

Satan Hindered Us

“But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire, because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again, and Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy” (1 Thess. 2:17-20).

Paul’s stay at Thessalonica was cut short by the stiff resistance and persecution he suffered from unbelieving Jews there. As these verses reveal, Paul felt his leaving the new Christians in Thessalonica was akin to a funeral, a bereavement. He wanted to return to them once and again, but those plans could not be completed because “Satan hindered us.”

Paul does not elaborate just how Satan “hindered” him. We know, of course, that it was not through a personal encounter that the hindrance had taken place. Satan has messengers, angels, and agents that aid him. Once, when Jesus told his apostles that he would be killed by the Jews but would rise again, Peter rebuked him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee” and Jesus said to him, “Get thee behind me Satan: thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men” (Mt. 16:21-23). Peter certainly wasn’t Satan but he was acting — unwittingly it is true — as an angel of Satan. Jesus didn’t look forward to the trial which led to His crucifixion. In the garden so fervent was His agony and prayer that He shed great drops of sweat like blood as He prayed, “Oh my God, if it be possible let this cup pass from me” (Lk. 22:44; Mt. 26:38f). Peter’s protest over there being no necessity for His dying was Satan whispering to him, “You don’t have to die. There’s an easier way.” Peter’s words only made the pain Jesus felt more difficult.

Satan is an active force in our world. Peter wrote that he “is a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Dreadful is God’s description of him. In Revelation Satan appears as a great, red dragon so huge that with a swoop of his tail he sweeps away a third of the stars of heaven. There he appeared before a radiant woman about to bear a child which child (Jesus) he sought to destroy (Rev. 12:2f; 5f). He was unsuccessful: the manchild was caught up to God and the woman was taken away into a wilderness. But, he didn’t cease his efforts: he went away to make war with the rest of the seed of the woman, which symbolically meant us (Rev. 12:17). So Satan sought allies to help him in his perpetual, eternal war against God. We next see him standing by the sea, and emerging from that sea is a great, furious seven-headed beast, dreadful in appearance. The another beast emerges out of the midst of the earth (Rev. 13:1-10, 11-17): the oppressive, persecuting Roman government with the false prophet; viz., the Caesar’s demand of emperor worship. How much pain and suffering God’s saints would suffer through almost 300 years brought through the wicked deeds of these servants of Satan!

Satan is responsible for sickness (Lk. 13:16); sin and death (Gen. 3:14-19). Satan a murderer and is the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). Surely no one, in his right mind, would

desire to follow such a one as this, but he blinds the minds of men to his intents and the consequences that follow those who yields to Satan's temptation. He is the great Deceiver (Rev. 12:9) and we should not be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). To the contrary we should ever be watching of his devices for ensnaring us.

God's assurance is that He will not allow Satan to tempt us with greater temptation than we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). God set limits on the extent he could try Job and He sets limits on the extent he can try us. Those who yield to Satan do not do so because they could not withstand, but because either they wanted the bait Satan dangled before them or else they didn't look for a way of escape. We should not give Satan an advantage over us (2 Cor. 2:11); nor give place to him (Eph. 4:27).

God has given us armor to stand against the devil's snare (Eph. 6:13) and we should put that armor on and use the shield God provides us to overcome all his fiery darts (Eph. 6:16).

We can overcome if we will resist him (Jam. 4:7) but his temptations can be excruciating and trying. He put such a thorn in the flesh upon Paul that three times Paul asked the Lord to remove it (2 Cor. 12:8-9). But despite his temptations, the faithful Christian will find that by fending off Satan's enticements will result in his being stronger and more confident in the grace and power of God.

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