And His birth means nothing to them. So, Jesus is the hidden one.

He's the rejected one. The one that the builders rejected has become the capstone. And that's how it is now. The builders of Israel rejected Him.

They looked Him over. And He carried no weight with them. They found no use for Him. And it's the same day, same today. Our Lord Jesus is mocked in the universities.

And His teaching carries no weight in the government. So, they have gagged the king of kings. And yet, nothing seems to happen.

His law means nothing. And people have boiled down His teaching to the level of play nice with others. And so, Jesus carries the same weight as a teacher's aide on the playground in an elementary school.

[15:19] And He's hidden now. But He will be revealed. And His revelation will be shocking. It will be overwhelming.

He will be revealed from heaven with blazing fire with His powerful angels. Think of that. He will be revealed from heaven. The skies will be rolled back as a scroll and He will be revealed from heaven.

And there will be no doubt at that point where He was, where He's been, what He's been doing. When the unveiling begins, the whole earth will see His glory.

He will come on clouds of glory. And there will be no doubt who the King is on that day. He will come from heaven and He will come with blazing fire.

The very created elements. oxygen. Oxygen. Nitrogen. The very stuff of creation will erupt at His coming.

[16:16] Because He is God. So on Mount Sinai, God came down to earth. And what was the picture? It was this billows of smoke because it says He came down in fire.

Because when God enters the created world, the created world erupts into fire and there's a mighty earthquake. And so when God comes, the creation reacts.

And when He comes, it bursts into flame and the world lurches and the mountains melt and He lifts His voice. And the islands flee away because He's God.

And when God comes into His creation, the creation cannot handle His glory. So He is God. And so Jesus comes in blazing fire.

But more than that, He comes in fury and in wrath. And so His coming is fiery. The words in our passage are no doubt a reference to Isaiah 66.

[17:24] It says, See, the Lord is coming with fire and His chariots are like a whirlwind. He will bring down His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire.

For with fire and with the sword, the Lord will execute judgment upon all men and many will be those slain by the Lord. He's coming to take vengeance on those who have ignored Him.

He's coming to take vengeance on those who have rebelled. He's coming to take vengeance on those who have abused His bride. And so the jealous husband is furious.

And He is coming in fire. And He has been aroused. And so the very mountains fly away in terror.

And He lifts His voice and the earth melts. And so woe to you if you've ignored this King.

Woe to you if you've mocked His claims. And woe to you if you've scorned His bride. Because justice is coming. Justice is coming and it's coming in fire.

[18:26] And it's coming in flame. And He comes with His angels. Hebrews calls them His servants. Flames of fire.

And here the angels are His heavenly attendants. They're His royal court. Now one angel descended into a Syrian camp and slaughtered 185,000 soldiers.

And the apostle John saw one and he fell down in his feet in worship. And now the sky will be filled with them. And they have longed to come.

They have longed to show the glory of the King that this world is scorning. And so now they are.

They're all arrayed around Him. And it's unclear whether this should be translated as powerful angels or the angels of His power.

And I prefer angels of His power. We're not talking about how powerful the angels are. We're talking about how powerful this King is. And so later on Paul talks about the wicked are shut out from the majesty of His power.

[19:39] power. And so power in this passage is not a reference to God's strength so much as it's a metaphor. It's a symbol for His deity. His divinity.

And so in Mark 14 Jesus is standing before the high priest and He says you will see me coming. You will see me enthroned on the right hand of the power and I will be coming on the clouds of glory.

So there it is. The right hand of the power. That's the idea. These angels are not powerful angels even though they are glorious and powerful beings. The idea is these are the angels that mark Jesus Christ and His divinity His holiness.

These are the royal attendants. The whole heavenly court is coming down to earth. And the angelic courtiers are coming to add their glory to His overwhelming glory.

And so His coming will be absolutely shocking. It will be absolutely overwhelming. And so what will that day be like for you?

[20:47] What will it be like for you? There's two options. The passage only gives us two options. Punishment or paradise. Punishment or paradise.

