

## Overcoming Obstacles - #3 Now and Eternity (sermon series on 1 & 2 Thessalonians)

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**Text:** 1 Thessalonians 2:17,18; 3

### A. Introduction:

Series review:

1. Week 1: Instructions and encouragement for new believers,
2. Week 2: Warning about agitators at work in the church.
3. Week 3: Paul, hindered by Satan.

B. In life we rarely know all the facts – 1 Thessalonians 2:17,18.

1. People in the Thessalonian church were telling themselves Paul didn't care, was a false teacher, and had abandoned them. This led to self-pity, depression, anxiety, fear.
2. When we, similarly, jump to uninformed conclusions and keep repeating them, we start believing what we say as fact.
  - a. Pastor's illustration: On inspecting his daughter's bank statement, he accused her of spending money at an unknown store "fin de la page," until his children pointed out to him that this was French for "end of the page."
  - b. Satan baits the Christian community into doing this: **John Bevere:** "One of Satan's most deceptive and insidious kinds of bait is something every Christian has encountered—offense. If we pick it up and consume it and feed on it in our hearts, then we have become offended. Offended people produce much fruit, such as hurt, anger, outrage, jealousy, resentment, strife, bitterness, hatred and envy. Some of the consequences of picking up an offense are insults, attacks, wounding, division, separation, broken relationships, betrayal, and backsliding" – in *The Bait of Satan*.
3. Now Paul told them the rest of the story – 1 Thessalonians 2:17,18. He had actually tried to come to them repeatedly but Satan had hindered him.
4. **Pastor Derrick:** "Be careful of the stories you tell yourself. Don't get baited into lies and exaggerations."

### C. Satan:

1. Paul believed in Satan because Jesus believed in Satan.
  - a. Jesus told His disciples of witnessing Satan's fall – Luke 10:18.
  - b. Jesus defined Satan and his work as the archenemy, deceiver, father of lies and liar from the beginning – John 8:44.
2. Blocked by Satan.
  - a. Scholars speculate that this blockage may have been the Roman authorities, Jewish authorities, sickness or other circumstance.
  - b. "Blocked" means the road has given way, been washed out, cut into, is not there any more, i.e. Satan takes away the road.
  - c. Pastor's illustration: The family finds a back road home when the main road is blocked due to a wildfire.
3. Satan may cause the destruction of your road but God always has another route for you to take.
4. Spiritual realities and personalities.
  - a. There are angels who work on behalf of God and demons who work on behalf of Satan.
  - b. Satan is the archenemy of God. He is the god of this age, blinds us from Christ's power, frustrates the work of God, targets Christians with lies, temptation, attacks on feelings and emotions.
  - c. Activity of Satan and his demons will increase as we approach the end.
  - d. Paul describes how to resist these realities:
    - i. Put on the armor of God – Ephesians 6:11-18.
    - ii. Understand the fullness of Christ's deity and all we have in Christ – Colossians 2:1-3.
    - iii. Remember that Satan is not all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere present as God is.

### D. Compromise:

1. Paul was concerned that the Thessalonians were compromising. We too might be tempted to compromise in areas of maintaining spiritual disciplines (e.g. church attendance – Hebrews 10:25), discouragement, loss of confidence in God's word, truthfulness, etc.
2. Paul sent Timothy to visit them – 1 Thessalonians 3:2—as a lifeline to strengthen and reassure them of God's love. **Pastor Derrick:** "Whatever trial or pressure you're facing, in the midst of that, when the road is taken out and God seems to be thwarted, remember there is no thwarting God because flying through the air is a Timothy – Romans 8:28." (Romans 8:28 doesn't say all things are good but that God intervenes, twists, contorts circumstances to work things out on our behalf so that they're redemptive.)
3. Our "Timothy" (encouragement) may come through the Bible, another person, a sermon, song, church service etc. to help us see we're not alone. (Pastor mentioned a truck commercial that illustrates a snowmobiler as "Timothy to the rescue." View it at: <<http://tinyurl.com/h8colud>>.) Lyrics to closing song "Victory in Jesus": <[http://www.popularhymns.com/victory\\_in\\_jesus.php](http://www.popularhymns.com/victory_in_jesus.php)>

### Ministry:

1. What is the danger of basing our conclusions and actions on only our side of a situation? What's an offense? What are some fruits of being offended?
2. Do you believe Satan is real—why or why not? Have you had an experience of being blocked or attacked by Satan? Did God provide a way out? Tell your stories. How do we as God's children defend ourselves against Satan? Why do we not need to fear him?
3. How might Christians in the 21st century be tempted to compromise? How does Paul's bold statement of Romans 8:28 relate to compromise and other temptations faced by Christians in our time?

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank You for overcoming Satan and opening new paths for us. Help us to be wary of giving in to the temptations of taking offense, compromise, discouragement, unbelief, etc. Help us to recognize the Timothy's of encouragement that come to us and to be Timothy's to