

STUDY NUMBER THREE - 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Has Satan Hindered You?

Key Verse 2:18: "Because of this we desired to come to you, indeed, I Paul, not only once but twice, but Satan hindered us."

TEXT:

v.13 And because of this we also are constantly giving thanks to God, because when you took to yourselves the word of divine preaching that goes out from us, you welcomed not the word of men, but even as truly it is, God's word, which also is operating in you who are believing.

v.14 For you became imitators, brethren, of the assemblies of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you also suffered the same things at the hands of your own countrymen, even as also they did from the Jews,

v.15 those who also killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and are not pleasing God and are hostile to all men,

v.16 forbidding us to tell the Gentiles in order that they might be saved; to the end that they might fill up the measure of their sins always. And there came upon them the wrath in the end.

v.17 But we, brethren, were made orphans by separation from you for a short season--in person, not in heart (outwardly not inwardly)--we made every effort all the more with much desire to see your face.

v.18 Because of this we desired to come to you, indeed, I Paul, not only once but twice, but Satan hindered us.

v.19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of glorying? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

v.20 For you are our glory and joy.

INTRODUCTION:

The other day my good friend Randy chided me for having such a big bottle of Scope mouthwash. I told him that was the only size they had at Sam's and I had to learn a new principle:

By buying a lot you can save a little.

Erma Bombeck has a great article called the:

"Wal-Mart metamorphosis"

Something really strange happens to me when I'm in a Wal-Mart store. It's as if a metamorphosis takes place. I change from a mild-mannered boutique looker into a power-driven shopping machine.

It begins in the parking lot. I tell myself if I can't find a spot near the front door, I'll go home. It's no big deal. I don't need anything. I'm just there to look.

The longer I have to circle, the more pumped up I become. If I don't get inside that store and get my hands around a bargain--and soon--I'm going to hyperventilate.

I even change physically. No longer am I a woman who shops to be seen. In a Wal-Mart, no one cares. An Elvis sighting rates only a bored glance. If George Bush asked directions to paint thinner, 10 people would yell, "If it had been a snake, it would have bitten him."

Mostly what scares me is what can only be described as the "I need this!" hormone. When it kicks in, I am like a woman who has just traveled by dogsled over 500 miles to get supplies for a mining camp for the year before I return. I need supplies of bulk proportions, like drums of paint, cartons of paper towels and crates of antifreeze. I also need a peach parakeet, a Christmas-tree skirt kit with sequins to attach, a case of bamboo shoots, and a pair of floral leggings that make me look like a Disney parking lot from the rear.

I need an ice chest shaped like Marge Simpson, a plastic topiary tree, a smoke alarm and a key ring with a scorpion laminated in it.

To look at my cart, one would never suspect there are only two in our family. There are enough staples to last until the thaw--if I didn't live in the desert.

Stores like Wal-Mart that have the ambience of a monster truck-pulling contest in progress have sprung up all over the country. They are enormously successful. They are like giant garage sales without the chips in the candy dishes and the lamps that need rewiring.

They can sell 100 pounds of cat food to a dog owner, knitting needles to someone who doesn't know which end to hold the needles, and a bicycle water bottle to someone who thinks it's a plant mister.

All I know is, with 36 rolls of toilet tissue in my bathroom, my longevity is assured. I'm too cheap to die.

(From Universal Press Syndicate, "At Wit's End"
by Erma Bombeck)

Matthew 6:31-34

Do not be anxious then, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "With what shall we clothe ourselves?" For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

In our study of 1 Thessalonians we are making a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP.

We have raised 2 QUESTIONS to this point:

QUESTION #1:

DID WE MAKE THE RIGHT START IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS?

It is first things first. We must enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

QUESTION #2:

ARE YOU A PHONY?

The 2nd study is very closely related in that we are phonies if we have not come into that relationship. Our religion is just a performance before people. It is also possible to be in relationship and out of fellowship. We find that we have to fake it in order to make it.

A 3rd problem that could present itself to us and keep us from normal development would be SATAN'S HINDERING TACTIC.

His primary hindering tactic for those who know not the Christ is to keep them from ever finding time to make that critical decision.

The hindering tactic in the life of the believer is to keep him childish and carnal, never finding time to spend time with the Lord and deepening his relationship that he might become fruitful and effective in his life.

Ephesians 6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

1 Peter 5:8, 9

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

2 Corinthians 2:11

in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

2 Corinthians 3:3, 4

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 12:7

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself!

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

Romans 16:20

And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

1 John 4:4

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

Amos 3:12

This is what the Lord says:
 "As a shepherd saves from the lion's mouth
 only two leg bones or a piece of an ear,
 so will the Israelites be saved,
 those who sit in Samaria
 on the edge of their beds
 and in Damascus on their couches."

Hebrews 5:11-14

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Keeping a Christian CHILDISH and CARNAL is Satan's greatest thrill.

As we enter in upon this study, then, let's ask ourselves the question in our SPIRITUAL CHECKUP:

HAS SATAN HINDERED US ALONG THE WAY?

v.13 And because of this we also are constantly giving thanks to God, because when you took to yourselves the word of divine preaching that goes out from us, you welcomed not the word of men, but even as truly it is, God's word, which also is operating in you who are believing.

1 Thessalonians 1:2, 3

We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father;

Lenski says:

Paul now goes back to the ultimate basis of faith, love and hope, namely, to the word of God imparted to the Thessalonians.

"AND BECAUSE OF THIS WE ALSO ARE CONSTANTLY GIVING THANKS TO GOD."

Now the reason:

"BECAUSE WHEN YOU TOOK TO YOURSELVES THE WORD OF DIVINE PREACHING THAT GOES OUT FROM US, YOU WELCOMED NOT THE WORD OF MEN, BUT EVEN AS TRULY IT IS, GOD'S WORD."

There are 4 STEPS involved here:

- 1.they HEARD the word of God
- 2.they RECEIVED it
- 3.they WELCOMED it
- 4.it WORKED in their lives

Harold J. Ockenga points out:

As men gain knowledge of the content of the word, they must give assent to it and make a commitment of their lives to the truth. For them it became the living word which

convicted, converted, cleansed and changed them.

There are 4 THINGS then which stand out in this verse:

- 1.They heard the word of God,
- 2.They accepted it or received it,
- 3.They welcomed it,
- 4.It began to work in their lives.

Paul, having made a defense for their conduct in the city of Thessalonica, would now make a defense for the word which they brought to them and what was responsible for their changed conduct.

The message of the missionaries was not man's words of wisdom.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.

THE BIBLE AND THE PRESIDENTS

John Quincy Adams (1825-29)

"The first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention is the Bible. I speak as a man of the world . . . and I say to you, 'Search the Scriptures.'"

Andrew Jackson (1829-37)

Upon hearing a man defaming God's Word, Jackson rebuked him with the following well-chosen words:

"Sir, that Book is the Rock on which our Republic rests!"

Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865)

Lincoln had devout Christian parents but apparently didn't become a believer till the darkest days of the Civil War. As a boy he read the Bible so much that his style was ever after heavily influenced by the King James Version. The following quotation is no doubt from the period before he found his faith:

"I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this book upon reason that you can and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man."

Ulysses S. Grant (1869-77)

Grant was a man of integrity. As he was dying of cancer he wrote his memoirs, not for prestige, but so as not to leave his family in debt. He finished in time; the royalties saved the family from financial ruin. Grant wrote:

"Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts on your hearts and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for the progress made, and to this we must look as our guide in the future."

William McKinley (1897-1901)

President McKinley was a genuine believer in Christ. His words are sorely needed by our currently biblically illiterate, "Christian-bashing" culture:

"The more profoundly we study this Book and the more closely we observe its divine precepts, the better citizens we will become and the higher will be our destiny as a nation."

Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09)

"Almost every man who by his life-work added to the sum of human achievement of which the race is proud, of which our people are proud, almost every such man has based his life-work largely upon the teachings of the Bible."

(From The Grace Evangelical Society News, Vol. 7, # 2.
Feb. 1992. An article by Art Farsted)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The gospel is not the kind of message that man would invent if he could nor is it a message that he could invent if he would.

