

A Practical Study of 1 Thessalonians

Delighting The Heart of God “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Question Number Three – Has Satan Hindered You? – 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said:

Matthew 6:31-34

Don't be anxious then, saying, "What are we going to 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 those things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things are going to be added unto you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

We're making a SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP through the book of First Thessalonians. We learned that Paul spent only three weeks there. And in this ministry, he had an incredible impact on the community.

In our first study we asked ourselves the question:

1. Did You Make the Right Start?

We compared our lives against the lives of the Thessalonian Christians in those first ten verses. And I never walk away from those verses without being under deep conviction, wondering what's wrong with me. Wondering where I need to change in order to demonstrate the excitement, the enthusiasm, the intensity of life that those Thessalonians displayed.

Now of course I think on the other hand of suffering is that which produced it, I guess I would wince a little bit because they certainly were under tremendous persecution, even from the very moment they came to know Christ.

And then in our last study we helped you understand that it's still possible to be a model for ministry by showing you what it really ought to look like.

The apostle Paul demonstrated to us that his message was truth, his motivation wasn't with any secrets, his personal ministry was one without deceit, and we saw a glorious picture of his life. And I asked you the question:

2. Are You a Phony? Are you Real?

And we looked at two possibilities:

1. The person can be a phony and not be a Christian and just play like he's one, or

2. A person can be a Christian and be a phony because he's living in the flesh rather than the Spirit.

Now we come to probably one of the most critical questions of all of them. And the question we're asking you is this:

3. Has Satan Hindered You?

You know I think we need to recognize the fact that he's very, very much alive and well. And one of his great satanic tactics is to hinder. And you're going to see that in our key verse in verse 18 in just a minute.

But how does he hinder? He has two ways of doing it:

1. He hinders you from ever getting serious about your relationship to Christ.

Once you become a Christian, his tactic doesn't change. His tactic of hindering has to do with your spiritual growth. If he can keep you childish and carnal, then he's rendered you ineffective for the cause of Christ—basically—during your life as a Christian. So he just kicks it in for number two program, once you become a Christian. He hates for you to become a Christian and overcome that hindrance. But then once you become a Christian, he just changes the tactic and:

2. [he] keeps you from ever finding time to spend alone with the Lord to deepen and develop your relationship by study

of the Word and by your prayer life and by your scripture memory and the other things that will help you grow in Christ.

Now I thought it would be really good if I just took a brief minute of an overview to read some verses. A lot of these are going to come out of 2 Corinthians—it's amazing—they're clustered there. But this kind of shows you what Satan is about and what he's trying to accomplish because you're going to see it jump out at us here in verse 18 in just a minute.

How about Ephesians 6:12 to start off:

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 around 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.

Are you aware of the fact that he's out to destroy? And he's just looking for people to have for lunch? You know that ought

to give us a holy sense of respect and an awareness of what he's trying to do.

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 4:3, 4

If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to them that who are perishing, in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of glorious gospel Christ should shine unto them.

2 Corinthians 12:7

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

I'm 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.

You know there's a verse where Amos, the old sheepherder, as a prophet describes what it's like as a shepherd to come on the scene after the lion has done his dirty work. Listen to this:

Amos 3:12

This is what the Lord says:

“As a shepherd saves from the lion's mouth
only two leg bones or the piece of an ear,
so will the Israelites be saved, ...

You know, he's doing horrible things today. “But greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

But we deny this. We're ignorant of the way he works and the ploys and the schemes that he uses to cause us to get botched up priorities to think of only the here and now instead of being focusing on the fact that where we're going and realizing that this is only temporary. And it is a battle zone and we need respect for that.

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've become in need milk instead of solid food...

You see, that's the way he works in the life of Christians. He just gets you to sit around on your duff and be lukewarm and throw it into neutral and never really get serious.

And as a result of your being like that, you never progress. And Paul has to say to the Hebrew Christians "Hey look, I would say a whole lot more about Christ and His priesthood but you all can't take it right now because you've had it in neutral too long. And as a result of that, I'm not going to be able to share with you what I'd like to share with you."

