

# 3 Steps to Overcoming When the Enemy Derails Your Plans

Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us (1 Thes. 2:18, KJV).

Have you ever pursued something you believed was God's will, yet obstacles kept you from doing what you thought you were supposed to do? If so, don't feel alone. The apostle Paul felt the same way.

Paul used the Greek word *egkopto* for the word hindered. It was an old word, formerly used to describe a road so deteriorated and broken up that it was impassable. It was also used in Greek times to portray a runner cutting in or elbowing out of the way someone running a race. The primary idea of the word "hindered" is that of an impasse so severe that it prohibits you from going where you need to go or someone who unkindly elbows you off course in your spiritual race. Paul was actually saying:

1. Satan created an impasse that kept me from coming to see you.
2. Satan cut in on me and prohibited me from visiting you, as I desired.
3. Satan tried to elbow me out of the way to keep me from coming to see you.

Recently Satan created an impasse for our ministry. We had just sold a small part of our property for a good sum of money, when the bank that the buyer had used turned him down for the loan. It was crushing to us. We had plans for that money; now we would have to wait.

On top of that disappointment I had just received news that our Christian television station decided to pull our program off the air. No reason was given! The board was given a gag

order not to discuss it with anyone.

I know what it is like to be hindered from doing the will of God. Everything does not always go smoothly for me. I sometimes have a hard time as well. I think people need to know that preachers struggle too. God never promised us an easy life. There will be obstacles. Paul faced them, and you will too. So how do you overcome these obstacles? Let me give you three things you must do in order to overcome these hindrances.

### **1. Recognize that the enemy stopped you, not God.**

Paul did not use religious jargon and say, "Oh, I tried to visit you many times, but it was not God's will for me to come." Paul, instead, blamed the real culprit behind his failed attempts to visit the church: Satan.

Paul had preached in Thessalonica for three consecutive Sabbaths, until eventually the religious rulers gathered a mob and rushed into Jason's house where Paul had been staying. Paul was not there and so they grabbed Jason and everyone in his house and brought them to the civic leaders. They twisted their words, and thus made Jason and the others post bond. At night, Paul escaped.

Who had inspired these people to treat Paul so unjustly? Satan, of course. Paul writes and lets the church know that Satan was behind all of this. God had nothing to do with this horrible act. You see you will have to make a clear decision as to who is behind your hindrances. Do you believe God stopped you? If so, then you will have to change course. If you believe Satan stopped you, then you continue your course. Paul was saying that Satan did not want him to preach the gospel. He would not interpret this riot as God's way of telling him to shut up! Paul knew better. He would continue to preach no matter what happened to him.

The reason you need to discern the source of your hindrance is

that knowing the enemy is trying to stop you will help you keep on track. It will keep you from dropping out of the race.

For example, let us say you feel a real call to the ministry and so you want to go to Bible school. You are saving your money to go to school. But suddenly, your hours at work get cut in half. You now have to use your savings to pay your bills. What do you do about Bible school? If you think that God cut your hours, then you might conclude that God does not want you to go to Bible school, and perhaps even the ministry. But if you know that Satan has tried to hinder you, you will keep your plans to attend Bible school. You won't give up. Eventually, you will go.

Another reason it is good to know the enemy is trying to stop you is that this knowledge will keep you from blaming yourself. So often, when we face battles, and the first thing that often occurs is thoughts of condemnation. You begin to erroneously think that God is judging you. You begin to ask yourself, "What did I do wrong?" "I must have deserved these problems?" "Maybe, I am reaping something from my past." You begin to beat yourself down. This is exactly what the enemy wants you to do. But don't fall for it.

In my case, I recognized that the enemy did not like the positive results that were taking place through our television program. He hated the fact that we were receiving a lot of local and national coverage because of our ministry of deliverance. So, he began to manipulate the minds of the television station's board members until they honestly believed they had a justification for pulling our show off the air. If they had it, why have they not told us? Why is it kept "hush, hush"? Why did they not give us an opportunity to discuss the matter before they voted to remove us? I do not believe for a moment that these people were being led by God to do what they did. Satan put it into their minds to do what they did.

