

Hindered by Satan I Thess. 2:17-20

¹⁷ But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸ Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ 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? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

Introduction

When it comes to the church, though the church was purchased with the precious blood of Christ, though the church is built by his own power, though the church has promised ultimate and final victory that even the gates of hell cannot prevent, in spite of all of this, the church is always in danger, the church always faces the reality of spiritual defection, spiritual disaster, spiritual destruction, the path to victory, the path to triumph, the path to glory for the church is a battlefield, no question about it. And all along the sides of that battlefield is the carnage of churches that were destroyed. The world system and the flesh, Satan, demons, all set themselves for the failure of the church.

There are battles on every front, but I personally do not believe that anyone can experience anything as intense, as

demanding, as difficult or as crucial as the battle for the purity and the power of the church. Not only are you fighting against normal human problems, but you now have engaged war with Satan and demons and sin itself. So, that the battle for the building of the church, the preserving of the church, the purity of the church and the power of the church is the greatest warfare of all, the greatest battle. Any man who goes into the ministry must understand that there will be no career in which he could engage which will come close to the demanding effort that this one calls for. It takes everything we are all the time, constant vigilance, constant study, constant teaching, constant leading, discipling, training, warning, to keep the church on track. It does not just happen and it doesn't come easy.

The War is real

Eph. 6:10

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

I Peter 5:8

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith,

Rev. 12:3-5, 7-9

³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. ⁵ She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

⁷ And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

12b Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

Daniel 10:4

⁴ Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that *is*, the Tigris, ⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist *was* girded with gold of Uphaz! ⁶ His body *was* like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

⁷ And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. ⁸ Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. ⁹ Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Prophecies Concerning Persia and Greece

¹⁰ Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and *on* the palms of my hands. ¹¹ And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

¹² Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. ¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision *refers to many days yet to come.*”

"lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." ([2Co 2:11](#))

I. The Effort

¹⁷ But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸ Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again

Having been taken away from you (bereft, bereaved of) (642) (**aporphanizo** from **apó** = preposition meaning from, away from, speaks of a rupture of a former relationship or any separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed + **orphanós** = an orphan, a child deprived of one or usually both parents) means to be made or caused to be an orphan and figuratively speaks of an unwanted separation as when one is torn away from, deprived of contact and society or unwillingly separated from. **Aporphanizo** can also be used to mean the separation of parents from children and a lover from his beloved. It was also used in a more general sense to denote the loss of any friend or relative.

Luke reminds us that this separation was somewhat abrupt or violent...

And when they did not find them (Paul and Silas), they (the jealous Jews) began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These

men who have upset the world have come here also 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus. 8 And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. 10 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. ([Acts 17:6-10](#))

Comment: The separation of Paul from the Thessalonians was not a physical act of removing Paul from the people, but the persecution which forced Paul and Silas to leave.

Short while - is literally for the season of an hour (kairos hora)

While means a point of time or period of time, time, period, frequently with the implication of being especially fit for something and without emphasis on precise chronology. It means a moment or period as especially appropriate the right, proper, favorable time (at the right time).

Kairos can refer to a fixed and definite time, the time when things are brought to crisis, the decisive epoch waited for or a strategic point in time. **Kairos** speaks of a limited period of time, with the added notion of suitability ("the suitable time", "the right moment", "the convenient time"). **Kairos** refers to a distinct, fixed time period, rather than occasional moments.

Eager

([spoudazo \[word study\]](#) from **spoude** = haste) conveys the idea hastening to do something with the implication of associated energy or with intense effort and motivation. It suggest zealous concentration and diligent effort, one's best effort!

Spoudazo speaks of intensity of purpose followed by intensity of effort toward the realization of that purpose. **Spoudazo** is used in the papyri in such senses as “do your best, take care, hurry on the doing of something.” **Spoudazo** is marked by careful unremitting attention or persistent application. The idea is give maximum effort, do your best, spare no effort, hurry on, be eager! Hasten to do a thing, exert yourself, endeavour to do it. It means not only to be willing to do with eagerness, but to follow through and make diligent effort. Give your utmost for His highest!

All the more (4053) (perissoteros) means more superabundantly, more earnest, more exceedingly, more frequent, much more, more earnestly.

Desire (epithumia [word study] from verb **epithumeo** = set heart upon from **epi** = upon or intensifier + **thumos** = passion) is a drive/passion directed at an object (epi = toward) and most often in NT describes depraved cravings and inner vile unrestrained desires from our fallen flesh nature

See (3708) (horao) refers not merely to the act of seeing, but also to the actual perception of object.

Face (4383) (prosopon from **prós** = toward + **ops** = the eye or face) is literally the part toward, at, or around the eye and so the face, countenance, presence, person.

