

Satan's Hindrances

1 Thess 2:18

1

18 For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us.

2

Has Satan ever **“Hindered”** you from doing something? This is an interesting concept. Did Satan build a barrier that prevented Paul and his companions from going to Thessalonica? Did he somehow cause circumstances to be such that they were unable to go? Maybe he caused the people around them to keep them from their desire to go. The answer is probably, all of the above. Paul, and Silas, and Timothy, were very desirous to visit the Church at Thessalonica, but they were unable to do so for the singular reason announced in the text, namely, "Satan hindered us." It wasn't from lack of desire, they wanted to go see the Thessalonian brethren. Note what they said of the Thessalonians...

1 Thess 1:2-3

3

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; **3** constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

No, their desire isn't where the problem lay, Paul is very clear in his statement to them...

4

“Satan hindered us”

So, what we see then, since they could not go together to see the Thessalonians, Timothy was sent, alone, to minister to them for a time. It wasn't desire or will which hindered them, but a lack of power. Now, what I mean by “power” here, is the idea that there are a lot of things that can keep us from doing something. We might want to travel the United States and see the many wonders that are here, but because of time, money, or opportunity, we just can never make it happen. Maybe its obligations we feel we have, maybe it's our jobs, our careers, or maybe its certain duties or responsibilities we feel. We all understand the types of difficulties that can pop up. When we look at what Paul is talking about here, I think what we see is that he is referring to just these kinds of situations of life. That's where this statement gets interesting. If the kinds of hindrances that Paul is talking about are these circumstances of life, how is it that he says that it is Satan that is hindering them? They certainly weren't prevented by God, though we do see that on certain occasions Paul was not allowed to go precisely where his desire would have wanted to.

Acts 16:6-7

5

6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; **7** and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

But the circumstances that Paul is talking that had hindered them from going to Thessalonica were not circumstances of the Spirit, but ere rather things of the world. Thus Paul says that

6

"Satan hindered us"

This brings us to the thought of, how Satan did it? It would be useless to try and speculate on the specific circumstances that happened, though some try. Bagster, in his pulpit Bible version makes this statement...

7

"Satan hindered Paul by raising such a storm of persecution against him at Berea, and other places, that it was deemed prudent to delay his visit till the storm was somewhat allayed."

OK, maybe, sounds plausible, but we really don't know for sure. Whatever circumstances or situations that arose, Paul attributes to Satan trying to stop them from spreading the Gospel. I think it obvious that even if this were happening, I doubt sincerely that it was the only thing. I imagine that there were many different obstacles that presented themselves as barriers that kept them from their desire. Paul wasn't neglecting to do his duty to God, He just kept getting sidetracked by things, that is what he defines as Satan's hindrances. We know that the Church was under attack and maybe it was that he felt that he couldn't leave other struggling Churches to Satan's attacks. The enemies of the truth, Satan's minions, were extremely active in their opposition, so Paul and his companions were hindered from going to Thessalonica. Or it may be that Satan had instigated dissensions and discords in the Churches that Paul was visiting, and he felt he was obliged to stop first in one and then in another to settle their differences; to bring to bear the weight of his spiritual influence upon the various divided sections of the Church to restore them to unity. Whatever the reasons we just don't know, but he gives all the credit to Satan as source.

The point is that this isn't the only occasion in which Satan has hindered good men: in fact, when you look at the history of Satan and his interactions with man, this has been his practice in every age, but we're just looking at this one particular incident. When we look at our lives I don't know that any comfort can necessarily be taken from this, but hey, misery does love company.

There are some points that we want to look at concerning these thoughts. Satan doesn't want anyone to have a relationship with God through Christ and is doing everything within his power to keep that from happening. Please understand what I just said. You, me, everyone individual out there is known by God. That should make us feel very good, even important, because we are important to God, but the opposite of that is just as true. Satan knows each and every one of us, individually. We are just as important to him as we are to God, but for vastly different reasons. Satan doesn't want us because of love, as God does, Satan wants us just so he can keep us from God. So...

8

- 1) Satan has always worked against the plan of God
- 2) Satan wants to hinder us
- 3) How can we tell when Satan is trying to hinder us

"Satan hindered us" is the testimony which all the saints in heaven will bear against the arch enemy. This is the witness of all who have written a holy line on the historic page, or carved a consecrated name on the rock of immortality, "Satan hindered us."

The scriptures are absolutely loaded with accounts where we see Satan trying to keep people from obeying God.

From Adam and Eve in the garden, to Elijah battling the priests of Baal in 1 Kings 18, to Moses enduring the faithlessness of the Israelites, even to Uzza reaching up to stop the Ark of the Covenant from falling off the wagon. Now that last one might be a bit of a surprise, but consider it for just a moment in this light. If it is not from God, who is it from? There is no middle ground, no grey area. God had declared that only the Levites were to transport and handle the Ark, and even then with only very strict requirements. Uzza was not a Levite, when he reached up to steady the Ark, he broke the Law of God, whether intentionally or not, whether he did it ignorantly or not, he broke God's Law. Obviously his intentions were sincere, but he broke the Law and if it is not from God it is from Satan. This is an important point to understand. Satan doesn't always work in obvious ways, far more often than not, he is subtle in his efforts and couches them in sincerity and ignorance, but they are still from Satan and not God. This is our first point...

