

“Want”

The pronunciation is not always precise in East Texas. Sometimes, we might end a question with “y’hontoo?” While this lesson will not be on redneck vernacular, or colloquialisms of modern-day natives of Texas, it will devote a little time to the subject of “want”- from a biblical perspective, of course.

While the Bible does sometimes use the term “*want*” in reference to “*being in need or poverty*” (the Grk. term is *hustereis*, as in Mk. 12:44; Phil.4:11), the more typical usage is that of *desiring, willing, wishing, or intending* (the Grk. term is *thelo*, and derivatives thereof). But here’s the point for our consideration:

I. We “want” on various levels.

Our “desire,” or “want,” has a whole range of intensity. Think about it.

A. There is the “I’ll take it if it’s free” level of want.

Closets, garages, barns, and shops are full of stuff (aka “junk”) that we *wanted* because it was free. We didn’t *need* it. We didn’t even really *want* it. And possessing it certainly did not prevent our poverty- though it may have made us appear “poor” to have it piled up everywhere. We took it merely because it cost us nothing to have it!

We may console ourselves with such platitudes as, “I might need that someday,” or, “Well, it’s too good to just throw away,” or even, “If you don’t want it anymore, I’ll take it.”

Such reminds me of the “cheap salvation” offered by denominationalism. They “give away” salvation even to those who really don’t want it, because it costs the *possessor* nothing- at least in their view. Passages such as Rom.5:15-16 and 6:23 are used in an attempt to support this erroneous view.

While in one sense, salvation is “free” in that cannot be bought with money and is readily available to all regardless of station in life, Jesus would deny that those who only take it because “it’s free” ever really attain it, Luke 14:26-33.

B. Then there’s the “mildly interested” level of want.

This is slightly, but noticeably, above the previous level in that some small token is willing to be given in exchange for whatever is “wanted.” It is the “Yeah, I’d like to have that if it doesn’t cost too much,” level of want.

I ran across this a lot when I was in the tractor and equipment auction business several years ago. A tractor or piece of equipment would be up for bids and the auctioneer, working as he might, couldn’t get any bids. He would say, “Well, who’ll give a dollar?” and thirty-five hands would immediately go up! Sometimes it was even worse.

Occasionally, the “desire” for some piece of equipment was so poor, that other items deemed more valuable would have to be “thrown in with it” to even get the guys to bid!

Again, and unfortunately, we see parallels to this level of “want” for salvation in the religious world of today. Folks are really not all that *desirous* of eternal salvation, unless

a lot of recreation, free baby-sitting, social activities, and other earthly things are “thrown in with it”! cf. 1Cor.2:14 > 3:1-5; Rom.8:5-6; Phil.3:19; Col.3:1-2.

C. The “moderate effort to attain” is third level of want.

This is, “Yeah, I want it- and I’m even willing to work for it, as long as I don’t have to get *fanatical* (or *weird*) to get it,” level of want. In this case, the value of the object is perceived, and it is desired. But the person “wanting” is not “totally committed” to having it.

They certainly wouldn’t “*sell all*” in order to attain it, Matt.13:45-46. They, like the fellow in Matt.19:16-22, are willing to go *part way* to achieve their desire, but certainly not willing to make it the priority of their life.

We see this often in religion. People are willing to do what is necessary to become members, and even willing to participate *moderately* in order to stay that way, but never completely give themselves to the proposition by truly “*seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*” (cf. Matt.6:33) They don’t want to be perceived as a “religious fanatic” by their friends. They very much resemble two *soils* from Jesus’ parable of the sower in Luke 8:12-13. Their “want” is not strong enough to forgo the “*time of temptation,*” and they are still too concerned with “*the worries and riches and pleasures of this life*” to really grow and bear fruit for the Lord.

D. But there’s the “intense desire” level of want- this fourth level is real want!

This level differs from the previous in that costs and difficulties aren’t prohibitive factors.

It can be very simply illustrated from 1Pet.2:1-3. Any mother or father can tell you that when little Junior/Junita “wants” his/her milk, **nothing else matters!** You can pat, tickle, burp, change diapers, or do whatever you may, but nothing will deter his/her *singular desire*. The word for “*long*” is the Grk. term *epopotheo*. It means to *earnestly or greatly desire*.

Matt.6:22 speaks of the necessity of the eye being “*clear*” (NASV). The KJV uses instead the word “*single*”. The text does not speak of being *one-eyed* as opposed to having two eyes. It means to have a *singular focus* or objective (cp.Jas.1:8): **heaven**, cf. vv.19-21, 24ff, 33!

Those who attain salvation, and heaven as its proper reward, will do so because they “want” it more than anything or anyone else in life! Their main objective in life is to “*learn*” and *do* that which *pleases God*, Eph.5:10. There are other things that may momentarily capture their attention, but nothing else ultimately matters to them. They “want” it with every fiber of their being. That’s the highest level of “want” and shouldn’t be expended on anything less than this noble goal!

II. Conclusion: What’s your level of “want” with regard to salvation?