



**KING'S  
CHURCH** (<http://kingschurchedinburgh.org/>)  
**EDINBURGH**

# The Flesh, the World, the Devil

## Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:11

Jesus is coming again. All of our hopes and dreams are to be centred on that event. In our active waiting God is making us ready. In this period we will face opposition

You're in a fight, it's a good fight. It's a fight that God has destined you to win!

At baptism Christians would often be encouraged to fight valiantly against the world, the flesh and the devil. These battles are reflected in these verses. These verses mention some of the everyday sources of opposition these new Christians:

Isolation (v. 17) , frustrated chains of events (v. 17), Satan blocking the way (v. 18), unsettling trials (v. 2), temptation (v. 5).

## The Flesh (Heart and mind):

*v. 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.*

The biggest joys and challenges we face are to do with our emotions about people.

This was his daily battle. Thinking about people as "our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes"

How do we guard our heart?

- We work at relationships ("we made every effort to see you"). Relationship blossoms in proximity.
- We take an interest ("I sent Timothy").
- We choose to be easily encouraged. ("He has told us that you always have

pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us.”)

- We pray! v.10: “Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again”

## The World

*vv. 2–4: 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. 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.*

*v. 7: Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith.*

Persecution – attack from without. Negative circumstance beyond our control. Distress – the feelings it causes within.

How do we fight this fight?

- With truth. Paul taught this was normal. It’s beyond our control. It’s in God’s control
- With strengthening and encouragement from trusted people.
- With Christ. Philemon 2: “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ”
- With the church. Hebrews 10: “Keep encouraging each other don’t give up meeting together”

## The Devil

*v.18: For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way.*

*v. 5: ...I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labours might have been in vain.*

God is Sovereign, Satan is on a lead.

BUT he has limited power we need to be aware of:

2 Corinthians 2:11: "... in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

“Satan” simply means “adversary”. To “obstruct or oppose”. He’s been doing it right from the Garden of Eden.

How does he do this?

- He lies. John 8:44: He is a liar and the Father of lies.
- He blinds the minds of those who don’t believe. 2 Cor 4:4 “The god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”
- He pretends to be what he’s not. 2 Cor 11:13-15: Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light
- He tempts. He tempted Jesus. He’ll tempt you to sin.
- He plucks the word of faith from peoples heart where it doesn’t take root (Mark 4)
- He causes some sickness (Luke 13:16)
- He hinders evangelism and discipleship.
- He accuses Christians before God and one another. Rev 12:10

How do we overcome?

James 4:7: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

## QUESTIONS

- Framework for Opposition. Why is it important for us to understand that God intends opposition to feature in the Christian life?
  - Opposition of the Flesh. Dan talked about one area: relationships. What other opposition does the flesh (our own hearts, emotions and thoughts) bring?
  - Opposition of the world. What’s our experience of facing persecution for Christ? What does that look like for us now or in the places we’ve lived?
  - Opposition of the Devil. Do you overthink or underthink the devil’s personal determination to thwart your Christian progress? What’s the lie he’s telling you right now (about you or about someone?) - share if you’re willing.
  - How does the knowledge that Jesus was tempted - “He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin” - help us in our daily battle?
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