



“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.” - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

Imagine being a Christ-follower in Thessalonica. When Paul and Silas first visited to share the gospel, they were driven out of town by an angry mob. Members of that same mob continued to pursue them, and they had to flee again! It would be an understatement to say that the Christians living in Thessalonica were in a hostile environment. Despite the risks, the church understood their vocation as Christ-followers and walked in it. In both of his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul celebrates the way that this group of new believers had been walking with Jesus while helping them to fill in a picture of what it means to be a child of God.

The world we live in often feels hostile. Where the Thessalonians saw Paul and Silas chased out of town by an angry mob, we might see people attacked and belittled for their faith on social media. Even amid the hostility, Paul told the Thessalonian Christians to encourage the disheartened, help the weak and be patient with everyone (1 Thess 5:12b). These are wise words for us as well, as modern-day Christians navigating a society that continues to feel more and more hostile to our faith. What might it look like for you to encourage someone who is disheartened? What might it mean to have patience with everyone?

Even as we think about the role that encouraging, helping, and being patient have in our vocation as children of God, Paul’s words to the Thessalonians in his second letter, “God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,” is a REALLY BIG DEAL. We are called to belief and set apart to be children of God in the world. In that calling, God offers us forgiveness where we fall short and His unfailing love and mercy.

God puts people in our lives who point us to Him and remind us of who He is and what He’s done in us and for us. Those same people help us to understand what it means to be a Christ follower. God gave Paul, Silas, and Timothy to the Thessalonians- who has He given to you? It may be a friend, parent, church worker, or someone else who models for you what it looks like to follow Jesus and encourage you to stand firm.

When this world seems hostile remember that you have been chosen for the vocation of child of God and sent to bring Good News with encouragement, help, and patience to the world. Stand firm in that calling, following the examples that have been set for you and setting the example for those who will come after.

Journal questions

- What are some parts of the vocation of Child of God that I find challenging? What comes easily to me?
- Who encourages me to stand firm in my faith? Who can I encourage?

Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for calling me to be your child. Help me to live out that vocation by standing firm in the Gospel and showing others the truth of your love and mercy. In Jesus’ name, amen.