

# THE EPIC LIFE – BOB HALLMAN

## The Heartbeat of a Healthy Church

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

2010

### Introduction

In the closing verses of Chapter 5, Paul wraps up this wonderful letter by making two requests and delivering a series of 15 rapid-fire exhortations designed to provide the church and its leaders with practical guidelines on how to maintain a healthy church!

**Illustration:** The value of an exercise Heart Rate Monitor: 120-180 bpm

### I A Healthy Church Honors Its Leaders

A. **Respect** those:

1. Who work hard among you: **[Verse 12]**

**Respect** = “Recognize; love and appreciate”

**Work hard** = Kopiao = “Labor leading to exhaustion”

1 Thess 2:9 “Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.”

2. Who are **over** you in the Lord

**Over you** = Proistemi = “To stand before in rank”

They are to provide leadership as undershepherds of God’s flock.

Heb 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

3. Who **admonish** you

**Admonish** = Noutheteo = “To caution, warn or gently reprove”

Col 1:28-29 “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”

B. Hold them in the **highest** regard in love **[Verse 13a]**

**Hold them in the highest regard** = Hegeomai = “To esteem”

1. Because of their work

1 Tim 5:17 “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”

C. Live in **peace** with each other [Verse 13b]

What are some of the characteristics of a mature believer?

**They refuse to:**

1. Participate in gossip or slander
2. Remain unreconciled with those they have conflict with
3. Criticize leaders behind their backs

**They promote:**

1. Peace, tranquility and harmony wherever they go!
2. Stability and cohesion within the fellowship of believers
3. Unity by “making every effort” to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” Rom 14:19; Eph 4:3; Heb 12:14-15

**Bottom line:** A healthy church values, loves & appreciates its leaders!

## II A Healthy Church Is Courageously Loving

Having stated the responsibilities of the church to its leaders, Paul now addresses the leaders’ responsibilities to the church.

A. Warn those who are **idle** [Verse 14a]

*Admonish* = Noutheteo = “To caution, warn or gently reprove”

*Idle* = Ataktos = “To be disorderly or unruly”: origin “You’re out of line!”

It’s a military term that means to break ranks, to get out of line or to conduct one’s self in an undisciplined or irresponsible manner.

In Thessalonica, evidently there were people who were guilty of:

1. Not working in anticipation of the Lord’s return
2. Disrupting the peace by their independent behavior
3. Gossiping, slandering and being busybodies - 2 Thess 3:11-15

2 Thess 3:6 “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.”

B. Encourage the **timid** [Verse 14b]

*Encourage* = Paramutheomai = “To comfort or console”

*Timid* = Oligopsuchos = “Faint-hearted, feeble-minded, small-souled”

A timid person is an individual who:

1. Is easily discouraged and despondent
2. Is often dealing with a sense of inadequacy, doubt and fear
3. Is overwhelmed by stress and burdened with problems
4. Is frequently succumbing to temptation and sin

**Paul’s example:**

1 Thess 2:11-12 “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting [paramutheomai] and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who

calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

C. Help the weak [Verse 14c]

**Help** = Antechomai = “To adhere to (stick with) and support”

**Weak** = Asthenes = “To be without spiritual knowledge or power”

A weak person is a step beyond someone who is timid:

1. They are spiritually and physically drained
2. They are exhausted, burned out and ready to quit
3. They have not learned to lean on Christ for help and strength

**Paul’s exhortation:**

Rom 15:1-2 “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.”

D. Be patient with everyone [Verse 14d]

**Be patient** = Makrothumeo = “To be long-spirited, longsuffering”

What does this kind of patience look like?

1. It acknowledges that none of us have *arrived*
2. It recognizes that spiritual maturity is a *process*:  
We all naturally want everyone else to grow quickly and we want everyone else to be patient with us while we grow slowly.
3. It durable, persevering and never gives up
4. It avoids growing impatient, disgusted or giving way to exasperation
5. It refuses to devalue the person who is struggling

**Quote:** Matthew Henry

He said that when we try to help other people we "must not be high in our expectations nor harsh in our resentments nor hard in our impositions, but endeavor to make the best we can of everything and think the best we can of everybody.”