I hope and pray that this particular study would do like it did to some folks last week. When we finished there were tears in eyes because they recognized the fact they'd been victims. And they were serious enough to want to do something about it. They were realizing they were in a battle and didn't even know it and they were getting whipped. There was a great deal of discontent over the fact that they hadn't made more progress than they should have in their Christian lives.

So keeping the Christian childish and carnal is Satan's

greatest thrill. And as we make a spiritual check-up in these verses, ask yourself this question:

Have I Been Hindered By Satan?

Verse 13—now this is a verse you ought to memorize. This is a great one.

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.

The secret to victory in the hindering ploys of Satan himself is to have the divine Word of God working in your heart. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. It's your offensive weapon as you face him in battle.

Jesus has a great illustration of that in Matthew chapter 4 when three times he nails Satan with quotations from the book of Deuteronomy to win his battle.

“because of this we are constantly giving thanks to God,”

And the reason for that is: “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,”

Now we see the progress of a person who is getting serious about his walk with God or he's a person who's becoming a Christian.

1. they HEARD the Word,
2. they RECEIVED it,
3. they WELCOMED it, and
4. it began to WORK in their lives.

Harold Ockenga kind of homilitized that. He says the Word of God:

... convicted them, converted them, cleansed them and changed them.
(source unknown)

Yes, those are the steps that are described in Paul's ministry there during those three weeks in the city of Thessalonica.

Now, when it comes to the whole business of the Scriptures, it is appalling the ignorance that we have today on the part of people in understanding the Word of God.

I found this little story in a book of a friend of mine—J. Kirk Johnston, who's a pastor in Danville, Iowa. He and I were in the doctoral program at Talbot together here a couple of years ago and we both had designs on getting our dissertation

published and he wrote his on *Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life*.

And so it just got released and I got a copy of it at the seminary and had read it. And this little story reminded me of the fact that we are living in a day when people are just talking about the Word of God. They really don't know too much about it.

(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!” ...

- * 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 [pages of the] Bible.

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How much do you know the scripture? Have you been in it today? What’d you read this morning beside your *Daily Bread*? What are you memorizing? Are you serious?

You know, you’ve got time to do everything else. What about the time that you needed to have in the Word this morning?

Now I was telling everybody at breakfast, I had kind of a funny experience this morning. I got out in the hall about 4:30 or 20 until 5:00 and I was getting ready to ride by Aerodyne on the deck and watch the bats fly into the chimney and there was a great big old high school kid standing there.

He said “I’m scared.” I said “What’s the matter?” He said “Well my truck is parked on down the hill there and I started to go down there in the dark and I heard a noise.”

And I said “Number one, you parked your truck down there by the dump and number two, you heard some bear.” And he got real scared and he said “Well would you go with me?”

I said “Sure.” I mean, at least two of us go down there together and we walk down there. And sure enough there’s garbage all over the road because they’d gotten into it yesterday. And he got into his old truck and turned the lights on to be sure everything was going to work before I left. And I came back up and I thought, you know that guy really knew he had trouble. And he knew he was starting the day with an enemy. And while we were walking down that road, I was fully aware we are in no-man’s land. And I did a quick dance coming back up too by myself. Because I just don’t like those things. I mean, they can do their thing and I’ll do mine and I certainly don’t want to get between them and their mother, or any of that kind of stuff. I had great respect.

Did you have that kind of respect when you arose this morning? You know a sense of awesome fear that he’s like a roaring lion choosing to ruin your day—a perfectly good day—by doing everything he possibly can to keep you from really spending time with Him.

You know it’s just that serious. And yet we don’t do it. We don’t spend the time in the Book that can make us into the kind of men and women who are productive for the glory of God.

And Paul says “One thing I can tell you, you Thessalonians did that. You took the word of divine preaching that went out from us and you welcomed it, not as the word of men, but even as truly as it is, God’s word. You were thrilled with it! You were eager!”

And you know, when he got down the road to Berea, he found that they were even more excited.

Acts 17:11 says:

Acts 17:11

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

There was a sensational appetite on the part of these Macedonian Christians. No wonder they made such an impact! The key to it was the Word of God was something very, very valuable to them. And then there’s that last phrase that is so important. For it is the Word of God which is working in you.

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

The word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword...

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable...

The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

The spoken word of God has an inherent power to change.
(original source not available for verifying content)

And it WILL change.

