

First message**What Passion for God is****2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 12:2**

Acts 1:3

Passion – “a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept” (*Merriam-Webster’s English Dictionary*).

When it is misappropriated and misapplied

Passion comes with its boundaries.

Passions are necessary

Then, what is the passion for God?

I. Passion for God is a desire.

- A. “Good will (pleasure, approval, satisfaction)”: Romans 15:23; 2 Corinthians 7:7
- B. “To be zealous”: 1 Corinthians 14:1 (cf. John 2:17b)
- C. “To want or to will”: 2 Corinthians 11:12 (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:6); Consider also Galatians 4:20, 21; 6:12-13
- D. “Craving” or “longing”: Philippians 1:23 (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:17)
- E. “Actively seeking for something”: Philippians 4:17
- F. “To aspire”: 1 Timothy 3:1
- G. There are different degrees of “desire”: 2 Corinthians 7:7; 2 Corinthians 8:16

II. Passion for God is of the changed heart.

- A. “Desire” and “zealous” could be both good and bad.
- B. Conversion is the beginning of passion for God (cf. Ephesians 2:2, 3).
- C. Conversion comes through the consciousness of our guilt before God (cf. Galatians 1:13).
- D. Converted heart works with right motives (Philippians 1:14-18).

III. Passion for God is multifaceted.

- A. Passion for God is only for ... (1 Corinthians 4:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 8:5, 8; Galatians 6:8a; Galatians 5:25).
- B. Passion for God is born out of
2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 2:12-14; Philippians 3:20a; Colossians 1:13-14; Romans 12:2; Philippians 3:7).
- C. Passion for God grows
1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31; Romans 6:1-2; 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:23; Galatians 3:27, 29
- D. Passion for God demonstrates ... (Romans 8:28-29; 1 Timothy 4:12).
- E. Passion for God propagates deep impressions of the greatness of God and the smallness of man.
The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 2, articles 1 and 2....
- F. Passion for God also requires ... (cf. Philippians 4:11, 12; 2 Corinthians 3:5).

Conclusion

Passion for God is an intense and deep desire with spiritual power and heavenward mind originated from God that enables the believers to serve Him faithfully, to endure hardship patiently, to hope for the future earnestly, to edify the body of Christ sincerely, and to glorify God wholeheartedly.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your desire for God, and what do you do with it?
2. Why is passion for God so important and relevant to believers?
3. How does your passion for God effect on the body of Christ (church)?
4. How is your theology relevant to passion for God?

Second message: The Standard of Passion
2 Timothy 3:14-17

The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 1, articles 1, 4, 10 ...

If our output exceeds our input, our upkeep will be our downfall.

The Bible is the light and guide of our journey to heaven and of our service to the Lord.

Colossians 3:10

Passion for God needs proper boundaries and foundations- the standard of our passion.

I. Passion for God needs standards.

Nothing runs well without rules (2 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 9:25; cf. John 16:13-14). Passion needs standards, because ...

A. Passion is not the end itself but a means

1. God is not the author of ... (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7, 11; 1 Corinthians 11:34; 14:40).
2. Passion for God needs ... (2 Thessalonians 2:9-14).
Ecclesiastes 7:29; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 9:8; Ephesians 1:16-18; Colossians 1:9-10).

B. Passion must be instructed (2 Timothy 3:14).

II. Passion for God must yield to the authority of its standard, the Bible.

1 Corinthians 15:1; Galatians 1:11; Colossians 2:6ff.

A. Passion for God is grounded in ... (1 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:13; 2:3).

God Himself "can be made an object of idolatry. If a person fails to form a true conception of His character and weaves into the mental image formed of Him the false features gathered from other quasi-divine beings, then,

whatever the name employed, be it God or Jehovah, or even ‘the Father,’ the reality of the divine life is not in it. In such a case it is the perverted image that evokes the worship, instead of the true God” (Geerhardus Vos, *Grace & Glory*, Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth trust, 1994, 16).

1 Timothy 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 4:23-25; Romans 10:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 4:6).

- B. Passion for God grows in proportion to the growth to....
 Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:9, 10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Ephesians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:17).
 1 Corinthians 8:2; 1 Timothy 4:3b, 5b, 6, 13, 16).

