

# BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

## Famous Last Words

Romans 16:17-27

2000

### Introduction

If you knew that you only had a few days to live, how would you spend them? Who would you want to be with? What would you want to communicate?

Most of us would choose to be with family and friends. In Paul's case, his family and friends were the church. And though Paul's life was far from over, he lived every day like it was his last.

His final words begin with a warning regarding those who would seek to cause division within the church by undermining the gospel of Jesus Christ. He then sends on the greetings of the men with him in Corinth (verses 21-23). And finally, in verses 25-27, Paul closes with a benediction focusing on the eternal purposes of God.

### I Paul's Final Warnings

A. Watch out for those who: [Verse 17a]

**Watch out** = Skopeo = "To keep you eye on"

1. Cause **divisions** in the church

**Divisions** = Dichostsis = "Disunion or dissension"

Satan has a variety of effective schemes to derail your spiritual life and separate you from God: But one of his favorites is to cause division within the church – often by overemphasizing one particular point of doctrine or teaching while placing little or no emphasis on the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 7:15-20 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."

Acts 20:29-31 "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 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. Put **obstacles** in other's way

**Obstacle** = Skandalon = "A trap or snare"

Matt 18:5-6 "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin (skandalon), it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

**Application:**

1 John 2:10 "Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble (skandalon)."

3. Teach what is **contrary** to sound doctrine

**Contrary** = Para = "Along side of or near"

**Doctrine** = Didache = "Instruction"

False teachers most often use the Bible as their launching point, but quickly venture away from sound doctrine by either adding to the Bible, or subtracting from it.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 "If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain."

B. Keep away from such people [Verse 17b]

**Keep away** = Ekklineo = "To shun or avoid"

Note that we are not to battle these false teachers. Instead, we are to avoid them. Don't debate with them. Don't argue with them. Instead, just keep away from them.

**Application:**

Titus 3:10-11 "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him."

C. Be aware of their motives: [Verse 18]

1. They are not **servicing** the Lord

Phil 3:18 "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ."

2. They are serving their own appetites

**Appetites** = Koilia = "Belly"

These false teachers seek to turn believers from self-denial to self-indulgence, from self-sacrifice to self-service. They are driven by self-interest and self-gratification and often live lives of self-indulgence and luxury.

Philippians 3:19 “Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.”

3. They **deceive** the minds of naïve people by:

**Deceive** = Exapatao = To completely seduce or beguile”

Like a lion pursuing its prey, Satan will attack the strong, but he prefers the weak.

a. Smooth talk

**Smooth talk** = Hrestologia = “Fair speech or good words”

2 Peter 2:18-19 “For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.”

**Illustration:** Common schemes of the enemy

1. *Cheap grace*: Advocating license and fleshly indulgence under the banner of “grace” (Romans 6:1ff; Jude 4)
2. *Legalism*: Advocating rule keeping under the banner of “obedience” or “spirituality” (1 Timothy 4:1-5)

b. Flattery

**Flattery** = Eulogia = “Insincere or exaggerated praise”

Like Satan, these false teachers are cunning and skilled in the art of deception – even using flattery to deceive and mislead the naïve.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

**The Remedy:**

Eph 6:10-14 “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

## II Paul's Final Encouragement

### A. Paul highlights their **obedience** [Verse 19]

**Obedience** = Hupakoe = "To listen attentatively with the objective of complying"

**Heard** = Aphikneomai = "To go forth (by rumor)"

#### 1. It filled Paul with joy

Romans 1:8 "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world."

### B. Paul cautions them: [Verse 19b]

#### 1. Be **wise** about what is good

Romans 12:9 "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good."

#### 2. Be **innocent** about what is evil

**Innocent** = Akeraios = "Harmless or simple"

The only reliable way to know what is evil is to become so familiar with the truth that evil becomes immediately obvious. And the way we become familiar with the truth is by becoming familiar with the Bible

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

### Application:

I've heard some believers defend watching R-rated movies and immoral sitcoms by saying that they need to be able to understand the culture if they are to be effective in reaching unbelievers. But what we watch, what we enjoy, what we participate in lends itself to either evil or good.

Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things."

### C. Paul reminds them of their **victory** [Verse 20a]

#### 1. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet

**Soon** = Tachos = "A speedily, quickly and often unexpectedly"

Paul assures the believers in Rome that their spiritual warfare would soon be over.

Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

### D. Paul reminds them of their **standing** [Verse 20b]

#### 1. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you

#### IV Paul's Final Greetings

**Greet** = Aspazomai = "To enfold in the arms or to embrace"

A. Timothy sends greetings [Verse 21a]

1. He was Paul's fellow worker

Timothy was like a son to Paul and his key disciple - 1 Cor 4:17; 1 & 2 Timothy

Timothy was faithful in the Lord - 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10-11

Timothy had proven himself by serving in the work of the gospel - Phil 2:22

B. Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater send greetings [Verse 21b]

1. They were relatives of Paul

This appears to be the same Lucius mentioned in Acts 13:1-3 who was one of the teachers in the city of Antioch.

Jason was Paul's host when the apostle went to the city of Thessalonica. It was during this same visit when a riot broke out in the city and a mob rushed Jason's house and dragged him before the city officials. (Acts 17:5-7)

Sosipater may be the man from Berea in Acts 20:4-6 and a companion of Paul.

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."

C. Tertius sends his greetings [Verse 22]

1. He transcribed Paul's letter to Rome

The name indicates that he was a slave, because his name means "Third." In slave families they did not bother to think up interesting names; they just numbered the children: First, Second, Third, etc. His brother, Quartus (Fourth), is mentioned in Verse 23.

**Application:**

You might feel like a number, as if no one cares about you. No one takes notice of you. Remember, the Lord has a plan for you. He's got your number, and as you give yourself to Him and walk with Him, you'll find significance as a servant of the Most High God.

D. Gaius sends his greetings [Verse 23]

1. He extended hospitality to the church and to Paul

Gaius opened his house to the entire Christian community and to Paul and his friends.

He is likely the same man that Paul baptized in the city of Corinth – 1 Cor 1:14.

E. Erastus sends greetings [Verse 24]

1. He was Corinth's director of public works

**Director** = Oikonomos = "Manager or governor"

The gospel penetrated every level of society -- slaves, public officials, business leaders, fisherman, and leaders of the empire. They all shared an equal standing in the church of Jesus Christ.

F. Quartus sends his greetings

## V Paul's Final Benediction

Paul's final words are a summary of the whole letter to the Romans. They also counterbalance what Paul has written in verses 17-20 in his warning about false teachers. If false teachers can cause Christians to divide and to stumble, God alone is the One who unites men and who makes them stand.

A. Now to Him who is able to establish you by: [Verse 25a]

1. The **gospel**

**Establish** = Sterizo = "To make firm and stable"

By the gospel, God is able to establish the minds and hearts of believers in the truth -- to settle us, ground us, establish us and make us firm in Him.

Jude 1:24-25 "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy -- to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!"

2. The **proclamation** of Jesus Christ

The key to standing up in a fallen world is to plant your feet on Christ, the solid Rock.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 "... we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

B. The gospel: [Verse 25b]

1. Was a mystery **hidden** for long ages past

**Mystery** = Mysterion = "Something hidden or undisclosed"

It refers to something previously hidden but now made known.

In the context of the book of Romans, the mystery that Paul is referring to has to do with the God's provision of salvation for Gentiles as well as for Jews.

Col 1:26-27 "... the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 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."

That is the mystery. That is the radical, powerful secret of the authentic Christian life:  
***Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

2. Is now **revealed** and made known: [Verse 26]

**Revelation** = Apokalupsis = “To unwrap or unveil”

**Revealed** = Phaneroo = “To make manifest”

Eph 1:8-10 “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment -- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”

a. Through the prophetic writings

1 Peter 1:10-11 “Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”

b. By the command of God

Matt 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Acts 26:15-18 “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’”

3. Has been revealed so that all nations might:

a. **Believe** Him

John 1:12 “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

John 20:31 “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

b. **Obey** Him

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:**

1 Peter 1:2 "... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."

C. Now to the only wise God be glory forever [Verse 27]

Although God is powerful, loving and gracious, Paul here emphasizes the infinite wisdom of God in accomplishing such a wondrous plan of redemption.

This mystery was a plan that the "only wise God" predetermined. It was a plan that mankind could never have imagined or executed. It was foretold by the Old Testament prophets and then accomplished in the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The mystery is now proclaimed as accomplished in Christ, through the preaching of the gospel.

1. Through Jesus Christ

Ephesians 3:10-11 "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**Conclusion**

Rom 11:33-36 "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."