

WORKING THROUGH ADVERSITY
1 THESSALONIANS 2:18

Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.

Introduction:

1. In his letter to the church at Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul shared with them the adversity that the devil had placed in his path to prevent him from meeting with the church to encourage them and minister to them. In fact, Paul had numerous adversities during his ministry.
2. Adversity can best be described as "a difficult situation or condition."
3. Adversity can hit us physically, mentally, and/or spiritually.
4. The word "adversary" comes from the same root word as "adversity," so that tells us that adversity originates from the devil. **Cf. 1 Peter 5:8** *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*
5. If we understand that the difficult situations we find ourselves in originates with the devil, we can better face them and put our faith and confidence in Jesus to bring us through to victory. **1 John 5:4** *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*
6. So let's consider these three areas that adversity can attack us.

I. PHYSICAL ADVERSITY.

- A. Physical adversity can come from people, sickness, or our own failures and/or sins.
- B. Sometimes those closest to us can bring adversity to our lives. Our own family. **Matthew 10:21** *Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.*
- C. When we face adversity, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture. But we're not alone; there is help. Many have already made it through life, enduring far more difficult circumstances than we have experienced.
- D. Adversity is the training ground for Christian maturity. It develops our patience and makes our final victory sweet. **James 1:2-3** *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*
- E. Many people have physical limitations that could cause them to give up, but they don't. They have learned how to deal with adversity and work through it.

II. MENTAL ADVERSITY.

- A. Our adversary the devil enjoys playing mental games with us. Sometimes he can make us think that the things of God are fantasy and there is nothing in the world but what we have right now.
- B. This mental attack goes right back to the Garden of Eden. **Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3** *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*
- C. We are warned in God's Word to be aware of how the devil plays, and remember, he doesn't play fair. **Ephesians 6:11** *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*
- D. Christians are called to "not conform any longer to the pattern of this world," with its behavior and customs that are usually selfish and often corrupting. **Romans 12:2** *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*
- E. Our relationship to Jesus should influence the way we think.

III. SPIRITUAL ADVERSITY.

- A. If you haven't realized it yet, we are in a spiritual war. The devil is battling against Jesus for your very soul. If he can't have your soul he will try to get your allegiance. **Ephesians 6:12** *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*
- B. The word "wrestle" indicates that it is a hand to hand and foot to foot struggle we are engaged in.
- C. If the devil can convince you that the philosophies of the world are better for your life than the Word of God, he will have won the war for your soul. **Colossians 2:8** *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*
- D. The adversary plans to deceive the mind. How easy it is to get someone to go along with something, as long as they think it is alright. "You will not surely die," the devil lied (Gen. 3:4). And he is still lying, convincing people to question God's word.

Conclusion:

1. The Christian life involves hard work. It requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently, and to struggle against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. To live effectively, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We will stumble if we look away from Him to stare at ourselves or at the adversities surrounding us. **Hebrews 12:1-2** *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*