

UNEDITED DRAFT

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Have you ever noticed that if you don't want something very much you won't try very hard? Likewise, if you really want something, you will stop at nothing to get it? I was never a huge history buff. So when I got a history teacher I didn't particularly like when I was in high school, I didn't particularly care about my grade in that class. I wanted an "A" of course, but I didn't want to study or work, or even pay attention in class to get it. I didn't want it very much. When my quarter grade came in as a "C" I had my wake up call. That was the first "C" I had ever gotten on a report card. I decided then and there that even if I didn't like the teacher, and even if I wasn't all that interested in the subject, was going to work hard to bring that grade up. I really wanted a "B" by semester. And I ended up getting it because I put in the work and I stopped daydreaming in class. And I bet you all can think of examples in your own life. When you didn't particularly want something, maybe you got it, maybe not. When you wanted it with all your heart and poured yourself into it, the result was different, wasn't it?

One of the things a good company will do is not just train the employees how to do their job. They will also find a way to convey to the employ a passion for the company and what it is doing, and a passion for their role in the company vision. When everyone in the company is engaged and working with earnest desire toward something, then you find a successful company.

So let's go ahead and take this concept and ratchet up to the highest level. Does God really desire your salvation? Don't give the knee-jerk church reaction: "Yes!" Really think about it because this question is much more important than it may appear at first glance. You have been nothing but grief to him. You don't walk lock step with him. You say things you ought not. You have a bad attitude. You grumble and complain. You fail to do really things that God really wants you to do. So here's the thing... if our behavior is any indication, we don't act like people who are overly interested in being saved. And considering the cost... namely the death of his own son... maybe God isn't overly interested in saving us. What if God wouldn't mind seeing us saved, but if we weren't, well, that wouldn't be so bad either, all things considered. If God is only mildly interested in your salvation, then it's quite possible that you won't end up being saved. In view of our sin, it's really important that we know that God is more than passively interested in our salvation, but that he is passionately interested in our salvation. We get the answer to this question in the Bible reading before us today, Luke 13:31-35.

Luke 13:31-35

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

[It's hard to know exactly what's happening here. We know there were at least two Pharisees, Nicodemus and Joseph, who sympathized with Jesus. Were the Pharisees in this particular area on Jesus' side? Were they sincerely warning Jesus? Possible. But also consider: the Pharisees were political enemies of Herod. With that in mind, perhaps the best understanding is: "Herod wants to kill you, and you already know how much we despise you. So it's best that you leave." Maybe they were lying about Herod... maybe they didn't think he would follow through. In any event, they just wanted Jesus gone. Jesus was not in Jerusalem when they said this... based on Jesus' answer, perhaps they were trying to spur Jesus to move on to Jerusalem (out of Herod's jurisdiction) where

they thought Jesus might sooner meet his demise.] However we take this the bottom line is the same: Jesus, get out of here. Leave!

LAW: Do you try to push Jesus out of your life? Is he sometimes a bit too close for your comfort? We would like to call the shots in our own life... we want control. But there is Jesus claiming to be King and claiming authority over our life. By your actions you are telling Jesus, "Leave this place and go somewhere else!"

So Jesus is threatened with his life, and he is asked to leave. He is not welcome in this place. Does he pack up and call it quits? Because if he does, that would be indicative of what he might do with us too... pack up and leave.

32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

[Jesus call Herod a fox. He is sly and crafty. But Jesus won't be swayed or deterred by Herod or anyone else. He wants the Pharisees to send a message back to Herod. He essential tells him that he will go when he is good and ready. Jesus has a plan. He still has some work to do... demons to drive out and people to heal. These were things that proved he really is the Son of God who has full control over demons and disease... and who has full control over his own destiny! He is saying, "I will depart this world. But not today, and not tomorrow either. At the time of his choosing he would go to Jerusalem. He would go there knowing full well the kind of death he would face. But he would do this because he desires our salvation. He's dying to save us!

