

Hindered, Not Defeated
1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Introduction & Review

Last week we continued our examination of 1 Thessalonians 2 and Paul's commendation of that church. They had demonstrated the importance that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ had to them by what they were willing to suffer in order to hold fast to it and spread its message to others. The Thessalonian church was born in the midst of opposition and that opposition only increased after they had sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. What had started with just the unbelieving Jews expanded to include the Greeks - the Thessalonian's own countrymen (2:14) - who caused them to suffer in same way the churches in Judea had suffered when the church began. That initial persecution continued to increase until much of the church in Jerusalem fled to Judea, Samaria and beyond. Yet God used that to spread the gospel around the Roman world. Paul had already commended the Thessalonians for their imitation of the missionaries in spreading the gospel east and west throughout Macedonia and south into Achaia and he commends them again for their imitation of the churches in Judea in responding in the same way to persecution.

At Paul's mentioning of the suffering caused by the Jews, Paul expands to describe the evil of these unbelieving Jews. It is important to note that what Paul states in 1 Thess. 2:15-16 is not anti-semitic in anyway. Throughout Paul's writings he uses the phrase "the Jews" to refer to those religious Jewish people that rejected the gospel and persecuted the followers of Christ. Paul and his missionary companions are Jewish, so he is not referring to Jewish people in general. He makes specific charges against them as well as gives general characteristics and warns of their end.

His first charge was the most serious. They killed the Lord by violent means, and crucifixion and the events leading up to it are very violent. The disciples who had been hiding because of their fear of the Jews (John 20:19) became very bold after the resurrection to preach the gospel and lay the responsibility for Jesus' death upon them with Peter even charging the Sanhedrin to their faces in Acts 4:10. The resurrection changed everything. Paul continues on pointing out that these evil men were no different in killing Jesus than their forefathers had been in killing the prophets.

Paul next charges these unbelieving Jews with driving them out. It is unclear whether he is referring specifically being driven out of Thessalonica and Berea or more generally to all the incidents Paul had experienced of being pursued by persecutors to cause him to leave. As I noted last week, in examining Paul's life it seems that he would leave a place more out of concern for others than himself. As Acts 14 recounts the story, Paul went back into a city where had just been stoned and left for dead, so he is not a man that is intimidated.

In a classic understatement Paul writes, "*And to God, they are not pleasing.*" Indeed they were not even if they had been like Saul before he was transformed by the Lord Jesus to become the apostle Paul. Saul was zealous for God in his oppression of the disciples of Jesus, but he did so without knowledge of the truth. No doubt others were the same way, but their actions displayed the evil in their hearts in their hostility to others. They were obvious in their disdain and opposition to anyone that did not follow their traditions. That was their reason for their hatred of Jesus and their reason for opposing the gospel. They were glad to have Gentiles become proselytes of Pharisaic Judaism and would make great efforts to do so, but they were dead set against a message of God saving people from sin without requiring them to follow their Jewish traditions first. They did all they could to prevent the Gentiles from hearing the gospel and being saved. That demonstrates the Satanic motivation behind it.

Paul concludes vs. 16 with a warning that their multiplied sins were reaching full measure resulting in God's wrath being upon them to the end or to its completion. God's wrath was presently abiding on them as they experienced the consequences of their sins, but the fullness of God's wrath upon them is still yet to come and will last for eternity.

This morning we will continue in our study through the end of this chapter as Paul expresses his desire to see him and the personal glory and joy he has in them before the Lord. I had considered just going through this quickly to end last week's sermon except for Paul's mentioning that Satan had hindered them, and that is a subject I want to expand on this morning.

Paul's Longing - 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

Follow along as I read verses 17-20. ¹⁷ *But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.* ¹⁸ *For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us.* ¹⁹ *For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?* ²⁰ *For you are our glory and joy.*

Paul closes this chapter by expressing both his desire to see them again and confidence in them in which he took glory and joy before the Lord. This section is also a defense against any accusation that the missionaries had abandoned them.

