FOOTHILLS CHURCH

# SINCE YOU BELONG TO JESUS

**Phil Christiansen // November 15, 2026**
**1 Thessalonians 5:12 – 2 Thessalonians 1:12 (ESV)**
**Big Idea: Since we belong to Jesus, we can trust that He will accomplish in us all that He intends for His glory and our blessing.**

## Introduction

We're taking the second-to-last step our Ready & Waiting series this morning and it's been an encouraging journey to see how a group of idolatrous, Greek & Roman god worshipping people could be so transformed by the Gospel. The Thessalonian church was anchored in Jesus Christ. Their faith was active and it effected how they lived: 'I believe God so I'll obey God.' Their love was on full display as they served and sacrificed for one another. They even cultivated a 'won't quit grit' because their hope was rooted in Jesus, not their circumstances. They believed Paul and the boys when they heard the good news of the love and forgiveness of Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, their lives were changed. They were so different that others couldn't help but notice and that drew more people to faith in Jesus. But it also brought persecution from society around them.

The Thessalonian church lived like they belonged to Jesus and, even though they suffered, their faith grew because they journeyed together, supporting one another, encouraging one another to stand firm, and trusting that Jesus was coming back for them. Knowing that Christ would return impacted how they lived, grieved, and prepared for the future.

Today we're going to close 1 Thessalonians and jump straight into Paul's second letter to them. And as we unpack the text we'll see a consistent theme: When we belong to Jesus we can trust that He will accomplish in us all that He intends for His glory and our blessing. So, with that, open your bible or app to 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 12. I'll be reading from the ESV so you can follow along. [READ 12-24]

"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the
fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15 See that no one
repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another
and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks
in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do
not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test
everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.
23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may
your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."

*Since you belong to Jesus, this is how you are…*

**Concerning Leaders (v 12-13)**

Since they belong to Jesus, the Thessalonian church needed to make sure that they treated their leaders well. At this point, the church would have met in homes, and that meant that the owners of those homes were in the spotlight for persecution and aggression from the unbelieving community. Those who were working hard to lead, teach, host, and correct within the little church were front-facing, easy to see kind of people. Those leaders took extra hits, and were persecuted more readily, because they were known. Paul's point was, 'be good to your leaders. They're carrying a heavy load. They have enough challenges with their neighbors and civic leaders…they shouldn't have to take hits from you, too. Instead, <u>value and appreciate</u> [your leaders] them greatly. Don't let anything get in the way of your good relationships…be at peace.'

It's easy to take pot-shots at leaders. They're often standing right in front of you—either in person or on TV. And, if you don't like what they wear, what they say, the song they sing or that they appeared to ignore you when you saw them at the store, it's easy to get churned up and want to throw rocks. But the truth is, the men and women who lead in the church are just people that have stepped up to do the work that God has called them to do. Just like you, they're imperfect, in-process, still-being-sanctified people who are doing their best before the Lord. Don't let

anything get in the way of peace between you. I'm not talking about ignoring sin or looking past ungodliness. I'm talking about, Paul's talking about, respecting the people who lead because they're the ones doing the work—even if it's not perfect—and especially because they're already in the crosshairs for persecution.

**With One Another (v 14-15)**

Paul also tells them that because they belong to Jesus and He's working in them, that they must continue to serve one another well. It's easy to understand how, in the midst of struggle and opposition, that the Thessalonian church would grow weary and even impatient with each other. But since they belong to Jesus and His Spirit enables and empowers them, even in the tough times, they can continue to love and serve faithfully. This comes out in all kinds of ways like: Guiding the undisciplined or irresponsible. Encouraging the worried, discouraged or insecure. Helping those who struggle morally, spiritually, physically or economically...help them. And in the midst of it all, model patience. Have you noticed how easy it seems to be to snap at someone close to you when you're feeling overwhelmed, tired, hangry, or just selfish? Patience is evidence of the Spirit's presence in our lives. So Paul is reminding them, 'You belong to Jesus. He will give you all you need. Serve one another well and display patience as they fumble, bumble and stumble.'

