

# THE EPIC LIFE – BOB HALLMAN

## The Importance of Follow-up

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

2010

### Introduction

One year earlier, Paul had spent three Sabbaths preaching the gospel and establishing the church in Thessalonica before he and Silas were run out of town by the Judaizers.

If he were like many evangelists today, he would have left Thessalonica, rejoiced at all the people he “led to Christ”, updated his ministry blog and never worried about them again. He could have concluded that he had done his job and been quite content and satisfied. However, Paul understood that his job was not simply to “get conversions,” his job was to make disciples – and making disciples takes time and commitment!

When a person puts their trust in Christ, he or she is born into the family of God as a babe in Christ. Babies need to grow. They need to learn to crawl, then stand, and then walk. As stated in chapter two, Paul saw himself as a spiritual parent to these believers and, as a parent, he was concerned for their growth in Christ. He wanted to see their faith developed and see them become more and more stable and mature.

### I The Concern of Paul

So when we could stand it no longer ...

***Stand it no longer*** = Stego = “To suffer or endure patiently”

#### A. He stayed in Athens [Verse 1]

Stayed = kataleipo = “To leave behind”

The verb is used of a child leaving his parents ([Eph 5:31](#)) or the death of one’s spouse ([Mark 12:19](#)). In 1 Thess 2:17, Paul said that he felt “orphaned” from his friends in Thessalonica, and the Greek word can also mean “bereaved.” To leave these new believers was like an experience of bereavement.

#### B. He sent Timothy to find out about their faith

1 Cor 4:14-17 “... my dear children. 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. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.”

One of the great needs in the church today is more *Timothys* -- men and women who are mature and committed enough to be able to take on an assignment like this.

What prevents more people like Timothy from being sent out?

1. Remaining spiritually immature - Hebrews 5:11-14

2. Being entangled in the affairs of this life - 2 Tim 2:4; Heb 12:1-2
3. Being ill-equipped/untrained for ministry - Eph 4:11-16; 2 Tim 2:1-4

1. Timothy's identity: [Verse 2]

- a. He was their **brother**

**Brother** = Adelphos = "A fellow believer"

- b. He was God's **fellow** worker

**Fellow worker** = Sunergos = "Co-laborer" (our English word synergy)

In other words, Timothy was an effective team player and understood the importance of working well with others in achieving the important goal of advancing the work of God in the world.

**Application:** Does this describe your life?

2. Timothy's activity: [Verse 3-4]

- a. Spreading the gospel

**Gospel** = Euangelion = "The Good News"

2 Thess 3:1 "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you."

- b. **Strengthening** them in their faith

**Strengthening** = Sterizo = "To support, stabilize, establish"

It's a building term that means to cause a structure to become more secure. Think of retrofitting the Wailua Bridge -- that's what this word describes.

In the Book of Acts we frequently find Paul returning to strengthen and encourage the churches he had previously planted (Acts 14:21-22; 18:23).

- c. **Encouraging** them in their faith

**Encouraging** = Parakaleo = "To exhort, comfort or help"

Eph 6:22 "I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and **that he may encourage you.**"

Col 4:8 "I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and **that he may encourage your hearts.**"

- d. Preventing them from being unsettled by their trials:

**Unsettled** = Saino = "Shaken, disturbed, moved, agitated."

**Trials** = Thlipsis = "Pressure in the form of affliction or tribulation"

Without a good grasp of the truth concerning the place of suffering in the life of the believer, we are in great danger of being shaken in our faith.

1. They were **destined** for them

**Destined** = Keimai = “To be appointed”

2 Tim 3:12 “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ...”

Paul wants to reassure his friends that the troubles they’re going through aren’t arbitrary accidents, blind acts of fate, or the result of bad karma, but that suffering is the crown of being a follower of Jesus. God places affliction strategically in our lives for our personal growth.

