

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

A Heart for the Lost

Romans 15:14-33

2000

Introduction

Paul's burning, driving ambition in life was to faithfully discharge the trust God had given him in preaching the gospel. Obedience to the Great Commission was what motivated everything he did. In 1 Cor 9:16-17, Paul tells us that he was compelled to preach. "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

David Brainerd, Missionary to the North American Indians in the mid 1,700s, put it this way: "I care not where I go or how I live or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep, I dream of them; when I awake, they are first in my thoughts."

That's the kind of heart that Paul had! A passion first for Christ, and a matching passion for those Christ loved.

I Paul's Encouragement to the Church

Prior to conversion, Paul was the critical, hard-nosed, demanding, legalistic poster-boy for the spiritual leadership of Israel. I imagine he was the kind of guy that people either loved or hated. And though he could be described in a thousand different ways, one adjective that probably never entered the mind of friend or foe was *encouraging*. Yet, following his conversion – no doubt due to the influence of Barnabas – Paul finished his ministry as one of the most encouraging leaders in the New Testament church!

It has been said that "perhaps once in a hundred years a person may be ruined by excessive praise, but surely once every minute someone dies inside for lack of it."

Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

A. He was convinced that they were:

Convinced = Peitho = "To be persuaded"

1. Full of **goodness** [Verse 14a]

Goodness = Agathosune = "Virtuous and high moral character"

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

The Holy Spirit is the source of goodness. It is a fruit that is borne only by believers who are submissive to His divine will and power.

The church at Rome was a responsive church, caring and compassionate church. It reached out to meet the needs of people – believers and unbelievers alike.

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

2. Complete in knowledge [Verse 14b]

Knowledge = Gnosis = “Experiential knowledge”

Paul is not referring to worldly knowledge, but to a deep knowledge of God’s truth as revealed in the Word of God. The believers in Rome were doctrinally sound in their knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge ...”

2 Peter 3:18 “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

3. Competent to **instruct** [Verse 14c]

Instruct = Noutheteo = “To admonish, warn, caution or reprove gently”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Col 3:16-17 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom ...”

Application:

It was never God’s intention for the pastor to be the only source of instruction and counsel. God’s plan is that every believer be involved in the work of counseling – by being aware of what is going on with neighbors and friends and brothers and sisters, and then meeting the need with sound, Biblical instruction.

B. He wrote them boldly: [Verse 15]

Boldly = Tolmeroteron = “To be daring or having great confidence”

1. To **remind** them

Remind = Epanamimnesko = “To put in mind”

Paul was not teaching them things that they had never heard, but was reminding them of what they already knew. My primary responsibility as a pastor is to remind you of what you already know.

2 Peter 1:12-13 “So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body ...”

2 Peter 3:1 “I have written [you] to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.”

Application:

We have such a hard time remembering what we want to remember; yet we so easily remember what we want to forget!

Satan reminds us of our failings day and night (Rev 12:10), while he constantly seeks to steal away the Scripture from our memories (Matt 13:19).

That is why we gather every week -- to be reminded of the truth of God’s Word!

2. To minister to them [Verse 16a]

Minister = Leitourgos = “A Temple servant”

Paul could have used the word *doulos*, or *diakonos* which means “servant” or “minister.” But he chose *leitourgon* because he saw his missionary work like that of a priest offering sacred worship to God.

Priestly duty = *Hierourgeo* = “To officiate as a priest”

1 Peter 2:5 “... you are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

3. To **proclaim** the gospel of God [Verse 16b]

Gospel = *Euaggelion* = “The Good News”

Rom 1:1-2 “Paul, ... called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God ...”

Acts 20:24 “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”

4. To win the Gentiles so that they might be: [Verse 16c]

a. An offering acceptable to God

Offering = *Prosphora* = “To sacrifice”

Paul considered himself as a priest performing an act of worship to God. But instead of offering a lamb or grain offering – he presented Gentile converts!

