

# THE EPIC LIFE – BOB HALLMAN

## Paul: A Model for Ministry

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

2010

### Introduction

As we have mentioned in previous weeks, Paul and his missionary companions met with severe opposition in Philippi and then again in Thessalonica. In an attempt to destroy Paul's reputation and, thereby, his message, Paul's adversaries made a series of very serious allegations against Paul and his friends. Paul skillfully addresses each slanderous accusation – not to defend himself on a personal level, but in order to prevent the gospel itself from being slandered.

At each point in this apostolic defense, Paul appeals to the personal knowledge that the Thessalonian believers possessed concerning the character and integrity of their spiritual leaders and their witness to the saving power of Christ

### Quote: Warren Buffett

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and only 5 minutes to destroy it!”

[<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesberman/2014/04/20/the-three-essential-warren-buffett-quotes-to-live-by/?sh=38b8173a6543>]

Having said that, this passage is a remarkable model of ministry for anyone in any role of leadership: fathers, mothers, business owners, employees, community volunteers, church leaders, etc.

We would be wise to imitate his example:

1 Cor 11:1 “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

### I The Manner of His Preaching

Paul appeals to the Thessalonians personal knowledge of his character and conduct with phrases like “you know” or “you recall” and “you are witnesses” (vv. 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11).

A. He was confident in the **success** of his visit: “It was not a failure” [Verse 1]

**Failure** = Kenos = “Vain or without impact”

Their preaching resulted in the planting of a new work in Thessalonica, which had an immediate impact that produced a permanent change in the lives of the believers.

B. He preached the gospel with **boldness**: [Verse 2]

**Gospel** = Euaggelion = “Good News” ( 4 times: 2, 4, 8, 9)

**Boldness** = Parrhesiazomai = “To be courageous in speech”

1. In spite of suffering and insult in Philippi

**Suffering** = Propascho = “To undergo hardship previously”

**Insult** = Hubrizo = “To abuse or treat shamefully”

2. In spite of strong opposition in Thessalonica  
**Opposition** = Agon = “Conflict or contention [agony]”

**Historical review from Acts 16:**

1. Paul went to Philippi because of a vision he had of a man calling him to Macedonia.
2. He preached the gospel and cast a demon out of a fortune-telling young girl whose owners responded by having Paul and Silas arrested, stripped naked and beaten, thrown in jail with their feet in stocks and then kicked out of town. [It was during this imprisonment that Paul and Silas worshipped the Lord leading to a door-opening earthquake and the conversion of the jailor and his whole household].
3. He then went to Thessalonica where, after three Sabbaths in the synagogue, their ministry provoked a riot in the city and the apostles had to sneak out of town.

But Paul later summed up this experience as a normal part Christian life:

Phil 1:29-30 “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle (*agonizomai*) you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.”

**Was this boldness natural to Paul? NO!**

- 1 Cor 2:3 “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.”  
 2 Cor 7:5 “For when we came into Macedonia, [he had] conflicts on the outside, fears within.”

**Application:** How to move from fear to boldness

**1. Be filled with the Holy Spirit**

Acts 4:29-31 “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

**Quote:** “Courage is fear that has said its prayers.” (Dorothy Bernard)  
 [https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/55811-courage-is-fear-that-has-said-its-prayers]

**2. Ask for others to pray for you**

Eph 6:19-20 “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

C. He appealed to them with truth and integrity [Verse 3]

1. It did not spring from **error**

**Error** = Plane = “A deviation from orthodoxy”

In other words, Paul’s message was not one that wandered off course from biblical truth as the Jews had suggested; rather, it was grounded in the Old Testament scriptures.

2 Cor 4:1-2 “Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”

2. It did not spring from impure motives

**Impure motives** = Akatharsia = “Unclean (physically or morally)”

Can refer to “sexual immorality or evil ambition” -- Both of which were common among the false prophets of Paul’s day.