My Bible. <https://mybible.com/covers/711>

Col 3:12-14 “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

E. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong [Verse 15]

**Pay back** = Kakos = “To inflict injury or harm”

Here Paul sets forth the Christian *principle of non-retaliation*—an ideal

grounded in the Old Testament (Lev 19:18) and firmly anchored upon the very words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:44-48).

**Summary:** The *unruly* are challenging you; the *timid* are leaning on you; the *weak* are depleting you. And at times, they even hurt you!

Rom 12:17-21 “Do not repay anyone evil for evil ... Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

1. But always try to be kind to each other
2. But always try to be kind to everyone else

Gal 6:9-10 “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

**Application:** A church filled with men and women with attitudes like this will change neighborhoods, companies, islands and nations for Christ!

### III A Healthy Church Is Spiritually Optimistic

These next three verses present three positive commands that reflect the attitude of spiritual optimism and are notable for the following reasons:

- a. The verb forms for these 3 directives are identical: Present imperative
  1. It is in the command form: It is not optional
  2. It is in the present tense: It implies continuous action
- b. Each of these commands is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus

A. Be **joyful** always [Verse 16]

**Joyful** = Chairō = “To be glad or to rejoice”

**Always** = Adialeiptos = “Without interruption, without ceasing”

**Old Testament:** Ps 34:1-3 “I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.”

**New Testament:** Phil 4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

#### Top 10 Reasons to be Joyful:

10. You are *loved* by God!
9. You are *adopted and sealed* with the promised Holy Spirit
8. Your sins -- past, present and future -- are *forgiven*

7. You have God's promise that He will *never leave* you
6. You have assurance that *God will complete* what He started in you
5. You have been placed in a *loving* Christian 'ohana (family)
4. You have been invited to *participate in the EPIC life!!*
3. You have confidence that all things (including the stress, challenges, pressures, heartaches) *work together for the good* of those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28) and serve to help you become mature and complete in your faith, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4)
2. You are *anticipating* Christ's soon return, a glorified body and the joy of ruling and reigning with Christ in the sin-free environment of God's new heaven and new earth!
1. It *could be worse* -- you could be burning in hell!

B. Pray continually [Verse 17]

**Pray** = Proseuchomai = "To supplicate or worship"

**Continually** = Adialeptos = "Without ceasing"

In a negative sense it was used to describe a persistent, hacking cough. It doesn't mean you're coughing every second, but it does mean that you are coughing repeatedly and continually. We are to pray like that—repeatedly and continually.

**Two types of prayer:**

1. Scheduled prayer: Blogging
  - a. Daniel prayer (3 times a day): Dan 6:10
  - b. *Closet* prayer: Matthew 6:6
2. Spontaneous prayer (divine appointments): Twittering
 

Eph 6:18 "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests ..."

C. Give **thanks** in all circumstances [Verse 18]

**Give thanks** = Eucharisteo = "To express gratitude"

**Note:** We don't give thanks *for* everything, but in everything!

1. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus
 

Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, consistently taught that a heart of gratitude was normative for the Christian life (Col 2:7; 3:15,17; 4:2; Eph 5:4, 20).

**What enables a believer to be thankful?** Our conviction that ...

1. *God is loving*: Nothing happens that isn't permitted by God or that we can't handle with His strength - Phil 4:13
2. *God is faithful*: Nothing happens that doesn't advance God's plan for our lives and His kingdom - James 1:2-4
3. *God is sovereign*: Nothing happens by chance or that is beyond the power of God to turn for our good and Christ-likeness - Rom 8:28

D. Do not **put out** the Spirit's fire [Verse 19-20]

**Put out** = Sbennumi = "To extinguish or quench"

The Bible often uses fire to characterize the activity of the Holy Spirit.

**Ways we can put out the Spirit's fire:**

1. Unconfessed sin - Isa 59:2
2. Fear and unbelief - Heb 3:7-19
3. Misuse or neglect of the gifts - 1 Tim 4:14
  - a. Hyper-charismatic: An excessive emphasis on spiritual gifts
  - b. Hypo-charismatic: A deficient emphasis on spiritual gifts
4. Resisting the Holy Spirit - Acts 7:51
5. Grieving the Holy Spirit - Eph 4:30

1. Do not treat prophecies with contempt

**Prophecy** = "Foretelling or forth-telling the Word of God"

**Contempt** = Exoutheneo = "To despise or fail to esteem"

1 Cor 14:1-3 "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy ... everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort."

