"A HEART FOR NEW BELIEVERS"

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

10-29-2025

*** We need a <u>Heart</u> for New Believers!**

What does it mean to have a heart?

A Heart for New Believers is:

I. A <u>DESIRE</u> FOR THEIR <u>FELLOWSHIP</u> (2:17-18; cp. 3:10, 11)

A Heart for New Believers is:

II. A <u>REJOICING</u> IN THEIR <u>SALVATION</u> (2:19-20; cp. 3:8, 9)

A Heart for New Believers is:

III. A <u>CONCERN</u> FOR THEIR <u>FAITH</u> (3:1-8)

A. BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE <u>STRENGTH</u> THAT THEY NEED (v. 1-2)
(The <u>Stability</u> of Their Faith Should be Our Concern)

B. BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE <u>PRESSURES</u> THEY WILL FACE (v. 3-5)
(The <u>Trial</u> of Their Faith Should be Our Concern)

C. BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE <u>FRUIT</u> THEY SHOULD SHOW (v. 6-8)
(The <u>Evidence</u> of Their Faith Should be Our Concern)

A Heart for New Believers is:

IV. A <u>PRAYER</u> FOR THEIR <u>GROWTH</u> (Full Maturity) (3:9-13)

A. A PRAYER WITH <u>THANKS</u> IN IT (v. 9)

B. A PRAYER WITH <u>FEET</u> IN IT (v. 10-11)

C. A PRAYER WITH <u>FAITH</u> IN IT (v. 12-13)

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INTRODUCTION:

EX: of the need for compassion, a heart for people. People need someone who cares!

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Paul was one who cared! He had a heart for believers (especially new converts) (cp. v. 17 - "not in heart"). EX: the necessity of follow-up for new converts.

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What does it mean to have a heart?

A Heart for New Believers is:

I. A <u>DESIRE</u> FOR THEIR <u>FELLOWSHIP</u> (2:17-18; cp. 3:10, 11)

2:17

"<u>Being taken</u>" from you = lit. - "<u>to be taken</u> so that you are left alone like <u>orphans</u>"

Paul viewed himself as their spiritual father and mother (2:7, 11).

ILLUS: of a mother being deprived of her little children. Nothing is more tragic!

Yet we can leave behind little orphans (new converts) and think little or nothing of it.

When you love someone, they may be taken out of your sight, but they are not taken out of your heart (inner thoughts and affections).

Paul and his co-workers fervently endeavored to see those new converts. They longed for them.

"Desire" = strong passion

If we are not careful, we can become clique-ish--where we only talk, fellowship, associate with those we have known for years.

Paul didn't know these Thessalonians for much more than <u>three weeks</u>! ("3 sabbaths" - Acts 17:2). Yet he loved them immensely.

2:18

Paul loved the Thessalonians so much he was willing to risk his life to return.

He loved the Philippians so much he was willing to stay out of heaven in order to encourage them (Phil. 2:22-26).

He said to the Corinthians "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." (II Cor. 12:15) --Wiersbe (P. 60)

Satan does not want new converts to receive the care they need!

"Hindered" = lit. cut in on. To hinder by blocking the way.

This word was originally used to describe how an army would break up a road to render it impassable to their enemy (like some roads in NYC). It was also used in the athletic sense of cutting in on someone during a race.

A closed door may not always be God's way of saying "No." Sometimes Satan closes them! He hates new converts and does not want their faith to be strengthened. He will do anything to hinder their growth.

