

# BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

## “The Power Of Encouragement”

Colossians 2:1-7

2004

### Introduction

In Colossians 1:28-29, the apostle Paul described his goal of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ by “admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom that in order that he might present everyone perfect (or mature) in Christ.”

As a Pharisee, Paul had only been concerned with *what* he communicated.

But now as a Christian, Paul was also concerned with *how* he communicated.

Through Christ and the modeling of Barnabas, Paul had learned the “Power of Encouragement” and became of source of encouragement for the church!

### Study after study has shown that:

“Encouraged people achieve the best; dominated people achieve second best; neglected people achieve the least.”

### That’s why Sam Walton, the Founder of Wal-Mart Stores once said:

“Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune – and now Wal-Mart is too!

### It reminds me of the boy who asked his father to play darts with him:

“I’ll throw and you say ‘Wonderful!’”

I think we’d all be much better parents, better spouses, better workers, and much better friends, if we simply decreased our criticism and increased our praise!

### I The Challenge Of Paul’s Ministry

A. Paul **struggled** for the believers at Colosse [Verse 1a]

**Struggled** = Agonizomai = “A contest, conflict, contention, fight, race”

An athletic term describing what it takes to compete and win in a track event or a wrestling match (Hebrews 12:1).

It’s the same word used to describe Jesus’ agony in the garden when His sweat was like drops of blood - Luke 22:44.

It’s graphic language, but Paul uses it to describe the fervency of his intercession for believers he has never even met. And remember, at the time of this writing, Paul was chained to a Roman guard day and night, a thousand miles from Colosse.

Col 4:12-13 “Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling [agonizomai] in prayer for you, that you

may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”

**Application:**

Have you ever felt that miserable sense of helplessness?

Like when your child is at college 3,000 miles away and is discouraged. Or when a friend who refuses to repent of sin that will destroy their life. Or when you suffer the agony of a wayward spouse.

You may feel helpless, but you’re not! Paul didn’t wring his hands and wonder what to do as he sat in prison – he prayed – he agonized in prayer. And God answered! And if you’re willing to pray, God will answer you too!

B. Paul struggled for the believers at Laodicea [Verse 1b]

Laodicea was in the Roman province and was about 18 miles west of Colosse.

C. Paul struggled for those who had not met him personally [Verse 1c]

1. That they might be **encouraged** in heart [Verse 2a]

**Encouraged** = Parakaleo = “To comfort or exhort”

Sometimes this word means to comfort, sometimes to exhort but it is always used in the sense of enabling someone to meet a difficult situation with confidence and strength.

**Application:**

If you want to become skilled in comforting others, you must first be comforted by God.

2 Cor 1:3-7 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort [paraklesis], who comforts [parakaleo] us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort [parakaleo] those in any trouble with the comfort [paraklesis] we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort [paraklesis] overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort [paraklesis] and salvation; if we are comforted [parakaleo], it is for your comfort [paraklesis], which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort [paraklesis].”

2. That they might be **united** in love [Verse 2b]

**United** = Sumbibazo = “To drive together, knit together or instruct”

Eph 4:16 “From him the whole body, joined and held together [sumbibazo] by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

**Application:** What does it mean to be united in love? It means that ...

1. We treasure each other and put “10s” on other people’s heads

2. We spotlight gifts and abilities rather than faults and failures
3. We rally around each other in times of sadness and loss
4. We allow people to have "bad days"
5. We are quick to forgive
6. We act in kindness toward each other
7. We defend each other and believe the best about each other
8. We encourage one another and pray for one another
9. We conduct ourselves in keeping with the standard of God's Word

## II The Purpose Of Paul's Ministry

- A. That they might have the full riches of complete **understanding** [Verse 2c]

**Understanding** = Sunesis = "A mental putting together, knowledge"

Col 1:9 "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

### Application:

How do we get this kind of spiritual understanding?

1. From the teachings of Jesus Christ
  - 1 John 5:20 "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true."
2. From the ministry of the Holy Spirit
  - 1 Cor 2:12 "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."