Someone else said:

Bad men or devils would not have written the Bible, for it condemns them and their works. Good men or angels could not have written it, for in saying it was from God when it was but their own invention, they would have been guilty of falsehood and thus could not have been good. The only remaining Being who could have written it is God, its real Author.

Do you know a book that you are willing to put under your head for a pillow when you are dying? That is the book you want to study while you are living. There is but one such book in the world.

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

Two men were fishing one Sunday morning. Their consciences began to bother them because they were not in church. Finally, one fisherman said, "You know, I feel a bit guilty that we're not in church this morning."

"Well," replied the other, "if it's bothering you, why don't you say a prayer or something?"

The first angler answered, "Okay, I'll say the Lord's Prayer."

"Oh yeah? But you don't even know the words!"

"Want to bet I don't?"

"Sure do. Here's five bucks that you don't know the Lord's Prayer."

"Here's five bucks that I do!"

"You're on. Now let's hear it."

The first fisherman took a deep breath, closed his eyes and reverently intoned, "Now I lay me down . . ."

"Stop! Stop!" The second fisherman interrupted impatiently. "You don't have to finish. Here's my five. I didn't think you knew it!"

This story may only be a fisherman's tale, but in reality there is a shocking amount of biblical ignorance today. In a nationwide survey of Americans, the Barna Research Group found that

- * 58% do not know who preached the Sermon on the Mount.
 - * Most Americans cannot identify the names of the first four books of the New Testament.
 - * Half of all adults (52%) did not know that the book of Jonah is in the Bible.
 - * Half of all adults (48%) did not know that the book of Thomas is not in the Bible.
 - * Seven out of ten adults did not know that the expression "God helps those that help themselves" is not contained within the Bible.
- pp. 67-68

Stedman says:

In the midst of flux and change, one thing remains absolutely unchangeable, the word of the living God. The message of the Bible never alters, it is always up to date. Speaking to the issues of every age, the bible is like a solid rock in the midst of a desert of shifting sand. It is the most precious object on the earth today. Abraham Lincoln called it God's best gift to man. Daniel Webster said, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering, but if we or our posterity neglect it and its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity." Those are prophetic words for these times.

"AND BECAUSE OF THIS WE ALSO ARE CONSTANTLY GIVING THANKS TO GOD, BECAUSE WHEN YOU TOOK TO YOURSELVES THE WORD OF DIVINE PREACHING THAT GOES OUT FROM US, YOU WELCOMED [negatively] NOT THE WORD OF MEN, BUT [positively] EVEN AS TRULY IT IS, GOD'S WORD."

Hogg and Vine say:

There is a slight though real difference between the words "received" and "accepted." The first refers to the ear. The second, adding the idea of appropriation, refers to the heart.

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

Dr. Paul Meier, a Christian psychiatrist, did extensive testing of the spiritual and mental health of students from an evangelical seminary several years ago. As he told it:

When the results came in, initially I was surprised and disappointed. Those seminary students who had been Christians for many years were only slightly healthier and happier than those who had accepted Christ in the past one or two years. The difference was not even statistically significant. However, my disappointment turned to joy. I learned one of the most valuable lessons of my life when I found the factor that made the difference. That factor was Scriptural meditation. Students who practiced almost daily Scripture meditation for three years or longer were significantly healthier and happier than students who did not meditate on Scripture daily.

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(The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives by Dallas Willard)

Here we have an activity of mind and body undertaken with all the strength we have to make our total being cooperate effectively with the divine order. As a pastor, teacher, and counselor I have repeatedly seen the transformation of inner and outer life that comes simply from memorization and meditation upon Scripture. Personally, I would never undertake to pastor a church or guide a program of Christian education that did not involve a continuous program of memorization of the choicest passages of Scripture for people of all ages.

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(Decision-Making by the Book by Haddon Robinson)

Ahab's plan fails. An archer shoots an arrow into the air--"by chance" the Scripture says--and it sinks into Ahab's belly. Isn't it strange how chance and the sovereignty of God meet! The last we hear of Ahab, dogs are licking up his rich royal blood by a pool in the capital city of Samaria.

Don't miss the force of that story. If we want to believe a lie, we will get the lie to believe. If we come to the Word of God determined to do what we please, we can get from the Bible anything we desire.

We must come in submission to the Word, in submission to its teaching, in submission to the moral law of God.

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Paul speaks of their message as a:

"WORD OF DIVINE PREACHING THAT GOES OUT FROM [them]."

Spurgeon says of the word of God:

This is the revelation of God, and I will die sooner than I will ever by any action of mine permit a doubt to be cast upon it.

We also see in this verse that Paul once again uses the NEGATIVE and POSITIVE in describing this "WORD OF DIVINE PREACHING":

"YOU WELCOMED [negatively] NOT THE WORD OF MEN, BUT [positively] EVEN AS TRULY IT IS, GOD'S WORD."

The response of the Thessalonians was that once they heard this message:

they welcomed it,

they were thrilled with it,

they were eager and desirous to have more of it.

This word that they brought was not some fanciful fairy tale made up of men but:

"EVEN AS TRULY IT IS, GOD'S WORD."

Acts 17:11

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

Paul concludes the verse with a very interesting observation:

"YOU WELCOMED NOT THE WORD OF MEN, BUT EVEN AS TRULY IT IS, GOD'S WORD, WHICH ALSO IS OPERATING IN YOU WHO ARE BELIEVING."

The Thessalonians are characterized by the fact that they were the ones welcoming the word of God, and now it was working in their lives.

Hendricksen says:

The genuine character of this acceptance was proved by the fact that this divine word was actually bearing fruit in the lives of the people as the passage in chapter 1:6-10 has already shown. They had "turned away from idols toward God and toward the coming of His Son, and, even amid much affliction, they were joyfully proclaiming the new faith. And as verse 14 is going to show, the word accordingly was operating. It was at work effective in the lives of believers. And the reason why the word was at work, and this in a favorable sense, was that it was the word of God. By means of that word, God himself was working.

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The word of God has a living quality about it, and as it enters the heart of man it begins doing its work in our lives.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The spoken word of God has an inherent power to change.

Genesis 1:3

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

1 Samuel 3:19

The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground.

Let us meditate for a moment on the power of the word of God in our individual lives:

1. THE PAST:

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2. THE PRESENT:

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

3. Let us think of THE FUTURE:

Philippians 1:6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

1 John 3:2, 3

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Barnes explains:

The meaning is that the true was made efficacious in the minds of all who became true Christians. It induced them to abandon their sins, to devote themselves to God, to lead pure and holy lives, and enabled them to abide the trials and temptations of life.

The WORD OF GOD working in our lives is doing 2 THINGS:

- 1.It is PURIFYING us
- 2.It is REARRANGING OUR PRIORITIES

1.First of all, the function of the word working in our lives, PURIFYING US, is seen in:

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2.Secondly, our PRIORITIES ARE REARRANGED:

Matthew 6:33

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

The word "OPERATING" is in the PRESENT TENSE, indicating the fact that this is something that is going on all the time.

Psalms 1:1-3

Blessed is the man
 who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or stand in the way of sinners
 or sit in the seat of mockers.
 But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.
 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither.
 Whatever he does prospers.

Psalm 119:9, 11

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word.

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

Ryrie says:

He also claims for the word effective, fructifying operation because it works in the heart of the believer.

Hogg and Vine say:

In Hebrews 4:12 the word of God is described as "living" and "active." By it the soul is saved (Jas. 1:21), and the new birth effected (1 Pet. 1:23). By it Christians are sanctified (John 17:17; 1 Tim. 4:5), and edified (Acts 20:32). It bears fruit and increases throughout the world (Col 1:6), growing and prevailing mightily (Acts 19:20). Like the seed (Mk. 4:26, 27), the word of God bears its life and power within itself, hence its manifold activities and its boundless increase. It is compared with fire as against that which is false and with a hammer against that which is strong (Jer. 23:29). It is light in the midst of darkness (Ps. 119:105), and it is the sole weapon of attack in the Christian's armory (Ephes. 6:17).