Each one of you. Each one of you will experience this day but you won't necessarily experience it the same way. Just like you go to a football game and at a football game there's a winner and there's a loser.

There's triumphant fans and there's very sad fans. And so Christ will Christ's coming and how you receive it will depend on who you are.

For a great many it will be a day of terror and punishment. So look at verse 8 and look at look at it. He will punish those who do not know God 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.

[21:56] For some of you unless you repent and believe the gospel this will be a horrible day. That day is circled on your calendar in terror.

They will be punished with everlasting destruction. Everlasting destruction. Everlasting destruction. It will be absolutely final. There will be no hope of pardon. And that is the horror of hell. It's not that it's so painful.

It is painful. But it is so long. And that is the horror of hell for those who are there. They cannot escape. And there's no point where you will rest and your sentence will never ever be served. You'll never get any closer to the end. And you'll never have a hope of a million billion years from now. I'll be let go. It's everlasting destruction.

[23:05] So in 1741, Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon to the small town of Enfield, Connecticut on Deuteronomy 32, verse 35.

Their foot shall slide in due time. And during the storm he was forced to stop because the shrieks were so piercing and the people were moaning so loudly he couldn't go on.

Because what had happened was the word of God had crushed them and it had pierced their hard unbelieving hearts. I wish the word would pierce your hearts for some of you.

And that you could say that this was the day that I was saved. this was the day that God changed my life and I went from going to hell to going to heaven. So let Edwards' words come down to you from the centuries and let it go into your heart.

Listen to what he says. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God for one moment.

[24:17] But you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward you shall see a long forever a boundless duration before you which will swallow up your thoughts and amaze your soul and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance any end any mitigation any rest at all.

You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages millions of millions of ages and wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance and then you will have and when and then when you have so done when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner you will know that all is nothing to what remains.

your punishment will be infinite indeed. It will be everlasting destruction. Jesus comes to bring everlasting destruction and it's destruction.

So let's go into a forest in our minds. Let's imagine going in there and we are going to destroy a tree. And so what would it look like? So picture this.

There's this big tall oak tree and we are going to destroy it. And so we take out our chainsaw and we fire it up and we cut the tree down. And so instantly the tree is dying.

[25:54] Its branches, its trunk is cut off from the roots and so life ebbs away with no hope of returning. And so we keep cutting. We cut off branches and we tear off the bark and we keep cutting and cutting the tree into smaller and smaller pieces.

And so now it doesn't even look like a tree anymore. And then we set the logs on the fire and we burn every single piece of that log to ashes.

we watch as the fire consumes the bark and the branches and the wood and we burn it all away. That's what this punishment is.

It's the continual ongoing destruction of your life. So you'll be undone. You'll be unraveled forever and ever unwound becoming less and less human only to survive to be further destroyed.

You see there's only so far we can go with a tree. When we've burned the tree we can't really do much more to it. But God has infinite wisdom, infinite power, infinite resources.

[27:20] who knows what God can do. And all of His Godness will be turned towards you in anger.

And you will be shut out from the majesty of His power. That's the next line. You'll be shut out from the majesty of His power. God's power.

It doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to be shut out from, away from the majesty of God. It doesn't quite mean that. It means because the holiness of God, this is why I'm saying this, because the holiness of God will be the heaven of people, of some people, and it will be the absolute hell of other people.

Because the presence of the Lord is everywhere, and He is as much in heaven as He is in hell. And so it's not that you're going to be cut off from seeing God. The point is that when God comes, when Jesus comes, the majesty of His presence, the glory of His divinity will shut you out.

It will thrust you away. He will thrust you away into outer darkness. And so the Lord's unveiling will thrust you away from Him. And you'll beg for the mountains to fall on you, and you'll crawl into the ground trying to get away from Him.

[28 : 46] His glory will shut you out, and you'll be glad to go. And His glory will destroy you forever. You'll be banished from His favor. That's the meaning of this passage. There's no more good things for you.

Nowhere you can lay your head where you can say, at least this is okay. At least this is good. It will all be taken away from you. And you'll wander in darkness. You'll be shut out from the kingdom of God, and you'll be shut out from His smile, and you'll be shut out from His blessing.

