God's Desire for Every Church

(2 Corinthians 12:20-13:14)
1/8/2012

- ***What Paul expected from the Corinthian church reflects what God desires out of every church, including ours!***

What does God want out of every church?

I. God wants <u>REPENTANCE OF SIN</u> with a goal of <u>moral purity</u> (12:20 – 13:4)

II. God wants <u>SELF-EXAMINATION</u> with a goal of <u>genuine faith</u> (13:5-10)

III. God wants <u>PEACEFUL UNITY</u> with a goal of spiritual <u>restoration and comfort</u> (13:11-13)

Conclusion: v. 14 – The secret to attaining every blessing: Christ's grace, God's love, and the Spirit's fellowship.

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What does God want out of every church?

I. **God wants _____ with a goal of _____**
(12:20 – 13:4)

II. **God wants _____ with a goal of _____**
(13:5-10)

III. **God wants _____ with a goal of spiritual _____ and _____** (13:11-13)

Conclusion: v. 14 – The secret to attaining every blessing: Christ's grace, God's love, and the Spirit's fellowship.

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When polled, people had different ideas as to what they wanted in a church service.

People have a desire to break away from some traditions and structure in worship that seems to serve no spiritual purpose.

"Variation of services. Not just a celebration worship service every week, but different types of services throughout the month"

"The use of visual arts during worship"

"Utilizing the gifts of every member of the community"

"lots of leaders and involvement. More than just the pastor and worship leader up-front"

"Seating at round tables instead of pews and rows of chairs"

"Today the warning stands over the church, and especially those who have transmitted the present cultural values into the church, so that church is little more than a Christianized version of modern culture. The warning stands where leadership is built on the cult of personality – where image is everything. He warning looms where worship is show time – where preaching is entertainment – where God's Word is muzzled and the pulpit panders to itching ears. The warning echoes where we are the focus of worship – our feelings, our comfort, our health, our wealth – where super-apostles are preferred over Paul." (Hughes, p. 230).

What matters most is not what people want in a worship service, but what God wants. What He wants in church is paramount.

v. 20
"For I fear" – Paul's concerns for the Corinthian church reflect God's concerns; since Paul was God's chosen apostle with a ministry particularly related to reaching and discipling the Gentile nations for Christ. Therefore, his cares were God's cares, his desires were God's desires.

Paul was concerned that when he would arrive at Corinth (for the "third time" – 13:1), he would not find them to be as he wanted them to be (he wanted them to be unified (v. 20) and morally pure (v. 21).

Paul also was concerned that the Corinthians would not find him as they would like to see him (namely: grieving over their sin and stern and severe in his dealing with their sin).

- ***What Paul expected from the Corinthian church reflects what God desires out of every church, including ours!***

What does God want out of every church?

I. God wants <u>REPENTANCE OF SIN</u> with a goal of <u>moral purity</u> (12:20 – 13:4)

v. 20
What Paul did <u>not</u> want to find in the Corinthian church (and what God does <u>not</u> want to find in our church) are:

1) **"Debates"** (*eris*) – quarreling, contentions

2) **"Envyings"** (*zelos*) – jealousies (having a misplaced zeal for what others have)

3) **"Wraths"** (*thumos*) – sudden, explosive, hot outbursts of anger; furious rages

4) **"Strifes"** (*eritheia*) – selfish disputes

5) **"Backbitings"** (*katalalia)* – speaking against somebody, slanders

6) **"Whisperings"** (*psithurismos*) – similar to backbitings but in a softer tone; spreading rumors, gossiping

7) **"Swellings"** (*fusiosis*) – inflated opinions, conceited pride

8) **"Tumults"** (*akatastasia*) – disorders, out of control behavior

v. 21
Paul's further fear was due to a refusal of the Corinthians to repent of their immorality. He was concerned that they might find him mourning over their sin.

"Bewail" - to cry as at a funeral; to grieve to the point of mourning

Such sorrow for sin ought to be our attitude.

When Paul visited the Corinthian church, he did not want to find them involved in immorality.

If he did, he would not neglect it, or ignore it, but would mourn over it and would take apostolic action towards those who refused to repent (13:2, 10).

"Sinned already" - It was not merely ongoing sin that Paul was concerned about, but was sin committed in the past that was never repented of.

"Repented" (*metanoeo*) – to change one's thinking and therefore turn from the sinning.