Now, what I did, is to kick back for a second and I asked myself a question:

How does the Word of God change us?

And I just took the three tenses, okay.

1. In the PAST—here I am a believer—how did the Word of God change me?

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore [Paul says] if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are

become new.

So in the PAST we've had a salvation experience where we were CONVERTED!

We turned around, went a different direction, we were moving into relationship toward God. We all have that in our history—the Word of God working in our lives changed us.

2. Now what about the PRESENT?

2 Corinthians 3:18

We with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [the mirror of the Word of God] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

The more I expose myself to the mirror of the Word of God, the more I begin to change, and the more I begin to look like Jesus.

And you can be a Christian for 40 years and not change much if you're not exposed to the Book. But if you have made a commitment that you're going to be in the book every day, I tell you, you're going to begin to change.

Now about 5 or 6 years ago in my ministry I made that commitment. I said "Lord, until the day I die. I'm not going to miss a day in the Book." And I haven't. And I have discovered

that so many times I've had to do that at 4:30 a.m. in the airport and I don't care anymore whether flight attendants think I'm weird just because I've got a big open Bible or they think I'm afraid to fly or something. I'm just sitting there reading a book, doing my thing. And you and I need to get serious about that, because that's changed my whole orientation.

I used to do my study, you know, for all these studies I was writing and say "Well I can do it for them and I'll get something out of it." That ain't the way it's cut man. You've got to have that personal walk with God.

If you're a Sunday school teacher—I'm not talking about getting ready for your Sunday school lesson. I'm talking about you and your walk with God. You cannot go along in your life without time in the Word of God. And there are so many tremendous tools. You've got to have that, and you'll begin to change.

It won't be you trying to change. It won't be you trying to extricate sin out of your life so that you can begin to look holy or you can begin to talk the language. It's just out of a deepening relationship. Things start falling off like dead leaves and you just begin, more and more, reflect the personal Lord Jesus. And that's exactly what He wants to do in our lives.

It's a quiet work of the Spirit—the Word of God—working in our lives.

You know something else I've learned along this line too? I've discovered something kind of interesting. The guys that I have staked around the state of Texas that I'm accountable to are all guys that I'm memorizing with. You know and every one of those guys, without exception, are beginning to realize there are things more important than the job they do. They're guys who are ready, just right on the brink of quitting what they're doing and serving the Lord full time. Isn't that interesting? It's just over and over again. It's amazing how your priorities get changed, your direction gets purified, because that Word of God is being memorized and it's getting down in their lives and they're beginning to recognize the fact "Hey there are things more important than this stuff."

And I'm getting close to the goal and I'm wanting to do and finish strong! And I want to do it right! And I believe that's just the Word of God working in our lives because they memorized it and the Spirit of God is using it in their thought processes.

And third I would say:

3. the FUTURE.

And I put down there:

Philippians 1:6

I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a

good work in me will continue to perform it until the day of Christ.

And:

1 John 3:2, 3

Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

“We shall see Him as He is.”

And so in the PAST—yes—conversion.

In the PRESENT—I’m being conformed more to Christ as I reflect in the mirror of the Word of God.

And in the FUTURE—the work’s going to be ultimately complete.

Now what does He do? How does the Word of God work? Two things:

1. He’s PURIFYING us—He’s dealing with sin in our lives.

And secondly:

2. He's REARRANGING OUR PRIORITIES—He's getting us focused in on what He wants to accomplish in us.

Now would you notice one thing? I translated that word “operating” and it is in the PRESENT TENSE.

The Word of God “is operating in you who are believing.”

If you haven't taken any of it in recently, it probably isn't doing too much because you don't have any there to do the working. Just like when you don't eat.

I love Psalm 1 for that reason because it describes the beautiful process of a man exposing himself to the Word of God on a regular basis.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
nor stand in the way of sinners...

But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates [he chews the cud]
day and night.

He's like a tree planted by the streams of water,
which yields its fruit in its season
and whose leaf does not wither...

And you can just stick in there:

1 Peter 2:2, 3

as newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the word, you may grow thereby...