Lenski says:

This Word works in the Thessalonians what Paul states in chapter 1:3. It came to them with the power of the Holy Spirit and much assurance (1:5); it turned them from the idols to the living God, to him who raised up Jesus from the dead, the Savior from the wrath to come (1:9, 10). This effect, wrought by the Word, convinces all believers, all who experience this blessed effect, that this is, indeed, God's Word.

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Barnhouse says:

Now if you want to see how terrific this verse is, turn over two or three more pages toward the back of the Bible until you come to Hebrews 4:2. Here the writer says: "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them. But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Horne follows up on this by saying:

It was through the instrumentality of the word that the supernatural power of God worked in those who became saints, and they continued to exercise faith. We cannot live today on the spiritual experience of yesterday.

The word "BELIEVING" is in the PRESENT TENSE and is the single condition of salvation.

Ockenga summarizes it by saying:

The Thessalonians believed the word. Such faith is elemental to Christian experience. As men gain knowledge of the content of the word, they must give ascent to it and then make a commitment of their lives to the truth. This results in an entrance to the kingdom of God and the experience of justification by faith. Thus, Paul could speak "the word which worketh in you." For them it became the living word which convicted them, converted them, cleansed them and changed them. In this sense, the word of God may be called the saving word. Wherever the happy reaction of the Thessalonians is repeated the word of God works efficaciously in individuals unto salvation.

Stedman says:

Most of us are familiar with the story of Mutiny on the Bounty. In the nineteenth century, crew members of the H.M.S. Bounty took over the ship, set their captain adrift in a lifeboat, and ended up at last on Pitcairn Island in the South Pacific.

That is only part of the story. What happened to the mutineers after they landed is something else altogether. These rough, tough, godless sailors, together with the wives they had taken with them from the island of Tahiti spent their days on Pitcairn drinking, gambling, carousing and fighting among themselves. Soon the fighting led to battle. One by one they killed each other off until the colony was reduced to a handful.

Among them was a man named Alexander Smith. Rummaging through his trunk one day, Smith found a Bible that his mother had put there. He began to read it and his life was changed. As he read to the survivors, a dramatic change began taking place in their lives as well. And when that island was discovered by outsiders some years later, the inhabitants had become a model community. There was no jail because there was no crime. The citizens loved God and each other. The Book had totally changed their lives and their society.

There is much talk today about revival coming upon our land. May I say to you that revival is not going to come through warm fuzzies and personal experience. It is only going to come when we return wholeheartedly to the teaching of the scriptures.

(Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit)

Let God send the fire of His Spirit here, and the minister will be more and more lost in his Master. You will come to think less of the speaker and more of the truth spoken. . .

Let God but send down the fire, and the biggest sinners in the neighborhood will be converted; those who live in the dens of infamy will be changed; the drunkard will forsake his cups, the swearer will repent of his blasphemy, the debauched will leave their lusts--

Dry bones be raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone be turned to flesh.
--Charles H. Spurgeon

p. 1

Jonathan Edwards recorded the evidences of spiritual awakening in his treatise, Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God. He said there were five marks of genuineness in true revival:

1. It exalts Jesus Christ.
2. It attacks the kingdom of darkness.
3. It honors the Scriptures.
4. It promotes sound doctrine.
5. It produces an outpouring of love toward God and men.

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When we realize how central and crucial the word of God is to our spiritual development, we understand why Satan would do everything in his power to hinder us from having daily time for meditation and study in the scriptures.

1 Peter 2:2, 3

like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

v.14 For you became imitators, brethren, of the assemblies of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you also suffered the same things at the hands of your own countrymen, even as also they did from the Jews,

The reason why Paul and his fellow-workers knew that the word of God was working in the lives of the Thessalonians is that they followed a pattern:

They "BECAME IMITATORS . . . OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD WHICH ARE IN JUDEA IN CHRIST JESUS."

The further reason is stated:

"BECAUSE YOU ALSO SUFFERED THE SAME THINGS AT THE HANDS OF YOUR OWN COUNTRYMEN, EVEN AS ALSO THEY DID FROM THE JEWS."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Those whose lives are being changed by God often find themselves the objects of criticism and attack by people in whom there is no divine life.

Frequently when Christians suffer persecution, they are tempted to think God's blessing has departed. Paul counters Satan's lie by reminding his readers that their experience duplicated that of their elder brothers and sisters in the faith in Judea.

Spurgeon has a very delightful comment on verses 13 and 14. He says:

There are three sights that are worth seeing in these verses. First of all, ministers who are giving thanks to God, and two, hearers who are receiving the Word of God, and three, converts who are exhibiting a family likeness.

In verse 13 we see the Thessalonians welcoming the word and we see the word working in their lives.

Now we come to verse 14 and we are made aware of the fact that suffering is part of the curriculum.

The reason Paul knows that the word of God is operating in their lives is because they became "IMITATORS."

Here in verse 14 the Thessalonians became imitators of their fellow Christian brethren in the land of Judea.

1 Thessalonians 1:6

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word while in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,

These Christians that the Thessalonians were imitating had

2 SPHERES OF OPERATION:

- 1.Their PHYSICAL sphere of operation was in "JUDEA"
- 2.Their SPIRITUAL sphere of operation was "IN CHRIST JESUS."

The way in which they imitated these Christians in Judea is seen in the next phrase:

"BECAUSE YOU ALSO SUFFERED THE SAME THINGS AT THE HANDS OF YOUR OWN COUNTRYMEN, EVEN AS ALSO THEY DID FROM THE JEWS."

Now Paul was certainly a chief authority in this business of persecution in the land of Judea. Before he became a Christian he was one of the most avid persecutors of the Christians there.

Acts 9:1

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

Galatians 1:13, 14

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

William Hendricksen points out:

Willingness to suffer for Christ is proof of discipleship. It shows that the word of God is at work in the heart.

William Barclay, in The Daily Study Bible, says:

To the Thessalonians the Christian faith had brought not peace but trouble. Their new-found loyalty had involved them in persecution. Paul's method of encouraging them is very interesting. It is in effect to say to them, "Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod." Their persecution was a badge of honor which entitled them to rank with the picked regiments of the army of Christ.

Ellicott ties it together when he says:

Your imitation of the churches of Judea and your sufferings is a distinct evidence of the working of the word within you.

Here in the 14th verse we see proof of the effectiveness of their ministry of the word of God. This was demonstrated in that they not only "BECAME IMITATORS" of the other Christians in Judea, but in addition were willing to suffer for the things of Christ.

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Joseph Parker has stated:

The Thessalonians were more than hearers. They also had suffered. Until a man has suffered the Word, he cannot understand it. He that will live godly will suffer persecution even now.

(Topical Memory System: Life Issues edited by
The Navigators)

Margaret Clarkson put it this way: "Perhaps the greatest good that suffering can work for a believer is to increase the capacity of his soul for God. The greater our need, the greater will be our capacity; the greater our capacity, the greater will be our experience of God. Can any price be too much for such eternal good?"
p. 85

(I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression
by Erma Bombeck)

An ad in a midwest newspaper read, a while back, "WANTED: Women to do ironing for housewife ten years behind in everything. Must have strong courage and sense of humor. Phone-----."
p. 150

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life
by Barbara Johnson)

THESE DAYS
IT TAKES NERVES OF STEEL
JUST TO BE NEUROTIC

Every day we live out the proof that stress is HERE, a fact of life, and we must learn to cope with it. You may have seen the cartoon that shows Ziggy driving by a highway sign reading:

HARSH REALITIES NEXT 2,500 MILES.

Actually, the harsh realities last a lot longer than that. The sign could read:

HARSH REALITIES FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP.

pp. 91-92

When I woke up this morning I had one nerve left . . . and now you're getting on it.
p. 99

(Healing and Holiness by C. Samuel Storms)

I have always been amazed by the skills of the sculptor. Although I have only seen Michelangelo's David in a picture, it baffles me how any man could produce something so striking and lifelike. Someone once said that sculpting is easy: you just chip away everything that doesn't look like a man! When I read passages such as those by Paul and James and Peter, it is as if they envision God to be a sculptor of sorts, with our trials and pains the hammer and chisel used to shape us into the image of Christ. All he does is chip away from our lives everything that doesn't look like Jesus!