The components of repentance

Note: Repentance involves the entire man, just as does Biblical faith. Thus, it is spoken of as partaking of three distinguishable elements.

a. True Repentance Involves A change of MIND
The intellectual element - *a knowledge of the truth regarding sin*

Meta – change noia = mind

That is, repentance is based upon a recognition and apprehension of what sin really is and what it means.

Scripture: Psalm 51:3; Revelation 9:21 (See: Rev. 9:20-21)

b. True Repentance Involves A change of ATTITUDE
The emotional element - *a genuine hatred of the sin which the natural man cherishes, as well as a genuine love for the truth which the natural man despises*

Repentance involves a total change of emotional attachment: that which was once cherished is now feared and despised, and that which was once regarded with contempt is now embraced as of the highest value.

A hatred for the enslaving sin; An utter sick & tired attitude toward sin

Scripture: See: 2 Corinthians 7:9,10;

Note: Remember that sorrow does not necessarily indicate true repentance (cf. Lk 18:23). The individual may be sorry for the effects of his sin, rather than for the guilt of the sin (cf 1 Sam 15). However, whatever the external, emotional manifestation may be, repentance will always involve a change of mind with reference to the focus of the individual's love, to that which he regards as precious and that which he regards as contemptible.

(examples: The Rich man who would not sell his goods to follow Christ; Judas Iscariot who was sorry that his plan didn't work out; King Saul who was sorry that Samuel was so upset with him)

Hebrews 12:17
For ye know how that afterward, when he (Esau) would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

c. True Repentance Involves A change of WILL
The volitional element - *a change of purpose, a decision to seek pardon*

Strong refers to this as an inward turning from sin, a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing. This inward resolve or change of purpose is more than reformation; it is a decision to allow the Spirit to accomplish God's purposes in me. This volitional aspect makes itself known in "fruits worthy of repentance" (Lk 3:8).

Scripture: Psalm 51:10-13; Acts 2:38; 26:20

Repentance involves a TURNING FROM SIN and a TURNING TOWARD GOD

Ezekiel 18:30
Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

Acts 26:20
But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

So basically, Repentance is a willingness to Turn from anything that is keeping you from Christ, either for salvation (for the unbeliever) or for fellowship (for the believer).

A man continually rededicated his life and always prayed the same prayer, "Lord, take the cobwebs out of my life." His pastor had heard this prayer more times than he cared to remember. Finally, when the man uttered that prayer into his pastor's ear at the altar, the pastor responded with a prayer of his own, "Lord, kill the spider!" Repentance requires change in both our attitudes and our behavior.
Our Daily Bread, March 19, 1992

What sins need to be repented of?

1) **"Uncleanness"** (*akatharsia*) – impurity (in this context sexual impurity is in view)

2) **"Fornication"** (*porneia*) – various forms of illicit sexual activity; particularly of premarital sex and especially in today's society – pornography

"Lasciviousness" (*aselgeia)* – unbridled, "unrestrained, lawless insolence, sheer animal lust. It is the vice of a man who has no more shame than an animal in the gratification of his physical desires" (Rogers, citing Trench, p. 419).

What disciplines should be incorporated into one's life to avoid such sexual sin?

1) **Turn off the sexual sewage drain**
(Avoid sexually explicit TV, video, magazines, music; Don't go to certain beaches; Avoid the stores which sell pornography)
In 1988 TV averaged "at least one sensual-arousing scene for every 40 minute segment" (Ronald E. Johnson, Fund. Journal).
Job 31:1 - "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"
Ps. 119:37 - "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way."

2) **Don't be idle; be busy serving Christ**
II Tim. 2:22 - "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

3) **Realize that women are not sex objects but people with an eternal soul who need Christ**
It is vain to lust after external flesh. Ask God to help you to view people through God's eyes.

4) **Read God's Word every day to purify your mind**
Memorize Scripture which address the subject of sexual purity.
Ps 119:11 - "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

5) **When you do have a wrong thought, confess it to God as soon as you are convicted** (I John 1:9)
Don't let sin build up in your life.

6) **When tempted to take an indiscreet "look" counter the temptation by praying** for your family and friends to be pure (if married, thank God for your spouse.)

