

A "Heart For" Series #2  
**A Heart For The Lost**  
By Bill Denton

**Introduction**

A. Illustration (Paul Borthwich wrote)

The Apostle Paul wished he could give up his own eternal life to save his countrymen (Ro. 9:1-4). Charles Finney wept at the thought of people facing a Christless eternity. A. B. Simpson agonized in prayer over the nations where Jesus Christ was not exalted.

Hudson Taylor's nightmare featured millions tumbling into the chasm of hell.<sup>1</sup>

B. Last week, I spoke to you about having a heart for people

1. It was his heart for people that drew those people to Jesus
2. It was his heart for people that determined Paul's tender, loving manner of communicating the gospel of Christ
3. In countless passages, the idea of developing a heart that is open, that is marked by attributes like compassion, tenderness, and love that is the prerequisite for helping other people
4. Perhaps the greatest failure of any people is when our hearts become hard, unmoved, unconcerned – when that happens to our hearts, nothing happens with regard to helping others

C. Now, if we have trouble with having a heart for people in general, how much more of a problem is it for us to have a heart for the lost?

1. Not many of us would say with Paul that we'd give up our own eternal life in order to save our countrymen
2. Neither do we have the same stress as Charles Finney or A.B. Simpson, both of whom are well-known to have had a burning desire to save lost souls
3. I doubt many of us have ever been wakened during the night because of a nightmare like Hudson Taylor's watching people plunge to their eternal death in hell's fire
4. Yet when faced with the most direct instruction to all disciples, to go into the whole world and make disciples of all the nations, we are at once confronted with the main issue that determines whether or not we actually do what Jesus said – it is the heart (or lack of it) for the lost

D. I want to challenge all of us to do a little "heart examination" today, and perhaps chip away at some of the crust that has grown over our hearts, so that we are moved by the plight of lost people all around us

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<sup>1</sup>*Discipleship Journal* : Issue 88. 1999 (electronic ed.). Colorado Springs: The Navigators/NavPress.

## I. We Must Have Compassion For Lost People

### A. Illustration (Steve Brandon wrote)

Two [preachers] of the 19th century were concerned with presenting their congregations complete in Christ (Col. 1:28). [They] were Andrew Bonar and Robert Murray M'Cheyne. They were close friends, who constantly prayed for one another and spoke with one another concerning their ministries. . . These two men were speaking with one another about . . . preaching . . . on the previous Sunday. M'Cheyne had asked Bonar, "What text did you preach on?" Bonar replied, "The wicked shall be turned into hell..." (Ps. 9:17a). And M'Cheyne then responded in typical fashion, "And did you preach it with tears?"<sup>2</sup>

1. A heart for the lost begins with a recognition that people are lost, and the terrible condition they are in because of it
2. It's amazing at the kind of things that move us
  - a. some are moved by human tragedy, by death, wars, disease, all sorts unimaginable horrors that happen
  - b. some are moved by injustice, prejudices, the kind of hatred that pits one person or group against others in unfair, harmful treatment
  - c. some are moved by poverty, lack of education, unemployment, and a host of life situations that oppress people and make life hard
3. It is simply difficult to find people who are moved by the fact that most people stand before God as lost – i.e. condemned sinners without hope, destined for eternal separation from God in a Devil's hell

### B. There are two theological battles that help produce this lack of heart for the lost

1. The first is in the form of a question: "Are people really lost?"
  - a. despite our familiarity with the Bible, and despite our intellectual understanding that we neither deserve to be saved, nor can we earn our salvation, it's amazing how many people seem to think that God will not dare punish those who live a fairly good, moral life
  - b. do a "man-on-the-street" interview and you'll discover that a huge number of people seem to think they are OK with God because they are "pretty good people"
  - c. I daresay that if there is one thing most of us struggle with is the idea that most of the people we know are lost – after all, they are, comparatively speaking, not so bad – how could they be lost
  - d. what this betrays is our serious lack of understanding of how bad sin is, and how far, even one sin puts us from a God who is totally, completely righteous and holy, with no sin at all
  - e. our question about the truth of condemnation hardens our heart to the truth that people are lost

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org>

2. The second is a product of our pluralistic society that promotes the idea that there cannot be just one truth, but rather there must be many truths
  - a. John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. NASB95
  - b. even if we accept the fact that people are lost, we hesitate to push Jesus to much, after all, if one way, or truth, or life is as good as another, then people can just find their own solution to sin
  - c. we have no heart for the lost because everyone is most likely OK
  - d. these two issues have clouded our hearts, made them hard to reality, and caused us to become unfeeling about the plight of others

## II. What The Bible Says About Having A Heart For The Lost

### A. Our hearts are connected directly with what we treasure

1. Matthew 6:20-21
  - 20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. NASU
2. You may not think this has much to do with the lost, but I'd just say that if the opposite of being lost is possessing eternal life and a home in heaven, then the passage speaks of things the lost need to hear about
  - a. we need to confront the fact that wherever our treasures are, there we will also find our hearts
  - b. do you not think this also concerns who we want to be in heaven with us – perhaps we ought to look at what we treasure – it appears we may not treasure the lost enough to be concerned about them

### B. Our hearts give us away as going through religious motions, but missing the most important of all things

1. Matthew 15:8 (Jesus quoted Isaiah who spoke for the Father)
  - 8 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. NASU
2. It's entirely possible for people to go through all sorts of activity, especially verbal activity, and end up a long way from God
  - a. John 3:16
    - 16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. NASU
  - b. Luke 19:10
    - 10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." NASU
  - c. Jesus was all about the lost, loving them, concerned for them even willing to die for them to save them – let's not end up too far away

### C. Our own salvation is directly related to what happens in our hearts

#### 1. Romans 10:8-11

8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." NASU

2. You can't be saved unless you have a heart that believes in Jesus and that moves you to confess that belief to others
  - a. the reason this is so important is that our own salvation is a matter of our heart
  - b. salvation means that our hearts are Christ-focused, but our hearts also produce a confession, and that necessarily involves others
  - c. have we become so complacent about our own confession that it doesn't matter to us what other people hear about our faith?
  - d. are we complacent about our confession because we think it isn't important that others hear about it

### D. Scripture gives us specific instruction to help save others

#### 1. Jude 20-23

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. NASU

2. The motivation that urges us to act on behalf of others is mercy
  - a. mercy is all about compassionate treatment of others
  - b. but, compassion is something that demands a heart able and willing to be moved by the plight of others so that we will do something
  - c. in this case, snatching men out of the fire is a graphic way to remind us that we must have a heart for the lost in order to save them

### Conclusion

A. Are you moved by the plight of people around you, or have you settled into the idea that their most likely OK as they are? If the latter, your mind and God's are far away

B. There are a lot of people who will be lost simply because nobody cared

C. Invitation