That sounds harsh to many people. They can't imagine that sincere people could listen to the devil. Hey, remember Peter? In one moment, Jesus told him, "Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father has revealed it to you." The next moment, minutes later, Jesus rebuked Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" It is possible for godly people to hear from God one moment and then to hear from the devil the next moment.

I don't think the religious leaders who drove Paul out of town were thinking that Satan was using them. They honestly believed that they were serving God. Jesus said, "They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16:2). The worst kind of deception is religious deception. There is not a stronger deception than what comes from religion. Religion in one moment can inspire people with such profound thoughts and in the next moment fill them with such devilish thoughts. This is what happened to Paul, and Paul called a "spade a spade." He did not mince words. **Satan hindered us!**

## **2. Acknowledge that the setback is only temporary.**

*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Cor. 4:17).*

The hindrance you have faced is only **momentary**. That means temporary. It won't last forever. At first you might think that you will never get back in the race, but you will. Satan's attacks will cease, and you will see clearly how to move forward.

Tony Campolo preached a fabulous sermon entitled: *Its Friday, but Sunday's a coming!* Don't you know that Satan thought he defeated Christ? But little did he know that Sunday was coming. You might be facing Friday, but Sunday's coming! The victory is near you!

Are you sick? It's only Friday, Sunday's a coming!

Are you broke? It's only Friday, Sunday's a coming!

Are you divorced? It's only Friday, Sunday's a coming!

Are you defeated? It's only Friday, Sunday's a coming!

### **3. Look for a way to fulfill God's plan.**

There is an old saying in the world that fits this truth: *Don't take it lying down!* Do something about it. Paul did not throw up his hands and resign himself to the situation. He found a way to keep preaching. Read the story in Acts 17. After being kicked out of Thessalonica he then preached in Berea, and the Bereans were more receptive.

Like Paul, I did not like pulling our land off the market and, instead, another buyer came and we sold the land for more money. Also, I did not submit to the idea that I cannot do television, simply because one station did not want us anymore. My wife and I went on television on a secular station and we have reached new people, especially those who have not heard the gospel. More people have come to our church through the new station than the old Christian station, and at a savings of 33 percent.

Remember the idea of the word **hindered** meant *someone who unkindly elbows you off course in your spiritual race*. Paul told the Galatians, "You were running a good race. Who cut in on you?" (Gal. 5:7). There are two things you can do when someone elbows you. You can drop out of the race and find the judge and complain that someone elbowed you—this will unlikely accomplish anything. Or, you can run faster and become more determined to get ahead again—this is the answer!

I coached youth football for many years. Young boys are usually not very tough. Every season when we would have our first scrimmage, inevitably, during the scrimmage, a couple of

boys would come to me crying, "Coach, they are holding me!" "Coach, they are grabbing my face mask!" At that point, the kids were thinking that I would sympathize with them. But I didn't.

I told them, "When a guy is holding you, then hit his hands off of you." "When someone grabs your mask, then slap their hands so they will let go!" Basically, I tried to toughen the boys, because no one wins by looking for the referee to defend them. No, they win when they find a way to overcome the opponent's aggressiveness and unfair tactics.

There will be jealous people who do not want to see you get ahead. The reason that the Thessalonians filed charges against Paul was because of jealousy. "The Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot" (Acts 17:5). They had their public reasons for their mistreatment of Paul: "Paul is teaching heresy," "Paul is not a good example," and "Paul has broken the Ten Commandments." But the deep unspoken reason for elbowing Paul off course was jealousy.

When you feel that you have been mistreated because they are jealous of you, then the sweetest revenge is success. Simply succeed. Dust your feet off in front of them. Declare you are moving forward in God's plan. Don't let them discourage you. Get them angrier with you when they see that they can't stop you!

Paul not only moved on to Berea, but after being escorted out of that city, he preached in Athens. He preached in the large outdoor amphitheater called the Areopagus. This was a very important meeting place. This shows that God used Paul *more* after being kicked out of Thessalonica and Berea. Make the devil regret that he messed with you!