There it is. You take in that milk of the Word of God, you begin to grow, and then you take on a little meat and you begin to feed on the Word of God so that you are an individual that is beginning to grow up in Jesus Christ. And you're going to find such fantastic fulfillment in that kind of discipline in your personal life. That's the thing that thrilled Paul about the Thessalonian Christians.

Look at verse 14.

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,

You began to take on a family likeness. You started looking like them.

What he says is, they took on a family likeness—they started to look like them. But he also said something else. You notice it? He said, You all suffered just the same way those poor folks did down in Judea too.”

And I believe sometimes, and I'm going to do some more study on this, but I believe that suffering increases our appetite for the Word of God if we're believers and we're walking with the Lord.

I think once we're in the crucible, it just drives us to the Book. And the more we're in the Book, the more tender we become and the more we grow. You just see it in people who've really suffered in their lives. They've got a deeper walk with God—if they are indeed believers and they're relating properly to the suffering, there's just a richness about their lives that is just very, very special.

And so Paul says here:

“you become imitators” of us even though you're suffering

You kind of hurting this morning a little bit? You know maybe God is using that to produce growth in your life. Let it drive you to the Word of God.

And then Barbara Johnson of course has suffered so much. She says:

(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 [should have] read:

HARSH REALITIES FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP.
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Then she ended it by saying:

When I woke up this morning I had one nerve left . . . and now you're getting on it.
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You know, I mean, maybe some of us feel like that! We're hurting kind of bad inside!

Well, so the Thessalonians. It drove them in the Book. They found their answers.

Now there's FIVE GREEK PARTICIPLES in verses 15-16. This is the 5-fold indictment of the Jews and what they did to Jesus and why they're suffering.

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,

I'll just give you the five of them.

First:

1. They “killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets.”

“Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets.” (Matthew 23:37)

And secondly:

2. “[they] drove us out”—they wouldn’t let us stay there in Thessalonica and preach.

Third:

3. “[they] are not pleasing God”—although every Jew prided himself in the fact he was pleasing God. He said “No, they’re not.”
4. “[they’re] hostile to all men”—even to Jesus.

Remember in Mark 3 when they watched Him to see if He would heal that guy with the shriveled hand on the Sabbath in order that they might accuse Him? They had only that purpose in mind.

“[They were] hostile to all men.”

And then the next participle is in verse 16.

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.

I want to just spend a little bit there on this business of:

1. “forbidding...in order that they might be saved,” and
2. then “to the end that they might fill up the measure of their sins always.”

Have you ever thought just maybe that you might be sitting here and you’ve already filled up your vessel? Or you’re a Christian and you’ve been playing around so long with spiritual things that God’s put you on the bench and you’re going to be disqualified at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

Does that thought ever enter your mind that maybe Satan is just hindered long enough to accomplish his desperate designs and purposes for your life?

You see, that’s what he’s saying here. That they might “fill up that measure of their sins always.”

Now what does that mean? That means that God gives us a certain amount of time and there's a certain amount of grace, but there comes a day when grace runs out and judgment begins to fall.

There's a verse I memorized a number of years ago:

Genesis 6:5

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually and it grieved God that He made man.

And what did He do? He just said "No, put that boat together man. We're going to wipe it out. The time has finally come. They might fill up the measure of their sins."

Let me give you a few verses just for you to chew on along this line, the seriousness of it.

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 what your eyes see,
but know this that for all these things
God's going to bring you into judgment.

Hebrews 10:31

It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And now let me describe this kind of VAT that describes each of us. And when the vat is full, the judgment falls.

Genesis 15:16

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

What God's saying to Abraham is "Abraham, there's four more generations before the Amorite's bucket is full. And when their bucket's full, you're coming back to your land and I'm going to judge the Amorites."

How about Romans 1:24. Oh boy, this just grieves your heart:

Romans 1:24

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

Three times there in that last part of Romans chapter 1, "God gave them over...God gave them over...God gave them over."

I want to tell you dear friends, you can't sin away a day of grace without consequence.

And as a believer you're NOT going to lose your salvation but you are going to lose the possibility of reward and to stand on the sidelines and be disqualified because you tried to cheat and win. It's going to be one of the most painful things in all the world to stand in the presence in the One who had His hands and side pierced and gave His life so you could be there.