Christian virtues like faith, patience, endurance, and dependence on God often come at a high price--our pain. "When you crush lavender," wrote David Watson, shortly before his death, "you find its full fragrance; when you squeeze an orange, you extract its sweet juice. In the same way it is often through pains and hurts that we develop the fragrance and sweetness of Jesus in our lives."

p. 127

This is one reason I am convinced that the gospel of health and wealth being preached today is fundamentally selfish. It is oriented to me and what I need and can obtain from God. But affliction, whatever its form, is really God's way of preparing us to minister to others.

p. 128

I thought often in the hospital of the words of Florida pastor Steve Brown. Steve says that every time a non-Christian gets cancer, God allows a Christian to get cancer as well--so the world can see the difference. I prayed I might be so filled with God's grace that the world might see the difference.

Steve's words represent a powerful truth. God does not witness to the world by taking his people out of suffering, but rather by demonstrating his grace through them in the midst of pain.
p. 129

F. B. Meyer makes a very pointed statement as he speaks about suffering:

Who shall estimate the hundred-fold of blessing from every moment of pain? The psalms are crystallized tears, the epistles were in many cases written in prison, the greatest teachers of mankind have learned their most helpful lessons in sorrow's school, the noblest characters have been forged in a furnace. Acts which will live forever, masterpieces of art and music and literature have originated in ages of storm and tempest and heart-rending agony. So also is it with our earthly discipline. The ripest results are sorrow born.

v.15 those who also killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and are not pleasing God and are hostile to all men,

Paul, in these next 2 verses, reminds the Thessalonians of the Jews and of the things which they were guilty of so they could recognize that they are not abnormal in going through the crucible of suffering at this time.

Here in verses 15 and 16 we have 5 GREEK PARTICIPLES, and they give us a 5-fold indictment of the Jews by presenting us the errors which they have committed.

The first thing that Paul says they are guilty of is:

1.They "KILLED THE LORD JESUS AND THE PROPHETS."

The Lord Jesus said this same thing in:

Matthew 23:37

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Barclay on this point says:

No man ever rendered a message inoperative by slaying the messenger who brought it.
p. 223

This is certainly true in the Christian faith of those who have suffered and died a martyr's death--in many of those situations the word has prospered as a result of their death.

The 2nd thing that they are guilty of in verse 15 is:

2.They "DROVE US OUT."

Paul here is referring to the fact that in many places in his ministry it was the opposition of the Jews that caused them to be driven out of areas where they were ministering. This was certainly true there in Thessalonica.

It would seem reasonable that even though the Jews would refuse to accept the message of Jesus Christ that they would be willing to let others hear and respond according to the dictates of their own hearts, but this was not the case.

The 3rd thing that Paul states here in this verse is:

3.They "ARE NOT PLEASING GOD."

This would hit home with any godly Jew because their whole lives were spent in pursuit of wanting to please God by the performance of certain laws and ordinances which were to bring about pleasure to God.

The facts of the case, however, are clearly presented. They are not pleasing God by the way they are acting.

The 4th thing that Paul states here in this 15th verse is:

4.They "ARE HOSTILE TO ALL MEN."

By this he means they were just concerned about their own rights and privileges, thinking only of themselves. Everybody else was a competitor, someone to be obliterated rather than someone to love and to be concerned about.

Mark 3:2

And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him.

1 Corinthians 2:8

the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

Acts 26:14, 15

And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

And I said, "Who art Thou, Lord?"

And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

Hebrews 2:9

But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

v.16 forbidding us to tell the Gentiles in order that they might be saved; to the end that they might fill up the measure of their sins always. And there came upon them the wrath in the end.

The previous 4 PARTICIPLES in verse 15 were:

- 1.They "KILLED THE LORD JESUS AND THE PROPHETS,"
- 2.They "DROVE US OUT,"
- 3.They "ARE NOT PLEASING GOD,"
- 4.They "ARE HOSTILE TO ALL MEN."

And now:

- 5.These Jews are "FORBIDDING US TO TELL THE GENTILES IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED."

According to Barclay:

The Jews wish to keep the offer of the love of God exclusively to themselves.

We are God's chosen few.
 All others will be damned.
 There is no room in heaven for you.
 We can't have heaven crammed.

Acts 4:18-20

And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

When truth unmask wrong, those who are exposed get very nervous . . . like the two brothers in a story I heard recently.

These brothers were rich. They were also wicked. Both lived a wild, unprofitable existence, using their wealth to cover up the dark side of their lives. On the surface, however, few would have guessed it, for these consummate cover-up artists attended the same church almost every Sunday and contributed large sums to various projects.

Then the church called a new pastor, a young man who preached the truth with zeal and courage. Before long, attendance had grown so much that the church needed a larger worship center. Being a man of keen insight and strong integrity, this young pastor had also seen through the hypocritical lifestyles of the two brothers. Suddenly one of the brothers died, and the young pastor was asked to preach his funeral. The day before the funeral, the surviving brother pulled the minister aside and handed him an envelope. "There's a check in here that is large enough to pay the entire amount you need for the new sanctuary," he whispered. "All I ask is one favor: Tell the people at the funeral that he was a saint." The minister gave the brother his word; he would do precisely what was asked. That afternoon he deposited the check into the church's account.

The next day the young pastor stood before the casket at the funeral service and said with firm conviction, "This man was an ungodly sinner, wicked to the core. He was unfaithful to his wife, hot-tempered with his children, ruthless in his business, and a hypocrite at church . . . but compared to his brother, he was a saint." pp. 4-5

(The Christian Salt & Light Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

We all know religious people who seem to court persecution--those running around with their own stake and box of matches. People want to reject them. They are very zealous people, lapel grabbers with a religion that probably never goes below the shirt pocket. They may think that they bear the offense of the cross, but they are just plain offensive. They've got body odor, bad breath, and bad manners. p. 89

(Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses by James W. Moore)

There's an old story about two farmers who lived side by side. One day the fence between the two farms was pushed down, and the livestock of one farmer trampled the garden of the other farmer. The farmer whose garden was damaged was so irate that he rounded up the animals and refused to return them until their owner had paid in full for the damages. The farmer whose livestock had caused the problem was genuinely sorry. He apologized, paid the damages, took his cows home, and repaired the fence.

A few days later, ironically, the opposite thing happened! The other man's livestock pushed the fence down and got into the other garden. But this farmer, who had a golden opportunity to retaliate, chose to come at the problem in a different way. He rounded up the cows and returned them to their owner.

The owner, red-faced and embarrassed, reached for his checkbook: "I suppose you have the damages figured, so let me pay you and get it over with. How much do I owe you?"

"Nothing, nothing at all, not a penny," said the good farmer. "We are neighbors, and I'd much rather lose my garden than your friendship."

Later that night, there was a knock at the door of this kind farmer. When he opened the door, there stood his neighbor with the money he had received for damages a few days before.

Handing over the money, he said, "Please take the money back. You have something I don't have, and I want it. I want to find that kind of unselfish spirit, and maybe this will get me started!"
pp. 40-41

(The Christian Salt & Light Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

We cannot reflect His light and remain obscure. We cannot hide His light. God doesn't call us into the secret service. Either secrecy will destroy the discipleship or the discipleship will destroy the secrecy. We cannot live light-filled lives in our society without standing out, without having people notice us. They may not like us, and they may persecute us; but they will know we are there.
p. 105

1 Peter 3:15

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

"FORBIDDING US TO TELL THE GENTILES IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED; TO THE END THAT THEY MIGHT FILL UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR SINS ALWAYS. AND THERE CAME UPON THEM THE WRATH IN THE END."

Paul now tells us the consequences or the end in view for doing the things which they have done.

Matthew 23:31-33

Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?

Genesis 6:5-7

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them."

