

Lord, Clear the Way!

A Study of 1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:13

World Outreach Church
Sermon Discussion Guide
Sunday Sermon: **July 28, 2024**
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INTRODUCTION: A mountain of lava ...

Pastor Rob Morgan recently traveled with his family to Iceland to celebrate his grandson's high school graduation. After arriving in Reykjavik, they began to drive toward the city, but were suddenly halted by an impassable mountain that covered the entire highway. In amazement, they realized this "mountain" was a cooling lava flow from a newly-erupted volcano! The incident reminded Pastor Rob of verses from 1 Thessalonians, chapter two, in which the apostle Paul states that, "Satan blocked our way." You see, Satan is like a seething cauldron volcano, spewing out all kinds of circumstances to block the way of God's people. We must be watchful because the Devil is always trying to obstruct our pathway with problems and temptations to hinder our progress in life. Pastor Morgan presents a passage from 1 Thessalonians, giving us a wonderful prayer to lean into when our way has been blocked by evil:

Scripture

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13 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.** 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.

¹ So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. ² 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, ³ so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.

⁶ 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. ⁷ Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. ⁸ For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. ⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.

¹² May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

***How can you recognize when Satan is at work, obstructing your way, versus the ordinary ups-and-downs of life? How do you respond?**

***What are some practical ways you can show thankfulness each day?**

***During difficult times, we all need God to strengthen and encourage us through His people. How have you experienced this in your own walk with the Lord?**

Background and Verse-By-Verse Study

1 Thessalonians 2:17 *But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought).*

- Brother, young child, mother, father, orphan ...

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 ... *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.*

- “Enkopto” is a military word.
- How did Satan block their way?

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 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.*

- One of the joys of the Second Coming of Christ will be meeting people we led to Christ, either **directly** or **indirectly**.

***How can you incorporate praying for or with others into your daily routine?**

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 ¹ *So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens.* ² *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.*

- About 300 miles, probably on foot.

1 Thessalonians 3:3 ... *so that no one would be unsettled by these trials.*

- 1 Thessalonians 3:3
- 2 Thessalonians 2:2

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 ... *For you know quite well that we are destined for them.* ⁴ *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.*

- When we feel unsettled, we need to go back to the truth we already know.

1 Thessalonians 3:5 *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.*

- Satan tempts – Matthew 4:1
- He prompts – John 13:2
- He fills the heart – Acts 5:3
- He gains a foothold – Ephesians 4:27
- He outwits – 2 Corinthians 2:11

***How does your awareness of Satan’s tactics help you fight back? Are you confident in your ability to resist the enemy’s schemes against you? Why or why not?**

1 Thessalonians 3:6, 11 ⁶ *But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. ...* ¹¹ *Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you ...*

CONCLUSION:

- Satan Blocks Our Way
- Our Lord Jesus Clears the Way

***Share a time when you had a “Red Sea” moment, and God cleared the way for you.**

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You that we can look forward, by the power of Jesus’ blood, to that day when we will be with You forever and see You face-to-face—a day when all our tears, sorrows, pressures, and the stresses of life will be behind us. We thank You, Lord Jesus, for clearing the way for us to have a relationship with God. We praise You that You are still clearing the way for us today when our pathway is blocked by evil. Help us to discern when this is happening and cry out to You. We thank You that You hear and deliver. Amen.

• *Part one of this series, **The Book that Cannot Be Set Aside - A Study of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16**, is available on wochurch.org/sermons or WOC’s YouTube channel.*