I. The desire of Paul (vs. 17).
   A. Paul’s desire was to be with these brethren.
   B. Have you ever met a good parent that did not want to be with his/her children?
      1. If you are a good parent you want to be with your children as much as you can.
      2. Paul was the one who converted these people to Christ through his preaching and he wanted to be with them.
   C. It seems as if his intention was to come back to them quickly when things died down in Thessalonika.
      1. Notice that he says he was taken from them for a short time.
      2. The word time indicates an opportune time in the Greek.
   D. Paul was never away from them in heart, only in body.
      1. A preacher who loves the congregation for which he preaches is always thinking about what can be done for the congregation.
      2. What can be done better, who needs encouragement and many other things are on the mind of the preacher, even when he is away.
      3. I believe the same is true for an elder of a congregation.
   E. He had a great desire, a longing, to be with them and strengthen and edify them.

II. The devil’s hindrance (vs. 18).
   A. Paul had every intention of coming back to them, but the devil impeded his actions in some way.
   B. Any talk about what the hindrance was is speculation because we are not told the exact hindrance thrown at Paul by the devil.
      1. However, we see in the account in Acts where the Jews of Thessalonika came to Berea and persecuted Paul.
      2. More than likely, the hindrance was of this nature.
   C. The devil is still in the business of hindering the work of the church.
      1. Our culture is a great hindrance.
         a. The views of people towards morality, religion in general and many other things has the devil at its roots.
         b. The views of those in the pro-homosexual movement, the pro-abortion movements and other such movements are encouraged by the devil.
      2. The sins of the brethren are a great hindrance.
         a. Whenever a member of the church gets caught up in sin it hinders the work.
         b. People outside of Christ see it and know it.
      3. The attitudes of the brethren are great hindrances at times.
         a. Some are apathetic - they simply aren’t interested.
         b. Some are ignorant - they don’t know and they don’t know
that they don’t know.

c. Some are argumentative - they always want to stir up a fuss instead of getting to work.

4. The only thing we can do with members like this is to tell them to get on board or get out of the way.

5. We can’t dwell on people like this, only help them when we can and go on about the work of the church as we can.

D. Satan is still in the hindering business and his business is good.

III. The delight of ministers (vs. 19-20).

A. I don’t know a preacher who does not feel a special desire for those he taught the gospel to be saved.

B. This is the delight of all ministers and it is what Paul is discussing in these two verses.

C. His hope of reward in heaven was tied to these brethren.

D. His rejoicing was tied up in these brethren.
   1. They were a source of his joy.
   2. Knowing they were walking in Christ, which is why he wrote this epistle, brought him joy.

E. The phrase crown of rejoicing is believed to have been an allusion to the Olympic games.
   1. The winner was given a crown of victory.
   2. Paul felt victorious when those he taught remained faithful.

F. What would bring him great delight was there being in the presence of Christ at His coming.
   1. He did not want to lose one soul of that congregation to the devil who was hindering him.
   2. He wanted everyone of them to make it to heaven.

G. John told the elect lady that he rejoiced greatly when he found her children living for Christ (2 John 4).
   1. This was probably someone who he had converted.
   2. It encouraged him to know that her children were living for Christ as she had taught them.

H. Why would he tell these brethren that they were his joy and glory?
   1. He wanted them to know that he had not returned because of the devil, not because of any lack of love for them.
   2. He also wrote this to encourage them while he was away from them.

I. How have you felt when someone wrote you and told you how much you mean to them and how much faith they have in you?
   1. No doubt you were highly encouraged.
   2. You were motivated to continue the course.

J. In the same manner, these brethren needed encouragement to fight the good fight of faith and Paul gave it to them.