Notice first that Paul once again refers to them as “brethren” reinforcing the truth about the nature of their relationship with each other as part of the family of God. I don't think that can be stressed enough. All true Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are one family. The world has lots of problems with racial prejudice, but that is not to exist in the church. I will quickly add here that social justice and the ideas that have come out of critical race theory (CRT) only aggravates racism and it does so on purpose by setting demographic groups against each other. The solution to the problem will not be found in putting people in classes of the oppressed or the oppressors, the solution is found in Jesus Christ in which all of His followers love one another as He has loved us.

Paul calling the Thessalonians “brethren” is also significant because they are mostly Gentiles and he and his fellow missionaries are Jewish. In doing so Paul makes a clear distinction between himself and the Jews he just spent several verses castigating for their evil.

Paul then continues on to explain their desire to see them again after being unwillingly removed from their presence. He uses a strong emotional term to describe what happened. The verb (ἀπορφανίζω / aporphanizō) that is translated as taken or torn away actually means “to bereave of a parent, to cause to be an orphan.” The emotions described in that are very strong. They had not abandoned them. Their departure was with great grief as of a parent and child being separated. Paul considered them to be his children in the faith. He expresses that directly concerning Timothy and Titus (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4). The apostle John speaks the same way in his epistles using the phrase “little children” seven times in 1 John.

That seems very different from what is much too common among modern evangelists who come into an area and preach for a short time, then write glowing reports about their ministry, but seem devoid of any actual relationship with those that are claimed to have been converted. Perhaps two large factors that make a difference in this are: 1) Paul would spend ample time in the community in which he was planting a church if at all possible. 2) Paul and those converted as he proclaimed the gospel to them often suffered persecution together. Where there is greater emotional investment, there is greater emotional connection. That is something to consider as you minister to other people no matter what your particular spiritual gift may be. Are you emotionally investing yourself in others?

Paul assures them that this separation was only in physical presence - literally “in face” - and not in their inner thoughts and desire - literally “in heart.” His hope was that this separation would only be for a short time for they, as translated well in the ESV, “endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to

see you face to face.” There was strong emotional longing which is expressed in the word used here (ἐπιθυμία / epithumia) which is often translated as lust. It often is used in settings which give it a negative connotation, but context determines the moral nature of the strong desire. That strong desire is very positive here and in 1 Timothy 3:1 in which Paul uses the same word to describe the work an overseer (bishop / elder / pastor) should desire to do. Paul had a strong desire to again be in their physical presence, but he also states that there was an intense effort and motivation on their part (σπουδάζω / spoudazō) to make it happen as Paul continues to explain.

They all wanted to come see the Thessalonians, but Paul also emphasizes here his personal desire interjecting “*I, Paul, also once and twice,*” before explaining why it had not happened. “*Satan thwarted us.*” Satan, is a Hebrew name meaning adversary. The word hindered, ἐγκότω / egkoptō, refers to a military practice of breaking up a road and leaving obstacles to make it difficult for the enemy to pursue. It is to hinder, impede, make difficult, but such hindrances are only temporary. Satan had prevented them so far, but that did not mean in anyway they were giving up. It is probable that Paul would have gone through Thessalonica once or twice on his third missionary journey. Satan hindered Paul and delayed his plans, but Paul continued onward and eventually was able to see his desires fulfilled.

Paul does not say how Satan had hindered them, only that he did. Commentators will speculate about it, and there are many descriptions in the Scriptures about the activities of Satan and his demonic followers and things they did to interfere in the affairs of man. I want to expand on this topic, but first I want to complete Paul’s train of thought in verses 19-20. For now, just keep in mind that Satan can hinder, but that is only temporary. God’s plans always move forward to accomplish what He desires even when He allows adversity to occur.

Glory & Joy in the Thessalonians - 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

Paul concludes this chapter by a three-fold question and answer followed by a direct statement regarding why they have such strong desires to see the Thessalonians again. ¹⁹ *For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?* ²⁰ *For you are our glory and joy.*

Verse 19 is interesting grammatically in that there are no verbs in the Greek. The English translation supplies them so that it makes sense to us. This makes his concluding statement in verse 20 an emphatic answer to the questions asked.