Who in the body could you come alongside, encourage, or help? Maybe someone needs help determining direction in their life or getting back on their feet financially. Perhaps there's a single parent who is buckling under the weight of doing it all by him/herself. There are younger believers who would benefit greatly from the friendship and wisdom of an older, more seasoned believer. Your life and faith experience could be a priceless encouragement to them. Most of us don't know the hardships, heartaches or confusions of those around us, unless they're in our small group. But God knows the needs of every person in our body—whether they've said something or not. So, my encouragement is to pray. Ask the Lord to point out a person, couple or family. You may not even know their name but He does. And after He points them out to you maybe ask them

to lunch after church to get to know them, hear their story and begin a friendship. It doesn't have to be weird. You could just ask them, 'Is there any way I can be helpful to you?' Because we belong to Jesus, we get to care well for each other. And to do that we need to know one another. I'm eager to hear who God connects you with and how that goes. So let me know.

Verse 15 takes a little turn. Did you notice? "See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to *everyone*." So, don't retaliate when you're mistreated (the Lord will take care of that), but seek to do good to one another. Makes sense. But he doesn't stop there. He says be good *to everyone*. So there it is: when you treat your leaders well, serve one another well, forgive freely and seek to do good to each other, the world notices. AND when you choose *not* to retaliate when you're mistreated, persecuted, wronged, libeled, or badmouthed but, instead, seek to *do good* to those who've hurt you, *then* you're living like you truly belong to Jesus. And people can't help but notice! The Thessalonian church was constantly being squeezed by their culture. The temptation to establish an 'us/them' mentality must have been overwhelming. The same is true for us today. It's not an 'us vs them,' that's not God's heart. The once-pagan, idol worshipping Thessalonians were given the good news of Jesus because God doesn't want any to perish but everyone to come to repentance.[1] Doing good to everyone reminds us that God loves, cares and is concerned for everyone, not just those in the church.

**In Worship (v 16-22)**

Since the Thessalonian church belongs to Christ, then they can truly rejoice, pray and give thanks despite their circumstances. These commands from Paul aren't suggesting that his friends have to celebrate their torment. He's not telling them to be thankful because they're suffering. He's saying that since they know who they are and Whose they are, they can rejoice, pray and be thankful, regardless of current

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[1] 2 Peter 3:9

circumstances, knowing that God will accomplish in them all that He intends for His glory and their blessing. They know Jesus is coming for them. They're actively ready and waiting for Him. And, until all of that comes to fruition, they continue to live, love and serve out of an overflow of gratitude for all God is and all He's done. They choose joy because they know their current situation is not all there is. They choose thanksgiving because they know, even with all they've been given in Christ Jesus, that there's still so much more to come. They pray constantly, seeking the Holy Spirit to guide and lead them in ways that will honor and glorify God as they continue follow His lead.

Some of you are going through it right now. You've got broken bodies, hurting relationships, struggling marriages, wayward children, financial chaos, and so much more. Remember: this is not all there is. If you belong to Jesus, then you can trust that He's got you and He will guide, protect, and empower you. And you need to know that what you're currently enduring does not affect His love or care for you. The question is, 'Will you trust Him?' In the middle of the mess, will we choose to remember that God wants to accomplish in us all that He desires for our blessing and His glory? Do we really believe that what God has for us is more valuable than the cost of our current struggle? Then let's rejoice! Do we genuinely believe that God will rescue us and bring justice? Then let's pray patiently and persistently. Do we truly embrace that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him"[2]? Then let's give thanks regardless of circumstance! When we remember the bigger picture, knowing that God is moving toward a very intentional end, then we can wait patiently—in the yuck—while we rejoice, pray and give thanks because we trust the One who saved us.

