

# THE EPIC LIFE – BOB HALLMAN

## The Evidence of New Life

1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

2010

### Introduction

The background for this letter is found Acts 17:1-15. God established the church in Thessalonica through Paul and Silas' ministry during Paul's second missionary journey. And even though Paul had been with them for only three Sabbaths (Acts 17:2), the church in Thessalonica had already distinguished itself as a vibrant and fruitful reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ in spite of severe suffering and persecution (Acts 17:5-10; 1 Thess 2:13-16; 2:3-4; 2 Thess 1:4-10).

And as we discussed last week in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul continually remembered:

1. Their work produced by *faith*
2. Their labor prompted by *love*
3. Their endurance inspired by *hope*

**Review hupomone:** Minor physical adjustment transforms hupomone into an act of worship!

### I The Assurance of Salvation

A. Paul affirmed that they were: [Verse 4]

1. **Loved** by God

**Loved** = Agapao (perfect passive participle) = “The perfect focuses on the abiding results, the fixed condition of being the grace recipients of God’s love.”

Paul often refers to the believers in these terms:

- a. Loved by God - Rom 1:7
- b. Dearly loved - Col 3:12
- c. Loved by the Lord - 2 Thess 2:13

2. **Chosen** by God

**Chosen** = Ekloge = “To elect or choose”

Most of the teaching of the Bible is easy to understand. But there are concepts in some cases that are difficult for us to fully understand. The doctrine of election and free will fall under the heading of an **antinomy** [anti + nomos (law) = Against the law of logic/reason].

An antinomy occurs when we have what appears to be a contradiction between principles or conclusions that are equally necessary and true.

1. The doctrine of *Election* (known as Calvinism)

Election teaches that man is so corrupt and utterly sinful that he is incapable of responding to God and that a man or woman can only respond to the gospel if God has elected them for salvation in advance.

There are many scriptures that inform us that God elects or chooses some individuals for eternal life – Dt 4:37; 7:6-7; Is 44:1-2; Rom 8-9; Eph 1:4-6, 11; Col 3:12; 2 Thess 2:13

2. The doctrine of *Free Will* (known as Arminianism)

Free Will teaches that though mankind is corrupt and marred by sin, any and every man and woman who so desires is capable of responding to the gospel, being forgiven of sins and being assured of eternal life.

There are many scriptures that inform us that salvation is universally available, but must be acted on by means of an individual's free will;

John 3:16 ...whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Mark 8:34 "If anyone wishes to come after Me ..."

2 Pet 3:9 "... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

How *both* can be true is apparently incomprehensible to finite human minds; no one has ever been able to explain this antinomy satisfactorily.

What we do know, without question, is that God has made it clear that He has predestined some for salvation. But He has also made it clear that salvation is available to anyone.

**Note:** While we may not be able to solve the apparent antinomy of Election and Free Will, we can discern the signs and evidences of those who are among God's elect by virtue of the unmistakable signs of the new life that God produces in a person who is genuinely born again.

B. Paul assured them because the gospel came to them: [Verse 5a]

**Gospel** - *Euangelion* = "Good news"

1. With words (not simply with words, but)

Paul says the first piece of evidence that these people are genuine believers is the way in which they responded to the Word of God.

Heb 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

**Illustration of bad theology:** "Preach the word – use words if necessary!"

Rom 10:14-15 "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

2. With **power**

**Power** = *Dunamis* = "Strength, power, ability"

**Possible meanings:**

1. Miraculous authenticating signs - Matt 13:54; 14:2; 1 Cor 12:10; Gal 3:5; Heb 2:4; 6:5
2. The inward power in the messengers, but this important characteristic is brought out by the next prepositional phrase, "with or by the Spirit."
3. The inherent power of the gospel as the "Word of God, which is alive and powerful" (Heb. 4:12)?