Rom 1:5 “Through him and for his name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”

Application:

Every believer who is instrumental in winning a person to Jesus Christ is presenting that convert as a priestly offering to the Lord.

When we bring others into a reconciled relationship with God, we are functioning in a priestly role by bringing to God the supreme offering of the hearts of men.

b. Sanctified by the Holy Spirit

Sanctified = *Hagiazo* = “To make holy, purify or consecrate”

Acts 15:8-9 “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.”

II Paul’s Self-Assessment

A. He **gloried** in his service to God [Verse 17]

Glory = *Kauchesis* = “To boast or rejoice”

1 Cor 9:16-17 “Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

Jer 9:23-24 “This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me ...”

Illustration:

Every week I get mailings from pastors, evangelists and conference speakers who are being promoted for their dynamic, spirit-filled, miracle-filled ministries. Their slick marketing mailings and magazines are attempting to convince people like you and me that they are God's gift to church. Frightening!
You never hear that kind of self-promoting, self-serving, self-righteous attitude from Paul. Instead, Paul made it his goal to boast about his weaknesses so that Christ's power would rest on him. (2 Cor 12:9-10)

B. He refused to speak beyond what he had accomplished: [Verse 18]

1. By leading the Gentiles to **obey** God

Rom 1:4-5 "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith."

a. By the power of signs and miracles [Verse 19a]

Signs = Semeion = "An indication, token, wonder"

Wonders = Teras = "A prodigy or omen"

Heb 2:3-4 "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

Acts 14:3 "So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there [Iconium], speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders."

Application: Jon Courson's illustration

The Holy Spirit is like steam in a locomotive: He's there to move the engine down the track – not to blow the whistle!" Too many people look at the power of the Holy Spirit as a divine whistle to draw attention to themselves.

b. By the **power** of the Holy Spirit [Verse 19b]

1 Thess 1:5 "... our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction."

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."

Application:

Notice, Paul doesn't take credit for his ministry. Neither should we! We have no right to take credit for what God accomplishes through us. Instead, like Paul, we should boast and glory in nothing but the cross of Christ!

C. He made it his ambition to preach the gospel [Verse 20]

Why? In obedience to God's commission for him to preach the gospel!

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."

1. He **fully** proclaimed the gospel of Christ [Verse 20a]

Fully proclaimed = Pleroo = "To complete or finish preaching"

He had faithfully and fully communicated the gospel in every place to which the Lord had sent him -- from Jerusalem to Illyricum = 1,400 miles on foot!

Acts 20:20-21 "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."

2. He preached Christ where He was not known [Verse 20b]

2 Cor 10:15-17 "Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory."

3. He preached where there was not an existing **foundation** [Verse 20c]

1 Cor 3:10 "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds."

Illustration: "Aquarium ministries"

In Matt 4:19, Jesus called us to be "fishers of men." But many ministries today are merely "aquarium keepers" – adding to their ministry by scooping believers out of other ministries. May God make us "fishers of men" rather than "aquarium keepers."

III Paul's Future Plans For Ministry

A. He expressed his desire to **visit** the church at Rome [Verse 21]

Longing = Epipothia = "Intense longing or great desire"

Romans 1:11-15:

He longed to see them in order impart some spiritual gift to make them strong.

He longed to see them in order to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

He longed to see them in order to preach the gospel to have a harvest among them.

1. He had delayed because of his desire to reach the lost [Verse 22]

Hindered = Egkopto = “To delay, impede, or detain”

Because Paul was submitted to the Lord’s guidance and direction, Paul was divinely hindered from going to the church at Rome.

Proverbs 19:21 “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.”

2. He planned to visit Rome when he visited Spain [Verse 23-24]

Spain is the region of ancient Tarshish (the city to which Jonah fled).