2 Cor 4:2 “Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3. It did not spring from **trickery**

**Trickery** = Dolos = “Decoy, bait, deceit”

The word “deceit” was originally used of a fisherman who deceives a fish with a lure.

Paul didn’t use trickery or slick salesmanship to sell the gospel, assuring people of things that the gospel never promises.

Paul tried to make the gospel as attractive as possible, but he never changed its central character or focus. Paul would never compromise issues like man's need, God's savior, the cross, the resurrection, and the new life.

2 Peter 1:16 “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

D. He preached with the goal of pleasing God [Verse 4a]

**Illustration:**

1. Jesus always pleased the Father  
John 8:29 “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”
2. Paul aimed to please the Lord  
2 Cor 5:8-10 “So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

**Application:** One of the greatest privileges of a Christian

Eph 5:8-10 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ... and find out what pleases the Lord.”

1. He had been **approved** by God  
*Approved* = *Dedokimasmetha* (perf.) = Past approval with continued effect”  
  
**Quote:** “It is better to be approved by God and suffer, than to be applauded by men and prosper.”
2. He had been **entrusted** with the gospel  
*Entrusted* = *Pisteuo* = “To commit something of value to another”
  - a. Paul was entrusted with the gospel - 1 Tim 1:11
  - b. Timothy was entrusted with the gospel - 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14
  - c. Saints have been entrusted with the gospel - Jude 1:3

**Question:** Have we been found trustworthy with the gospel?

E. He rejected ungodly tactics/behavior [Verse 4b-6]

Again Paul responds to these false charges by reminding the Thessalonians of his track record and evidenced character.

1. Trying to **please** men  
Gal 1:10 “Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

**Quote:** Bill Cosby

“I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.”

[[https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/bill\\_cosby\\_105051](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/bill_cosby_105051)]

## 2. Using flattery

**Flattery** = Kolakia (only use in the NT) = “Insincere talk designed to manipulate a person to your advantage”

- a. Flattery is a tool of false teachers - 2 Pet 2:18
- B. Flattery is a tool of the divisive within the church - Rom 16:18
- d. Flattery is cause for God’s divine wrath - Job 32:22

## 3. Masking inner greed

**Mask** = Prophasis = “To cloak or hide”

Any time when our primary concern is to get what WE want -- whether it is money, power, or influence -- we are motivated by greed.

- a. False teachers used the ministry to enrich themselves  
2 Peter 2:14 “With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed — an accursed brood.”
- b. Paul made special effort to not do so  
2 Cor 2:17 “Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.”

## 4. Looking for praise from men (or anyone else)

Paul didn't seek glory from men because his needs for security and acceptance were met primarily in Jesus. This meant that he didn't spend his life trying to seek and earn the acceptance of man. He ministered from an understanding of his identity in Jesus.

John 12:43 “[The Pharisees] loved praise from men more than praise from God.”

## 5. Being a burden to them

Paul never demanded special treatment. To the contrary, he worked harder than anyone else so as not to stumble even one.

Acts 20:33-35 “I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'”

## II The Manner of His Life

A. He was gentle, like a **mother** caring for her children [Verse 7]

**Mother** = *Trophos* = “Wet nurse”

The use of wet nurses was widespread in the Greco-Roman world, and ancient writers typically portrayed the wet nurse as an important and beloved figure.

**What does a mother do for her children?**

1. She nurtures them
2. She provides for them
3. She comforts them
4. She sacrifices for them

Just as a mother nourishes her child through her own body, Paul nourished his spiritual children in the faith with the Word of God.

