

“WHAT GOD DESIRES FOR US”

Hebrews 13:17-24

Message 1630

In studying world religion, I have found that worshippers in many religions fear the object they worship. They may go through many different formalities to somehow avoid the anger of the god they think they are serving.

The Christian religion is quite different from that. In the Christian religion we do not fear God because He is angry, but we reverence Him because He is holy and just and He will do exactly what is right.

In many religions, finding favor with the god that is worshipped requires much self-effort. So those who adhere to such religions go to great lengths to satisfy the god they worship by extreme self-effort.

In Christianity, self-effort must give way to God’s effort. God desires to bring you into a relationship with Him that brings peace in your heart. It is for that reason that faith is the heart of our experience. That is why we emphasize faith so often. Being rightly related to God brings happiness.

WHAT GOD DESIRES FOR US is the theme of Hebrews 13:17-24.

17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

19. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God created us to attain true happiness. To accomplish this, He desires to refine in us certain vital **QUALITIES**.

THE QUALITY OF ORDER is God’s desire for us in making us like Himself. This text relates order to obedience and submission. It states that we are to obey them who have the rule over us. Reference here is made more directly to spiritual leaders than to natural or political rulers. Obedience is important today in all levels of society, but it is most important in the society we call the church where people are expressly concerned about spiritual welfare.

Church leaders are looking over you, watching out for you, so that you might attain what God desires for you. Church leaders have a very sober responsibility in this matter. If you are a member of the church, they want to see you grow in your Christian experience. They want to see you maturing as you go along in life. They are going to give account to God of their care of you, and they want to do it with joy and not with grief.

So God desires to refine in you the quality of order and that is done through obedience, submission and diligent prayer. The Apostle urges upon those who receive this letter to pray for them. He says, “pray for

us.” I believe he was thinking of himself as one of those who was watching over the souls of believers. Diligent prayer is essential for a well-ordered life.

I encourage you to pray for me. I’ll translate this right into your heart; pray for me that I might be able, to live in all good conscience and be able to present to you hope by faith in Christ Jesus, hope for each day.

THE QUALITY OF PEACE is God’s desire for us as His children. The God of peace wants to share His peace with you and me. There are two connected avenues by which this peace can come to us. One is through the blood of the everlasting covenant. This was not a second thought with God. He didn’t start out one way and change His mind and come up with another idea. It is very clearly stated in this text that the blood of Jesus Christ is according to the everlasting covenant, the eternal plan of God. From the very beginning after the first man and woman sinned, God had in mind that the sacrifice of His own Son would be the only way by which He could share His peace with us. It is by the blood of the everlasting covenant.

The second avenue by which peace can come to us is by the resurrection of that great Shepherd of the sheep, the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ. That was the proof of His Sonship. That was the keystone of His peace. Before Jesus died He said, “My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you, let not your heart be troubled.”

That great Shepherd of the sheep wants to give you His peace. That is the quality that God wants to perfect in your life. God desires to share His peace with you. You can have that peace when you come by way of the everlasting covenant and believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THE QUALITY OF PERFECTION is God’s crowning desire for His redeemed. God desires to bring us to perfection. There are two connected methods by which He will attain that.

First, God desires to perform in us every good work which is well pleasing in His sight. I want you to be sure to understand God will work in your heart when you open your heart and life to Him. God will not “crash the gate.” He will not break into your life against your will. He waits for you to open your heart so that He can come in and work in you. And He will bring you to perfection by working in you every good work which is well pleasing in His sight.

God works by another method, through Jesus Christ. There are many who try to build their own lives. They feel like this child who says, “No, I can do it myself.” But they make such a miserable failure. Here the Lord is saying that He is going to bring perfection to you and me through Jesus Christ. We know from the Gospel record that He is the only One who ever lived a perfect life. So if we are going to come to perfection we need to do it by the way that God has designed and according to His desires for us. He desires to bring us to perfection through Jesus Christ so that we can share with Him. Then we shall bring eternal praise to Him as our text states, “to whom be glory for ever and ever.”

Perfection is possible only in God’s way. Thus, we learn God desires these vital qualities to be brought into our lives. He desires order. He desires peace. He desires perfection in our lives. But these qualities are attainable only in His way. I must insist upon that, my friend, for I stand by God’s Holy Word. But I am glad to tell you these are possible for you and for me on the basis of what God has said in His word and by an obedient response in our hearts.