- a. He invited them to support him financially

1 Cor 9:11-12 “If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?”

3. He planned first to go to Jerusalem [Verse 25]

- a. To **serve** the saints there

Serve = Diakoneo = “To be an attendant, to wait upon as a host”

2 Cor 4:5-6 “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.”

- b. To deliver a financial gift from Macedonia and Achaia [Verse 26]

Gift = Koinonia = “Sharing or having in common – in this case, financial sharing”

Acts 24:17 “After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.”

The believers in Jerusalem were suffering from persecution and poverty. Many had lost their jobs or were imprisoned for their faith. These difficulties were compounded by the fact that many Jews who were coming to Christ were staying on in Jerusalem as houseguests of the believers within the city. The financial burden was overwhelming! So, the Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia, realizing their indebtedness to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem took up an offering to meet their pressing financial needs.

2 Cor 9:12 “This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.”

- B. He emphasized the **debt** of the Gentiles [Verse 27-28]

1. The Gentiles shared in the Jew’s spiritual blessings

Spiritual = Pneumatikos = “Non-material things”

This financial gift would also be a means of cementing the commitment and fellowship between the Jewish and Gentile believers.

2. The Gentiles owed the Jews a material blessing

Owed = Opheiletes = “To be in debt”

Rom 13:8-9 “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.”

Material = Sarkikos = “Pertaining to flesh or material things”

It was from Jerusalem that the gospel spread across the world. The contribution was a voluntary gesture on the part of the Gentile churches. It was the acknowledgment of a debt – not a legal debt, but a debt of love.

C. He expressed his **confidence** in the blessing of Christ [Verse 29]

Blessing = Eulogia = “Commendation”

IV Paul’s Request For Prayer

A. He urged them to **struggle** with him in prayer [Verse 30]

Struggle = Sunagonizomai = “To agonize with”

In Romans 1:9-10, Paul assures the believers in Rome of his unceasing prayers for them.

Now, he asks those same believers to agonize or struggle with him in prayer!

Like Jesus in the garden, Paul knew that imprisonment awaited him in Jerusalem. “I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.” - Acts 20:23; Acts 21:4, 11

And like Jesus, Paul’s only request is that his friends pray for him!

Colossians 4:12 “Epaphras ... is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”

Illustration:

Wrestling: The longest three minutes of my life!

B. He asked them to pray that:

1. He might be **rescued** from unbelievers - Acts 21:27-23:29 [Verse 31a]

Rescued = Rhoumai = “To deliver”

Unbelievers = Apeitheo = “Those who are obstinate, unpersuadable or disobedient”

Paul suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews who rejected the gospel. But notice that he didn’t quit preaching, he just wanted believers to pray for his protection.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 “Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.”

2. His service might be accepted by the saints - Acts 21:17-20 [Verse 31b]

Accepted = Euprosdektos = “Well-received”

3. He might come to Rome to be mutually **refreshed** - Acts 27:15 [Verse 32-33]

Refreshed = Sunanapauomai = “To recruit oneself in company with”

And if you take a look in Acts 21 and 27, everyone of these prayers were answered:
Paul was protected - Acts 21:27-23:29
Paul was accepted - Acts 21:17-20
Paul was mutually refreshed - Acts 27:15
Lives were touched, folks were saved; and we're encouraged here today – because people prayed.

On a human level, Paul's life was anything but peaceful. He lived in uncertainty and turmoil – often risking his very life to complete his God-given mission. But he knew intimately the God of peace, and he lived in the peace and tranquility that God gives to those who faithfully abide in His will.
Philippians 4:7 “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
That peace still sustains us today as we complete the race set before us – keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith.”

Conclusion

May God give us His heart for the lost – a heart like Paul's that was compelled to preach the gospel – a heart like David Brainerd – not caring where we go or how we live and what we have to endure in order that men and women and boys and girls might be saved from a Christless eternity.
And then, like Paul, one day we will say ... “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” 2 Tim 4:6-8

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