In verses 19-22 Paul corrects the Thessalonian church's resistance toward using the gift of prophecy in their gatherings. In this context, prophecy is a message inspired by the Holy Spirit for the edification, encouragement

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[2] Romans 8:28

and guidance of the church community.[3] The Thessalonian believers were familiar with 'spontaneous speech' on behalf of an *idol*; they didn't want to do things that reminded them of their ungodly past. And, since not everyone who says they are speaking by the Holy Spirit really is, they resisted prophecy altogether. But Paul didn't want them to snuff out the fire of the Spirit and miss out on a chance to be built up. Instead, they were to test the prophecy to decide if it was legit. Paul doesn't tell them how but, most likely, it included comparing what had been said in the prophecy with what the Apostles preached and taught about Jesus—that He is Lord and God in the flesh—and whether the prophecy aligned with what was already considered scripture at the time (the Old Testament).[4] If the prophecy would build up the body, aligned with Apostolic teaching and scripture, then it would be considered good and worthy because it was from the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, it was dismissed.

**While You Wait (v 23-24)**

Paul closes chapter 5 with a prayer that focus on holiness and Christ's return, which echoes parts of chapter 3. He reminds them, since they belong to Jesus, that God will continue His sanctifying work in their lives until the day Jesus comes again. Every bit of them is being made holy to the glory of God. Not just spiritually, but physically. To the Greeks, the body was a trap from which to escape. But God made humans as physical and spiritual creatures and He will sanctify every part of us—physically and spiritually.

God started your salvation journey and He will see it through to the end. Your salvation, which will be complete when Christ returns, has never been dependent on you—it's always been about Him. His grace. His mercy. His sacrifice. His blood. His love. His faithfulness. We say it often around here, we bring very little to the equation. Other than a willingness to receive His forgiveness and remain yielded to His leadership, we bring

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[3] Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (1 Th 5:20). Lexham Press.

[4] Shenton, T. (2006). *Opening up 1 Thessalonians* (p. 111). Day One Publications.

nothing. And even our willingness to receive forgiveness and follow His lead are anchored in Him. He convicts us of sin and convinces us of our need for Him so we might be saved. And He gives us His Spirit to take up residence in us to empower and enable us to live godly lives. We bring very little to the table. He saved you. He delivered you. He restored you. It wasn't your goodness or righteousness, but His! This sanctifying work that God initiated in you when you placed your faith in Jesus Christ has led to your ongoing transformation, helping you become increasingly like Christ. When Jesus returns, you won't need to worry about whether or not you're blameless enough to stand before Him. He's already taken care everything! Paul's prayer is that the Thessalonian church would be able to get their heads and hearts around that reality. God will finish what He started when Christ returns.

*Between the Letters*
Now, flip a couple pages to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. Paul has learned that the severity of the persecution against the Thessalonians hasn't eased up—in fact it might even be worse. And there may be a fake letter from "Paul" going around[5] that made people think the Day of the Lord had already happened. But where was Jesus and why were they still suffering? You can imagine the panic in them. So, Paul writes the second letter to relieve their anxiety and set things straight. After a customary greeting in verses 1-2, Paul gets right to it.

Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 with me. [READ]
"3 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. 4 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."

## Under Pressure (1:3-4)

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5 See 2 Thessalonians 2:2

Like a good friend and shepherd, Paul seeks to encourage them. It seems the pressure of persecution didn't derail their love and steadfast faith, but promoted it. Real faith is a living and growing relationship with God. Their trust and love continued to grow, even as they suffered, because they trusted that Jesus would accomplish in them all He intended for His glory and their blessing. Paul and the boys were astounded by their growth and maturity. Their response to trials was inspiring. Paul couldn't help but thank God for all that was happening and he couldn't quit bragging about them to the other churches—not for comparison but out of sheer joy. The Thessalonian brothers and sisters had become "an exemplary model of enduring Christian commitment under difficult conditions."[6]

To encourage them to continue in their faithful endurance, Paul highlights more of what they can expect when Christ returns. Check out verses 5-12. [READ]

"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— 6 since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 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 8 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. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 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. 11 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, 12 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."

## When Christ Returns (v 5-10)

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6 Holms. Michael W., *NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1998), 212.