- B. That they might know the mystery of God: [Verse 2d]

1. Namely, **Christ**, in whom are hidden: [Verse 3]

Now, the false teachers in Colosse were claiming a deeper, secret knowledge of spiritual things. But Paul dismisses that by saying that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ -- hidden not in the sense that they are kept concealed, but that they are stored up in one place only, and that is in Christ.

Col 1:27 "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

- a. All the treasures of **wisdom**

**Treasures** = Thesaurus = "Treasury or storehouse of wealth"

**Wisdom** = Sophia = "Wisdom (higher or lower, worldly or spiritual)"

Job 28:12-13, 21-23 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living ... It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.' God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells ..."

Colossians 2:3 is God's answer to where true wisdom dwells – it is found

in Christ!

b. All the treasures of **knowledge**

**Knowledge** = Gnosis = “Experiential knowledge”

The Gnostics claimed to have a secret knowledge of God. To understand this secret knowledge, a person had to be initiated into this group by being mentored into the deeper truths of the faith – truths that weren’t available in the Bible and weren’t available to the average believer.

But Paul counters this heresy by saying that the only way to understand the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge is to enter into Christ by faith.

### **Application:**

How do we experience this knowledge?

1. God reveals it to us

Eph 1:17 “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”

2. We pursue it

Hos 6:3 “Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.”

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.”

C. That no one would **deceive** the Colossians: [Verse 4]

**Deceive** = Paralogizomai = “To delude”

### **Illustration:**

This is the same word used in the Septuagint in Genesis 29:25 when Laban tricked Jacob by giving him Leah instead of Rachael.

One of Satan’s simplest strategies to deceive Christians is to lay a slightly twisted version of the truth along side of God’s truth in order to confuse the unsuspecting believer. So beware!

1. By fine-sounding arguments

**Fine-sounding arguments** = Pithanologia = “Persuasive or enticing words.”

This is the only place in the entire New Testament where this word is used, but it was commonly used in Paul’s day to refer to a lawyer’s persuasive speech to influence an audience towards an unjust verdict.

### **Application:**

There are two primary methods Satan uses to deceive and entice believers:

1. False teaching (External)

Acts 20:29-31 “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!”

## 2. Unapplied teaching (Internal)

James 1:22 “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive [paralogizomai] yourselves. Do what it says.”

### III The Encouragement Of Paul's Ministry

#### A. He was absent in body but present in spirit [Verse 5a]

1 Cor 5:3 “Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit.”

Now Paul has already encouraged the believers in Colosse for their love for all the saints and for their faith in Christ Jesus. But he's far from done. In verse 5, he continues by pointing out two more praiseworthy characteristics in their fellowship ...

#### B. He delighted to see how **orderly** they were [Verse 5b]

**Delighted** = Chairō = “To be cheerful or rejoicing”

**Orderly** = Taxis = “Regular arrangement, disciplined, unbroken ranks”

This is a military term that likened the Colossian fellowship to a group of well-disciplined soldiers.

These believers were organized, everyone did their job, and they remained solid in the face of false teaching within and opposition without.

1 Cor 14:40 “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”

2 Thess 3:6 “We command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is [disorderly] and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.”

#### Application:

Now if you live in isolation from the body of Christ, you can sometimes get away with living a haphazard, undependable, and impulsive life.

But if you want to fulfill your calling as a member of God's family, you must learn to work with the body of believers in an orderly fashion.

What can you do to live a more orderly and disciplined spiritual life?

1. Be a consistent student of God's Word
2. Develop your relationship with God through prayer
3. Give yourself in service to God and the body of Christ
4. Pair up with another believer for accountability
5. Read: Gordon McDonald's book, Ordering Your Private World  
Richard Foster's book, The Celebration Of Discipline

#### C. He delighted in how **firm** their faith in Christ was [Verse 5c]

**Firm** = Stereōma = “Established, steadfastness”

This word was also used to describe a Phalanx, which is a formidable military formation of soldiers carrying overlapping shields and long spears.