ILLUS: how Satan works on those about to get saved:

1) He uses men to turn them away from the faith (ILLUS: Elymar the Sorcerer - Acts 13:4-12)
2) He pulls away the seed (Word) sown in men's hearts (Mk. 4:15)
3) He blinds men to the truth (II Cor. 4:4)

ILLUS: how Satan works on those who get saved:

1) He intimidates them by <u>persecution</u> (Rev. 2:10)

2) He <u>physically afflicts</u> them to discourage service and devotion to God
EX: Job 2:7 - "sore boils"...from head to foot
EX: Paul - II Cor. 11:7 - "a messenger of Satan" gave Paul a thorn in the flesh

** 3) He throws <u>obstacles</u> in the path of believers to hinder or thwart their efforts
EX: Rom. 15:22 - "...I have been much hindered from coming to you."
--Acts 16:16-18 - Hindered prayer
--Eph. 6:16 - Satan throws "fiery darts"
--Dan. 10:13 - He even hindered an angel from coming to Daniel to give him new revelation.

A Heart for New Believers is:

II. A REJOICING IN THEIR SALVATION (2:19-20; cp. 3:8, 9)

2:19

When we get to Heaven, what we should desire above all else is to have brought some trophies (other converts) with us!

HYMN - "Must I go Empty-Handed...Must I meet my Savior so..."

That which will cause us to rejoice should not be: "Wow, I made it!" But rather, "Praise God! Look what I brought with me!"

(NOTE: Paul was not satisfied with just bringing converts with him -- He wanted to present mature, holy disciples! (SEE 3:13; II Cor. 11:2 - "chaste virgins" [God will raise us all up and will present all of us to His Son to be His bride - II Cor. 4:14]).

We rejoice in our salvation - How often do we rejoice when others get saved? Or do we really?

Our source of joy must be outside of ourselves to be real joy!

We will find real pleasure in seeking the well-being of others.

I can tell you right now why you are depressed, miserable, joyless! It is because all of your attention is focused on self. Put it on others!

"Let each esteem others better than themselves!" (Phil. 2:3).

2:20

As your pastor, I can say that you are my glory and joy! When God uses me to build you up, that gives me joy. When you drift away (absent from church), that robs my joy!

A Heart for New Believers is:

III. A CONCERN FOR THEIR FAITH (3:1-8)

Notice the emphasis on faith in this chapter (v. 5, 6, 7, 10)

A. BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE STRENGTH THAT THEY NEED (v. 1-2)
(The Stability of Their Faith Should be Our Concern)

3:1

"Forbear" - endure it; bear it.

Paul is saying, "I was so concerned about you, I was so anxious to hear how you were doing in the Lord that I could not stand it any longer! I had to find out!

3:2

"Establish" - to strengthen by adding extra support.

The word was used of a buttress or a projecting structure of brick or wood that would support and give extra stability to a wall or building so it wouldn't crumble.

"Comfort" = by giving encouragement and exhortation.
- lit. to call alongside

"Concerning" = for the advantage of...your faith

We are "established" in our faith with doctrine! (a new convert needs teaching)

We are "comforted" in our faith with encouragement! (a new convert needs someone who cares, someone to be along his side to exhort!)

One of the worst feelings in the world is loneliness (we know God is always with us--but we need each other).

We can't lead people to Christ and then abandon them! Their faith needs strengthening!

B. BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRESSURES THEY WILL FACE (v. 3-5)
(The Trial of Their Faith Should be Our Concern)

A new convert needs to know about the various trials (testing pressures) that will come his way. Paul was sure to inform his new converts of this fact.

Paul himself faced pressures after his salvation (Acts 9:16 - "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."

It seems like as soon as someone trusts Christ that is when the heat starts coming. That is sometimes when your family turns against you, when your morals are tested, etc.

3:2-3

The stronger your faith, the less likely you are to be drawn away because of pressures that come your way.

"Moved" = to shake someone's faith, or draw someone away from their faith.

Satan uses afflictions (lit. - pressures) to cause us to run away from our faith. God allows it to prove the genuineness of our faith and to strengthen our faith.

3:5

For an unbeliever, Satan's tests (his application of pressure) are enough to scare him out of Christianity and to reveal that his profession was not real.

God promises the believer not to allow us to be tested above that which we are able to bear (I Cor. 10:13).

