

Home Group Helps

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

Living in the Light of His Return: Ministry that Stands Against Satan

^{2:17} 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. ^{3:1} Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, ³ so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. ⁴ For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

I. Ministry Affection (2:17-18a) – 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

II. Ministry Obstructed (2:18b) – and *yet* Satan hindered us.

III. Ministry Ambition (2:19-20) – 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.

IV. Ministry in Action (3:1-2) – ¹ Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,

V. Ministry in Affliction (3:3-4) – ³ so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. ⁴ For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know

VI. Ministry Achievement (3:5) – ⁵ For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

1. Launching Question(s):

- Have you ever had a conversation with someone who does not believe in a personal Devil? Why do you think they believe that way?

2. Observation Question(s):

- In this passage, the Devil is referred to as “Satan” which means "an adversary, one who resists." Paul says in 2:18 that Satan “hindered” (i.e., opposed/resisted) Paul’s desire to come to Thessalonica.
- How does Satan hinder people from believing the Gospel (see: 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Mk. 4:14-15; 2 Thess. 2:8-10)?
- How does Satan hinder Christians by weakening their faith (see: 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 2:7; Matt. 16:23; 2 Cor. 11:3)?
- The Apostle Paul commands us to “stand firm” against the Devil (Eph. 6:10-17) and the Apostles James and Peter command us to “resist” the Devil (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-10). Why?
- How do we “stand firm against” or “resist” Satan?

3. Interpretation Question(s):

- This passage states that “Satan hindered us” (2:18) and yet, Scripture seems to also indicate that God hinders a desired ministry at times (see Acts 16:6-8).
- How do we reconcile these two ideas?

4. Reflection Question(s):

- How does Zechariah 3:1-5 encourage you?

5. Application Question(s):

- How might you better “stand firm against” or “resist” Satan this week?