

The Heart of God's Man (Part 1)

1 Thessalonians 3: 1-13

The heart of a pastor is a very unique thing. He feels many of the same emotions anyone else does. It isn't that the pastor is given something that is impossible for others to possess, but his heart is special because it is different. I can't really explain all that God does in the heart of a man when he is called to pastor a congregation of people. Many times, the pastor does not know the membership he has been called to serve, but even before he assumes his duties, God has placed a love for those people within his heart. It is more than a desire for their wellbeing; it is a genuine love for them and a heartfelt desire to serve them. God does something special in the heart of a man when He places him in the position of pastor.

Paul certainly possessed a pastor's heart. Even as he wrote this letter to the church, he was not with them physically, but we can clearly see that he still possessed a love for them only God could give. He had already sought to encourage and challenge their faith, and now he bears his soul unto the church. He speaks to them from the depths of his heart. I want to begin considering the [qualities](#) our Lord develops in the pastor as we think on: [The Heart of God's Man](#).

I. The Investment of the Pastor (1-2a) – Here Paul speaks of the personal investment and effort that he has put forth on their behalf. Consider:

A. His Forbearance (1a) – [Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone.](#) Remember the closing verses of [Chp.2 – He endeavored to see them, once and again, but was hindered of Satan. The church there was his glory and joy.](#) Paul was deeply burdened by his separation from the church. He longed to hear from them and sought to be satisfied of their well-being. The word [forbear](#) reveals the deep passion Paul had for the church. It means “*to conceal, to hold out, to endure.*” Paul had concealed his concern and desire for Thessalonica as long as he could. He could no longer hold out, not knowing how they fared in the current situation. [2 Cor. 11:28-29 – Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.](#) ^[29] [Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?](#)

- As a pastor, I am concerned about the well-being of this congregation. I am most concerned with your spiritual needs, but I am also aware of the social needs. God will not allow a man that He has placed within a congregation to go on unconcerned about their needs. When a man reaches the place that he loses his concern, it is probably time to seek the Lord about another place of ministry. (This is particular to the heart of God's man, but all believers ought to be concerned with the well-being of the church. You don't have to be a pastor to seek the welfare of the church.)

B. His Fervency (1b) – [we thought it good to be left at Athens alone](#). Paul chose to send Timothy to Thessalonica and remain at Athens alone. Now, some might assume Paul was fearful of returning to Thessalonica. It might be thought that he was being cowardly and afraid for his personal well-being. Upon studying the life and ministry of Paul, that is not a valid conclusion. Paul was bold in his faith and commitment to the gospel, even if it meant persecution or physical harm.

- This speaks volumes about Paul's love and desire for the well-being of the church. Even though he longed to be there in person, attending to their needs and enjoying their fellowship, he made a personal sacrifice to stay behind for the good of the church. Paul knew the uproar that surrounded his first trip there and he wanted to avoid any further distractions.
- What a lesson for all of us, pastors and believers alike. Would we be willing to lay aside our personal desires for the good of the church? Would we be willing to make such a sacrifice so that the church might prosper?

C. His Fellow-laborer (2a) – [And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith](#): Paul's investment in the young preacher, Timothy, paid dividends for the church. Notice:

1. Timothy's Closeness – Paul referred to Timothy as a [brother](#). He was a fellow believer. He had trusted Christ in salvation. He too was committed to the cause of Christ and the growth of the church. Paul had not sent someone who had no desire to help the church or support her in times of need. Paul had instilled much in the heart of Timothy and he knew the church would benefit from his presence.

2. Timothy's Calling – Not only was Timothy a brother in Christ, he was also [a minister of God](#). He had not come to them out of curiosity. He was not there to receive a paycheck. He had not come to climb the ladder of prosperity. Timothy was there because of the call of God to minister.

- While I'm here I may as well go ahead and address an issue raised in the text. I believe in the call of God on a man's life. The pastorate is not something that a man chooses – God chooses the man for His ministry. Many churches are lacking spiritually and facing decline because they are being led of men who have no clear call of God. A man who is not called will flee when danger comes. He will not lead in the interest of the church or the will of God; he seeks his own good. A genuine shepherd will stand and defend the sheep. He will seek their good above his own.