Suffering is the quickest path to spiritual maturity. *Afflictions are not accidents—they are appointments.*

2. They were **warned** about them

**Warned** = Prolego = “To predict or forewarn”

The truth is, if you aren’t presently in a trial, you are either headed out of on and preparing to head into one!

- a. Jesus warned of trails and hardships - Jn 16:1-4, 33

- b. Peter warned of trails and hardships

1 Peter 4:12-13 “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”

- c. Paul warns of challenges in the Christian life

Acts 14:21-22 “... We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God ...”

### **How are we to respond when trials come?**

1. Rejoice - Romans 5:3; 1 Peter 4:13

2. Consider it pure joy - James 1:2

3. Give thanks - 1 Thess 5 :18

**Why are we able to do this?** Because we have an eternal perspective!!

2 Cor 4:17 “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”

**Application:** The truth about trials -- there are no accidents, only incidents that are appointed by him for our good and his glory!

Ps 34:19 “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.”

Ps 112:1-6 “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands ... Surely he will never be shaken.”

- C. He was afraid: **[Verse 5]**

**Stand it no longer** = Stego = “To suffer or endure patiently”

1. That the tempter might have **tempted** them

“The tempter” is one of the many descriptive titles of the devil!

One of Satan’s constant objectives is to negatively affect our faith in the promises and truth of God’s Word. He wants us to doubt God’s love. He wants us to depend on our own strategies to handle life and on our human works rather than depend on the Lord and His love.

**Tempted** = Peirazo = “To test, scrutinize, examine”

Matt 4:3 “The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God ...”

**Illustration:** The parable of the soils (Matthew 13:1-23)

1. Some never receive the Word because Satan snatches it away
2. Some receive the Word with joy, but fail to develop deep roots. When trouble and persecution come, they fall away.
3. Some receive the Word, but its effects are choked out by the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth and it never bears fruit.
4. Some receive the Word and bears a crop – 100, 60 30 fold!

**How does the devil tempt us in hard times?**

1. He tempts us to doubt God’s goodness
2. He tempts us to retaliate against others with anger and resentment.
3. He tempts us to give in to despair and discouragement.

**Note:** Satan tempts us to get the worst out of us; God tests us to get the best out of us!

2. That their efforts might have been **useless**

**Useless** = Kenos = “Vain, empty, fruitless, without effect, without reaching its goal.”

1 Thess 2:1 “You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure.”

1 Cor 15:58 “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Paul knew that the Lord would reward his faithful labor. But he also knew, because of the workings of Satan, some of his labor could be fruitless or without effect if he didn’t do his part. This is why he was so concerned about their faith and took steps to protect his labor.

## II The Report to Paul

- A. Timothy brought good news about: **[Verse 6]**

**Good news** = Euaggelizo = “A favorable report”

This is the only place in the New Testament where this verb is used in the general sense of bringing good news rather than of preaching the gospel. Paul’s use of it here shows his depth of excitement on hearing favorable news of the Thessalonian Christians. The report from Timothy was, to Paul, like hearing the gospel.

Prov 25:25 “Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land.”

1. Their **faith** and love

**Faith** = Pistis = “Assurance, belief, conviction”

**Love** = Agape = “Divine sacrificial charity”

**Faith in what?**

In God’s character, His Word, His purpose, His promises, His presence, and His power. That kind of faith will evidence itself in a loving ministry for others!

Col 1:3-6 “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints -- the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you.”

1 John 3:23 “And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.”

2. Their pleasant memories of Paul

Despite the awful and slanderous things that were being said about Paul by the Judaizers, the believers in Thessalonica continued to remember Paul affectionately and were looking forward to fellowshiping with him again.

1 Cor 11:2 “I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.”

3. Their reciprocated **longing** for one another

**Longing** = Epipotheo = “To intensely crave (lust)”

2 Cor 7:5-7 “For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn -- conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. **He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.**”

B. The impact of the report on Paul and his friends:

1. They were **encouraged** because of their faith [Verse 7]

**Encouraged** = Parakaleo = “Comforted or consoled”

a. Despite their distress and persecution

**Persecution** = Thlipsis = “Pressure in the form of affliction or tribulation”

2 Cor 7:2-4 “Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. I do not say this to

condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.”

