

HEADWINDS

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 3

If you have ever flown in an airplane, particularly across the country, you may have heard the pilot or co-pilot announce that the plane was running into a heavy headwind. Headwinds are winds that push against the forward movement of the aircraft as opposed to tailwinds that come from directly behind the airplane and push it along. Strong headwinds often lead to a longer flight while strong tailwinds usually cut down on the overall flying time.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of significant spiritual headwinds that he ran into in his ministry in Thessalonica. According to Acts 17, Paul founded the church on his 2nd missionary journey. For three Sabbath days, Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue, proving that Jesus was the Christ and that his death and resurrection had been prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament). Some of the Jews believed as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks. This caused quite a stir in the city and a riot broke out because of the Jews' jealousy. The mob tried to locate Paul and Silas but were unable to do so. They seized Jason (probably one of Paul's converts) instead and dragged him before the city officials. He and a few others with him were forced to post bond before they were permitted to be released. The bond Jason paid probably included a promise that Paul and Silas would not come back to the city.

Paul saw this as a demonic headwind that kept him from returning to the church at Thessalonica. Notice what he says at the end of I Thess 2: *"But, brothers, when we were torn away 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 stopped us."* Did you see the headwind? *"Satan stopped us."* Paul sought to fight the headwind but it was initially too strong.

Paul became concerned that the Thessalonian believers were going to give up and walk away from their faith because of their trials (I Thess 3:5). Because he couldn't get back, Paul sent Timothy to check on the church and he discovered that they were standing firm for Christ. Timothy also reported that the believers greatly missed Paul and longed to see him again. Paul prayed fervently to be able to get back and the Lord answered his prayer: *"Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you (I Thess 3:11)."* The headwinds could only blow for so long before they were forced to yield and a path was cleared for Paul to return five years later on his third missionary journey.

Action Step: Do you find yourself facing difficulty in progressing in your spiritual life and/or ministry? It's possible that you have run into some demonic headwinds. James gives us a solution to the problem. Read James 4:7 and take it to heart.

Prayer Focus: For grace and strength to persevere in the face of demonic headwinds and for faith and courage to lay hold of God's Holy Spirit tailwind to break through any satanic hindrances.

Take-a-way: *God's tailwind is always stronger than the devil's headwinds.*