3. Timothy's Commitment – Paul also speaks of Timothy as a [fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ](#). He shared the same passions that Paul possessed. He had the same desire for the church. He was willing to labor among them as Paul would have. He could be trusted and counted on. We need that same commitment, fellow-laborers in the gospel of Christ.

II. The Interest of the Pastor (2b-3) – These verses reveal Paul's desire for the church. Keep in mind that he is no longer with them. It would have been easy to have forgotten them or grown unconcerned. Paul had a vested interest in Thessalonica. Notice what he desired for them.

A. He Desired Stability – Paul sent Timothy ...to [establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith](#). He desired that they be established, "*to make stable, place firmly, set fast, or strengthen.*" Paul knew the doctrine he had established among them, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and Timothy was sent to establish their faith further. Paul desired them to be settled in their faith, unmovable in the face of adversity.

- It would appear with modern education and the sound preaching many hear, that a deep settled faith would not be a problem in our day, but I fear many are not established on a firm foundation. That is why it is so important to spend time in the Word and commit ourselves to the faith. If we are not settled, we may stray when difficulty or opposition comes!

B. He Desired Security – [Paul also wanted Timothy to comfort them in the faith](#). This has the idea of "*admonishing, consoling, encouraging, instructing, standing alongside of.*" The people had faced a very discouraging experience. Soon after they received Christ, their pastor was run out of town. Paul knew the anxiety they felt. He knew the doubts they had. He knew they needed one to comfort, console, encourage, and stand with them. Paul knew that Timothy would be beneficial in settling them in the faith.

- We too need that same comfort. We need the assurance that fellow believers are there for us and with us. We need the instruction and help that only comes through the Lord and His people. It is hard to stand when you are asked to stand alone! Never underestimate the power of unity and support. Just knowing someone is there with us brings great benefit to our lives!

C. He Desired Steadfastness (3) – [That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto](#). Paul wanted them to endure in the struggle. He warned them of focusing on the storm rather than the Savior. He desired that they be steadfast in the face of opposition.

- I always admire openness and honesty. We will deal with that further in a moment, but Paul was not deceptive regarding adversity. He wanted them to understand that serving the Lord often came at a price. They would be called upon to stand in the face of adversity. All who served the Lord prior to that time had faced opposition and they would as well. Trouble and difficulty will come when serving the Lord, but we must not be moved by them. We must stand upon truth even when it isn't popular. We cannot forsake truth for the approval of the world.

III. The Integrity of the Pastor (4-5) – Paul now reminds them of his character and integrity as a man of God. He is not bragging, but simply reassuring their confidence in him. He revealed he is:

A. A Man of Honesty (4) – *For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.* Paul reminds them he had always been open and honest with them concerning all things. He had earned their trust and that should not have changed. Apparently, he had warned them of possible persecution before it ever came.

- Modern pulpits, as well as pews, desperately need those of honesty. Many fear to speak truth if they are unsure how it will be received. We need to proclaim the gospel message with a heart of love and a commitment to honesty. People don't need to be lulled to sleep; they need to be awakened to their need!

B. A Man of Loyalty (5a) – *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.* As we've said, it would have been easy for Paul to have abandoned the work in Thessalonica. Many modern preachers probably would have. But Paul was loyal and committed to the work the Lord had led him to start there. He was genuinely concerned for them.

- The modern pastor needs to remain loyal to his congregation until the Lord removes his burden. He needs to love and care for those whom the Lord has asked him to lead. Church members need to possess that same loyalty. I know there are times when the Lord leads folks to a new church, but much of what we are seeing today is not of the Lord. We need those who are committed to blooming where God has planted them!

C. A Man of Accountability (5b) – Paul didn't want his labor in Thessalonica to have been in vain. God had led him there to establish a church and exhort the believers. He had a responsibility to fulfill and he knew that one day he would give account of the church there.

- Accountability is little discussed in our day. I can assure you that I am aware of it and am humbled by it. God has led me to pastor this church and I will give account of my ministry here. Believers need to be reminded of accountability. If you are a member of this church, you are responsible to support it in every way you can. If you are serving in an office here, you are accountable to God for that.

Conclusion: Paul has begun to bear his heart to the church in Thessalonica. They would do well to follow his lead. What is hidden within our hearts? Do you know the Lord as Savior? Is there a committed desire to serve Him? Are you settled in what you believe and willing to stand for truth?