The opening threefold question is “*For who [is] our hope or joy or crown of exultation?*” At first glance you might think his answer would be Jesus Christ Himself, but then you are surprised when instead he uses a rhetorical question to state that it was the Thessalonians. Why? Because the tendency is to quickly read through something without careful consideration of what is actually written.

We are society in which information is constantly pumped out. The news cycle no longer even pauses - nor does social media and especially so if you are carrying a smart phone and checking it whenever a message alert sounds. The result is information overload with little time for more than superficial consideration. That is even worse with audio-visual media since it is harder to go back and analyze the communication for truth and accuracy and thoughtful reflection. This is a major reason people have become so susceptible to lies and partial truths whether it is coming from advertisers, politicians, or social engineers who want you to adopt their morals. The latter’s main means of this is entertainment to infuse into you their ideas when you are relaxed and seeking amusement and not on guard against the evil they want you to accept. (We also now have medical “experts” such as Dr. Fauci who are a combination of all three as they create unreasonable fear to manipulate you toward their own purposes. They are frauds because they lie in saying they are following science because they do not, and they manipulate the data to reach false conclusions. Three simple questions expose them. Why does the United States rank first in total reported COVID-19 cases, cases per day, and deaths? Why has the second wave of infections been much higher in the lock down states and nations than those with less

draconian measures or those without them? Why do nations with nations that routinely use HCQ have minuscule COVID-19 statistics compared to those that have restricted its use?)

Information overload resulting in superficial thinking is a serious issue and that is why David preached a sermon earlier this year on *A Theology of Social Media*. It is why I also preached a sermon earlier this year on developing close and intimate friends and not being overwhelmed by superficial relationships on social media.

None of this was a problem for Paul or anyone in the first Century, nor did it even exist until electronic technology enabled constant broadcast of sound and pictures that would occupy the human mind. Why do I bring this up? Because while none of this was a hindrance to Paul in his endeavors in knowing and serving God, it is something that can hinder you and it will be used by Satan against you if you let him. Do not treat your Bible like you do a newspaper, magazine or social media. You need to read it to gain a general idea of its message and its flow of thought. You need to study it to make sure you understand the details of what has been revealed so that you do not misinterpret it. You need to memorize it so that it is as described in Psalm 119:11 as being treasured in your heart so that you might not sin against God. You need to meditate on it so that you gain from it every bit of benefit it can give. The Biblical idea of meditation is the opposite of eastern mysticism in which you empty your mind which is very dangerous for it allows anything to come in including the demonic. Biblical meditation comes from the idea of a cow or sheep chewing its cud. It is to ruminate on what God has revealed thinking deeply about its meaning and application to your own life. The word of God will keep you from sin, but sin and Satan will keep you from the Scriptures or properly interpreting it. Do not rush your reading and study of God's word. Be thoughtful. Think deeply.

A closer examination of verse 19 shows why Paul's opening question refers to someone other than Christ. The phrase is a threefold question connected by the word "for" (γάρ / gar) which is a "marker of cause or reason between events" (Louw-Nida). Paul's question is connected to the previous thought as the explanation for them. Paul's previous thought is about their grief in being unwillingly separated from the Thessalonians and their great desire to see them again. That is the context and flow of thought in the chapter.

The nouns used in the threefold question also need to be examined closely. The Greek noun translated as hope (ἐλπίς / elpis) refers to the source or cause of an expectation. The English word hope has taken on a connotation of an uncertain fulfillment of the expectation, but the Greek is a confident assurance of the expectation. Such hope certainly applies to Jesus since Christ is the source of our confident assurance of salvation and a future in eternity with Him in heaven as testified by multiple Scriptures. (1 Timothy 1:1 - "*Christ Jesus, our hope.*" Titus 2:13 - "*the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.*" Colossians 1:27 - "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"). However, the hope expressed here is connected to why Paul desired to see them again. Paul wanted to see them again because he had confident assurance in their salvation, character and ministry as expressed throughout his letter.