All that good is taken from you. Everywhere you look, it will be bad. And God will destroy you forever.

That's what Jesus comes. That's what justice looks like. But the coming of the Lord will be paradise for others. It will be paradise for others.

You see that in verse 10. On the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people, and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

[29 : 52] So for believers in Jesus Christ, this day is not punishment, it's paradise. And so His coming is a relief, and He will be glorified in you. And so how your hearts will be lifted up in glory on that day.

You'll see His glory. And you know what? Your hearts will be changed, and so your heart will beat with His, and there will be no sin, no guilt standing between you and Him. And you will be amazed at Him.

And so you will see His fury as it's lashed out onto other people, and that amazingly will be your salvation.

salvation. And see, that's why Jesus said, when you see these things happening, lift up your heads, because the day of salvation is near. Your redemption is near, and so you will lift up your head, believer, on that day, and you will see glory, and you will glory in Him.

So can you imagine it? You can see that justice, and that will be good news to you, and you'll marvel at Him, you'll be amazed at Him, and you will see Him, and you'll be like Him. All fear will be gone, all guilt will be gone, all sin will be gone, and there'll be nothing but pure, amazed joy. And so how your hearts will expand.

[31 : 17] We see now dimly, don't we? These words seem almost mythical to us. We see dimly. We see but a poor reflection. We see Him by faith, but then we will see Him by sight.

And faith is good, but sight is better. And you will be able to look on Christ in all of His glory, and you will be able to rejoice and marvel in it. And I want you to think of that.

When Isaiah saw Him, he cried out, woe is me, I'm undone. And when John saw Him in Revelation, he fell down on His feet as dead. And when Peter saw Him in His glory, he started talking like he didn't know what He was saying.

He was out of his mind. But you will see Him. You will see Him and you will rejoice. And His light, His glory will fill up your hearts with radiant joy because He comes to be glorified in you. And your joy is His glory and He comes to be glorified.

His glory. And so His glory will loosen your jaws and you will sing. And His glory will silence you and you will fall down and worship. And that's why He comes for us.

[32 : 34] That's why He's coming. Because that is our reward, His glory and our joy. And so He comes that we could see that and rejoice and He comes to give us the desire of our hearts.

brothers and sisters, don't we long to see Jesus glorified in this earth. He's neglected now.

He's hidden now. People mock Him now. But then every eye will see Him and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess and His coming will be the introduction, our introduction to heaven.

Because that is heaven for us. To see worship going to Him. And so His coming will be our introduction into glory. When we see it, it will be the beginning.

So there's the same coming. It's the same event, the same glory, the same blazing fury, the same Jesus. It's punishment for some and it's paradise for others.

[33 : 44] what will decide the difference? What will decide how you experience that day? Well, everything will hinge on whether you're His friend or His foe.

Who receives punishment? Who receives punishment? Verse 8 says, those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Punishment is for those who don't know God.

And that doesn't mean they're ignorant of Him. It means they have no relationship with Him. They don't know Him. They're strangers to them. They have willfully rebelled. They've suppressed the truth and unrighteousness.

And so even though they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile. And since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind.

This is what we're talking about. It is not innocent ignorance. They have not known God because they do not want to know God. They've seen His glory in the creation and they've turned away from Him.

[34 : 50] And the law of God is written on their hearts and their consciences and they ignore it. They've forsaken Him. And on top of that, they have disobeyed the gospel.

Did you know that the gospel is not just an offer? It is not just a free invitation. It is a command. And so, we not only offer Christ to you, we don't only say here, take it or leave it, but as Christ ambassadors to you, we command you to repent and believe.

believe. Why do we do that? Because God has commanded you to repent and to believe. So, it's not like turning down the invitation to my Christmas party.

It's not like that. You can do that and guess what? I guess you don't want to come. What am I going to say? It's more like saying no to the president when he tells you to go to the White House.

[35 : 57] It's more like you saying no to the judge when he commands you to come and testify. So, God commands everyone everywhere to repent, to say no to sin, to stop cherishing sin, and to come and be saved.