Richard Baxter, “When you meditate on any Scripture truth, think of it as a beam of eternal light from heaven; indited by the Holy Spirit to lead men to obedience and felicity: behold it with reverence as a letter or message sent from heaven: and a thing of grand importance to your souls. When you meditate upon any grace, think of it as part of the image of God, implanted and actuated by the Holy Spirit to advance the soul into communion with God and to prepare it for him ... Take in God if you would feel life and power in all that you meditate on” (John Gwyn-Thomas, *Rejoice ... Always*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989, 92).

Francis Schaeffer, “Believe, that in our present state, the soul and the body have separate and contesting interests: the body thinks it is its interest to have its appetites gratified, and to be indulged in its pleasures. While the soul knows it is its interest to have the appetites of the body subdued and mortified, that spiritual pleasures may be the better relished.... Be wise, therefore. Be resolute and show yourselves men who are actuated and governed by reason and are affected by things as reason represents them to you. Not reason as it is in the mere natural man, clouded, and plunged, and lost in sense, but reason elevated and guided by divine revelation to us and divine grace in us. Walk by faith, and not by sense” (Cited in Matthew Henry, *The Pleasantness of a Religious life: A Puritan’s View of the Good Life*, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1998, 17).

Conclusion

Passion is not the end but means to the service for God. Passion must be governed and ruled by the authority of God’s Word (Romans 10:2; 16:17-18). Martin Luther once said, “When the preacher speaks, God speaks! ... And whoever cannot boast like that about his sermon should leave preaching alone, for he surely denies and blasphemes God” (Cited in Fred W. Meuser, *Luther the Preacher*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983, 11-12). It is not to deify preachers but to let their conscience and ministry be bound by the Word of God.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we apply the lesson that passion is not the end itself but a means to get to the end to our Christian life and service?
2. Why does passion need boundaries (proper norms)?
3. What does it mean that passion yields to the authority of the Bible?
4. How can we grow in passion?

Third message: The Focus of Passion

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

R. C. Sproul says, “Modern man has an aching void. The emptiness we feel cannot be relieved by one more gourmet meal or another snort of cocaine. We carry water in a sieve when we try to fill the empty space with a better job or a bigger house” (*Hunger for Significance*, Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1993, 14).

Philippians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 3:5;
John 5:39; Luke 24:27
Romans 8:29

I. **Passion for God comes with determination.**

A. Paul says of his

1. The word, “determine,” may mean different things including “to choose or pick out,” “to approve or esteem,” “to be of opinion, deem, or think,” “to determine, resolve, or decree,” or “to judge.”
1 Corinthians 7:37; Romans 14:13
2. There are two things in the state of determination
 - a. “Determination” and “the power of will” are inseparable.
Cf. Romans 5:8; 8:28, 35).
 - b. Our will needs to be disciplined.
“Education,” “instruction,” “cultivation and improvement,” “rule of regulating principles and practice,” “correction,” or “subjection to rules, order, or precepts.” Cf. Philippians 4:8

B. Paul says of the purpose of his determination.

II. **Christ is the centre of passion for God.**

A. Passion for God includes

B. Passion for God leads us to the gospel.

“Testimony of God” (verse 1), “the gospel” (1:17), “the preaching of the cross” (1:18), “Christ crucified” (1:23), and “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (2:2). 2 Corinthians 4:5

- C. Passion for God centres on Christ alone.
2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8
- D. Passion for God is nothing but of Christ (1 Corinthians 16:22).
Colossians 1:18; Philippians 3:10; Ephesians 4:8-12

III. **Passion for God discloses Christ through**

- A. Paul demonstrates his passion for God in and through the gospel of Christ.
 1. God’s calling ... (Romans 1:1; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:7).
 2. Gospel is the power ... (Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:10).
 3. God will judge the secrets of men ... (Romans 2:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8)
 4. Paul’s ministry is to minister ... (Romans 15:16).
 5. Paul’s preaching was ... (Romans 15:19).
 6. Paul’s mission was ... (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2 Corinthians 2:12; 1 Timothy 1:11).
 7. Paul claims ... (1 Corinthians 4:15).
 8. Paul is compelled ... (1 Corinthians 9:16).
 9. The gospel builds up ... (Ephesians 3:6).
 10. Paul’s life is devoted to ... (Philippians 1:7, 17).
 11. All of Paul’s experiences fall on us for ... (Philippians 1:12).
 12. Gospel is ... (Colossians 1:23).
 13. Preaching the gospel pleases God (1 Thessalonians 1:4).
 14. Paul labours ... (1 Thessalonians 2:9).
 15. The gospel is the bond ... (Philippians 1:5; 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:2).
 16. There is no other gospel (Galatians 1:6-8).