Paul was concerned that his labor (wearisome toil; work that causes sweat) might have been in vain.

C. BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FRUIT THEY SHOULD SHOW (v. 6-8)
(The Evidence of Their Faith Should be Our Concern)

3:6

What to look for in a new convert:

Proofs of genuine salvation:
1) Faith - which evidences itself in works
2) Love - they loved the brethren!
They remembered Paul & yearned to see him

3:7

When your focus is on others, you can be going through the furnace yourself (with distress and pressure) and yet be comforted! (because of the faith of others).

3:8

Paul is saying: "Now we are really living since you are standing firm in the Lord."

Real living to Paul was not:
1) Budweiser beer
2) A mansion at Mara Largo
3) business in Tallahassee
4) a Bucs game in Tampa
5) or a camping trip in the Florida Keys

It was the unselfish satisfaction of knowing other believers are sturdy in their faith (walking with the Lord).

What is life to you?

Can you say, "Their faith is my concern"?

It can't be until you are sure about your own faith (get that settled, then focus on others).

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I Jn. 5:4).

A Heart for New Believers is:

IV. A PRAYER FOR THEIR GROWTH (Full Maturity) (3:9-13)

Samuel told Israel: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." (I Sam. 12:23)

A. A PRAYER WITH THANKS IN IT (v. 9)

3:9

Paul is saying, "I can't thank God enough! We can't return enough thanks to God for all of the joy He has given us because of how you turned out."

B. A PRAYER WITH FEET IN IT (v. 10-11)

Old saying: "Put feet to your prayers."

Paul was willing to be the answer to his prayer.

He didn't say: "God send someone else..."

EX: We should never pray that God would send forth laborers into His harvest unless we are first willing to go ourselves! (Mt. 9:37, 38)

Sometimes our prayers are unbiblical. I'll go a step further -- sometimes our prayers are sinful!

How dare we pray for God to meet someone's need, when we have the ability to meet it (ILLUS from Bulletin: When Moody heard a group of well-to-do businessmen praying that God would send a needed $1500 to meet a pressing church need, he went into the room and said, "Men, stop asking God to give you the needed money. Any one of you could write a check for this amount right now. Write the check and begin praising God!")

3:10

Paul still was not satisfied with leaving them alone (even after Timothy's report). He was still burdened to perfect their faith.

"Perfect" = to fit together, join together, restore, to repair, to equip.

Word was used: to reconcile political factions; as a surgical term for "setting bones"; for repairing fishing nets (Mk. 1:19)

"Lacking" = missing, shortcoming, a deficiency.
We get our Eng. word: hysterectomy

In all our lives, we need our faith built up. How much more a new convert.

3:11

"Direct" = lit. make straight; remove the obstacles that have been set by Satan.

"Way" = road

God answered this prayer: Paul wrote in II Thess. 1:3, "We are bound to thank God always for you brethren...because that your faith groweth exceedingly."

C. A PRAYER WITH FAITH IN IT (v. 12-13)

Not only must we ask God to help us do what we can do, but we need to trust God to do what we can't do!

Paul depended upon God to increase their love.

3:12

NOTE: Paul prayed for their love to increase. What does this mean?

It means that we cannot manufacture our own love. God must give it to us. God is love! (I Jn. 4:8). We need God to teach us to love (SEE I Th. 4:9, 10 - "...Taught of God...")

Make this a prayer request for yourself and others!

"Abound" = overflow, exceed

Paul didn't merely pray for them to love each other, but that they would really love!

That God would give them more love toward each other and toward the lost.

3:12-13

Your love not only benefits others, it benefits yourself!

1) When you love, it strengthens your heart. You will be so strong that you will endure anything for the benefit of others.

2) When you love, it produces holiness (love fulfills the law. When you love, you won't steal, lie, covet, commit adultery, etc.)

CONCLUSION:

Our church is noted for having a warm friendly spirit.

May we live up to this reputation.