2. They really lived [Verse 8]

a. Since they were **standing** firm in the Lord

**Standing firm** = Steko = “To be stationary, unmoved or to persevere”

Four times in Paul’s instructions in Ephesians 6:10-17, he commands believers to stand firm in their faith and against the devils schemes.

The fact that his spiritual children of Thessalonica were holding their ground in doctrine and Christian conduct energized, enlivened, and enthused Paul in his labors for the sake of Christ.

**Application:** *You too – stand firm!*

Phil 1:27 “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel .”

3. They were **thankful** to God [Verse 9]

a. For the joy they had because of them

**Joy** = Chara = “Exceeding gladness”

1 Thess 2:19-20 “For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”

Paul is saying, “What am I going to be most excited about when I stand before the Lord? It’s going to be you!!

4. They **prayed** night and day most earnestly that: [Verse 10]

**Prayed** = Deomai = “To beg (as binding oneself)”

Col 4:12 “Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”

a. They might see them again

1 Thess 2:17-20 “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. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”

b. They might **supply** what was lacking in their faith

**Supply** = Katartizo = “To complete, repair, mend, perfect, restore”

A term used for mending torn nets and setting broken bones. In a spiritual context, Paul used the same word in Gal 6:1 for restoring sinning saints and in Eph 4:12 for equipping all the saints for the work of ministry.

**Quote:** “Room for improvement is the largest room in the world.”

Schmidt, Helmut. Brainy Quote.

[https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/helmut\\_schmidt\\_756166](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/helmut_schmidt_756166)

**Application:** What is lacking in your faith?

1 Peter 5:10 “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you [Katartizo] and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

### III The Blessing of Paul

A. May our God **clear** the way for us to come to you [Verse 11]

**Clear the way** = Kateuthuno = “To straighten, guide, direct”

In 2:18, Paul describes how Satan “hindered” his path. So he now intentionally prays for God’s direction.

**Application:** Have you been hindered in some area of your life?

Ecc 7:13 “Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?”

Prov 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

B. May the Lord make your **love** increase and overflow: [Verse 12]

1. For each other and everyone else

2. Just as Paul’s did for them

Suffering can either produce greater selfishness or greater love! And love is the chief mark of Christian faith and maturity!

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

**What hinders us from loving one another?**

1. We are weak in faith and intimacy with the Lord

2. We remain in a lifestyle of sin

3. We are overly critical of others

4. We fail to work out our problems biblically

C. May he **strengthen** your hearts: [Verse 13]

**Strengthen** = Sterizo = “To set fast, confirm or turn resolutely in a certain direction”

1. So that you will be **blameless**

**Blameless** = Amemptos = “To be faultless”

Not positional holiness provided at the point of salvation (1 Cor 1:2, 8, 29-30), but experiential holiness that results from personal transformation.

Phil 2:12-16 “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed -- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence -- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life -- in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.”

2. So that you will be **holy**

**Holy** = Hagiosune = “Set apart or sacred (progressive sanctification)”

a. In the presence of our God and Father

b. When our Lord Jesus **comes** with all his holy ones

**Holy ones** = Hagioi = A reference to the saints who have gone to be with Christ and who will be resurrected when He comes (4:16).

1 Thess 5:23-24 “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

**Application:** Jesus is coming soon!

*Do you have this type of earnest desire for new believers?*

*Do you long to see other believers and help them grow in their faith?*

*What new believers have you recently invested in?*

## Conclusion

How should you respond?

1. *Unbelievers:* Believe the gospel and receive eternal life
2. *Believers:* Start discipling someone!
  - a. Help them mature in their faith
  - b. Encourage them to grow in their love
  - c. Inspire them to be blameless and holy before the Lord

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