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life
by Barbara Johnson)

I'M NOT GOING TO WORRY
UNLESS THE ANIMALS START LINING UP
TWO BY TWO FOR THE NEXT SPACE SHUTTLE!

p. 102

"TO THE END THAT THEY MIGHT FILL UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR SINS ALWAYS."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

God will only allow an individual or a group of individuals to accumulate so much sin and then He will judge. He does not judge before this limit. The Thessalonians' persecutors were hastening God's judgment on themselves by their actions.

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Be happy, young man, while you are young,
 and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.
 Follow the ways of your heart
 and whatever your eyes see,
 but know that for all these things
 God will bring you to judgment.

Hebrews 10:31

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hogg and Vine say:

God permits men to go far in wickedness because He is long-suffering and gives time for repentance "as in the days of Noah."

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Genesis 15:16

In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.

Romans 1:24

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

Romans 1:26

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

Romans 1:28

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

"AND THERE CAME UPON THEM THE WRATH IN THE END."

The certainty of God's judgment is seen here at the conclusion of verse 16.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

v.17 But we, brethren, were made orphans by separation from you for a short season--in person, not in heart (outwardly not inwardly)--we made every effort all the more with much desire to see your face.

The word "BUT" that begins this verse forms a great contrast to the Jews whom we have been speaking of in the previous verses.

You will note that once again he calls them "BRETHREN."

Paul has called himself:

1.a "nursing mother" in chapter 2:7,

2.a "father" in verse 11,

and now in verse 17, because of the fact that they had been separated unwillingly, he refers to the fact:

3.they were made "ORPHANS" by the separation from the Thessalonians.

John 14:18, 19

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also.

This separation from the Thessalonians was a very painful one, and it was only "IN PERSON." Paul said that he left his heart with them.

I am sure Paul sang often:

"I left my heart in Thessalonica."

There is a POSITIVE and a NEGATIVE here:

"BUT WE, BRETHREN, WERE MADE ORPHANS BY SEPARATION FROM YOU FOR A SHORT SEASON--[positively] IN PERSON, [negatively] NOT IN HEART."

The word "ORPHANS" is only used here in the New Testament. It also means "to be bereaved of a child."

2 Samuel 3:14-16

Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins."

So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go back home!" So he went back.

Paul is experiencing great grief like one experiences in bereavement and separation.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

To Paul it was as though his family was being torn apart. It broke his heart to leave them as infant babes in Christ. He left them physically but they were still in his heart. They were not out of sight and out of mind.

The care and feeding of new believers was not just an obligation but something that needed to be done.

Barnes comments:

"In presence, not in heart. My heart was still with you." This is an elegant and touching expression which we still use to denote affection for an absent friend.

(Cages of Pain by Gordon Aeschliman)

Very few of the people who have recounted their crippling stories to me have found comfort from Christians around them. One described it as lying on the operating table in excruciating pain after being run over by a semi truck. The surgeon pokes away at the holes and gashes in your body and lectures you for being in a position that left you vulnerable to semi trucks. Meanwhile, you're bleeding to death.
p. 29

"WE MADE EVERY EFFORT ALL THE MORE WITH MUCH DESIRE TO SEE YOUR FACE."

One of the characteristics of love is that it does not like being separated from the one that is loved.

Because of this separation and the love between the apostle and the Thessalonians, we note in the latter part of the 17th verse that:

they "MADE EVERY EFFORT ALL THE MORE WITH MUCH DESIRE TO SEE [the] FACE" of the Thessalonians again.

Evidently, the 3 of them, Paul, Silas and Timothy, endeavored to return to the city of Thessalonica and were not able to do so.

Acts 17:5-10

But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

v.18 Because of this we desired to come to you, indeed, I Paul, not only once but twice, but Satan hindered us.

Because of this great desire to see your face:

"WE DESIRED TO COME TO YOU."

1 John 12

Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

3 John 4

I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

Because of the love which they had for the Thessalonians, Paul says that the 3 of them desired to come to Thessalonica.

Then he says:

"INDEED, I PAUL, NOT ONLY ONCE BUT TWICE, BUT SATAN HINDERED US."

We come now to the KEY VERSE in our study. We are looking for symptoms in our SPIRITUAL CHECKUP as to why our lives are not effective as they should be for the Lord.

Here in this 18th verse we recognize that Satan is in the business of:

hindering us from becoming Christians,
and hindering us from growing in Christ.

Galatians 5:7

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

1 Peter 3:7

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

The word "HINDERED" is a military word for "breaking up the road to construct bridges."

It was an event that Paul has in mind because "HINDERED" is in the aorist tense, referring to a "point action." It could have been physical or it could have been pressure, but whatever it was, Paul does not make specific reference to it here.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary asks:

Was it Satan, God, or other people? The helping of new converts is God's will and any hindrance would be opposition. Regardless of who on the human level, the ultimate kind of opposition is Satan.

John Calvin says:

Whenever the ungodly cause us trouble, they are fighting under the banner of Satan and are his instruments for harassing us.

God permitted this to happen but He is no more responsible for it than He is for any sin which His creatures commit and which He permits.

Horatius Bonar points out:

With many of us the Christian life has not gone on to maturity. "Ye did run well. Who did hinder you?" It has been a work well begun but left unfinished. A battle boldly entered on but only half fought out. A book with but the preface written but no more. Is not thus Christ dishonored?

Paul in many places likens the Christian life to a race, and what he is saying here is that Satan, the opposing runner, has cut in on the Christian and caused him to break stride or to stumble.

The picture in the word "HINDERED" also has the idea of breaking up the road. Thus it makes travel very difficult. It is like driving in an area under construction.

Barclay describes this word as:

. . . putting up a roadblock calculated to stop an expedition on the march. It is Satan's work to throw obstacles in the Christian's way and it is our work to surmount them.

Horne, in commenting on this passage, says:

This passage teaches that within the limits set by a sovereign God the adversary may hinder His servants from engaging in a worthwhile activity born of strong inward compulsion.

Keith L. Brooks points out:

It sometimes takes much prayer to discern whether the hindering influence is of the Holy Spirit or of the adversary. In the present instance Paul was convinced that the obstacles were such as only Satan would devise.

What this hindrance was we are not sure. It could have been a hindrance caused by illness or opposition from the Jews.

Hogg and Vine point out:

It was probably the bond that Jason and his friends gave to the civil authorities at Thessalonica, and it included an understanding that Paul would not reenter the city. It may be that he refers to his ineffectual efforts to have this bond cancelled.

Ellicott says:

St. Paul here plainly says that the devil was the hindrance. What peculiar agencies are not revealed. Without here entering into controversy it seems not out of place to remark that the language of the New Testament, if words mean anything, does ascribe a personality to the tempter so distinct and unmistakable that a denial of it can only be compatible with a practical denial of scripture inspiration.

Hendricksen says:

Even when the devil tries to chop up the road that lies ahead, thus apparently blocking our advance, God's hidden plan is never wrecked. Satan may cut in on us, preventing us from doing what for the moment seems best to us; God's ways are always better than ours.

Barnes says:

The apostle recognized the hand of Satan in frustrating his attempt to do good and preventing the accomplishment of his strong desire to see his Christian friends. In the obstacles, therefore, to the performance of our duty and in the hindrances of our enjoyment, it is not improper to trace the hand of the great enemy of good, the agency of Satan may for ought, we can tell often be employed in the embarrassments that we meet within life. The hindrances which we meet with in our efforts to do good when the providence of God seems to favor us and His word and Spirit seem to call us to a particular duty often look very much like the work of Satan. They are just such obstructions as a very wicked being would be glad to throw in our way.

Speaking of Satan, Hogg and Vine say:

In the New Testament the word occurs 36 times and always with reference to the sinister and mysterious enemy of Christ and His people. That Satan is not merely the personification of the evil influences at work within the heart is evident, among other reasons, because Satan tempted or tried the Lord Jesus, in whose heart no unholy thought ever could have arisen.