- B. Paul demonstrates his passion for God in and through Christ.
 1. Pursues to be an ... (1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 2:14-15; Romans 15:7).
 2. Reflects the glory of Christ and ... (Romans 15:17-18; 1 Corinthians 1:29-31; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6).
 3. Be a servant of ... (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:11).
 4. Identifies ... (Romans 6:3-4, 8; Philippians 1:20-21).
 5. Appreciates ... (Romans 8:1-2).
 6. Dies ... and lives ... (Romans 8:10).
 7. Relies on ... (Romans 10:4).
 8. Recognizes ... (Romans 12:4).
 9. Puts on Christ (Romans 13:14).
 10. Acknowledges ... (Romans 14:10, 14).
 11. Brings souls to Christ (Romans 16:5).
 12. Has spiritual discernment by ... (Romans 16:17-18).

Conclusion

Focusing on Christ is practical, truthful, and necessary dependence on His person and work for our atonement. Christ is the master key to open any door from salvation to glory. The educated passion works under the sanctified will that leads the believers to the Gospel that reveals Christ. Thus, passion for God focused on Christ edifies His people and glorifies Him. Passionate believers abide in Christ and walk with Him and give off the aroma of Christ. They are Christlike.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is your “determination” necessary in your passion for God?
2. What are the things that you must renounce if you are determined to be passionate for God?
3. How is Christ the centre of your passion for God?
4. How is Christ shown through your passion for God?

Fourth Message: The Expressions of Passion

2 Timothy 2:19-21

Romans 6:17-18

1 Corinthians 11:1f

“The challenge is not in how much we have, but rather in finding God sufficient in the midst of what we have... The issue ... becomes not what we have, but how we got what we have. It’s called character” (Joseph Stowell, *Perilous Pursuits*, Chicago, ILL.: Moody Press, 1994, 75).

Titus 2:1-8; 1:1

I. Sanctification is ... expression of passion.

1 Corinthians 3:1; Romans 12:3, 6, 16b

- A. The unholy use of passion is a characteristic of
Ephesians 4:22; Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:9-10
- B. Sin is the most powerful hindrance.
 1. Our corrupt nature ... (Colossians 3:5; Romans 6:14a).
 2. Believers fight against ... (Romans 8:13; 1 Corinthians 9:27).
 3. Sin is a disobedience to ... (1 Thessalonians 4:1-7).
- C. Sexual sins, in particular, take a special place in relation to sanctified passion.
“Sexual immorality,” literally, “fornication” (see Galatians 5:19, 1

Thessalonians 4:3-5); “youthful lust (passion)” (2 Timothy 2:22); “whoremonger (sexually immoral)” (Ephesians 5:5); “lust of concupiscence (“lustful passion”)” (1 Thessalonians 4:5), and “inordinate affection (passion)” (Colossians 3:5); “uncleanness” (2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5; the absence of righteousness and of purity of the heart) and “licentiousness (sensuality or sexual sin)” or “wantonness” (2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19; Romans 13:13).
Ephesians 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 12:21

- D. Sanctification ... is ... (Ephesians 4:15; 2 Corinthians 9:10; Ephesians 4:16 [cf. Colossians 2:19]; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).
- E. Sanctified passion for God manifests ... (2 Corinthians 7:1; 12:21).
- F. Sanctification is the work of God through the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit works ... (Ephesians 4:30; Romans 8:17, 26; Philippians 1:29).
 - 2. But we fail, don't we? Augustine aptly says....
 - 3. Sanctification does not depend on the virtue of
 - 4. The spirit of the dependence ... (1 Timothy 1:12-17; Galatians 6:3).

II. **Compliance with the will of God is ... expression of passion.**

- A. Passion for God works ... (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Romans 16:26b; Titus 1:3).
- B. Passion for God moulds our hearts
 - 1. Obedience gives a sense of

“This sense of burden comes from focusing on cases where duty and inclination have come apart. But the ideal case is where they coincide. The best kind of person likes doing what he is also under an obligation to do” (John Hare, *Why Bother Being Good?*, Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity, 2002, 23). 2 Corinthians 5:13-14
 - 2. Obedience to the will of God aggrandizes passion for God (John 14:15).
- C. Passion for God responds ... (1 Corinthians 2:10-12, 16; Romans 14:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:3-4).