7) **If married, seek to satisfy your spouse's sexual desires so he/she will not be driven to "look" elsewhere** (I Cor. 7:3, 5; Prov. 5:18-19)

8) **Form an accountable friendship with someone who will challenge you toward purity.** You also can encourage that person in a mutually accountable relationship. (II Tim. 2:22b; Heb.10:24-25; I Cor.15:33; Prov.27:6)

9) **Don't put yourself in situations where you know temptation will be great.** "If you don't plan to eat, don't set the table"
Romans 13:14 – *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*

10) **When tempted to look at pornography, realize it's destructive, enslaving, and Anti-God nature.**

A Christian has no business reading material which…
1) uses vulgar language;

2) Ridicules God's standards for purity;

3) breeds on new sensations such as obscene violence, bestiality, incest etc.[note: Leviticus 20];

4) Dishonors the love relationship of marriage [Pornographers leave committed love out of sex; Love is deeper than a physical act];

5) breeds discontentment;

6) Leads to covetous lustful passion; masturbation etc.

Note: Masturbation is sin because it is selfish in nature; It is a manifestation of a covetous spirit. A lustful desire to have that which is not yours. Fornication or adultery is not merely committed by the act but by the thought.)

11) Don't settle for a cheap substitute for the real thing, which God will give in His way and in His timing.
(Beware: Pornography fills the mind with distortions about sex and unrealistic expectations)

13:1
"The third time" –
Visit #1 (Acts 18:1)
Visit #2 (2 Cor. 2:1)
Visit #3 (the visit Paul was now planning to take)

"Two or three witnesses" – Could allude to the two now three attempts of Paul to see the Corinthians come to true repentance; or it could be referring to the impending church trials of those living in unrepentant sin, in which two of three others would give evidence of the sinful behavior of some (cp. Dt. 19:15).

v. 2
Paul gave at least three warnings that if he came to the Corinthian church and found people living in unrepentance that he would **"not spare**." Not spare what? He will not spare those living in the sin nor those who tolerate it in the church. He would demonstrate apostolic power in judging those in unrepentance.

Examples of Paul using his apostolic power to judge:

Acts 13:9-11
Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

1 Timothy 1:20
Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

1 Corinthians 5:3-5
For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

v. 3
Since the Corinthians were looking for evidence of Paul's apostolic authority, he promised to demonstrate it upon his arrival toward those living in gross sin (cp. 2 Cor. 10:4-6, 8)

v. 4
Because they viewed Paul as weak in appearance (2 Cor. 10:10), he promises them that he would not be weak in power when he appeared (2 Cor. 10:11).

Paul reminds them that just as Christ was weak at His crucifixion yet is now power in His resurrection and exaltation to glory, so Paul was weak, yet would display God's power toward the Corinthians.

II. God wants <u>SELF-EXAMINATION</u> with a goal of <u>genuine faith</u> (13:5-10)

v. 5

"Examine yourselves" – put yourselves to the test to see whether or not you are genuinely in the faith (i.e. in Christ and His saving Gospel). This is an examination none of us should avoid.

The little book of 1 John is given for the purpose of the professing believer to examine himself so that he might know that he has eternal life

Evidences of Genuine Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

1. <u>Obedience</u> to God's Commands
   1 John 2:3; 1 John 2:5; 1 John 3:24

2. A Lifestyle of <u>Righteousness</u>
   1 John 2:29

3. A <u>New Nature</u> which does not practice sin
   1 John 3:9; 1 John 5:18

4. A <u>Love</u> for the Brethren
   1 John 3:14-15; 1 John 3:18-19; 1 John 4:7

It would be better for a man to examine himself now than to find out later after death that he was never really in the faith.

Many in the Corinthian church who had succumbed to the sins of 12:20-21 had ample reason to examine their true spiritual status.

Can you imagine how foolish it would be for a man who has all the signs of stomach cancer or ulcers to do nothing about it; to have constant abdominal pain and to be spitting up blood and to go on his way thinking he's okay would be the height of folly. So, to be living in sin with no remorse or divine chastisement and to assume you're on your way to Heaven anyway is foolishness.

Some might say: "But Pastor, you're making me to doubt my salvation." Some of you have adequate reason to doubt your salvation.

I'd rather have you doubt your salvation but have it, than to never entertain a doubt and not have it.

Some of the evidences of true salvation are:

1) Love of God and His people

2) Spiritual desire for God's Word

3) Grief over sin accompanied with chastisement by God

4) Obedience to God and a desire to be more obedient

"Prove your own selves" - no one can do it for you. Look for Bible-based proof in your life that you are God's child.

