

## **"My Heart's Desire"**

*"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1-3).*

There can be no doubt about the love Paul had for his Jewish brethren. These verses clearly indicate the great desire the apostle had for Israel to be saved by the grace of God. Though he was often persecuted by them, even left for dead on occasion, yet he still tried time and again to teach them the gospel of Christ. When traveling from city to city preaching the unsearchable riches of our Lord, he often went into the Jewish synagogues first. Within the confines of these buildings, he tried his best to point the Jews to the Messiah which was spoken of in the Old Testament. Yet most refused to listen to this man of God. Not because of a lack of effort on his part nor because he didn't care for them, but because of their desire to have their own way.

We need the same yearning which Paul had, a willingness on our part to share God's message with our fellow man. It takes time and effort to go out into the fields and sow the seed of the kingdom in the hearts of men and women. We face the same situation the apostle did, not everyone will listen, and most will not accept the truth. Yet the thing lacking among so many followers of Christ it seems, is the love for the souls of our fellow man. May God help each of us to lift our eyes and see the fields that are white to harvest and may our heart's desire be to teach the gospel to the lost so they can be saved.

How tragic it was because they had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. Zeal is a wonderful attribute each Christian should possess. When Paul wrote to Titus, he said, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14). This same apostle commends the church at Corinth for their zeal and how their enthusiasm stirred others to act as well. "For I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority" (2 Corinthians 9:2).

Yet zeal must be connected with knowledge if it is to produce the desired results. Knowing God's will is essential if one is to be saved. Jesus said: *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me"* (John 6:44-45).

The problem with the Jews in Romans 10 was they were ignorant of God's way of making man righteous. Through their ignorance (not knowing), they sought to establish their own system of righteousness and they failed to submit to God (Romans 10:3). God has a plan; it has been revealed in the Scriptures and man must obey it if he is to be saved. No amount of zeal will replace knowing and doing the Lord's will (Matthew 7:21-27).

Many in the religious realm today have a burning zeal for the Lord, yet they lack the knowledge of God's will just like these Jews did. Those of us who are Christians know what the Scriptures teach, but do we have the desire and zeal that is necessary to bring the lost to Christ? God expects us to possess both knowledge, and zeal. One without the other is not pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

May we busy ourselves with the work God has given us to do. "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Someone loved us enough to share the good news of what Christ did for us on the cross so we could be redeemed. Why not pay such an effort forward so others can have the same opportunity for redemption?

**- by Jim Mickells**

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## **"You Know How It Is"**

She was a member of the local church and hadn't been at services so I called to see if she or one of the children might be sick. When she answered the phone I explained my concern and reason for calling. She assured me that all of them were well, none of them were sick, they just

had an open-house family get together with lots of relatives dropping in - "you know how it is" - and didn't come to services!

I never cease to be amazed at the lackadaisical way in which we view our service to the Lord. Who would think of not showing up at work Monday morning, then when the supervisor calls, respond, "I'm fine, no problem, I just didn't come in for work this morning" - and at that point swing into that "you know how it is" routine about oversleeping or relatives came in for a visit, etc..

Talk until you are blue in the face and you'll never convince me that you'd do this. In the first place you'd be too embarrassed to try to palm off on your boss such a flimsy excuse for not coming to work. In the second place, you know that no reputable company is going to tolerate such a display of irresponsibility on the part of an employee. Yet you expect the Lord to accept it!

I want to say to these folks: **"NO, I don't know how it is!"**

**- by Lowell Blasingame**

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## ***Helping Others - To Heaven Or Hell***

We know that preparing for judgment is the most important thing in this life. Jesus taught that if we were to "gain the whole world, and lose our own soul" we would be making a terrible trade (Mark 8:36,37).

Knowing this to be true, we should earnestly seek to convince others - especially those closest to us - of the urgency of obeying the gospel. Everything we do and say should be calculated to produce the salvation of their souls.

It is a sad thing to see some Christians who don't seem to understand that they are negatively impacting these people who should be most important to them. When unbelievers (*even our own family and close friends*) can observe us compromising our spiritual priorities (*including forsaking the assemblies*) in order to engage (*oftentimes with them*) in other activities (*such as ballgames, parties, secular organizations, etc.*), we have given them a firm push in the direction of hell.

Paul urged Titus to "show thyself a pattern of good works" (Titus 2:7). And he told Timothy to be "an example of the believers" (1 Timothy 4:12). It is clear that the apostle understood that the teaching and preaching of these two young evangelists would be either helped or hindered by the kind of personal examples they portrayed. Surely it is the same with us.

If we are genuinely concerned about the souls of others, common sense dictates that we should never let them see us compromise our faith or priorities.

Think about it Christian. Are you helping others - especially those closest to you - to go to heaven or to hell?

**- by Greg Gwin**