III. **Edification is ... expression of passion**

- 1 Corinthians 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, and 26.
- A. Passion for God requires ... (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 9:27a; 2 Corinthians 10:5).
 - B. Passion for God must edify
 - 1. Passion for God is (2 Corinthians 9:2; Colossians 4:12-13; 2 Corinthians 10:8).
 - 2. Edification builds up ... (2 Corinthians 12:19).
 - 3. Edifying passion for God promotes ... (Romans 15:30; 1 Corinthians 1:10).
Philippians 2:3; 3:15-16; Philippians 4:2-3)
 - 4. Edifying passion carefully turns its attention to others ... (Romans 15:1, 3; 1 Corinthians 16:15, 19; 2 Corinthians 7:13; 1 Corinthians 8:1-3; Philippians 2:29-30; Colossians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:2-3; 2 Timothy 4:11; Romans 16:3-4).
 - 5. Edifying passion for God concerns
 - 6. Edifying passion often faces (2 Timothy 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

C. Passion for God cultivates

1. Behind public and open demonstrations of our passionate services (1 Timothy 4:15-16).
2. Desire to please God ... (Colossians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 5:9).

IV. Causes of distractions from passion for God

- A. Sin
- B. Abundance
- C. Self
- D. Ritualization

Conclusion

As we cannot hide the light, so we cannot but manifest our passion for God one way or another. Most significantly, passion for God moulds and reveals our character. Sanctification, edification, and compliance to the will of God are essentials that we should be able to find from passion for God. Behind all, there is the work of the Holy Spirit in us and our personal and private devotion to Him.

Discussion Questions

1. How does passion for God build up Christian character?
2. Why is sanctification important to passion for God?
3. What sins do you think of as the most destructive to passionate Christians today and why?
4. Why must passionate believers depend on the Spirit of God?
5. How would you explain the relationship between passion and duty?
6. How does passion for God edify the church of God (or believers)?

Fifth Message – The Obstacles of Passion

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

(1) God knows our tribulation. (2) God has a purpose even in our tribulation.

Philippians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7; 2 Timothy 1:12

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

Passion does not pass by obstacles but rather attract them.

I. Challenges to Christian passion

- A. Misunderstanding of the work of the Holy Spirit
- B. Putting man's will over ... (Ephesians 5:17; Romans 10:2-3).
- C. Christian idealism
Galatians 6:9; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Romans 4:18, 20; 2 Corinthians 4:16, 18; Philippians 1:29; 2 Corinthians 7:5).
- D. Reality of a life of patience, endurance, and perseverance ... (Romans 5:3).
- E. Satan ... (1 Corinthians 7:5b; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; Ephesians 5:26-27, 5:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10; 1 Timothy 3:7).
- F. Lack of sympathisers ... (2 Timothy 4:10, 14, 16; Philippians 2:19-21).
- G. Sin challenges
Romans 7:23, 24; 1 Corinthians 15:34

Saint Augustine says in *The Confession of Saint Augustine*, "Sin comes when we take a perfectly natural desire or longing or ambition and try desperately to fulfill it without God. Not only is it sin, it is a perverse distortion of the image of the Creator in us. All these good things, and all our security are rightly found only and completely in Him."

II. Misunderstanding of the Providence of God

Romans 12:3, 16b; 11:33

- A. Man often misinterprets
2 Corinthians 11:30-31 (cf. 12:8-9); 2 Corinthians 12:7; Psalms 13:1
- B. Man fails to appreciate ... mystery.
Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 2:1-3; Deuteronomy 29:29; 2 Corinthians 4:1
- C. Man fails to appreciate
- D. Man fails to have
"This is not a matter of temperament. The recluse or introvert has no advantage over the active, busy Christian. True meditation is the work to which we are all naturally indisposed, but it is one to which the Holy Spirit prompts those who love the Lord" (John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*, The Banner of Truth Trust, reprint, 1995, 13).
John 13:7; Ephesians 1:22
- E. Man fails to understand (1 Corinthians 1:27; Galatians 1:15; Philippians 4:6-8).