How can we be guilty of treating prophecies with contempt?

- a. By rejecting the spiritual gifts
- b. By rejecting the messenger
- c. By rejecting the message

E. **Test** everything [Verse 21]

**Test** = Dokimazo = "To examine, prove, try"

1 John 4:1 "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God ..."

**How do you test an idea or teaching?**

1. Be a student of God Word
 

2 Tim 2:15 "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."
2. Measure everything against the truth and authority of the Bible
 

Acts 17:11 "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."
3. Examine the fruit of the leader/teacher/prophet's life
 

Matt 7:15-20 "By their fruit you will recognize them"

1. Hold on to the good

2. **Avoid** every kind of evil [Verse 22]

**Avoid** = Apechomai = “To refrain or abstain”

**Every kind** = Eidos = “Appearance, shape, form”

Eph 5:3 “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.”

Rom 12:9 “Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.”

#### IV A Healthy Church Is Set Apart for God

A. Paul's words of blessing: [Verse 23-24]

1. May God Himself, the God of peace **sanctify** you through and through  
**Sanctify** = Hagiazō = “To separate, consecrate, hallow”

**Illustration:** Mom's good silver: Christmas and Easter

#### 4 fast facts about sanctification:

1. It is *God's will* for you to be sanctified - 1 Thess 4:3
  2. Sanctification is a *cooperative* effort:
    - a. It is the work of God - Lev 20:7-8; 1 Cor 1:2
    - b. It is facilitated by a surrendered life - Rom 12:1
  3. God will use *everything* that happens -- good and bad -- to transform you into the likeness of Christ - Rom 8:28-29
  4. It is a process that God *promises to complete* - Phil 1:6
2. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept **blameless** at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ  
**Blameless** = Amemptos = “Faultless”  
Signifies that no judicially unreconciled charge remains outstanding!

1 Thess 2:10 “You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.”

#### What is our part in leading a blameless life?

1. *Ask* the Lord to strengthen your heart - 1 Thess 3:13
  2. *Grow* in the love and knowledge of God - Phil 1:9-11
  3. *Do everything* without complaining or arguing - Phil 2:14-16
  4. *Anticipate* the imminent return of Christ - 2 Peter 3:14
- a. The One who calls you is faithful
  - b. The One who calls you will do it  
Paul's words are simple and direct. No qualification, no hesitation, no doubt of any kind. Just four simple words: “He will do it!”  
Not “He may do it” or “He might do it” or “He could do it” or “He'll do it if he feels like it.” Not even “He'll do it if we do our part.” Just a simple declarative statement that God will do it!

1 Cor 1:8-9 “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

B. Paul’s words of benediction: [Verse 25-28]

1. Brothers, **pray** for us

**Pray** = Proseuchomai = “To supplicate or worship”

Paul frequently expressed his need for prayer:

- a. For an honorable life and a clear conscience - Heb 13:18
- b. For strength in the midst of challenges - Rom 15:30
- c. For open doors for ministry - Col 4:3-4
- d. For courage to share the Good News - Eph 6:19-20
- e. For the rapid spread of the gospel - 2 Thess 3:1-2

**Application:** Pray for all the leaders at church – not just the pastors!

2. Greet all the brothers with a **holy kiss** (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 1 Pt 5:14)

3. Have this letter read to all the brothers - Col 4:16

4. The **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

**Grace** = Charis = “God’s favor in spite of demerit”

Nearly all Paul's letters begin and end with grace:

2 Thess 3:18 “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

**Definition:** “Grace is God’s bestowal of love and acceptance on us because of who He is and what Jesus has done.”

**Note:** Grace is a default setting in the Christian life. But it can be forfeited, so be careful about changing God’s spiritual settings!!  
Jonah 2:8 “Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.”

## Conclusion

The Heartbeat of a Healthy Church can be simply summarized:

1. A healthy church is marked by *members who make it easy to lead!*
2. A healthy church is marked by *leaders who make it easy to follow!*

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