

Monday, January 28 - 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. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18) Sometimes things just don't go our way. We have great plans, we have dreams, we have desires - but they just don't work out. Sometimes we will think it's just bad luck and other times we blame God. However, have we thought about evil in the world? Paul knew there were forces at work that would try to keep him from doing what God had directed him to do. What are you doing each day to keep in step with God's purpose for your life and to keep distractions from blocking you?

Tuesday, January 29 – 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? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20) Could this be said of you? Who are you encouraging? Who do you come along side of to offer a word of hope? When you see them succeed or see them grow in their faith how does it make you feel? The ultimate reward for Paul's ministry was not money, prestige or fame, but new believers whose lives had been changed by God through the preaching of the gospel. This was why he longed to see them. No matter what ministry God has given you, your highest reward and greatest joy should be those who come to believe in Christ and are growing in him.

Wednesday, January 30 – So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3) Some think that troubles are always caused by sin or lack of faith. Trials may be a part of God's plan for believers. Experiencing problems and persecutions can build character (James 1:2-4), perseverance (Romans 5:3-5), and sensitivity toward others who also face trouble (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). Problems are unavoidable for God's people. Your troubles may be a sign of effective Christian living.

Thursday, January 31 – In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain. (1 Thessalonians 3:4-5). Some people turn to God with the hope of escaping suffering on earth. But God doesn't promise that. Instead he gives us power to grow through our sufferings. The Christian life involves obedience to Christ despite temptations and hardship. Satan ("the tempter") is the most powerful of the evil spirits. His power can affect both the spiritual world and physical worlds. Satan even tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). But Jesus defeated Satan when he died on the cross for our sins and rose again to bring us new life. At the proper times God will overthrow Satan forever (Revelation 20:7-10).

Friday, February 1 – But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:6-7). Paul is experiencing pain and discomfort because of his stand for Jesus Christ. But he considers his persecution worthwhile if it leads to others following Christ. The people in Thessalonica are keeping the faith. Are you investing in the lives of other people? If so, are you encouraged as they grow? If you are not investing in someone else, what steps do you need to take to make that happen? If someone has been investing in you and your life, take time to send them a note of thanks