9 1) Satan has always worked against the plan of God

Satan has been working diligently through-out history to keep man from God. But there is one account that I think illustrates this idea very well, that of Job.

Job 1:6-9

10

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. **7** The Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." **8** The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." **9** Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

Do you see the accusation that Satan brings before God. He says that Job is only faithful because God has blessed him. Notice verse 10 of this chapter...

Job 1:10

11

10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Let's consider for a moment what Satan tries to do here with Job. He has accused Job before God saying that his faith is based on the bountiful blessings that God has given him. He then seeks to turn the blessings of this world that God had given him into a curse. How is that possible you might ask? The more we value the things we have been blessed with in this life, the greater the danger that Satan can turn our love for them against us as hindrances. If I value my career so much that I allow it to become the central focus of my life as opposed to faithful obedience to God, then my career has become a hindrance. If I place the importance of money over the importance of Christ and His sacrifice then money has become a hindrance, if I put such an enormous value on the things I need to get done, then am I allowing those things to keep from keeping the Word of the Truth? If family is more important than my faith, then I will allow family to be the lure that could draw me away from God. Satan doesn't use supernatural things to hinder man anymore, he uses the things of

this world, and specifically, he uses the things of this world that are important to us. And that could be different for each of us. Satan attacked Job through his wealth, his possessions, and his family, hoping that Job would blame God for the catastrophes befalling him. He used the things that Job valued in this world. The Romans would line up a man's family and threaten them with death if he did not renounce his faith in God, Christ, and the Word.

Now note what Job's wife told him...

Job 2:9

12

9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Even Job's wife tells him to give up. But I think that sometimes we miss part of the impact of this statement...

13

"Do you still hold fast your integrity?"

What is this integrity that she is talking about? We often think of this term as speaking to honesty, veracity. But it comes from the Hebrew...

14

OT:8538 **Tummah** (toom-maw'); feminine of OT:8537;
Innocence: KJV - integrity.

The idea that I see is humility before God. Job had not abandoned his faith, his humbleness before his God. In his recognition of the higher power that is God he stayed steadfast in his faith, that is what his wife was telling him to do, give up your innocence, your humility before God, and curse Him and die.

Here then is our next point...

15

2) Satan wants to hinder us

The whole reason Satan attacked Job was to cause Job to give up his innocent humility and walk away from God. That is the same reason Satan attacks us. He wants to hinder us from doing the will of God. Christ speaks to that in His comments in...

Rev 2:10

16

10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days.

So was it the devil that cast them into prison or was it the Romans? The answer is the Romans, but it is still described as Satan putting hindrances in front of people. Christ says to not fear, it's just a test. Look at what Peter says in...

Acts 5:3

17

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?"

In his condemnation to Ananias for his lie, Peter asks him why has Satan filled your heart to lie. That implies two things,

- 18** A) Ananias would know why
B) He could have prevented it from happening

Both of these things are true. Satan could only have filled his heart if Ananias had allowed it and Ananias could have kept Satan away if...

James 4:7-8

19

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Had Ananias submitted to God in faithful, humble obedience he could have resisted the devil and fled from him. He did not and Satan filled his heart with a lie.

Now for our last point...

- 20** 3) How can we tell when Satan is trying to hinder us

While this might seem to be the easiest to figure out, it often is the most difficult for us to see. There are so many subtleties in the world that sometimes there are things that we just don't recognize as being a trap for us. Some of them are obvious; the neighbor who intrudes on our privacy or property and we get angry and act unbecomingly towards them. The guy who cuts off on the freeway and then waves at us with an obscene gesture in his arrogance, and our initial reaction is to retaliate, the person who blocks our driveway as they visit that wonderful neighbor, the people that shoot off illegal fireworks until 2 in the morning, these all seem to be fairly easy to see as efforts of Satan to hinder us in our faith. No, it's the situations and circumstances that are more subtle in their nature that we need to worry about. Do we recognize the danger in pursuing a career that would require us to miss worshipping our God according to His Word? Do we engage in recreation activities that pull us away from our relationship with Him through Christ? Are we able to overcome our feelings and desires as we strive to practice "Love of the brethren?" It is these things of a quiet nature that are so dangerous to our faith that must be overcome, as well as those things that are more obvious. That is the mark of a Christian, someone who has their emotions under control.

James 1:27

21

27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Make no mistake, Satan's sole purpose is to "Hinder" each and every one of us in being faithfully obedient to God and His Word. Remember the passage we looked at in James 4...

James 4:7-8

22

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

When we move closer to God and farther away from the world, we become better able to overcome...

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