

**Satan Hinders Christian Work**  
**Dr. Michael A. Cox**  
**Original: 9-22-02; Revised: 1-22-17; 7-20-25**

**Text:** 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

**1 Thessalonians:** [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

**UBS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Paragraph Topic:** Paul's Desire to Visit the Church Again

**Central Idea of Message:** Satan seeks to derail ministry efforts by Christians.

**Introduction:** Poor Paul. He would travel from city to city and preach the gospel. He would be successful in converting some to Jesus Christ. He would make new friends; then he would have to hurry out of town to keep from being arrested, beaten, or killed. He had friends throughout the Roman empire. Some of these never saw him again. Absence made his heart grow fonder as he continued to serve wherever he could, in spite of Satan's opposition, because he longed to have fruit from his labor to present to Christ at the time of his return to earth.

**I. Absence Made Their Hearts Grow Fonder (v. 17)**

- A. Paul and his companions were bereft of the Thessalonian Christians
  - 1. Had been separated, orphaned, run out of town (Acts 17:10)
  - 2. Bereft in person, not bereft in spirit: I still remember my grandmother
- B. Absence made their hearts grow fonder
  - 1. Paul was eager to see their faces
  - 2. Friends and loved ones might be out of sight but not out of mind

**II. Satan Hinders Christian Work (v. 18)**

- A. Paul and his companions wanted to go to Thessalonica
  - 1. Paul wanted to travel there more than once
  - 2. **What stops people from engaging in Christian work?**
    - a) **Sometimes God stops us: forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia at that time (Acts 16:6-7)**

- b) **Sometimes we stop ourselves: disqualified due to ungodly conduct (1 Cor. 9:27) or just plain laziness**
- c) **Sometimes Satan stops us**
  - (1) Satan
    - (a) Paul believed there was a devil
    - (b) He tempts to evil
    - (c) He opposes God's work
    - (d) He inspires evil character
    - (e) He oppresses God's people
  - (2) With illness: Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7)
  - (3) With human opposition: Satan entered Judas (John 13:27; Acts 17:10)
  - (4) Satan thwarted their attempts to return to Thessalonica
    - (a) Satan thwarted their attempted return trips to Thessalonica because he knew people would turn from sin and to Jesus Christ
    - (b) Satan stopped them from returning by using people to create obstacles which would keep them from going
    - (c) God allowed Satan to stop them because the devil has much freedom - for now - but his clock is winding down, and because humans are free to choose whom they will serve
- 3. Principles
  - a) **Servants of Jesus Christ can expect opposition and persecution**
  - b) **Paul and his companions continued to serve God in spite of all the opposition from Satan**

### III. Fruit for the King (vv. 19-20)

- A. The Thessalonian converts were Paul's reason to boast at Christ's return (v. 19)
  - 1. Hope of exultation: confidence
  - 2. Joy of exultation: happiness
  - 3. Crown of exultation: prize
  - 4. Jesus is coming: **παρουσία**
    - a) Denotes the manifestation of a deity
    - b) Denotes the visit of a king or emperor

5. People God has brought to faith in Christ by working through you will be presented to Jesus at his coming
6. Apparently, there will be much recognition for those who have led people to faith in Christ
- B. Converts to faith in Christ are our glory and joy (v. 20)
  1. Trophy room illustration
  2. How many people have you influenced toward Christ Jesus?
    - a) How many jewels of this kind will be in your crown?
    - b) What have you to place at the feet of the returning king?
  3. Right now is an excellent time to start showing off our trophies!

**Conclusion: Will you serve this same Lord Jesus in spite of Satanic opposition?**