The Greek noun for joy, χαρά / chara, refers to the source of feelings of great pleasure and happiness. Jesus is certainly a cause of joy starting with the angel announcing Jesus birth to the shepherds in the field and telling them that he was bringing them "*good news of great joy which will be for all the people*" (Luke 2:10). The women at Jesus' tomb had great joy when the angel told them that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matt. 28:8). And as 1 Peter 3:8 described, our faith and love for Jesus Christ causes "*joy inexpressible.*" However, the joy expressed here is also connected to Paul's desire to see the Thessalonians again for they were a source of joy to him.

The third part of the question concerns the "crown of exaltation" or "boasting" (ESV). This excludes Jesus being the source for the word for crown, στέφανος / stephanos, refers to the wreath given as a symbol of accomplishment or victory which is then tied to the word for a source or cause of boasting (καυχῆσεως / kauchāseōs). While Christians certainly boast in Jesus, He is not something we

accomplish to have as a wreath of victory. However, the Thessalonians were certainly that to Paul and his fellow missionaries. Their radically changed lives were the evidence that God had accomplished His work in the Thessalonians through them.

It is no wonder then that Paul then uses a rhetorical question to signify that the Thessalonians were a source of hope, joy and a crown of exaltation to them and would remain so “*in the presence of our Lord Jesus in His coming.*” This is a reference to Jesus’ physical return when believers will be gathered together in His sight at His appearing. This begins with the rapture and continues on through the events in heaven during the tribulation period including the marriage supper of the Lamb. They will be the missionaries’ crown of accomplishment when that happens.

And if there was any doubt, Paul states it directly in verse 20 that the Thessalonian believers are their glory and joy. Glory, δόξα / doxa, is the reason or basis for legitimate pride, and joy as already defined is a source of great pleasure. Those are the reasons that they were sorrowful at their unwilling separation from the Thessalonians and their great desire to see them again. That would also be why Paul would overcome the obstacles Satan had placed before him and would eventually see the Thessalonians again. As I pointed out earlier, Paul would have seen them again on his third missionary journey, probably twice. Luke specifically states in Acts 20:1-3 that Paul had gone through Macedonia on his way to Greece, and then returned through Macedonia on his way back to Philippi from where he sailed for Troas. Thessalonica is a major city on Egnatian highway through Macedonia and gateway to the roads south into Greece. Paul also had Thessalonian men traveling with him - Aristarchus and Secundus. Satan hindered Paul, but he did not defeat him.

Hindered, not Defeated

I want to spend the rest of this morning’s sermon expanding on that idea. Satan hinders, but he cannot defeat God’s plans for His people.

Let me begin by expanding on what Paul states in verse 18. “*Satan hindered us.*” As I pointed out earlier, the Greek term here, ἐγκότω / egkoptō, is translated as hinder or thwart, and it comes from a military practice “making slits in the street to hold up a pursuing enemy” and hence its basic meaning of obstacle. The idea here is of a retreating army cutting up the road and placing obstacles on it to slow down the pursuing enemy. They would bust up the road, take down bridges, fell trees across it, or even cause a rock slide on it if possible. In modern war, they would put mines in it. That picture brings up two points I want to mention before talking about some of the ways Satan hinders us and ways we can overcome the obstacles.

First, it is the retreating army that puts up the obstacles. That means it is God and His people that are advancing and Satan and his forces that are in retreat. Remember, the problems in Thessalonica and all the other places Paul and his companions had been occurred because they had come there preaching the gospel and people were getting saved. Also keep in mind that Jesus said that in Matthew 16:18 that the gates of Hades would not overpower His church. If you are at the gates of a place, you are the ones on the offensive. Gates are defensive structures. Hades refers to the holding place of the dead, so Jesus is saying here that even death will not overpower His church. Believers will physically die and then be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), but Jesus’ church remains and continues His mission.

Second, whatever obstacles are placed will only cause a temporary hold up until they are overcome. There is another word that could be used to describe a permanent blockage, but Paul does not use that word. Whatever obstacles Satan places in front of you will only temporarily impede God moving forward to accomplish His will. I want to briefly point out two direct attacks by Satan or demons before pointing out other hindrances Paul faced and some general observations.

