

## BUT SATAN HINDERED US ... I Thess. 2:18

I wonder if you know anything about what Paul is speaking of here, in these three words, [Satan hindered us](#).

Well, of course, I know you do! We *all* have had first-hand experience of how Satan hinders. Indeed, that is what he has been doing from the beginning of time, - he hindered our first parents, and he constantly tries to hinder God's work also. No matter what you try to do he sets out to break your spirit.

He is behind all the wars and conflicts. He is behind the poverty and misery. He is behind family break-ups and strife. In short, he is behind everything that is wrong with this world because when God created it, it was perfect.

Remember before you became a Christian, - when the Holy Spirit was troubling you about your sin, - the devil gave you *every* reason why you should shut it out of your mind, and think no more about it. ... When you were confronted with the Gospel the devil gave you all kinds of reasons why you should not become a Christian, for example, none of your friends will want to have anymore to do with you ... you will look foolish ... you'll never be able to keep it. ... "Jesus can save others, but He will not save you!"

From the very outset, he hindered you ... He hindered you when he saw you first showing interest in Christ, - even what seemed at the time to be a meagre paltry interest. Now that you have been a Christian for a while he has not given up, for he is now trying every 'trick in the book' to get you to stumble and fall and give up. ... He stands back laughing at you, mocking you, and telling you how much of an awful job you are making at being a Christian. He makes it out as if you are an absolute fool! ... He will try anything to get you to doubt your salvation ... and leave it!

Even if you have been up until now a fairly firm believer, it won't be too long before he will attack your faith. He looks for every opportunity to weaken your standing in Christ. ... Satan hinders us!

What a privilege it is to be saved ... and from out of that, when the devil sets out to hinder you, even *that* is a **PRIVILEGE** ... because he is forced to recognise you are no longer his! Through the saving power of Christ, you have left him! As far as you are now concerned, the devil is

a 'has been' for he is not your master any more ... *Jesus is!* ... Jesus has taken over, and the enemy does not like it!

There is no doubt about it ... the devil tempts Christians. Some Christians think it is wrong to be tempted ... *it is not wrong!* It is 'part and parcel' of belonging to Christ! The devil will try all the harder to trip you up! In fact, often, – especially when you have recently become a Christian, - he hinders you all the more. When you are new to the faith, when you are a young Christian, it seems as if he works especially hard to *wrench* you away from God.

Now, we need not be surprised at this because he tempted and tried the Lord Jesus. He didn't get anywhere with Him so he hopes and tries to fare better with those who say they follow Christ.

He wants to ruin your resolve, and to wear you out ... and he wants to spoil your testimony for if you managed to do a thousand great things for Christ and he managed to 'trip you up' only once he would work his hardest to amplify and exaggerate that one mistake ... so you would forget those other 999 things you did that brought glory to Christ.

He wants to get you to doubt ... because if he can get you to 'dip your toes' into the 'old waters you used to swim in' he'll not stop until he 'gets you in again over your head'. Yes, he cannot *ever* take away your salvation in Christ but he can make your life miserable as a believer, if you pay heed to him. If he could get your mind to just linger for a few moments on the old paths and the old ways you used to be interested in, he will work on that.

He is like one of these computer viruses nowadays. ... These viruses come into your computer and you know nothing about them until things start to go wrong. It starts off very small, - annoying little things ... They are not always fancy programs that cause problems in the computer, - often it is just a 'comma' where there ought to be a 'full stop' ... and such a simple thing as that can muck your computer up. ... And you need computer programs, - anti-virus, firewall, - to stop those deviously very clever people!

And that's the way the devil does it ... He gets in ... and you don't even notice he's there. He starts in a simple way ... innocently, and he takes over by stealth. He wants to mess up your life for Christ. ... *But* it's a privilege when he sets out to hinder you for it's a sure sign *he has noticed you* ... and you must be a threat to *him!*

What the word 'hindered' here actually means is that the devil has cut up the road in front of you because he doesn't want you to travel along it any further. And here is where I see the **privilege**, - if you are taking up so much of his time, - there must be something you are doing that he doesn't like ... and it is always really good to do things the devil doesn't like!!

He doesn't bother the unsaved trundling down the road towards Hell the same way he bothers the saved. He has already got the unsaved and that's why he is interested in 'tripping up' the saved.