Paul traced the violence of the Jews who caused the trouble at Thessalonica to Satan as the Lord himself did when they sought to kill Him (John 8:37-44). Satan is not omnipresent or ubiquitous. Nevertheless, he has power to distress the people of God. Thus, he can hinder the coming of those who care for them as in this case (cf. Dan. 10:13). He can raise up false teachers among them (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Rev. 2:24). He can turn them aside from the right ways of the Lord (Acts 5:3; 2 Cor. 2:11, 11:3; Ephes. 6:11; 1 Tim. 5:15). He can afflict their bodies (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; 2 Cor. 12:7). And he can rouse the passions of men against them (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 2:13). Satan seeks to have servants of Christ put into his hands for testing (Job 1:6-12; Luke 22:31). He lays snares for them (1 Tim. 3:7), and by these he succeeds at times in making them his captives (2 Tim. 2:26). The final triumph of the saints over their adversary is nevertheless assured (Rom. 16:20).

Romans 16:20

And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Walvoord says:

How Satan sometimes gets in our way! This word "hinder" in the Greek means "to break up the road." The thought is that the way was impassable. Satan had broken up the road before him and Paul could not get through to them even though he longed to see them and to be a further help to them.

John Calvin points out:

It is certain that whatever opposes the work of the Lord proceeds from Satan. Would that it were a firmly settled conviction in all pious souls that Satan is continually making every effort to retard or hinder the edification of the church, we should certainly be more intent on resisting him. We should have more at heart the preservation of sound doctrine of which Satan takes such eager pains to rob us. A part of that sound doctrine is the doctrine of Satan himself.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Paul had spiritual discernment to see that it was Satan's strategy that kept him from going to Thessalonica. The word "Satan" actually means "adversary." I believe that today Satan seeks to hinder any program of getting out the word of God. We have seen several instances of this. Many times my Bible teaching program has been on a radio station by which we were reaching an entire area and things were going so nicely. Then a godless man would buy the station and he would take all religious programs off the air. That is the work of the enemy, the adversary. He doesn't want the word of God to be given out.

Stedman says:

Have you ever experienced a frustrating time in your own life when again and again you tried to do something you knew was right and found it hard going? Perhaps the opposition came from your own family or even from members of the family of God, the church. That is satanic hindrance--the psychological manipulations Satan uses to plant obstacles in your path.

The Bible is the only book that explains the persistence and malevolence of evil. Why do we struggle so in this life? What are we up against? Jesus tells us that it is the devil. He is a liar and a murderer. He deceives and he kills. The satanic mind is responsible for all the murderous violence, the widespread deceit and the false philosophies that confront us today. Paul himself tells us "our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephes. 6:12). No other book reveals this truth that it is not people who are the problem but the spiritual forces of evil that prevail in the world.

Paul suggests in his writings that there are 3 things we need to know about this reality. Perhaps most important is SATANIC OPPOSITION IS PERMITTED BY GOD.

In the book of Job we learn that Satan had to ask God for permission to afflict Job's body. Job lost everything, his family, his home and even his health, but God allowed it to happen. The end of the book reveals what was accomplished by that suffering, but, for the moment, it was all hidden from Job's eyes.

So, too, the purpose of suffering and opposition is often hidden from our eyes; but the Bible reveals that there is a malevolent power of evil at work. There are demonic beings, master manipulators, that are permitted to lead people about, putting thoughts in their minds and planting obstacles in the path of the gospel. Satanic opposition is permitted for this reason: to be used by God.

Opposition is an effective training. Affliction, suffering, pain and heartache are often God's way of getting our attention. You may have paid little attention to Him until you suffered a time of great distress. Then you began to hear what He was saying to you. God uses opposition not only to train us but to give us an opportunity to overcome trouble, to rise above it.

Satanic opposition underscores the value of believers. "For what is our hope, our joy for the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19). Whatever else those words may mean they are saying that Paul considered the spiritual maturing of these believers in Thessalonica and other places his most important work. He was saying, "I have invested my life in you and your growth into mature, whole people. This is the most important thing in the world. When the Lord Jesus comes, I will glow with pride that you have achieved the changes in your life that I so long to see brought about."

2 Corinthians 12:7

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself!

(Healing and Holiness by C. Samuel Storms)

Joni Eareckson Tada explains it beautifully and makes application of this truth to her own experience.

Satan intends the rain which ruins a church picnic to cause the people to curse their Lord; but God uses the rain to develop their patience. Satan plans to hinder the work of an effective missionary by arranging for him to trip and break a leg; God allows the accident so that the missionary's patient response to the pain and discomfort will bring glory to Himself. Satan brews a hurricane to kill thousands in a small Indian village so he can enjoy the misery and destruction; God uses the storm to display His awesome power, to show people the awful consequences that sin has brought to the world, to drive some to search for Him, to harden others in their sin, and to remind us that He is free to do as He pleases--that we will never figure Him out. Satan schemed that a seventeen-year-old girl named Joni would break her neck, hoping to ruin her life; God sent the broken neck in answer to her prayer for a closer walk with Him and uses her wheelchair as a platform to display His sustaining grace.

pp. 104-5

Lenski points out:

Satan was back of the riotous proceeding that drove Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica. He was also back of the hindrance that frustrated the 2 plans to return to Thessalonica.

Since there is strength in union of relationships, the devil's method is to promote separation in order that he might hinder the work of God. One need only look at many, many churches today who have experienced the hindering ministry of Satan, in the fact that they are divided and are actually of little effect upon the community because of this division.

We see SATAN'S HINDERING MINISTRY:

1. as the children of Israel were being delivered from the land of Egypt--in the 10 plagues that came upon that land as Pharaoh resisted God's purpose and plan, taking the seed back to the land.
2. The second effort of hindering is the armies of Pharaoh that went out to overtake the Israelites as they prepared to cross the Red Sea.
3. We see Satan's hindering ministry once again as the children of Israel come up to Kadesh-Barnea in preparation to enter the land.
4. We see the hindering ministry of Satan in the life of the Lord Jesus as he used the scribes and the Pharisees, and even from the mouth of Peter on one occasion:

Matthew 16:21-23

From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."

But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

5. Satan hinders man as he prepares to make his decision for Christ by snatching away the seed of the word of God before it has a chance to take root.
6. He hinders the Christian from Bible reading and prayer.
7. He also hinders the Christian in giving that which he should give back to the Lord of his material wealth.

2 Corinthians 8:10, 11

And I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

8. He also hinders the Christian from bearing an effective witness by filling his heart with fear.

Spurgeon has wisely said:

In fact, beloved, we never ought to expect a success unless we hear the devil making a noise.

W. Graham Scroggie very aptly states:

He who most closely follows God will be most closely followed by the devil. Never can we engage in any act of true surrender without exposing ourselves to the onslaught of this great foe. You have but to pursue the path of loyal obedience to the known will of God and you shall certainly have Satan in hot pursuit of you.

Erich Sauer, in his book The King of the Earth, points out:

The fact is that the devil is a spiritual being gifted with the highest intelligence, and though fallen, exceedingly powerful, whose existence cannot be in any way assailed by philosophy nor any natural science since it is just in our world and in universe immediately surrounding it that we observe disharmony, death, and destruction, even if purely speculative contemplation of nature forces on us the conclusion that this world and presumably the solar system connected with it are the domain of this world ruler and potentate.

Alan Redpath in his book, The Man of God, says:

It is a tragedy in the life of a man of God when he yields to the pressure of Satan and God leaves him to his own. He is reduced to scheming and planning and when he is driven into a tight corner, he can only escape by deceit. Suddenly, the man who has given in to depression realizes that he has purchased his deliverance from the pressure of the devil at too great a price. He has obtained release from tension for a moment, but he has exchanged the smile of God for the grin of the enemy. He has exchanged the protection of Jesus Christ for flimsy walls of defeat as David exchanged trust in the promises of God for the walls of Ziklag, which soon were going to be burned by fire and over which David would weep scalding, bitter tears of repentance. Oh the harm that is done by the man who gives in to the enemy.

How does Satan do this? Well, he uses:

- 1.the WORLD,
- 2.the FLESH,
- 3.and by DIRECT ATTACK--he himself is involved in affecting our spiritual walk.