Satan’s Attack on Job - Job 1-2, 42

Job 1-2 gives one of the best described attacks by Satan recorded in the Scriptures. Job was

“blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.” He was also very wealthy with 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 female donkeys. He had 7 sons and three daughters. He was *“the greatest of all the men of the east.”* In the course of events, God pointed out Job’s godliness and integrity to Satan, who then falsely accused Job and then the test began. In one day, Satan took away all of Job’s wealth and children, and Job responded with great grief, but holding fast to God proclaiming, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”* It was not long before Satan also took away Job’s health but left his wife to be a discouragement to him. Yet Job still held fast to his integrity. Most of the rest of the book is a dialogue between Job and three friends who desperately try to find some sin in Job for fear that otherwise what happened to Job could happen to them. In the end, God answers proclaiming His power, wisdom and majesty resulting in Job humbling himself before the Lord, and then the Lord restoring Job to double his previous wealth and giving 7 more sons and 3 more daughters.

While none of us would want to go through that, I am pointing it out because this is the most extreme case I can think of, and even here Satan can only put up temporary obstacles in hindering him from what God has called him to be and do. Job overcame all the adversity because of his absolute trust in God best displayed in Job 13:15 when he says, *“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.”* In the end, Job is an even more godly man. Satan was utterly defeated.

Angelic Battles - Daniel 10

Daniel 10 begins with Daniel mourning and fasting over trying to understand a message that had been given to him. Three weeks later an angel came with an answer to Daniel’s prayers and in doing so pulls back the curtain on spiritual warfare in heavenly places. This angel had been dispatched that first day but a demon named *“the prince of the kingdom of Persia”* had held him up for 21 days until *“Michael, one of the chief princes,”* came and helped him. The angel then reveals what would happen in the future including some the angelic and demonic forces that would be involved.

There is a spiritual battle that rages all around us. Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 6:10 reminding us *“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.”* How do we overcome the obstacles that come from such struggle? Paul directs us to be strong in the Lord and to stand firm having put on the full armor of God - the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, and taking up the shield of faith and sword of the Spirit - the word of God. He then adds, *“with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit.”* That is what Daniel did for three weeks until an angel came with his answer. The answer was delayed, but the hindrance was overcome. The essential element of overcoming spiritual warfare is summarized in James 4:7, *“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”*

Overcoming Hindrances

Paul does not say or even imply anything specific about how Satan hindered him. Perhaps that is because there are so many different ways Satan may try to hinder you including being the evil mastermind behind people who do evil things such as the thieves that stole Job’s wealth or the religious Jews that opposed Paul and the gospel. It may also be because ultimately it does not matter the source of the obstacle, but what does matter is trust in the Lord and commitment to overcome it. Here are some common obstacles to living life for the purposes for which God created and saved you. I will simply state the obstacle and a Biblical solution to overcome it based on the premise given in 2 Peter 1:3–4, ³ *“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”* The better you know God’s word and

live according to it, the better able you will be to overcome any hindrance that is put before you because you will better understand God's perspective and patiently wait for the Lord to guide you and enable you to do His will.

Unbelief: Salvation- Acts 16:31, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* John 20:31, *"these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."* Seeking the Lord is the primary quest of life.

Competing Sources of Truth: John 17:17, *"Thy word is truth."* John 14:6, *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'" John 3:33 "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. Rom. 3:4, "May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar."* The pursuit of truth will lead you to God, if it does not, then you have not found truth.

Temptation: 1 Corinthians 10:13, *"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."*

Fear: 1 John 4:18, *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."*

Anxiety: Philippians 4:6–7 ⁶ *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Abandonment / Rejection: Hebrews 13:5, *"He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'"*

Loneliness: Matthew 28:20, *"and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Unloved: Romans 5:8, *"but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

Impatience: Psalm 40:1, *"I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry."* Psalm 147:11, *"The LORD favors those who fear Him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness."*

Discontentment: Philippians 4:11–13, ¹¹ *"Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² 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. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*

Financial Trouble: Matthew 6:33, *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things (food, drink, clothing) will be added to you."* Psalm 37:25, *"I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging bread."*

Stress: 1 Peter 5:7, *"casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."*

Physical Handicap: Exodus 4:11–12, *The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" ¹² "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say." John 9:2–3, ² *And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."**

Suffering: Romans 8:18, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."* 2 Corinthians 1:3–4, ³ *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."*

Tribulation: John 16:33, *“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

Trials: James 1:2–4, ² *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Despair: Lamentations 3:19–24, ¹⁹ *Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. ²⁰ Surely my soul remembers And is bowed down within me. ²¹ This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. ²² The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ²⁴ “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I have hope in Him.”*

Some of Satan’s most effective obstacles are things that most people would consider to be something good and sought after.