Do you find yourself approved after examination?

"Know ye not . . ." – Do you know that Jesus Christ is in you?

Note: This is one of the clearest texts to sow that a person can know that Jesus Christ is living inside of his heart.

"Except ye be reprobates" – Christ is in your, unless you see after examining yourself that you are disapproved after testing (*adokimos*). My friend, don't be a reject by God!

2 Peter 1:10
Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

v. 6
It would be obvious to any Christian observer that Paul and his associates were not rejects! It was obvious that they passed the test. Note: However, it is infinitely more important that the Corinthians examine themselves rather than to examine Paul or anyone else. The same applies to you and me.

v. 7
Paul says in effect, "no matter how you view me, I want you to do right, though others maligned me as not passing their test."

v. 8
When you are on the side of truth, you don't ever want to do anything against the truth. You only want to live for the truth and its advancement. This is also a mark of a true believer.

Question: How do you feel when God's truth is blasphemed or attacked? If it does not bother you, you are not yet a child of God.

v. 9
Paul was glad to spend up his life (12:15) and to expend energy and effort and to lose his very physical health if it meant the spiritual strengthening of others. This too is a mark of a man with real salvation.

Paul's ongoing desire and prayer was that the Corinthians would be made complete by God.

v. 10
It would be better for the Corinthians to get a letter of warning from Paul than to face God's sharp, severe chastisement from His apostle.

God gave Paul his power for the church's edification (building up) not for its destruction (tearing down).

III. God wants <u>PEACEFUL UNITY</u> with a goal of spiritual <u>restoration and comfort</u> (13:11-13)

v. 11
"Farewell" – a greeting with rejoicing; "be blessed!"

"Be perfect" – allow God to restore you; be restored to completion.

"Be of good comfort" - allow God to encourage you; be encouraged

"Be of one mind" - be of the same mindset; e in harmony in your goals and thoughts. Have godly agreement among yourselves.

Psalms 133:1
Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

3 Essentials to Biblical unity:

1. Sharing a common <u>relationship</u>
   (the oneness of <u>being</u>, which comes "in Christ" - see: Eph. 4:1-5)

2. Sharing common <u>convictions</u>
   (a oneness of <u>thinking</u> which comes from the Bible - Amos 3:3; I Cor. 1:10)

   Agreement not necessarily in every detail or fine point of doctrine, but in the indisputable, clearly revealed essentials.

3. Sharing a common <u>goal</u>
   (a oneness of <u>service</u> which is focused on Christ)

Sharing a common <u>cause</u>

Disunity is so destructive because rather than working together you are working <u>against each other</u>.

Unity is:
1. Playing on the same <u>team</u>
2. Heading in the same <u>direction</u>
3. Serving the same <u>Master</u>

"Live in peace" - be at peace among yourselves; be peaceable.

Romans 12:18
If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Put away the sword! Bury the hatchet!

Pursue peace with each other.

The result of unity and peace in a local church will be God's felt presence of His love and peace. You show love and peace and you will reap God's love and peace.

v. 12 - "An holy kiss" - (cp. I Cor. 16:20) - A set-apart kiss, not a sensual embrace. It is evident that in Paul's day, the men kissed the men and the women kissed the women as a form of greeting (EX: the Italian culture). Do you express any affection to God's people?

If Paul were writing to Western churches, he would say, "Shake hands with one another" (Wiersbe).

Conclusion:

v. 14
Verse 14 is often called the "benediction" (a benediction is a formal invocation of God's blessing upon people)

The source of the blessing is the divine Godhead: **"the Lord Jesus. . . God (the Father) . . . the Holy Spirit"**

Note: If Jesus Christ was not deity, it would have been blasphemous to include His name with that of the Father and Spirit as a source of spiritual blessing.

Every saint needs:

1) <u>Grace</u> (God's unmerited kindness and favor)
2) <u>Love</u> (God's unconditional care and concern)
3) <u>Communion</u> (God's close fellowship; His presence on a daily basis)

This perhaps is the briefest and best prayer request for another person.

And with this benediction, we bring to a close our study of 2 Corinthians. And what an appropriate conclusion as the theme of this book was “God’s Strength in our Weakness” We surely need His grace, love, and fellowship to give us the strength we need in our lives and church. Amen.