Incidentally, that's why he also is interested in erecting all the barriers he can possibly think of in order to stop the unsaved person from coming to Christ. If you're not saved and God is speaking to you and your sin is bothering you ... you can be very sure the enemy isn't so far away either. Don't give the devil any joy, - trust Christ and defeat the devil! It's like another nail in his coffin every time a soul comes to Christ.

Aye, it's a **PRIVILEGE** when the devil sets out to hinder you ... because he has noticed you ... you must be bothering him! ... And also, **What PURPOSE** is there for the devil to hinder you?

Are you coming out to the church faithfully? ... Where did you used to go? He didn't bother you the same until he saw you going to church, and being a Christian!

Are you coming out to the prayer meeting faithfully? Are you reading your Bible? Are you praying? Are you trying your very best to encourage your brother and sister in the Lord ... even when sometimes they don't make it easy for you? ... You can be sure the devil does not like it, - he is not pleased with you!

He is clever, and he has a **purpose** in hindering you ... He absolutely hates the Word of God being preached so he sets up the agitators and he introduces false doctrines. He hates to see the people of God getting on, so he introduces the factions and the troublemakers. He hates evangelism and the preaching of the Gospel of free and Sovereign Grace ... so he makes his best efforts to get the preacher and the people to tone 'it' down until it no longer has the victory of Christ in the centre.

And he tells you to ‘slow down’ and not take your faith so seriously. Yes, surely, read your Bible every now and again, and pray when you have to ... but take it easy, and don’t become a fanatic. ... That’s the kind of way he works.

There is absolutely no doubt about it ... Satan does everything he can to disrupt the work of God ... and we’ve got to confess there are times when he *has* successfully hindered us.

It was Paul’s experience, it was Christ’s experience too. When Jesus was in the boat sailing through the lashing waves, He said to the disciples, - I’m sure, with exasperation in His voice, - **Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? (Mt. 8:26)**. ... It is in the interests of no one else that the voice of God’s people and the witness of God’s people is silenced and nullified, but the devil’s. ... That is what he wants to see ... more and more of God’s people with a very little, - almost negligible, - faith.

Every plan he devises sets out to rob God of His glory and tarnish the joy of our salvation. He wants to make you into a miserable Christian, and then he can point to you and say to others, “Sure you don’t want to be like that!”

That’s his **purpose**, - that is the basis upon which all his actions and thoughts and plans are founded. He ‘runs a negative campaign’ against Christ and His Church! ... And he wants to rob you *now* of the joys of being a child of God, and of knowing your sins forgiven, and of the eternity you will share with your Heavenly Father.

Yes, but I still say it’s a **privilege** the devil knows me and is interested in what I’m doing and saying. He knows I despise him and the error he tries to sell me. I’ve got to watch him for he’s busy and he knows my many weaknesses. Sometimes he catches me out ... but it’s at those times the Saviour reaches down and lifts me up again. ... It’s like He doesn’t always lift me out of the storm, but it is as if He gives me enough strength to endure it so it makes me more trusting of Him ... and inevitably, that is to His glory.

It is a **PRIVILEGE** the devil knows I’m not one of his, for I belong to God – He paid for and purchased me ... And yet I know the devil has a **PURPOSE** for pulling me down, and he will not give up until either the Lord takes me to glory or the Lord casts him into the pit, - whichever comes first!

But, you see, his **purpose** will only be allowed to go as far *as God's will permits* because I believe in the absolute and total Sovereignty of the Almighty God of Heaven and earth Who cares passionately for His people ... and His Word is *full* of **PROMISES** ... There is no temptation or trial that could come my way that He has not dealt with already ... and I know He is faithful, and He won't allow me, - of any of us, - to go through anything more than we can bear. In fact, His Word confirms to us that He will always provide a way for us to endure it (I Cor. 10:13).

So, even before the devil starts, God has him summed up, for God also teaches us in His Word that His grace is sufficient for our need, and His grace sustains and upholds us, even in weakness (II Cor. 12:9).

There is something about the devil Christians need to be reminded of, - he is not God ... Satan is not all-knowing, he is not all-powerful, he does not have the ability to be everywhere at the same time. *He is not God!* ... He is defeatable! ... I wouldn't want you to 'drop your guard' on the devil ... but he is not only defeatable ... *he is defeated!*

He hasn't gone away, and he is still more powerful that we could cope with on our own ... but he is *defeatable* and *defeated*. ... We don't have to wait until some future event of prophecy ... the devil was soundly defeated at the cross. Hell has his name written all over it. ... Hell will not be full until he is in it! ... Hell was prepared especially for him!