Riches: Proverbs 23:4–5, ⁴ *“Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration of it. ⁵ When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.”* Matthew 6:19–21, ¹⁹ *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* 1 Timothy 6:8–10 ⁸ *“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content ⁹ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

Pleasure: Proverbs 21:17, *“He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich.”* Ecclesiastes 2:10–11, ¹⁰ *All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. ¹¹ Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.”* Pleasure can be good, but hedonism ultimately does not satisfy and it comes at a high cost.

Fame: Ecclesiastes 1:11, *“There is no remembrance of earlier things; And also of the later things which will occur, There will be for them no remembrance Among those who will come later still.”* Isaiah 2:17, *“The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.”* 1 Peter 5:5b-6, *“for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.”*

Fame is fleeting, you will be forgotten. Fame belongs to the Lord.

Power / Position: Daniel 5:21c, *“the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.”* Luke 12:48b, *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”* Romans 14:11–12, ¹¹ *“For it is written, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” ¹² So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”* God holds people accountable for whatever responsibility He entrusts to them.

Friendship: Proverbs 13:20, *“He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.”* Choose your friends carefully.

Marriage: Proverbs 12:4, *“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him is like rotteness in his bones.”* A good marriage is a blessing, and bad one is a curse.

Satan will seek to hinder you, and by that he may cause a delay or circuitous route to your goal, but he cannot defeat you if you will walk with the Lord, and that includes getting up and resuming the journey if you stumble. Whatever obstacle you do find in your path whether it was put there by Satan, other people or it is due to your own sinfulness, Romans 8:28 is still true - *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* He will use it to produce in you perseverance, proven character and hope (Romans 5:3-5).

Psalm 37:3-6 summarizes how to overcome any hindrance. ³ *“Trust in the LORD and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. ⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. ⁶ He will bring forth your righteousness as the light And your judgment as the noonday.”*

Sermon Notes - December 6, 2020
Hindered, Not Defeated - 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Introduction & Review

The Thessalonians demonstrated the _____ of the gospel by what they were willing to suffer for it
Paul makes serious charges against the _____ Jews - killing the Lord & prophets & driving them out
Zeal for God without knowledge of God is _____ to God
God's wrath abides on the unrighteous at the _____ time and in the future

Paul's Longing - 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

Paul, a Jew, again refers to the Gentile Thessalonian believers as "brethren" - the church is _____ family
They were grieved at their unwilling departure from the Thessalonians - as "_____ like an orphan"
The _____ attachment was due to much time spent with the Thessalonians & suffering alongside them
They were separated physically - "in face" - but not in their inner thoughts and desires - "in _____"
They had a very strong _____ (ἐπιθυμία / epithumia) to see them & intense effort & motivation to do so
Paul emphasizes his own desire for this and that it had not happened only because Satan had _____ them
Paul does not say _____ Satan, the adversary, hindered them, only that he did

Glory & Joy in the Thessalonians - 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

