

When Things Aren't Working Out

¹⁷But as for us, brothers, after we had been orphaned from you for just a short time (in person not in heart), we tried all the harder and with great longing to see you face to face, ¹⁸because we planned to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and Satan blocked us. ¹⁹For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you? ²⁰Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

3 So when we couldn't stand it any longer, we decided to be abandoned in Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the good news about Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, ³so that no one would be shaken by these troubles. For you yourselves know we're appointed for this. ⁴In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer trouble, which, as you know, is exactly what happened. ⁵That's why, when I couldn't stand it any longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor could come to nothing. ■

■ Paul felt it

■ Satan plotted it

So where's the joy?

■ Paul redeemed it

■ God permitted it

■ Paul still felt it

VERSES 19-20: A STARTLING SOURCE OF JOY

JOY ARISES...

when your ultimate desire is
for something God is doing
that's _____ than you are,
for somebody God is building
who is _____ than you are.

ASSIGNMENT

Q: Who is your hope and joy and crown of boasting?
Have you told them that?
Or are you waiting for their funeral?