

# *It Is Written*

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## What is Your Heart's Desire?

By Steven Harper

In his letter to the Roman brethren, the apostle Paul writes of his strong desire that his fellow Jewish countrymen would obey the gospel. In Rom. 9:1-4, he puts it very strongly, indicating that he had "great sorrow and continual grief" in his heart (v. 2) for those Jewish brethren who had not yet obeyed, and further stating that, if possible, he wished that he would be "accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites" (vv. 3-4). To say the least, Paul desired that his fellow Jews would heed the gospel and obey that they might be saved, for he says in Rom. 10:1 that his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved."

Knowing the strong desire of the apostle Paul that his own countrymen might be saved, we might ask ourselves what our heart's desire is; that is, what is it within us that we desire so strongly that we have great sorrow and continual grief because it is not yet attained? As those whose heart should be set on the things that the Lord desires, our hearts should desire what He desires. Do they?

Today, let us take a look at a few things I believe we should have as our hearts' desire. Remember also that the things we will speak of today are those things that should be of the most importance to us, so we must look to ourselves to see if our hearts' desire follows the desire of God. First, as an individual Christian, we must ask what we desire most. Then, as a local congregation, we must ask ourselves the same question: What do we desire most? Let's look at a few things.

**Things Above?** The apostle Paul's admonition to the brethren of Colossae was that they "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2). What he was pointing them to was what he identified in his second letter to Corinth as that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2nd Cor. 5:1), rather than our earthly, physical bodies. We should be intensely craving the possession of that which does not fade away, and which cannot be destroyed! As Paul wrote, it is far better to be with Christ! (Phlp. 1:21-23).

Christians' hearts' desire should be in heaven, where our laid up, where "neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:20). It is in heaven where the reward awaits the faithful (Matt. 5:12; Heb. 10:34), and where our citizenship is centered (Phlp. 3:20).

It is only logical that Christians have this as their hearts' desire, for it is truly a place like nothing on Earth. It is no coincidence that the "New Jerusalem" — a place that prefigures heaven — as one where "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying...no more pain" (Rev. 21:4). It is a place where there is "no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light" (Rev. 21:23) and "There shall be no night there" (22:5). It is a place where "the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light" and nothing profane shall be within its walls (Rev. 21:24-27). Why would our hearts not desire these things more than anything the Earth offers?

**God's Word.** And while we remain on Earth, we who are God's people should "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that [we] may grow thereby" (1st Pet. 2:2). We do this not merely to fill the moments of our days, but because it is within God's word where God's plan for our salvation, though "kept secret since the world began" was "made known to all nations" (Rom. 16:25, 26). Without the revealed plan of salvation which God had eternally purposed, how would we know what He required of us? By what means could we be saved? Yes, Jesus died for our sins, but that did

not eternally secure salvation without man having done anything.

Faithful disciples appreciate God's word more than any other book of this world because within it we find the gospel — “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16) and because God's word is the source of our faith (Rom. 10:17); if we truly desire salvation, our heart's desire must be for God's word!

Faithful disciples of Jesus Christ have God's word as a great desire for it is within those words we find our Savior revealed! If we desire to have the salvation which comes from God, we must know the Savior who brought it to man, and we may know Him only by looking into God's word. This was, in fact, the main purpose of the Gospels being written for man, with John telling us, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30, 31). If it is salvation we seek, then we must believe He is the Christ (John 8:24), and we must be willing to confess that belief to others (Rom. 10:9, 10).

And, finally, we set our hearts' desire on God's word because it is through the written and revealed word reveals God's righteousness is revealed (Rom. 1:16, 17), a righteousness every one of us needs because righteousness of self is insufficient (Rom. 10:1-3). It is in God's word we find that God “made Him who knew no sin [i.e., Jesus] to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2nd Cor. 5:21). Outside of Christ, we cannot attain to this righteousness, so it is no wonder that God's word should be so greatly desired!

**Teaching to Save Souls.** As noted in the beginning of this study, Paul stated clearly, “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1), and Paul would later write that, essentially, everything he did was geared towards saving souls, telling those in Corinth, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1st Cor. 9:22). Saving souls should be one of our greatest desires, too — the very product of our desire for a home in heaven and our desire for God and His word.

If we want to get to heaven, it is because we know what heaven is all about [and the alternative] and, knowing this, wouldn't we also want to tell others about it? When we know God and His word, we observe the love He has shown for us, even while we were sinners — sending His only Son to die for us. And knowing this, wouldn't we also want to tell others about it?

It should be our desire because it is God's desire. Paul reminds us God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1st Tim. 2:3, 4), and Peter likewise reminds us God “is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2nd Pet. 3:9). The salvation of the lost — all of man, because all had sinned (Rom. 3:23) — was why Jesus came to earth (Luke 19:10), so this should naturally be our hearts' desire, too.

So, as we think about God's desire to save all men, and that Jesus left heaven and came to earth for the very purpose of saving the lost, does it affect us and our hearts? Is our hearts' desire that the lost be saved, and are we demonstrating that through our efforts to reach out to the lost and do what we can to teach them the gospel and lead them to Christ and the salvation He has brought to us?

I pray we all have hearts that desire these things, pleasing God above all.