1.First, he uses the WORLD and all of its allurements to accomplish his purpose:

2 Timothy 4:10

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. . . .

2.Secondly, Satan uses the FLESH, our old nature:

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

3.Then he attacks our spiritual walk by the use of the DIRTY Ds:

DISTRACTIONS,
DISAPPOINTMENTS,
DEFEAT,
DISOBEDIENCE.

Satan's strategy is summarized in these 3 POINTS:

1. He is HINDERING us,
2. HURTING us,
3. HURRYING us.

He is:

HINDERING us on the one hand,
 HURRYING us on the other hand,
 and HURTING us whenever he can get an opportunity.

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

Robert Robinson was born in England more than two hundred years ago. When he was just a boy, his father died, and his widowed mother sent him to London to learn the trade of barbering. In that great city Robert came under the persuasive influence of a powerful man of God, the great Methodist revivalist George Whitefield. Robinson was soundly converted and felt a call to the ministry; he began at once to study for a lifetime of serving Christ.

At twenty-five Robert Robinson was called to pastor a Baptist church in Cambridge, where he became very successful. But the popularity was more than the young minister could handle. It led to the beginning of a lapse in his life of simple faith. Ultimately he fell into carnality, another tragic victim of "sin's foul bondage." As the years passed he faded from the scene and few even remembered his earlier years of devotion to Christ.

Years later Robinson was making a trip by stagecoach and happened to sit next to a woman who was reading a book with obvious pleasure. She seemed to be especially interested in one page of the volume, for she kept returning to it again and again. Finally she turned to Robinson--a complete stranger to her--and held the page toward him. Pointing to the hymn she had been reading there, she asked what he thought of it.

Robinson looked at the first few lines:

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing
 Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
 Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
 Call for songs of loudest praise

He read no further. Turning his head, he endeavored to engage the lady's attention on the passing landscape. But she was not to be denied. Pressing her point, she told him of the benefit she had received from the words of that hymn and expressed her admiration for its message.

Overcome with emotion, Robinson burst into tears. "Madam," he said, "I am the poor, unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then."

Robert Robinson was now many years older and light-years removed from his earlier commitment to Christ. His days of simple faith had eroded. How ironic that, at the end of the hymn, he had seemed to prophesy his own downward course:

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it;
Seal it for thy courts above.

That is precisely what he did. Robert Robinson died shortly thereafter at the young age of fifty-five, the victim of the lure of a lesser loyalty. He had left the God he once loved and had become "a wicked old man."
pp. 166-67

If you have been a victim of Satan's hindering ministry, may God grant that in making your SPIRITUAL CHECKUP that you will recognize this fact and that you will deal with it right now and not put it off any longer.

James 4:7-10

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

How precious it is to know that even in the midst of the hindrances that are brought into our lives by Satan's ministry that God is able in turn to take these hindrances and use them for His glory.

Isobel Kuhn, in her book Ascent to the Tribes, verifies this fact when she says:

So all things are working for the Lord's beloved.
 Some things might be harmful if alone they stood.
 Some might seem to hinder, some might draw us backward;
 But they work together and they work for good.

All the thwarted longings, all the stern denials,
 All the contradictions, hard to understand,
 And the force that holds them, speeds them and retards
 them,
 Stops and starts and guides them, is our Father's
 hand.

1 John 4:4

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

v.19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of glorying? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

Here Paul raises the question:

"WHAT IS OUR HOPE OR JOY OR CROWN OF GLORYING?"

Then he proceeds to answer the question with another question:

"IS IT NOT EVEN YOU IN THE PRESENT OF OUR LORD JESUS AT HIS COMING?"

In this chapter we have seen Paul speak to us with regard to:

1.the PAST when he was as:

"a nursing mother"

and "a father" to them

2.in the PRESENT:

because of separation, he was made an "orphan," demonstrating his love for them.

3.now as he looks to the FUTURE:

"IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AT HIS COMING"

he recognizes that these Thessalonian converts are:

his "HOPE," his "JOY," and his "CROWN OF GLORYING."

Barclay points out:

The glory of any teacher lies in his scholars and students.

The "CROWN" Paul is talking about here in this verse is a crown that is "generally won in an athletic contest through strenuous exertion." It is not a royal diadem. The apostle and his associates had won this crown through much agonizing labor:

1 Thessalonians 2:9

For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Dwight L. Moody said:

The only monument I want is a two legged one. One that I lead to Jesus Christ.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul's affection now rises to a climax. What would be the greatest blessing he could possibly receive at the judgment seat of Christ? They were.

They were EVERYTHING that was worth ANYTHING to Paul.

1. When we focus on "HOPE" we focus on:

Galatians 4:19

My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you--

2. When we focus on "JOY" we can say:

"You light up my life."

3 John 4

I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

3. You are my "CROWN":

the symbol of God's blessing on his life and ministry.

The "HOPE" points to what they WERE.

The "JOY" points to what they ARE.

The "CROWN" points to what they WILL BE.

By these dramatic statements Paul has removed any thoughts of unconcern or selfishness on his part.

Ogilvie says:

People need to know that we love them. Picture the church gathered in Thessalonica to hear the reading of Paul's affirming words of love. Dock hands, laborers, business leaders, converted prostitutes from the temples, the rich and the poor, educated and uncultured, gentiles and completed Jews, all God's people, and all needed to know that Paul loved them. He knew their struggles and really cared. In that context look at the final verses of the chapter: "For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy." Feel what this must have meant to them! We dare not take anyone for granted. Everyone needs fresh expressions of love and empathy. Say it!

J. Vernon McGee says:

Paul says that one of the greatest things that he anticipates when Christ comes to take His church will be opportunity to see these people whom he has led to the Lord. The Thessalonian believers whom he has won to Christ were a joy for him, here and would be hereafter. By the way, is anyone going to be in heaven who will come up to you and thank you for having a part in giving out the word of God? Have you given your support to missions? If you have, someone you have never known, someone from the other side of the earth may come up to you and thank you for your support of missions. He will thank you for being interested in getting out the word of God because the word reached him and enabled him to be saved. That, my friend, is going to be part of the reward that we will get in heaven. We need to recognize that. It is a wonderful hope to look forward to the time when Christ Jesus takes the church out of this world. It is even more joyous to know that someone who trusted Christ because of your witness will go along with you to meet the Lord.

Walvoord points out:

But Paul said the real joy that was going to be in his heart as he stood in the presence of the Lamb of God, the One who loved him, the One who had died for him on the cross, would be his spiritual children that he would bring with him whom he had led to know Jesus Christ as Savior. Have you ever led a soul to Christ? One may say, "I'm not an evangelist. I'm not a good personal worker." But have you ever tried? God loves to use those who are willing to be used and there is latent in many a Christian a gift for leading souls to Christ which he does not realize. Almost anyone can give out gospel tracts. Any Christian can pray. Anyone can give of his substance for missions. There are more ways than one by which earnest Christians can lead souls to Christ. When that glad day comes when we are in the presence of Christ will we have some trophies of grace.

Barnes says:

The apostle here puts the Thessalonians in mind that, though he could not come to them as yet, and though he should never be able to come to them, yet, our Lord Jesus Christ will come. Nothing shall hinder that.

What a blessed truth to know that the Lord Jesus is coming back again and that Satan will not hinder Him. He will be right on schedule. He will come even as He has promised. He will come to take us to be with himself. Nothing will hinder Him.

Galatians 4:4, 5

But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

v.20 For you are our glory and joy.

Paul answers his questions emphatically that THEY are his "GLORY AND JOY." The great glory and joy of the Savior is going to be the simple fact that sinful, fallen man, having been redeemed, will enjoy the pleasures of glory with Him forevermore. As trophies of His grace, there will likewise be great joy in heaven on the part of those who have come to know Jesus Christ as Savior who, in turn, have not kept their faith to themselves but have shared it with others.

Ryrie says:

It may be paraphrased thus: "What is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Nothing, if you are not such in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. For truly you are our glory and joy."

Hendricksen points out:

Indeed, this is the meaning of gar here. It is YOU, note the emphatic position of humeis, who are our glory, that is, our reason for glorying in the Lord and our joy.