Phil 1:8 “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

**Application:** Who are you nurturing/discipling in the faith?

B. He loved them so much that he was delighted: [Verse 8]

**Loved** = *Homeiromai* = “To have a deep affection for” (used only here)

**In Greek literature:** A parent’s longing for a child who has passed away.

1. To share the **gospel** of God - 2 Cor 5:11-21
2. To share their very **lives** as well

John 15:12-13 “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

C. He reminded them of their toil and hardship [Verse 9]

**Toil** = *Kopos* = “Labor leading to exhaustion”

**Hardship** = *Mochthos* = “Sadness, travail, pain”

1. They worked day and night in order:

a. To not be a **burden** to anyone

2 Thess 3:7-9 “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.”

b. To preach the gospel free of charge

**Paul's teaching on the subject of ministry and money:**

1. A soldier/shepherd/pastor have a right to benefit financially from their labor - 1 Cor 9:7-10
2. Though Paul had this right to compensation for his work, he surrendered his right in order to prevent an obstacle to the gospel – 1 Cor 9:11-18

**Application:** Ministry is not a 9-5 job!

1. He didn't grumble about his wounds – he served others!
2. He didn't wait for people to give him money – he got a job!
3. He didn't wait to be cared for – he cared for others!

D. He appealed to their witness of his character while among them: [Verse 10]

**Notice:** Paul didn't say, "Don't look at my life. Look to Jesus."

He referenced the authenticity of his own Christian life and character!

1. They were **holy**

**Holy** = *Hosios* = "Pious or godly"

2 Cor 1:12 "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God."

2. They were righteous

**Righteous** = *Dikaios* = "Just, equitable, upright"

This word has to do with horizontal relations among men.

2 Cor 6:3 "We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited."

2 Cor 7:2 "Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one."

3. They were **blameless**

**Blameless** = *Amemptos* = "Faultless"

Signifies that no charge can be brought against him when examined by God.

Why? Not because he is sinless, but because he has biblically dealt with his sin (confession, repentance) and is judicially reconciled.

Acts 24:16 "So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man."

**Application:** Can we say that as Christians today?

E. He dealt with them like a **father** with his own children: [Verse 11-12]

In verse 7, Paul likened himself to a nursing mother willing to sacrifice and give for his children. Now he compares himself to a loving father.

1 Cor 4:15-16 “Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me.”

**The difference between mothers and fathers:**

- a. Mothers tend to worry about their children’s safety and security; fathers focus on their children’s success.
- b. A mother offers tender loving care while fathers push their children because they know we live in a world where failure is easy and success difficult. Both are absolutely necessary -- in raising children and in serving the Lord.

1. He **exhorted** them

**Exhort** = Parakaleo = “To call near, invite, entreat”

Exhorting means to be urging strongly, to be giving warnings or advice. While most people enjoy being encouraged, many do not like to be exhorted. But ministers of the gospel are commanded by God to exhort people.

**Examples of exhortation:**

1. Paul to the Thessalonians:

1 Thess 4:1-2 “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.”

2. Paul to Timothy:

2 Tim 4:1-2 “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.”

2. He comforted them

**Comfort** = Paramotheomai = “To encourage or console”

Encouragement keeps us going, it gives us strength to do what's right. You coaches know how encouragement helps your players perform more skillfully. You teachers know how encouragement helps your students try more diligently. You employers know how encouragement helps your employees work more cheerfully. How much more do the people of God need to be encouraged by others!

**Examples of Paul comforting:**

1. He encouraged Antioch church to remain true to the Lord - Acts 11:23
2. He encouraged the Philippians in their suffering - Acts 16:40
3. He encouraged the Colossians to be united in love - Col 2:2



**Application:** We are to encourage one another daily - Heb 3:13; 10:25

3. He **urged** them to live lives worthy of God who called them into His kingdom and glory  
**Urge** = Marturomai = “To implore” (the strongest of the three)

**Examples of Paul urging believers to live lives worthy of the Lord:**

Eph 4:1 “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

Phil 1:27 “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

Col 1:10 “And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way.”

**Application:** A time for mothering and a time for fathering

1. Sometimes people need us to cheer for them: Exhorting
2. Sometimes they need us to help them get up after a disappointment:  
 Comforting
3. Sometimes they need a kick in the pants: Urging

**Conclusion**

1. Have you responded to the Gospel?
2. Could your life stand up to the scrutiny and examination of those closest to you?
3. Who are you discipling in the faith?

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