Paul says it's unmistakably clear that they belong to God because they have leaned into His sustaining grace and strength to endure all they've been through. Their perseverance and growth amidst persecution is a sign of God's blessing, not judgment. Their endurance revealed their trust. We all know people who start something with great gusto and quit when it gets hard. We'll see it on January 1st when people join the gym in swarms and start their new diets but, by April, they will have abandoned it all. People often quit when things get tough: at work, in marriage, at school or in sports. It seems people don't have very strong 'suffer muscles.' But these Thessalonians weren't suffering in their own strength or tenacity. They endured through the strength God continued to give them—and in that endurance they demonstrated that they truly belonged to God and were worthy of His kingdom. Their endurance pointed to God. When you suffer, don't go it alone. Keep trusting God and inviting Him to give you the strength you need. Stay close to other believers who can help shoulder your burden. The Thessalonians were in it together. You were designed to do life in community, so don't suffer in solitude.

Paul assures them that when Jesus comes, they won't be able to miss it! It'll be thunderous and marvelous and, though they suffer bitterly now, when Christ returns they will be rescued and relieved. Their salvation will be complete. The tables will be turned and the persecutors will be punished with eternal destruction. Those who stubbornly refused to believe the Gospel and, in their hostility toward God, made others' lives a living hell will suffer eternal misery—forever separated from God. Throughout their lives they wanted nothing to do with Jesus and, in the end, they'll get what they want: endless separation from their Creator and King.. Choosing to be apart from Jesus, who is the Source of all life and love, is choosing their own destruction. They will no longer benefit from His gracious presence *at all*. He's been patient and doesn't want anyone to have to face His righteous judgment, but that patience will end when Christ returns. That's why Paul reminded them in 1 Thessalonians 5 to seek to do good to everyone—even their tormentors. God loves us. He wants everyone to come to repentance, to receive the forgiveness and

grace of God available in Jesus. So, when you are kind to those who make your life difficult, when you do good to those who 'don't deserve it,' you're demonstrating God's love to them. That's exactly how He's been toward you! You didn't deserve it, but His kindness led you to repentance.

When Jesus comes, those who belong to Him will be awestruck. Picture it: Jesus coming down from heaven, a loud command, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God, angels and fire and, since you belong to Jesus, your rescue and relief have arrived. *This is what I've been waiting for!*

The day I got married was my best day so far; the unbelievable 'wow,' the excitement, the joy. My face hurt from smiling so much. But that'll be nothing compared to when Jesus returns to make all things right. This is what you look forward to when belong to Jesus. Do you belong to Jesus?

*Invitation*

If you're here and you've never invited Christ to forgive you, to save you and to bring you into a right relationship with God, I want to give you the chance to change that. In His kindness He's made it possible for you to hear Paul's words to the Thessalonians today and to show you what it means when you belong to Jesus and what it means when you don't. He loves you and doesn't want you to experience His judgment. So, if you're not yet walking with Jesus, living for Him, but you want to, just raise your hand so I can pray with and for you. I may not yet know your name, but Jesus does. And He knows your heart. If you want to surrender your life to the leadership of Jesus today then make this your prayer: *Jesus, I need Your forgiveness. I need You to save me. I choose to follow You and I turn my back on every old way of living so that You have complete authority in my life. I want to live for You, not myself. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit and empower me to live like You want me to. Thank You for loving me, for forgiving me and for making me Your own. Amen.*

If that's your prayer today, I'd love to know about it. *[Connect Card: we'll follow up and answer questions. Help you as you begin your journey with*

*Jesus.]* If you are seated near someone who raised their hand, before you leave make sure to welcome them into the family of God. We journey together, and today is their first step of a new life in Christ—help them know that they're not alone.

**Until Then (v 11-12)**

Paul concludes chapter 1 with a prayer for his Thessalonian friends. He asks God to continue working in and through them so their lives make it obvious that they belong to Jesus. Christ is exalted when we follow His lead each day. And he petitions the Lord to keep moving in them so that every choice and action is the result of the Spirit's leading to the glory of Jesus and His revealed presence in their lives. His prayer is that the Thessalonians would know that God is working in them and they don't stand alone in their persecution because He is always with them.

**Wrap**

Since we belong to Jesus, we can trust that He will accomplish in us all that He intends for His glory and our blessing. And until He returns, we expectantly wait, following His lead, loving one another, doing good to all, serving and encouraging. And as we do, we are made ready for that glorious day when He comes to make all things right.

**Pray**