He commands everyone to come to the Son of God and be reconciled through Him. You see how gracious those commands are? He is telling you, be saved, be forgiven, be reconciled.

But His commands, they're gracious, but they're not without a threat. This command comes with consequences. If you do not obey God and come to Jesus and be reconciled to God through Him, then you will face Jesus and His blazing fury.

Obedience is not optional. If you obey, you will be saved. And if you disobey, you will perish. And so, dear friend, if you believe the gospel, if you believe, then Christ's coming will be your introduction, the beginning of paradise for you.

It will be glorious and full of joy. And that's why Paul said, he comes to be glorified in His people. He comes to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

[37 : 28] This includes you because you believed our testimony to you. There's the difference. They believed. They believed the apostolic testimony.

They believed the gospel. And so, I have to ask you, have you believed the gospel? If you believed, if you've been reconciled to God through the gospel, then Christ's coming will be good news to you. It will be good news. So, if you believe the gospel, the eternal Son of God became man.

God and out of love, He took on a human nature. And He became one of us to save us. And so, His heart was drawn out in mercy for a broken and sinful world.

And so, He was born in Bethlehem. And He lived with Mary and Joseph and He obeyed them. And He lived some 33 years and He never disobeyed God. And He lived a perfect life for one reason, so that He could be a perfect sacrifice, a substitute for sinners.

[38 : 43] And so, under Pontius Pilate, He was crucified on a Roman cross. And men did it out of hatred. But God had other purposes.

God did it out of love. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. He gave Him. He gave Him in Bethlehem. And He gave Him on that hill outside of Jerusalem.

And so, on that cross, while men spit and jeered at Him, that future wrath that we've been talking about broke in to time and space.

And it broke in on our substitute. And God poured out His wrath on His Son. And Jesus became a substitute for sinners.

So that blazing fury, Jesus felt it. Being shut out from the presence of God, Jesus felt it. He experienced it.

[39 : 49] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And so, that last day and all the hell after that broke in on Jesus Christ, the hell that we deserve, that last day that we deserve came upon Him.

And He did it because He loved us. Jesus loved His people and He didn't want them to experience that last day like that. he didn't want them to experience hell and so he faced it himself he took it for them and so he did it so that his final unveiling his the opening up of who he is it will be good news to you and so he took the wrath of God and God raised him on the third day because you know what the work was done God had said yes this is my servant he has done exactly what I've wanted this is a perfect it's over and God was satisfied and so now the command goes to the whole world it goes to everyone in this room to repent and believe repent from your sins and throw yourselves onto Jesus because if you do not then that day is waiting for you it's on your calendar and you will live it so he's a savior for sinners he's a savior for the needy and so repent and believe if you feel like

I am too wicked that's who he came for he came to save sinners so have you believed the gospel it all hinges on if you're Jesus friend or foe if you've been reconciled or not it's not if you're a sinner we're all sinners have you come to Jesus ready or not the day is coming it's on all of our calendars but you don't know when it's coming therefore keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour that's a word for you believers believers keep watch don't let Jesus come back to find you sleeping and unprepared and my dear unbelieving friends come to Jesus before it is too late let's pray our heavenly father we thank you that we have a gospel because we know in our hearts that we are sinners we have denied your claims we have rebelled against you we have sought our own way we've done it willfully we've done it wickedly and we need saved from your justice lord god thank you for sending a savior thank you for sending your son your son that you loved to experience that for us lord we won't know what that cross meant until we've been in heaven for millions and millions of years and when we've looked upon the bodies of those who have perished are perishing and then we will know how much we owe but father we open up our hearts that we could see and experience give us that strength and know the love that you have for us in Jesus Christ its length its height its depth its breadth to know it will you give us faith to believe and i pray father that you would save sinners save them for mercy's sake save them because they need saved look on them they need help so look on them you're a god of generous love look on them and save them and we will give you glory we ask that you would seal these things to our hearts and help us to live in obedience to what we've heard to live lives that are worthy worthy of the kingdom of god to live lives worthy of the calling that we've received we ask it in jesus name amen