Oh man that ought to motivate us NOT to allow Satan to hinder us any further in the pursuit of the will of God and spending time in the Word of God. He makes it clear that there comes that time when there will come wrath upon them 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.

Do you see the relationship he established in three weeks with those Christians?

What did he say about them? He said “I ministered to you all like a nursing mother.” Remember that?

And then we ended the study last time, he says “I was like a father. I was encouraging and exhorting you and being an example to you.”

Now what does he say? “I love you so much we felt like orphans when we were driven out of town. We couldn’t be with you anymore.” There was this DEEP, INTIMATE relationship that developed.

And Paul said that. He said we’re “made orphans.”

“We’re driven out of there after three weeks. We’d just got going good and it hurt inside. And like a nursing mother, and like a father and like orphans we had developed this deep intimate relationship with each of you.”

“[So] we made every effort all the more with much desire to see your face.”

We wanted to be with you and to see you once more.

Verse 18—now here’s our KEY VERSE.

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

There’s your phrase.

He said “Look, I tried to get back up there twice but Satan hindered us.”

Now how’d he do that?

Well, it could have been by personal illness.

It could have been that they had to sign some kind of legal document that Paul would never come back into town in order for the rest of these Christians that were left behind that'd been persecuted to be set free. There had to be some kind of bond maybe that'd been signed and they couldn't get it set aside.

So as a result he says "Satan hindered us."

Now, SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP.

What is it that's hindering you from becoming a Christian if you're not? What is it that's hindering you from growing in Christ?

Galatians 5:7

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

That's the very same word in Galatians 5:7 that occurs here in 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

You want to hear one more?

1 Peter 3:7

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

That word “hindered” means to break up the road. It means to keep the army from being able to pass by putting the road under construction and breaking up the road ahead so that militarily the forces cannot advance. And maybe, just maybe, you feel like that.

Now oftentimes Satanic opposition is permitted by God to accomplish some purpose. And can you think of any great purpose that's been accomplished by Paul being hindered from going to Thessalonica?

You know I can think it too. And they're very easy and very obvious.

One is 1 Thessalonians and the other one is 2 Thessalonians.

In God's greater purpose He kept Paul—using Satan's hindrance—out of Thessalonica so he could write these two letters so in the twentieth century you could sit down and understand the will of God and have supplied what is lacking in your faith. Because in God's greater purpose through the hindering work of Satan, He's accomplished something far greater. And that's for all these centuries Christians have

been able to study these two wonderful books that helped supply what was lacking.

Now I started chasing through the Scripture just to see if I could find some places where Satan did this so I would have some ammunition to give you to show you that he does it. And I came up with about eight of them.

1. First of all, as the children of Israel were being delivered from the land of Egypt, there were 10 plagues that were series of Satan's hindering work through Pharaoh.
2. The second effort at hindering is when Pharaoh and his army's chased them to the Red Sea trying to stop them from going on into the land.
3. And then thirdly at Kadesh-Barnea. Instead of going on into the land, they form a committee and come back and say "we can't go in." That cost them 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.
4. And you see his hindering ministry in the life of Jesus. He promises Him the kingdom of this world in the glory of them without the cross if He would just fall down and worship him. But Christ was victorious.
5. You see it in Matthew 16 when Peter says "Over my dead body you're gonna go to the cross!" And what does Jesus say? Don't "Get behind me Peter!" "Get behind me Satan!" Satan is using him. (Matt. 16:21-23)

Luke 22:31-32

Awe Peter, Satan desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat; and I pray for you, that when you have recovered, strengthen your brethren.

He's a vehicle—a tool in the hand of Satan at that moment. And Satan's working right now.

6. If you have never come to know Christ, he's trying to help you get out of here as quick as you can in one piece without thinking about this and letting it take root.
7. Or seventh, he's hindering you from making a real clean cut decision that you're not going to have another day in your life, as long as you live, if you can help it without being found reading the Word of God and spending time in it.
8. Another area that he hinders is in giving. He hinders Christians from giving of their material means whereby they can help ministry for the glory of God.

And you can read 2 Corinthians 8 along that line. These Thessalonians were great examples of sacrificial giving for the glory of God.