No threat, no authority, no danger will deter Jesus from his goal: going to the cross to pay for your sins and mine.

Note the bravery of Jesus! I'm afraid we sometimes view Jesus as a soft, effeminate, pacifist, milktoast, weak, compliant type of man. That is not the Jesus portrayed in Scriptures. Examples: Jesus camps by himself in the wilderness for 40 days with nothing to eat, battling Satan himself the whole time! He calmly sleeps through a raging storm while he's on a small boat. He calls the people with power a brood of vipers and tells them they are under God's condemnation. When the people of his home town try to throw him off a cliff, he calmly walks right through the crowd. He turns over the tables the temple courts in Jerusalem. He directly addresses Pilate, telling him he has no power except what God gave him. He declares boldly that he is indeed a King... just not the kind Pilate is thinking of. He doesn't cower from death.

And here he doesn't cower before Herod or the Pharisees. He will be going to his death, but only when and where he has decided it will happen! Get this picture in your mind: Jesus is bold. Jesus is resolute. He knows what it takes to rescue us, and he is determined to get it done, in spite of the pain and suffering and death.

Jesus was dying to save you. And so he methodically carried out his plan of dying to save.

We dare never think that poor Jesus was a victim of circumstances. He was misunderstood. And his enemies were so violent. And things just played out such that he died a tragic death. You know, life just goes like that sometimes. No! Jesus loved you so much, that he resolutely carried out the plan to save you.

So we've seen Jesus has the power to save us. But another important question remains: does he have the compassion to save us?

34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Jesus loves the people of Jerusalem. He so wants them to be saved. But he is the only way, and they would reject him. It breaks God's heart!

There is only one way to God. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ. God demands perfection. We can't give it. Jesus has. Through faith, you have his perfection and your sins are forgiven. But what about Muslims! They are so devout and sincere in their faith. And they reject Jesus, and his perfection, which means they must stand before God on their own merits. They fall short. Any religion that doesn't teach Jesus as the only Savior, is a religion leading to death. God doesn't care if you believe in him. God cares if you rely upon his Son for full and free salvation.

What about a person who does their best and tries hard and is a good neighbor and starts a foundation that helps thousands of people, and contributes to their community. God would damn them? Only if they're not perfect and holy. Are they? God won't condemn them for the good they do, but for the evil they have done. If you stand before a judge for speeding, you won't be fined for the times you drove the speed limit. And maybe that was most the time. You're fined for the one infraction. If a person is not holy, they do not deserve to live in the immediate presence of holy God. And they won't.

But understand, this situation breaks God's heart. God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth! He provided a way for all people to be saved. The way is free and it is for all. When people deny the Lord Jesus as the way, that just tears God apart... and his Son too.

Look what he said: **"I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"** God invites, he woos, he promises, he provides, he beckons... and he goes beyond that, even. He enlightens, he empowers, he converts... all by the power of the Holy Spirit who works through the Gospel. But understand this: he does not force, coerce, twist arms. If a person rejects the forgiveness, refuge, protection, safety, and provision which God generously offers to all, then God with great sorrow let's them have their way. To the person that obstinately refuses to say to God, "Thy will be done." God will ultimately say to them, "Thy will be done." Your will I is to hate me and avoid me and reject me... I'm sad, but I'll let you have your way.

Does Jesus demonstrate a passion for saving us, or only a passing interest? Does he have a strong desire, or a "we'll hope it works out for you" attitude?

Jesus shows us that he was dying to go to the cross. So he would die at the cross for our salvation. We see his heartache at the thought of us not being saved. Does Jesus want you to be saved? Does he want it more than anything else? Yes! Does his heart break over those who are not being saved? Absolutely. He stopped at nothing to make it happen. Be filled with peace and joy at this glorious, indisputable truth: Jesus is dying to save you!

I pray you will also be filled with the same passion for saving people that Jesus had. Be resolute. Be determined. Share this good news of Jesus' salvation with everyone. Amen.