Paul is saying that the Colossian's disciplined order and firm faith was like the order and steadiness of a trained and disciplined troop, and would protect the church from the danger of false teachers and heretics who had infiltrated their church.

1 Cor 16:13 “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith.”

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.”

#### IV The Exhortation Of Paul's Ministry

- A. He exhorted them to continue in **faith** [Verse 6a]  
**“Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord ...”**

##### Application:

**How did we receive Christ?** By faith in Christ through the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

**How are we to continue in Christ?** By faith in God through the systematic study of His Word!

Rom 10:17 “... faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

- B. He exhorted them to continue to live in Christ [Verse 6b]

**Live** = Peripateo = “To walk or conduct one’s life”

In the present tense it literally reads, “in Him be continually walking”

It describes the steady progress of the believer’s life -- one step at a time.

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

Next Paul uses four participles to describe what it means to live in Christ.

The first three participles are in the passive voice and reflect God’s activity and work of grace in the life of a believer. We have to cooperate and respond, but “it is God who works in us to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Phil 2:13)

1. **Rooted** in Him [Verse 7a]

**Rooted** = Rhizoo = “To become stable” (perfect, passive tense)

Eph 3:17-19 “And I pray that you, being rooted [rhizoo] and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

##### Application:

Like a deeply-rooted tree, you have been planted in Christ and those strong roots will hold you.

2. Built up in Him [Verse 7b]

**Built up** = Epoikodomeo = “To construct” (perfect, passive tense)

The tense is again present/passive and describes God’s ongoing work to bring about spiritual growth in the life of the believer.

But the Bible also teaches that we also have a role in this building process:

1. God builds us up

Acts 20:32 “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up [epoikodomeo] and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

2. We are to build ourselves up

Jude 1:20 “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up [epoikodomeo] in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.”

There are two results from being "rooted and built up" in Christ ...

3. **Strengthened** in the faith as they were taught [Verse 7c]

**Strengthened** = Bebaioo = “To confirm or establish”

It is again passive, stressing God’s grace and activity, and in the present tense, which describes the continuous strengthening that God gives when there is a Christ centered walk.

- 2 Cor 1:21 “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm [bebaioo] in Christ.”

- 1 Cor 1:8 “He will keep you strong [bebaioo] to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

#### **Application:**

So as we walk with the Lord, it is God who:

1. Roots us in Christ
2. Builds us up in Christ
3. Strengthens us in our faith

What should be our response to God’s generous mercy?

4. Overflowing with **thankfulness** [Verse 7d]

**Overflowing** = Perisseuo = “To superabound”

**Thanksgiving** = Echaristia = “Gratitude”

Unlike the first three participles, which were passive, this participle is present/active stressing our responsibility to actively and continuously live a life of thanksgiving!

This attitude is important enough that Paul mentions it 6 times in this brief letter - (1:3, 12; 2:7, 3:15, 16; 4:2).

#### **Application:**

One of the most obvious, external indicators of spiritual maturity – besides love – is a lifestyle of thanksgiving. Anyone can grumble, complain and criticize, but a truly godly man or woman will be marked by a

lifestyle of thanksgiving.

1 Thess 5:16-18 “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

**Why can we as believers live this way?**

Because “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28)

**Conclusion**

Let me close by saying this: Because Paul is writing believers, he assumes that they have already received Christ. But that may not be true for everyone here today.

If you want a new beginning in Christ, it's as simple as ABC!

1. **Admit** and repent of your sin

Acts 3:19 “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ...”

2. **Believe** in Jesus Christ

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

3. **Confess** Jesus as your Lord

Rom 10:9 “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

**A suggested prayer for a new beginning with God:**

“Dear Lord Jesus, I admit I am a sinner. And today I repent of my sin. Please forgive all my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. I believe that your Son, Jesus Christ, died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. Please come into my life and be my Savior and Lord. In Jesus name, Amen!

**Benediction:**

Now, “may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.” 2 Thess 2:16-17

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