9. And then the ninth area is he hinders believers from ever bearing witness. It's focused on me "Oh, I'm scared of

what they're going to think." "I'm afraid they're going to ask a question that I don't know the answer to." And so we become kind of silent witness and we've been hindered when we've got a guy sitting right next to us who could have known Jesus Christ if we would have had the courage to confront the issue and deal with it. And the Lord put them there!

And how does He do that?

WORLD,

the FLESH, and

the DEVIL.

Second Timothy 4:10 is a classic illustration:

2 Timothy 4:10

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

"As the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh..." (Gal. 5:17)

How is it that Satan attacks our spiritual walk? I came up with FOUR DIRTY D's:

1. DISTRACTIONS,

2. DISAPPOINTMENTS,
3. DEFEAT,
4. DISOBEDIENCE.

That's the way he does it. Gets us distracted, gets us disappointed with something. Sees us defeated in an area and saying "Oh boy, you've been defeated now. You'll never make it." Disobedience: "Boy you're not a child of God if you do something like that."

That's the kind of stuff he throws at you. You see, his strategy is:

to HINDER us,

to HURT us, and

to HURRY us.

Boy if he can get those THREE H's in there, he's really got us going his way.

He would HINDER us, he would HURT us, and then he would HURRY us so we never have time to slow down and really contemplate our own spiritual walk.

Have you been hindered by him?

May it move you this morning emotionally to the point that you're going to take care of that.

Because “greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

You make a decision. You drive a stake. You get your act together. You become a man and woman of God that's going to get serious about your walk with Him.

**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?**

We're like a nursing mother and a father, we've been made orphans, but boy we're going to be excited when we get to glory.

You are our HOPE and our JOY and our CROWN! Can't wait for that glorious time—the manifestation.

v. 20 For you are our glory and joy.

Now I have nine lessons out of the study.

Lesson #1: Our response to the word of God is to welcome it and to 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—and we'll see more of that.

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?

You got any folks that you can put their name in there and say "You are our joy, our crown, our time of rejoicing"? Or has Satan hindered you?

And in your spiritual check-up, you never really did have time to do these things so God could use you.

I want to conclude with a very remarkable story this morning. The story to show you how it looked like Satan hindered but there was a great victory that ultimately came.

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

Roger Simms, was hitchhiking home, he would never forget the date of 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 big black, sleek, new Cadillac. And to his surprise the car stopped and the passenger door opened. He ran toward the car, and tossed his suitcase in the back, and he 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 that 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 never kept His word!”

pp. 39-41 (slight word changes from original quote)

You see there are a lot of disillusioned people like that. Who because of adversity and wrong understanding of God’s purpose in their lives, have quit living for Him. And God had some greater purpose and He had accomplished that and they didn’t even know it.

Ray Boltz sings it real well and it just gives me such joy because I never give an invitation or ask people to raise their hands or do anything. I’m just looking forward to the pay-off up there. It’s going to be more fun than anything. And that’s what Paul says about the Thessalonian Christians, too. I’m looking forward to you be my joy in my crown.

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

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

Father, I pray that we would be men and women on a mission.
We would be men and women who are not going to allow
Satan to have an inch or to gain the victory. We're going to be
declaring with steel-like purpose and determination, that
we're going to keep on being changed by exposure to the living
Word of God. We're going to be men and women who
demonstrate increasingly more a Christlikeness that will
attract others to the Christ and we'll become fruitful even in

our old age to the glory of God seeing many come to Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of 1 THESSALONIANS: Your Spiritual Checkup

“Victory in Areas of Vulnerability”

Key verse 3:10 — *“night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith”*

QUESTION NUMBER THREE – HAS SATAN HINDERED YOU? – 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-20

KEY VERSE 2:18

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.

NOTE

NOTE

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.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Why is Paul giving thanks to God in verse 13?

3. How are the Thessalonians like those who were Christians in Judea, according to verse 14?

4. What does Paul tell us about the Jews in verses 15 and 16?

5. What was Paul anxious to do, according to verse 17?

6. What does Paul tell us about Satan in verse 18?

7. Do you believe that it is possible for Satan to hinder us?
Have you experienced this? Please comment on your answer.

8. According to verses 19 & 20 what is Paul's "hope" and "joy" and "crown of glorying?"

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons 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.

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