See your face - Paul always had before him the goal of maturing new believers in their faith which ultimately speaks of the practice of **discipleship** and the fulfillment of Jesus' instruction, not just to go and baptize but as Jesus concluded...

Wante (thelo) is a desire that comes from one's emotions. It is an active decision of the will, implying volition and purpose. It describes a conscious willing and denotes a more active resolution urging on to action.

I Paul - This phrase clearly identifies **Paul** as the author of this **letter**, even though he had introduced it with the names **Paul and Silvanus and Timothy**.

More than once - is literally **both once and again**.

II. The Enemy

but Satan hindered us.

Satan hindered us - One might ask how did Satan hinder Paul. Remembering that Satan is the prince of the power of the air and is the spirit that is now working or energizing the sons of disobedience (all unbelievers), it is possible that Satan "energized" some of his "children" (cf [John 8:44](#)) to somehow impede Paul's journey, but beyond that one cannot speculate. The main point is that Satan can hinder legitimate Christian work and workers. He has done it effectively in the past and undoubtedly continues to have apparent successes today. However, was he really successful in his thwarting of Paul? No, for although he meant it for evil, God used it for good, inspiring Paul to write the precious letter to the Thessalonians that you are reading. Furthermore, Paul was able to send Timothy which provided training for his young disciple regarding how to effectively follow up evangelistic efforts.

The other question that arises is how are believers to discern whether the hindrance is from God or from Satan. Clearly Paul knew that the hindrance in this verse was related to Satan. But

Paul was also "hindered" in his missionary journey by the Spirit, Luke recording...

And they (Paul, Silas and Timothy) passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been **forbidden** (koluo - forbid by word or act thus preventing something from happening) by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia 7 and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus **did not permit** them ([Acts 16:6-7](#))

In his epistle to the Romans Paul twice mentions his unsuccessful attempts to go to Rome...

And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been **prevented** {koluo - present tense = continuously} thus far) in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. (See **note Romans 1:13**)

For this reason I have often been **hindered** (egkopto - imperfect tense = over and over Paul was being impeded and implying a succession of hindrances) from coming to you (See **note Romans 15:22**)

Hindered (thwarted) (1465)(**egkopto/enkopto** from **en** = in + **kópto** = cut down, strike) strictly means to knock or cut into, to impede one's course by cutting off his way; and hence to hinder, impede, thwart or interrupt. It means to make progress slow or difficult. It can also convey the idea of delay (see below on [Acts 24:4](#))

As illustrated in the verses below the NT uses always have a spiritual connotation - Paul's course hindered here and ([R 15:22](#)), the progress of the gospel hindered ([1Cor 9:22](#)), the walk of Christians hindered ([Gal 5:7](#)) and the ascension of prayer by a husband who mistreats his wife ([1Peter 3:7](#))

In classic Greek **egkopto** was a military term meaning to cut in on, throw obstacles in the way of, or cut up the road so that normal movement was impossible. The road was so cut into and broken up that travel was blocked.

In secular Greek there **egkopto** is used in the context of interrupting (*koluo*) and thus hindering the progress of a discussion.

MacArthur explains that **egkopto**

is a military term referring to digging a trench or breaking up a road. One of the countermeasures an ancient army would take against the opposition was to dig a massive trench that would prevent enemy troops from reaching its men. Another way to frustrate the enemy's progress would be to tear up a brick or stone road so that he could not traverse it. Thus Paul depicted the powerful devil as supernaturally obstructing the apostle's strong desire to revisit Thessalonica. (MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press or Logos)

HOW SATAN HINDERS MINISTRY

1. IN THE LOST

a. Snatching the Seed

Matt 13:18

¹⁸ “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

b. Blinding the Eyes

2 Cor 4:3

³ But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them

ACTS 26:17

¹⁷ I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

2. IN THE CHURCH

a. Corrupting Doctrine

2 Tim 4:2

² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Galatians 1:6

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Acts 20:29

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch,

Acts 15:1

And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

b. Causing Division

I Cor 1:10

¹⁰ Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s *household*, that there are contentions among you.

I Cor 3:1

3 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? ⁴ For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I *am* of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

Romans 16:17

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ¹⁸ For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

III. The End

¹⁹ 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? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

Wiersbe comments that...

Paul did not look back and give in to regret and remorse. Instead, he looked ahead and rejoiced. For the Christian, the best is yet to come. Paul looked ahead by faith and saw his friends in the presence of Jesus Christ in glory. In times of trouble and testing, it is important that we take the long view of things. Paul lived in the **future tense**, as well as in the **present**. His actions were governed by what God would do in the future. He knew that Jesus Christ would return and reward him for his faithful ministry; and on that day, the saints from Thessalonica would bring glory to God and joy to Paul's heart. As the familiar song says, "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus." The fact that we shall one day stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ (see **bema**) ought to motivate us to be faithful in spite of difficulties. We must remember that faithfulness is the important thing ([1Cor. 4:2](#)). At the Judgment Seat of Christ, our works will be judged and rewards will be given ([Ro 14:10](#), [11](#), [12-note](#); [1Cor. 4:1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); [2Cor 5:9-note](#), [2Co 5:10-note](#)). (Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor **or** Logos)

MacArthur explains that...