Rom 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

1 Cor 4:20 "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power."

### 3. With the Holy Spirit

1 Cor 2:4-5 “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.”

What are some of the demonstrations of the Spirit's power:

1. He opens our hearts to receive the gospel - Acts 16:14
2. He draws us to Christ - John 12:32
3. He convicts us of sin - Jn 16:7-11
4. He fills us - Ex 31:3; Acts 2:1-4; 4:31; 9:17; 13:9; Eph 5:18
5. He empowers us - Acts 1:8; 4:31; Rom 15:18-19; 1 Cor 2:4; Eph 3:16; 1 Thess 1:5
6. He instructs us - Jn 3:5-6; 14:26
7. He counsels us - Jn 14:16-17, 26-27; 15:26; 16:7
8. He guides us into all truth - Mic 3:8; Jn 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:10-13
9. He reveals the thoughts of God - 1 Cor 2:9-13
10. He testifies about God - Jn 15:26; Acts 5:30-32
11. He sanctifies us - Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2
12. He comforts us - 16:13-14; 1 Pet 1:2
13. He directs the affairs of the church - Acts 15:28-29; 20:28; 1 Cor 12:4-11
14. He directs the service of the saints - Acts 8:29; 13:2-4; 16:6-10
15. He gives spiritual gifts - Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Heb 2:4
16. He produces Christ-like fruit in us - Gal 5:22
17. He gives us joy - Luke 10:21
18. He guides us - Acts 8:29; 10:19; 16:6-7; Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18
19. He encourages and strengthens us - Acts 9:31
20. He warns us - Acts 20:22-24
21. He pours out God's love into our hearts - Rom 5:4-5
22. He confirms in our hearts what is right - Rom 9:1-2
23. He gives us hope in every situation - Rom 15:13
24. He helps us pray - Rom 8:26; Eph 6:18; Jude 20
25. He intercedes for us - Rom 8:26-27
26. He transforms us into the likeness of Christ - 2 Cor 3:3, 18

### 4. With deep conviction

**Conviction** = Plerophoreo = “To be entirely confident”

#### How can you have this kind of confidence in God's work in your life?

2 Peter 1:10-11 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2 Peter 1:5-8 “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## II The Imitation of Paul's Faith

A. Paul reminded them of his example while among them [Verse 5b]

**Example** = Tupos = “To stamp or imprint”

Paul often appealed to people’s first-hand knowledge of his life and conduct and wasn’t shy about presenting himself as a reliable “tupos” or model of Christ-likeness.

Acts 20:17-21 “From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”

B. Paul encouraged them because: [Verse 6-7]

1. They became **imitators**:

**Imitators** = Mimites = “To mimic or copy”

They not only heard and welcomed the message preached by the apostles, they followed their example and closely patterned their lives after them as they sought to follow Christ.

**Illustration:** Teaching my sons life skills and spiritual truth: “**Live it – Teach it – Do it**”

a. Of Paul

Paul was bold in example:

1. “I urge you to imitate me” -1 Cor 4:16
2. “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” - 1 Cor 11:1
3. “Join with others in following my example” - Phil 3:17

Phil 4:9 “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

b. Of the Lord

Of course, Paul’s statements were reflections of the ultimate “tupos”, Jesus Christ.

Luke 9:23-24 “Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”

**What is the goal of all our imitation of believers and of Christ?**

1. That you might be conformed to the likeness of God’s Son - Rom 8:29

**Application:** Who are you imitating? Who is imitating you?

2. They welcomed the message with joy:

**Welcomed** = Dechomai = “To readily receive information and to regard it as true”

1 Thess 2:13 “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

a. In spite of severe **suffering**

Despite the harsh treatment they experienced from the hands of the Jewish authorities and their own countrymen, they listened to and accepted the gospel message (Acts 17:1-9).

2 Thess 1:4 “Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.”

b. With **joy** given by the Holy Spirit

**Joy** in the midst of suffering and distress is one of the chief hallmarks of the Christian faith!

**Illustration:** The apostles were frequently filled with joy in the midst of suffering!

Acts 5:41 “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”

Acts 16:25 “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”

Acts 13:49-52 “The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

**Application:** How do you normally respond to suffering, insult or injury?

Rom 5:1-5 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

James 1:2-4 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

3. They became a **model** to all the believers:

**Model** = Tupos = “Type, model, example or pattern”

a. In Macedonia – Northern Greece

The location of Thessalonica

b. In Achaia – Southern Greece

The location of Corinth where Paul was writing.

**More bad theology:** “Don’t look to me, I will disappoint you!”

Hidden message:

1. I don’t plan to be obedient!
2. I don’t want to be accountable!
3. I don’t desire to be responsible!

**The sequence is as follows:**

1. Paul imitated God and Christ – Eph 5:1; 1 Cor 11:1

2. Silas and Timothy imitated Paul

1 Tim 4:12 “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

1 Peter 5:3 “... not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

3. The churches imitated the apostles - 2 Thess 3:9
4. The churches became models for other regions

### III The Influence of their Faith

A. The Lord's **message** rang out from them: [Verse 8a]

1. In Macedonia
2. In Achaia

**Rang out** = Execheo = "To echo or resound"

Paul saw the Thessalonians as amplifiers who first received the gospel message but then sent it reverberating on its way with increased power and scope much like an echo in the mountains.