Reading too quickly could lead to thinking Paul is saying _____ is his hope, joy and crown of exalting
Information overload in a media driven society leads to _____ thinking & susceptibility to falsehoods
Medical "experts" who act more like marketers, politicians & social engineers _____ follow actual science
_____ broadcasting enabled by electronic technology has led to information overload & its consequences
Do not treat your Bible like a newspaper, magazine or social media - read, study, memorize & _____ on it
"For" (γάρ / gar) _____ Paul's questions to his grief in being separated and longing to see the Thessalonians
Hope (ἐλπίς / elpis) refers to the source or cause of a confident _____
We have hope in _____ for salvation and His return - 1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 2:13; Col. 1:27, etc.
Paul's hope is his confident assurance of the _____ salvation, character and ministry
Joy (χαρά / chara) refers to the source of feelings of great _____ and happiness
Jesus is a source of joy (Luke 2:10; Matt 28:8; 1 Pet. 3:8), but Paul is referring here to the _____
The Thessalonians were a crown of exaltation - a _____ of victory or accomplishment - for Paul
The Thessalonians would be a wreath of _____ for the missionaries at Jesus' return
They were also a source of glory - legitimate _____ - for the missionaries, so they wanted to see them again
Satan could only hinder Paul, for he _____ travel to Thessalonica again - Acts 20:1-3

Hindered, not Defeated

Hinder, ἐγκότω / egkoptō, describes a military practice of cutting up the road to _____ a pursuing enemy
The _____ army places the obstacles - Satan is trying to hinder the continued advance of the gospel
Matthew 16:18 - gates are _____ - even Hades (death) cannot stop Jesus' church

The obstacles are only a temporary _____ for God will continue to move forward to accomplish His will

Satan's Attack on Job - Job 1-2, 42

Satan stripped Job of his wealth, children and health - but Job maintained his _____ & trust in God

In the end, God is glorified, Job is more humble and mature and double blessed, and Satan is _____

Job's ability to overcome all the adversity was due to his absolute _____ / hope in God - Job 13:15

Angelic Battles - Daniel 10

Daniel prayed, and an angel was dispatched and delayed for 21 days until Michael assisted. The demon _____

Ephesians 6:10f - The spiritual battle is won by standing firm having put on the full _____ of God

2 Peter 1:3-4 - Knowledge of God's precious & magnificent promises enables _____ over obstacles

Unbelief: Acts 16:31; John 20:31

Competing Sources of Truth: John 3:33; 14:6; 17:17; Rom. 3:4

Temptation: 1 Corinthians 10:13

Fear: 1 John 4:18

Anxiety: Philippians 4:6-7

Abandonment / Rejection: Hebrews 13:5

Loneliness: Matthew 28:20

Unloved: Romans 5:8

Impatience: Psalm 40:1

Discontentment: Philippians 4:11-13

Financial Trouble: Matt. 6:33, Ps 37:25

Stress: 1 Peter 5:7

Physical Handicap: Ex. 4:11-12; John 9:2-3

Suffering: Romans 8:18; 2 Cor. 1:3-4

Tribulation: John 16:33

Trials: James 1:2-4

Despair: Lamentations 3:19-24

Riches: Proverbs 23:4-5

Pleasure: Proverbs 21:17

Fame: Ecclesiastes 1:11

Power / Position: Daniel 5:21c

Friendship: Proverbs 13:20

Marriage: Proverbs 12:4

Whatever the obstacle or its source, ultimate victory is to those who will _____ with the Lord

Romans 8:28

Romans 5:3-5

Psalm 37:3-6

KIDS KORNER – Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – Do one or more of the following: 1) How many times "Paul" is mentioned. 2) Talk with your parents about how Paul was able to overcome Satan's hindrances.

THINK ABOUT IT – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. What is the significance of Paul calling the Thessalonians *brethren*? How did they feel about being forced to leave the Thessalonians? Why did Paul have such a strong emotional commitment to them? Why can't 1 Thess. 2:19 refer to Jesus? What are some of the negative consequences of information overload due to technology and broadcasts? What care should you give to reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on God's word? Define hope, joy, crown of exaltation and glory and why the Thessalonians were a source of those for the missionaries? Describe the meaning of hinder in vs. 18. In view of this, is Satan on the offensive or defensive? Explain. Describe Satan's attack on Job. How did Job overcome the obstacles and defeat Satan? Describe the angelic battle in Daniel 10. How did Daniel overcome the obstacles placed before him? How is spiritual warfare waged and won according to Ephesians 6:10f? Why is the word of God critical to overcoming hindrances to godliness regardless of origin? Look up the verse listed with the obstacles above. Study, memorize and meditate on those that will help you overcome current obstacles to your Christian walk and service to God.