A great part of heaven's bliss for the redeemed will be the joyful presence of those whom they have been used to reach. The believer's hope of such reward is in part what Jesus in His parable of the unjust steward alluded to: "Make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings" ([Luke 16:9](#)). Even as the unbelieving steward or manager used his master's resources to purchase earthly friends, Christ said believers should use the resources their Master provides to bring people to salvation. Whether or not believers know those people now as friends, they will know them in glory as friends forever and as sources of eternal joy.

The time to receive in full the promised joys is still in the future, at Christ's return. (MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press or Logos) **Paul** recorded a similar description of his beloved brethren of Philippi...

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my **joy** and **crown**, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. (see **note** [Philippians 4:1](#))

Later in this same letter **Paul** asks the Thessalonian saints... For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? (see **notes** [1Thessalonians 3:9](#); [3:10](#))

CROWN (**stephanos** from **stepho** = to encircle, twine or wreath) was a wreath or garland given as prize to victors in public games and thus a symbol of honor. In Classical Greek the *stephanos* was used of the kingly crown but of the crown of victory in games, of civic worth, military valor, nuptial joy, festival gladness. Woven of oak, ivy, myrtle, olive leaves or flowers. Used as a wreath or garland.

Paul did not say that he would receive a **crown**, though this is suggested. He said that the saints themselves would be his crown when he met them at the Judgment Seat.

of Rejoicing

kauchesis: the act of boasting, exultation

Original Word: καύχησις, εως, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: kauchesis

Phonetic Spelling: (kow'-khay-sis)

Short Definition: the act of boasting, exultation

Definition: the act of boasting, glorying, exultation.

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 2746 *καύxēsis* (a feminine noun) – boasting, which can either be in the "achievements" of *self* (negatively) or about *God's grace* (positively).

See 2744 (*καυχομαι*).

Scripture also mentions a

crown of life for "a man who perseveres under trial" ([Jas 1:12-note](#))

the unfading crown of glory ([1Pe 5:4-note](#)) for those who "shepherd the flock of God" ([1Pe 5:2-note](#)),

our **hope or joy or crown of exultation** referring to believers whose life we have had a role (cf [Php 4:1-note](#)), and

a **wreath (crown)...imperishable** for those who run in the Christian race and are not disqualified ([1Co 9:24-note](#), [1Co 9:25-note](#), [1Co 9:26-note](#), [1Co 9:27-note](#))

The crown of righteousness is a phrase which in the present context is most likely the Greek construction referred to as genitive of apposition, the crown that consists in righteousness and is also the reward for righteousness.

Presence

emprosten: before, in front of (in place or time)

Original Word: ἔμπροσθεν

Part of Speech: Adverb; Preposition

Transliteration: emprosten

Phonetic Spelling: (em'-pros-then)

Short Definition: in front, before the face

Definition: in front, before the face; sometimes made a subst. by the addition of the article: in front of, before the face of.

COMING (**parousia** [word study] is a combination of two Greek words **para** = with + **ousia** = being (the participial form of the verb **eimi** = to be) and literally means a "**being beside**" or a **presence**.

See **Table comparing Rapture vs Second Coming**

Parousia speaks of the personal presence of a person. In addition it is used to speak of the coming of a person and his arrival or advent. In Paul's day **parousia** was common in the Hellenistic world for the formal visits of royalty. It became a technical term for the Second Coming of Christ and is so used eighteen times in the New Testament and seven of these are in the Thessalonian epistles.

The word **parousia** has no English equivalent and thus is often transliterated in writings and discussion.

Parousia denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with. **Parousia** thus combines the thought of an arrival, advent or the coming of a person to a place with that of their presence there subsequently until a certain event transpires.

In an ancient Greek letter a lady speaks of the necessity of her "**parousia**" in a place in order to attend to matters relating to her property there. In another secular Greek writing we find **parousia** used to refer to the coming of a king or other noted official. In the visit of the ruler was accompanied by magnificent ceremonies, delicacies to eat, gifts of money, street improvements, new buildings, addressing of complaints and requests! Sounds like the coming of the King to take His throne in the 1000 year Millennial or Messianic Kingdom!

As Jesus sat with Peter and James and John and Andrew, "on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your **coming**, (parousia) and of the end of the age?" ([Mt 24:3](#))