Paul's focus is on PEOPLE and not POSSESSIONS.

(Healing and Holiness by C. Samuel Storms)

In the New Testament "happiness" or "joy" does not necessarily mean the absence of physical pain or external adversity. Happiness is a delight in Jesus Christ that transcends earthly, outward circumstances. It is an inner contentment, a sense of well-being, which remains unaffected and unperturbed by worldly turmoil and bodily pain. When Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians from prison, notwithstanding the deprivation and bodily abuse he suffered, he called on them to make his joy complete "by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Phil. 2:2). Later in the same epistle he told them: "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things [specifically, I can be content and happy regardless of the circumstances] through Him who strengthens me."

Christian happiness or joy is not like the mercury in a thermometer, rising and falling with the heat of the day. It is a constant, ever-deepening sense of delight in Christ. p. 23

(The Christian Salt & Light Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

A cartoon pictured a middle-class husband lecturing to his wife. He was seated on the sofa with a blackboard. He had written an equation on the blackboard: "The mortgage is paid; we're fully insured; the kids are okay; we're healthy; and we have each other. It all equals happiness."

And his wife said, "Walter, would you run through that just one more time?" The bottom line is not necessarily happiness. p. 27

(Reliving the Passion: Meditations on the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus As Recorded in Mark by Walter Wangerin, Jr.)

Joy, by the grace of God, is the transfiguration of suffering into endurance, and of endurance into character, and of character into hope--and the hope that has become our joy does not (as happiness must for those who depend upon it) disappoint us.

p. 31

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

When life is over and we stand in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming, you Thessalonians will be our source of glory and joy. You mean that much to us.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Our response to the word of God is to welcome it and allow it to work in our lives.

LESSON #2: Exposure to the word of God purifies and prioritizes our lives.

LESSON #3: When we come to know Christ we begin to take on a family likeness.

LESSON #4: Suffering is part of the divine curriculum for Christlikeness.

LESSON #5: There comes a time when the cup of iniquity is full and the wrath of God is poured out.

LESSON #6: Paul's deep compassion and involvement in the lives of the Thessalonians is seen here in the deep grief he experiences through being separated from them.

LESSON #7: Satan is in the business of hindering us in the pursuit of the will of God for our lives.

LESSON #8: Satan is always trying to hinder, to hurt, and to hurry us.

LESSON #9: Will there be any persons in heaven because you had the privilege of sharing Jesus Christ with them here on earth?

In this study, we have been considering together the question:

HAS SATAN HINDERED YOU?

I trust that, as you look back at these verses and recognize the fact that Satan has in the past hindered you in some specific area, you will indeed deal with those areas right now and experience the joy and blessing that can be yours by living in the power of the Spirit.

(Reliving the Passion: Meditations on the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus As Recorded in Mark by Walter Wangerin, Jr.)

In mirrors I see myself. But in mirrors made of glass and silver I never see the whole of myself. I see the me I want to see, and I ignore the rest.

Mirrors that hide nothing hurt me. They reveal an ugliness I'd rather deny. Yow! Avoid these mirrors of veracity!

My wife is such a mirror. When I have sinned against her, my sin appears in the suffering of her face. Her tears reflect with terrible accuracy my selfishness. My self! But I hate the sight, and the same selfishness I see now makes me look away.

"Stop crying!" I command, as though the mirror were at fault. Or else I just leave the room. Walk away.

Oh, what a coward I am, and what a fool! Only when I have the courage fully to look, clearly to know myself--even the evil of myself--will I admit my need for healing. But if I look away from her whom I have hurt, I have also turned away from her who might forgive me. I reject the very source of my healing.

My denial of my sin protects, preserves, perpetuates that sin! Ugliness in me, while I live in illusions, can only grow the uglier.

Mirrors that hide nothing hurt me. But this is the hurt of purging and precious renewal---and these are mirrors of dangerous grace.
pp. 24-25

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

Christians may struggle with certain sins over a number of years; however, true believers will sincerely acknowledge them and quit committing them for a while. Then they may slide back into them. In these real-life scenarios, the conscious sin is not truly continuous, but it is repetitive. Even the sin that's not repetitive may go unchecked for years if a believer is as deeply disappointed as Mrs. Hanover of Leslie Flynn's true story:

Roger Simms, hitchhiking his way home, would never forget the date--May 7. His heavy suitcase made Roger tired. He was anxious to take off his army uniform once and for all. Flashing the hitchhiking sign to the oncoming car, he lost hope when he saw it was a black, sleek, new Cadillac. To his surprise the car stopped. The passenger door opened. He ran toward the car, tossed his suitcase in the back, and thanked the handsome, well-dressed man as he slid into the front seat.

"Going home for keeps?"

"Sure am," Roger responded.

"Well, you're in luck if you're going to Chicago."

"Not quite that far. Do you live in Chicago?"

"I have a business there. My name is Hanover."

After talking about many things, Roger, a Christian, felt a compulsion to witness to this fiftyish, apparently successful businessman about Christ. But he kept putting it off, till he realized he was just thirty minutes from his home. It was now or never. So, Roger cleared his throat, "Mr. Hanover, I would like to talk to you about something very important." He then proceeded to explain the way of salvation, ultimately asking Mr. Hanover if he would like to receive Christ as his Savior. To Roger's astonishment the Cadillac pulled over to the side of the road. Roger thought he was going to be ejected from the car. But the businessman bowed his head and received Christ, then thanked Roger, "This is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me."

Five years went by, Roger married, had a two-year-old boy, and a business of his own. Packing his suitcase for a business trip to Chicago, he found the small, white business card Hanover had given him five years before.

In Chicago he looked up Hanover Enterprises. A receptionist told him it was impossible to see Mr. Hanover, but he could see Mrs. Hanover. A little confused as to what was going on, he was ushered into a lovely office and found himself facing a keen-eyed woman in her fifties. She extended her hand. "You knew my husband?"

Roger told how her husband had given him a ride when hitchhiking home after the war.

"Can you tell me when that was?"

"It was May 7, five years ago, the day I was discharged from the army."

"Anything special about that day?"

Roger hesitated. Should he mention giving his witness? Since he had come so far, he might as well take the plunge. "Mrs. Hanover, I explained the gospel. He pulled over to the side of the road and wept against the steering wheel. He gave his life to Christ that day." Explosive sobs shook her body. Getting a grip on herself, she sobbed, "I had prayed for my husband's salvation for years. I believed God would save him."

"And," said Roger, "Where is your husband, Mrs. Hanover?"

"He's dead," she wept, struggling with words. "He was in a car crash after he let you out of the car. He never got home. You see--I thought God had not kept His promise." Sobbing uncontrollably, she added, "I stopped living for God five years ago because I thought He had not kept His word!"

pp. 39-41

THANK YOU

I dreamed I went to heaven
 And you were there with me
 We walked upon the streets of gold
 Beside the crystal sea
 We heard the angels singing
 Then someone called your name
 You turned and saw this young man
 And he was smiling as he came

And he said friend you may not know me now
 And then he said but wait
 You used to teach my Sunday School
 When I was only eight
 And every week you would say a prayer
 Before the class would start
 And one day when you said that prayer
 I asked Jesus in my heart

(Chorus)

Thank you for giving to the Lord
 I am a life that was changed
 Thank you for giving to the Lord
 I am so glad you gave

Then another man stood before you
 And said remember the time
 A missionary came to your church
 And his pictures made you cry
 You didn't have much money
 But you gave it anyway
 Jesus took the gift you gave
 And that's why I am here today

(Chorus)

One by one they came
 Far as the eye could see
 Each life somehow touched by your generosity
 Little things that you had done
 Sacrifices made
 Unnoticed on the earth
 In heaven now proclaimed

And I know up in heaven
 You're not supposed to cry
 But I am almost sure
 There were tears in your eyes
 As Jesus took your hand

And you stood before the Lord
He said my child look around you
Great is your reward

(Chorus twice)

(Words & music by Ray Boltz, © Gaither Music, ASCAP, 1988)

STUDY #3 - 1 Thessalonians

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