He trembles when you remind him how the shedding of the blood of Christ at Calvary defeated him in time and ultimately for eternity. Yes, the devil does set out to hinder us but when we are faithful to God the devil 'shoots himself in the foot' because that's what he did here in Thessalonika. ... Remember how Paul planned to go up to Bithynia but the Lord stopped him, - I would say it's a fair assessment the devil took to himself some of the credit, "*I stopped him/Paul!*" ... Aye, but the devil, - clever and all as he is, - he's also a fool because it was the leading of the Lord that first took Paul across the Bosphorus and into Macedonia ... into Europe, - it was certainly nothing of the devil!

Again the devil would say, "But sure look, wherever Paul went I had people in the cities and towns to chase him and his Gospel!" Yes, but you couldn't keep him out and you couldn't stop some of his hearers being saved! ... We remind the devil of the word of God in [Rev. 11:8](#) *behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, and*

of Paul's experience when he arrived in Troas, [II Cor. 2:12 a door was opened unto me of the Lord.](#)

*The devil has lost!* His plans are in disarray! Paul told the young pastor Timothy, [II Tim. 2:10 I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.](#) ... *There* are the promises in God's Word that assure us nothing is left to chance or to man's efforts or to the devil's plans. *God* is in control ... and yes, the devil *can* hinder us, but he doesn't 'have the last say' for *God does!* [Rom. 8:28 all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ... 37 we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.](#)

God's plans don't depend upon us, and they don't depend upon how the devil sometimes 'shoots himself in the foot' ... but God's plan is that He gives us the means and resources to stand against the enemy. When the enemy slows us down, or trips us up, or blocks our path ... what did Paul do? He didn't give up ... he prayed and the Lord always brought him through to the conclusion He had for him.

### CONCLUSION

Yes, the devil's busy. Yes, he has his influence all over the world ... but don't you remember when he stood before God he had to ask for permission to go and trouble Job. And only God gave him the permission the devil would never have got near Job.

When God says to the devil, "Enough!" the devil has to stop. When God says to the devil, "You're not going there", you can be assured the devil won't get going there. I'm certain there has been many a time when the devil has wanted to use a particular plan that he knew *for certain* would trip up David Greenaway, - but God said to him, "No!" ... You would not believe how he has tried to destroy us!

How do you manage to keep going? You can only keep going because God is your Heavenly Father Who looks out for His children, as the psalmist said, [Ps. 121:5 The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand ... 8 The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.](#)

The devil didn't stop Paul's witness *for he couldn't!* ... And the message of Christ from Paul's lips even worked in the hearts of the demon-possessed.

Yes, Satan can hinder us ... and it can be frustrating, annoying and exasperating ... but, for the believing child of God, we are instructed, [James 4:7 Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.](#)

I just want to finish by reminding you it is a **privilege** you bother the devil enough he thinks it is worth his while bothering you. And yes, he's got his **purpose**, - to stop you walking with the Lord, and your brothers and sisters in the faith. But isn't it good that we must be such a threat to him, enough to attract his hellish attention.

And the supreme beauty is that no matter how much power he has fooled himself into thinking he has he is basically *a failure!* He will never be able to flout the plans of God ... Not one soul for whom Christ has died will the devil see ending up in hell. No matter how Godless humanity would become, if this world was to continue on for the next ten million years would Satan be able to stop the work of God advancing.

The devil has no power outside of that which God has only loaned him. ... And how can I say those things? ... Simply, because of the **promises** in the infallible Word of God. Any means by which I personally can defeat the devil is because of Calvary. That's where the battle truly took place ... Jesus fought the devil there for you and for me ... and Jesus defeated him! Satan is a wounded adversary ... he has not quit his evil work just yet though and that means he keeps up his opposition to Christ and His Church. The battles are indeed many, and they will increase ... You don't have to go looking for them, - they come to find you!

Paul didn't go looking for conflict, but conflict managed to find him wherever he went. He told the Thessalonians he had suffered and was shamefully treated (v.2) because of the Gospel, but he saw it all within the context of God's will, [v.4 we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel.](#) ... God does not allow a single thing in your life, outside of His will for you, and out of which He will not eventually make a way of escape.

The devil is defeated, - Christ defeated him at the cross. You are a child of the King ... God's Son shed His blood for you on Calvary, and no matter how the devil tries, he can only do that which your Heavenly Father allows him!

So, don't wander away off. Keep close to God ... look out, and look up and I Cor. 15: 57 thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.