

Taking New Territory in Troubling Times, Pt. 5

Satan Hinders, the Tempter Tempts, Love Wins!

Steve Berger May 24, 2020

Today

Satan Hinders, the Tempter Tempts, Love Wins! We'll talk about Satan's work to disrupt and divide relationships in the body of Christ. He knows a house divided will not stand, so He tries to disrupt and divide us, knowing we'll be unable to stand in the fullness of God's will for the church.

Satan hates —

a) unified, loving, serving Christian community

b) unified community —

1. **Psalm 133** — anointing, refreshing, commanded blessing on God's people.
2. **Matthew 18:19-20** — Jesus Presence and answered prayer.

The church community gets radically blessed when we're in unity.

c) **loving community** — **John 13:34-35** world will know we're His disciples

When we're loving one another, we're a testimony to a love-less world.

You see why Satan tries to disrupt and divide our relationships. *We must not be ignorant of his schemes lest we contribute to his diabolical desires.*

Warning — relational problems in the family will prevent us from taking new territory in troubling times! Let's not forfeit the power, favor, testimony, blessing, and glory by falling prey to Satan's hindering, tempting schemes.

In Thessalonica, there was a huge opportunity for Satan to disrupt and divide the relationship between the Thessalonians and Paul... **it didn't happen!!!** Let's see why... a lengthy passage to capture the entire picture of what was going on...

a) **1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13**

But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore, we wanted to come to you; even I, Paul, time and again; but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you; therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now, we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? Now may our God and Father Himself,

and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

b) **Satan hindered Paul from going back to Thessalonica, after he had planted the church**

c) "hindered" cut a ditch in front of; to prevent growing relationship/fellowship

d) Satan knows Paul wants to establish and encourage them in faith, build upon their friendship, take new territory... repeatedly, time and again, he hinders Paul.

Interesting... *how Satan hindered Paul is unsure, most believe it was through the people who chased Paul out of town and followed him all the way to Berea. Yes, people can be used by the enemy to hinder the work of God...*

a) 2 Timothy 2:24-26

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

b) people can lose their senses, get snared by the devil to do his will, taken captive to do his will, happens when there's distance, silence, lack of communication, unholy communication — make sure you are not a willing or ignorant candidate.

By hindering Paul from coming back to Thessalonica, he can potentially hide Paul's true heart of love and longing to be with them. In other words, hindering Paul from getting there can make the truth of his love for them seem untrue!

While Satan is hindering Paul, Paul is concerned the Tempter is tempting the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 3:5

For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

Question — *How might the Tempter be tempting them if his intention is to destroy relationship?*

a) "Paul doesn't care about you, if he did, he'd be here."

b) "You're going to believe that guy who rode out of town and left you here to face persecution and tribulation by yourself, where is he now that you need him?"

c) Satan bombards with negative thoughts of others that seem to be backed by facts... "Yes, where is he?" "We're in this mess because of him." "...fine until we met him."

d) that's why we must be so careful... things are not always as they seem.

e) what would social media today do with Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah?

While the Thessalonians were being bombarded and tempted with negativity about Paul, Paul was being hindered from getting there himself, by the same evil forces. He couldn't get there no matter how hard he tried, regardless of how much he wanted to. **That is what the fact was, not what appeared to be fact from a single vantage point. Satan is playing both sides, hoping one or both will take the bait.** “Thessalonians don't love me, no need to reach out to them.” “Paul doesn't love us, if he did, he'd be here.”

How do we know that thinking negatively of Paul was the temptation that Paul knew they were being tempted with?

1 Thessalonians 3:6

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you...

a) Paul breathed a sigh of relief when he heard the Thessalonians loved him, remembered him for good, and wanted to see him too!

The Thessalonians didn't accept the temptation to think negatively, suspiciously or angrily.

Beloved — many of us have to get better at this. I've never seen so much negativity, suspicion, anger at one another. ***Differing opinion — elevating our own opinions — TRASH YOU!***

How did the tempter's temptations get defeated by Paul and the Thessalonians, and what must we imitate in our own lives to overcome the enemy's schemes as well?

a) **Love** — Paul made "love deposits" toward the Thessalonians a regular habit.

b) read the chapter, read it again, “eager to see you with great desire, you're our joy, glory, crown of rejoicing, pray for you, love you, long to be with you face to face...” Paul had deposited those types of feelings toward them **while he was with them, sent them through Timothy, wrote them here.**

c) Thessalonians did something wonderful — while they were being tempted to think negatively of Paul, **they chose the right thoughts to think** — based on fact, history, and loving relationship — not hindering, tempting, suspicion, and anger!

d) they understood —

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Beloved — if we started making **love deposits** toward the other members of God's family on a regular basis, and **thinking right thoughts** about one another — the enemy will have a much harder time convincing others that you don't care, love them — and that they should be negative, suspicious, angry at you, etc.

**Though Satan hinders, and the Tempter tempts,
love can win if we'll let it —
and we must!**

Ephesians 4:1-3

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called
- Lowliness and gentleness
- Longsuffering — humility
- Bearing with one another in love — keep the unity of the Spirit
- Bond of peace

Challenge for you today — if you are at odds with someone, if there is division in your life, if there is discord, lack of unity, if there is room for improvement, if the devil is working on both sides — take new territory and let love win. Love wins the day. Love never fails.

**If we'll let love win,
we'll take new territory in troubling times,
God will get glorified —
that's much better than devouring one another!**

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Satan hate a unified Christian community?
2. How did Satan try to destroy Paul's work/influence in Thessalonica?
3. Why did the tempter's temptations get defeated by Paul and the Thessalonians?
4. Is there any area of your life where you are sowing any kind of discord in the body?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 13 — in relation to any personal relationships that may need mending.
6. Is there someone with whom you need to reconcile?

NOTES