



“The Heart of the Matter” (I Thessalonians 3)

Danny Hodges- NT3487

Intro: Paul ends chapter four referring to his anticipation of one day standing in the presence of Jesus Christ and glorying in the people that have been saved through his life and ministry. I have that same anticipation, and I hope you do to. Just as a reminder from last week, we are all called to share Christ personally, but we also get credit for investing in churches & ministries that are reaching people for Christ (Phil.1:4-5; 4:17). Read the text.

Paul had tried to visit this church, but had been stopped by Satan (2:18b). So he is naturally concerned about how they are doing. So he sends Timothy to “strengthen and encourage” them, and to “find out about (their) faith.” Paul feared that “the tempter” had gotten to them and they had fallen back into their old ways. Timothy returned and gave a great report. So Paul and his team are encouraged. III John 3: 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. But while they are encouraged, Paul realizes the need for their continued spiritual growth, and he is praying most earnestly that God would enable him to see them again in order to “supply what is lacking in (their) faith.”

I. THE BASIS OF PAUL’S CONCERN (vv.1-5)

A. Trials (vv.3-4)

B. Temptation (v.5b)

C. The “Backgrounds” Of The People That Made Up The Church

* Successful independent business woman; Former fortune teller; You better know she had some trials to face, especially after Paul and his companions left town; Philippian jailor and family. Did he lose his job after taking prisoner Paul and the others to his house?

II. A FAITH THAT IS STILL “LACKING”

A. Paul’s Desire

* Paul wants to see them continue on. Just because they are doing well now does not mean they will continue to do well. So then, what is still lacking in their faith? What did they still need in order to run and finish the race of faith well?

B. What They Still Lacked

1. Spiritual growth/maturity/stability

- Increased love for one another & everyone else (3:11-12)
- See II Peter 1:12; II Thess.2:16-17; 3:3 (“establish”)

2. Strengthened hearts (3:13)

- Strengthen = 4741. sterizo, stay-rid'-zo; from a presumed der. of G2476 (like G4731); to set fast, i.e. (lit.) to turn resolutely in a certain direction, or (fig.) to confirm:--fix, (e-) stablish, stedfastly set, strengthen.

C. The Importance Of The Condition Of One's Heart

* Prov.4: 23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

* The condition of the heart determines the condition of the person.

* Matt.6: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

* I Kings 11: 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

* II Chron.12: 14 He (Rehoboam) did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the LORD.

* II Chron.36:11-14; Gen.6:5; 8:21; I Kings 8:38-39, 47-48; 15:3;

D. Keys To A Spiritually Strong Heart

1. Inner Cleansing That Affects Outer Conversation (Prov.4:24)

- Luke 6: 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. 45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

- Eph.5: 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

- Matthew 12: ³⁰ “Whoever is not with me is against me...34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

- Everyone is born with a heart problem, and the only cure is to be born again (Gen.6:5; Rom.2:29). Once I am born again, I need to allow my heart to be strengthened in the will of God.

2. Focus That Affects One's Future (Prov.4:25, 20-22)

- Deut.6: 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

- Deut.11: 18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

- Psalm 119: 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

- Col.3:1-4

3. Firm Footing For Daily Living (Prov.4:26)

- "Make" = 6424. palac, paw-las'; a prim. root; prop. to roll flat, i.e. prepare (a road); also to revolve, i.e. weigh (mentally):--make, **ponder, weigh**.

- Is this the best path for me to take? Are there doubts? Am I in submission to those God has placed over me? Is there a clear direction in the Word regarding this path?

- See Jer.6:16;18:15; Psalm 73:18 (context)

4. No Reckless Driving (Prov.4:27)

- The idea is that you have swerved, and unless you "wake up" and "straighten up," you are headed for a crash!

- Num.22: 32 The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

- SPT 7-13-11 article "You're not stopping me"

5. Close fellowship with strong leaders & fellow believers

- Hebrews 3:12-13, 7, 15; 4:7; Heb.13:7,17

CONCLUSION

* Where you are on the "road of life" is determined by where your heart is...So where is your heart? What is the condition of your heart today? Some need heart surgery that only heaven can do- you need to be born again. Some Christians need to get back on a firm path, set your focus on eternity...