

Why God Allows Satanic Attack – 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20 – December 1st, 2019

- I want to talk with you about something that the Lord has ministered to me in a very personal and profound way over the years.
- Namely, that of why it is He will allow the Devil and his demons, who are very real, to attack His people seemingly mercilessly!
- What follows are three reasons from both our text today as well as from my own personal experience as a Christian and pastor.

1. To turn us back to the Word and prayer (Verses 13-16)

13 And we also thank God continually because, **when you received the word of God**, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. 14 For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: **You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews** 15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

- I'm hoping you're able to connect the dots, as-it-were, as it relates to God using suffering and persecution to draw us to Him.
- Persecution of the church does not hinder the church; it's the absence of persecution of the church that will hinder the church.
- This because, God knows it takes both persecution and affliction to get our attention and in so doing bring us back to Himself.

Psalms 119:67 - Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Psalms 119:71 - It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

There's a most fascinating account that I think sums up this turning back to the Lord when we're prone to wander and go astray and it comes by way of that timeless classic hymn of old, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." Here's how one best described it: "It is an unfortunate turn of events when a young boy is forced to grow up without a loving father. Thus was Robert Robinson's fate. His dad passed away when he was only eight years of age. To make Robert's circumstances much more difficult, his maternal grandfather, Robert Wilkin, a wealthy man, who had never reconciled himself to his daughter's lowly marriage, disinherited his grandson and provided an inheritance for him of only ten shillings and sixpence. Even in his youth he endured the hardship of having to be the breadwinner for his widowed mother and himself. As he grew older, he came under the influence of the famed evangelist, George Whitfield. On Dec. 10, 1755, Robinson could not push from his mind a particular phrase used by Mr. Whitfield in one of his sermons: "Oh, my hearers! the wrath to come! the wrath to come!" He was wondrously converted and became a minister of the gospel; first, in a Baptist church, then in a Methodist church, and later in other denominations. In one location his congregation grew to 1,000 in attendance. Unfortunately, and for some unexplained reason, he became altogether unstable and unhappy. His Christian beliefs and training seemed of little importance to him. On one occasion, years later, he found himself the fellow passenger of a young lady on a stagecoach. It is reported that she began to sing to break the monotony of the trip. And what did she sing? Come, Thou fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above; Praise the mount-I'm fixed upon it, Mount of Thy redeeming love. O to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be. Let Thy goodness like a fetter, Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee - Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above. As she finished singing the young woman asked Robert what he thought about the song. His startling reply was: "Madam, I am the unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago; and, I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, if I could feel now as I felt then."

2. To protect and redirect our paths (Verses 17-18)

17 But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but **Satan blocked our way**.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most stunning passages of scripture, I would say this would have to be it.
- It seems there were those accusing Paul of not caring because if he did he would have certainly come back to Thessalonica.
- Satan may have blocked his way from returning to Thessalonica, but God brought about inspiring two letters over 2,000 years.

Acts 16:6-10 - 6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, **having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia**.

3. To create a longing for the Lord's return (Verses 19-20)

19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which **we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?** Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

- This is one of those times where I can honestly say that God, as only He can and always does, has saved the best for the last.
- By that I mean this is the Lord's "end game" as it were, in the sense that, this is what everything ultimately points to in the end.
- I'm of the belief that God wants to loosen our grip on this world to ready us for the next, which is why He allows Satan to attack.