**Quote:** F.F. Bruce

"Having received the gospel, the Thessalonian Christians had no thought of keeping it to themselves; by word and life they made it known to others. From the beginning they functioned as a missionary church." [[https://www.preceptaustin.org/1\\_thessalonians\\_18-10](https://www.preceptaustin.org/1_thessalonians_18-10)]

**Note:** There was no organized Missions program!

Instead, the new believers were simply living out their new life in Christ in the midst of the daily routine of life. And in turn their life-embodied message was transforming lives and impacting their world.

**Application:** One of the saddest statistics of our day is that 95% of all church members have never led anyone to Christ.

B. Their **faith** in God had become known everywhere [Verse 8b]

**Faith** = Pistis = "Trust, persuasion, belief, conviction"

Rom 1:8 "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world."

**Note:** Some churches are famous for their pastor, or their magnificent facility, or the size of their congregation, or the size of their annual budget. But the church in Thessalonica was famous for its faith!

1. Faith is produced by exposure to God's Word - Ro 10:17
2. Faith is expressed through obedience to God - Rom 1:5; Gal 5:6

C. Their **reputation** was well known because of: [Verse 9-10]

1. The kind of reception they gave Paul

Paul is saying, "I haven't had to tell people what happened in Thessalonica - they're telling me!"

2. How they **turned** to God from idols

**Turned** = Epistrepho = "To turn around or reverse course"

- a. To serve the living and true God

Those who had once worshipped and served pagan deities, renounced their sinful practices and beliefs, and fully embraced the truth of Christ.

It is in essence the concept of repentance; it means turning from former sources of trust (whatever that might be) to trust in God's plan of salvation and life through Christ.

Acts 3:19-20 “Repent , then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you -- even Jesus.”

**Note:** Repentance and service stand together as distinctive marks of conversion.

3. How they were **waiting** for his Son from heaven:

**Waiting for** = *Anemeno* (“Upward” + “remain”) = “To patiently wait” -- to remain in a place and/or a state of mind, with expectancy concerning a future event.”

They had a new hope and focus for life; they were living in the light of the return of Christ, a hope which gave them endurance and courage.

Acts 1:11 “Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

**Application:** James 5:8 “You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”

Col 3:1-4 “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

a. Whom God raised from the dead

1 Cor 15:3-4 “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

b. Who **rescues** us from the coming wrath

**Rescues** = *Rhoumai* = “To draw to one’s self, to rescue, to deliver”

**Illustration:** A lifeguard who swims out to rescue a drowning swimmer

**The Bible describes one of two destinies for every human being:**

1. Wrath for those who reject Jesus Christ:

- a. God’s present wrath that is being poured out - Jn 3:36; Rom 1:18
- b. God’s Tribulation wrath described in Rev 6-19
- c. God’s Great White Throne wrath when he will judge men for their sins - Rev 20
- d. God’s eternal wrath of everlasting punishment - Matt 25:36 (Sheep and goats)

2. Rescue and blessing for those who believe and receive salvation in Jesus Christ:

- a. God’s present blessing of forgiveness, adoption and new life - John 1:12; 2 Cor 5:17
- b. God’s future protection from the Great Tribulation via Rapture - 1 Thess 4:17
- c. God’s future reward at the Bema Seat Judgment - Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:9-10
- d. God’s eternal favor as we rule and reign with Him for eternity - 2 Tim 2:12

1 Thess 5:9-10 “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.”

**Conclusion:**

Paul mentions 5 characteristics that gave evidence that the Thessalonians were indeed genuine Christians:

**1. They responded to the gospel****2. They were faithfully:**

- a. Following the example of Paul, Silas and Timothy
- b. Modeling for others

**3. They turned from idols**

There had been a definite change in their lives. They had given up their old ways. They had turned their backs on the things that were displeasing to God.

**4. They were serving the Living God**

They had begun to serve the Lord. They weren't just Sunday Christians. They lived for the Lord through the whole week.

**5. They were waiting for Jesus' return**

Jesus *is* coming back soon!