III. Costs for passion for God

- A. Following Jesus Christ is costly (Luke 14:28, 31; 1 Timothy 1:16; 4:10; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:9; 3:10-11; 4:5, 17).
- B. Self-denial, cross-bearing, and life-surrender are essential payments
- C. Persecutions and martyrdom are
- D. Experiencing the purifying fire of afflictions is another payment (John 15:2; cf. Job 23:10; Isaiah 48:10).

Conclusion

God uses all circumstances in life to turn us to Himself. In times of afflictions, our object of passion is shifting from projects to the person of God. We'll learn of ourselves more clearly. Through obstacles, we may find bitterness in us. In times of prosperity, we may fall into wrongs to find false security in us, success, or material things. His ways and thoughts are higher than man's. He is sovereign and works through His providence.

Discussion Questions

1. Having heard of the obstacles of passion, what is your view of Prosperity gospel (for wealth and health) movement?
2. What challenges have you experienced as you desired to follow the Lord with passion? How such experiences influence on your faith and Christian life?
3. Have you experienced that no one encouraged or stood by you, when you were passionate for something for God? What lessons have you learnt from it?
4. How do you relate your passion to the providence of God? There are so many situations or conditions of life while you have passionately pursued God. They include failures, obstacles, adversities, misunderstanding, loneliness, discouragement
5. How do you meditate on God's Word on regular basis?
6. What costs do you expect to pay, if you keep your passion for God? How are you preparing for it?

Sixth Message: The Satisfaction of Passion Colossians 3:1-4

“Seek those things which are above.”

Colossians 3:1-4

2 Thessalonians 3:5

I. There is a time to end....

Luke 12:13-21; 9:25; 1 Timothy 6:12, 17-19

A. Death is real and unavoidable.

Hebrews 9:27 – “appointed”

2 Timothy 4:6; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8

B. The reality of death provides

Ecclesiastes 12:14; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:7-9

C. The certainty of death leads us to

1. There is a judgment of the believers.
 - a. Of rewards (Romans 8:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:8-10)
 - b. Of vindication (2 Thessalonians 1:4-7; Romans 2:6-7)
 - c. Eschatological bliss (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
2 Timothy 4:7-8; 4:18; Philippians 3:14; Romans 8:17; 6:23
2. There is a judgment of sinners (Romans 9:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2:5).
- D. The finality of death leads
Romans 8:24-25; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Philippians 1:23

II. **Eternity satisfies passion.**

Richard Baxter in his book, *the Saints' Everlasting Rest*, explains

- A. The Bible teaches us about "eternity."
Cf. Hebrews 11:10
- B. The proper understanding of eternity gives us
2 Timothy 4:6-8; 1 Timothy 6:12
- C. Eternity provides the contents of our passion for God.
2 Timothy 1:10; Colossians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 15:30-32; 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 5:23
- D. Eternity supplies believers' invaluable insight of life ...
Colossians 3:1-8; 1 Timothy 4:6-9; 6:6-7
Late Professor Daniel Lamont said, "Time, manwards, or what we may call 'clock time,' is something allotted by God to man as the sphere of opportunity, and when time closes, the opportunity ends. 'It is not the passing out from this life that makes death so serious, it is the passing into another form of life.'"

2 Corinthians 5:7).
- E. Eternity dwells in hope
 1. Hope is indissolubly bound up with ... (Romans 6:8; 2 Corinthians 4:18).
 2. Hope derives its strength from ... (2 Corinthians 1:9-10; Romans 8:23; 1 Thessalonians 1:3).

Conclusion

"Eternal" and "Heavenly" are melted in one thought. In eternity, corruption is swallowed up by incorruption. Glory will constitute the beauty of the children of God in eternity. Heaven offers us "substantial healing" in the life on earth. The fallen creatures will be restored in glory (Romans 8:17-25). The future glory includes their reward for their good work and divine vindication for their sufferings. The hope of eternity gives us a sense of security in this troubled world. The passionate believers who are longing for the presence of eternity also longs for continuing Lord's work until the Lord Jesus comes again. Their only satisfaction is found in heaven and eternity.

Questions

1. What does death mean to you?
2. How should we prepare for our own death?
3. What is your thought of eternity and how has it influenced on your life?
(You may begin with a question of how often or frequently dwell on the thoughts of eternity or heaven?)
4. If you are longing for heaven/eternity, what motivates you to have that longing?