

July 10, 2011
A Dangerous Church – Passion
House of Christ's Love
Pastor Rob Smith

Review –

Message

Illustration: George Gallop did a survey of 13000 people in 130 countries. It was a survey of people who used to go to church but no longer do. There were a number of questions in the survey. One of the questions asked, "What would need to happen for you to return to church?" The number one answer was "Passion in the lives of the members and leaders." What people wanted to see in the lives of those who go to church is a passion...a fire. A zeal. An enthusiasm among that makes going to church meaningful.

And for you and I, if we are going to be a part of a healthy church, it has to begin with an undeniable passion for God in each of our lives!!

The dictionary says that passion is, "an intense emotion, a strong feeling, a great devotion with an intense conviction which fuels or motivates us toward compelling action." It's a lot of words to describe one word, but basically, Passion is anything that you invest your time, thought, and energy on.

God himself is a GOD OF PASSION. We are made in His likeness!! And you and I are all created to be people of PASSION. I'll be honest with you, at times, it can be really difficult to keep a high level of passion in our lives can't it? There are situations in our lives that can rob us of our passion. Let me give you a few of those situations.

5 Things that can rob our passion

1. **Not knowing our purpose** – Every single one of us has a unique purpose to fulfill in this lifetime. Not one of us is here just because. From the moment we are born, God has given a purpose for our lives. Jeremiah 29:11 – "for I know the plans I have for you, declares the lord, Plans to prosper you and not to harm you but plans to give you a hope and a future". **III. –Plinko board**, letting the chips fall where they will and hoping that you will get lucky in life.
2. **Forgetting our first love** – we have become Apathetic: That means we are "without love". What once caused our hearts to beat faster now barely affects our pulse. We fall into routine or ruts. You see we become routine about our faith. We become routine about going to church. We don't deny Christ, we just demote Him to the common place. Apathy is not a state of mind, it is a condition of the heart.
3. **Worrying about tomorrow** – [Matthew 6:25](#) - "Therefore I tell you, do not **worry** about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) - He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set **eternity** in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. Of of the greatest weapons that satan uses against us is a fear or worry about our "tomorrows". Don't let the unknowns of tomorrow steal the preciousness of today and the hope of eternity!
4. **Seeking approval from others instead of God** - [Galatians 1:10](#) - Am I now trying to win the **approval** of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. We all want to be loved and we all want to be needed. We all want to be accepted by others. If you want real passion you need to recognize that while passion draws some people it will also repel some others. A desire for popularity pours water on the fire of passion for God. Without thinking about it, we turn the fire of passion down. We trade passion for approval.
5. **Becoming lazy** - • Romans 12:11; Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

Don't fall victim to things that will take your passion away!

Our big question for this morning is "Why were the early church believer's passionate?"

They were passionate because:

1. They saw miracles, signs, and wonders (Acts 2:3-43b)

- **Sign** = something that indicates or expresses the existence of something else not immediately apparent
- **Miracle** = an event that appears to be contrary to the laws of nature and is regarded as an act of God and event or action that is amazing, extraordinary, or unexpected
- **Wonder** = amazed admiration or awe, especially at something very beautiful or new
- Here in this chapter of Acts, we find
- There was a blowing of a violent wind (vs. 2)
- They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire (vs. 3)
- They began to speak in other languages (vs. 4)
- They were bewildered (vs. 5)
- They were amazed and perplexed (vs. 12)
- Everyone was filled with awe (vs. 43a)
- And many wonders and miraculous signs were done (vs. 43b)
- Can you imagine being in that place that day and seeing all these signs, wonders, and miracles!!!??
- In Acts 1, Jesus had told his disciples to 'wait for the gift my father promised' ... and it's interesting to note that God used specific signs and wonders to help the disciples understand what was taking place.
- Because they were Jewish, they were well versed in the Old Testament terminology, they understood their cultural surroundings, and when the events of that day were taking place, the disciples had no doubt that it was God who was orchestrating the events!
- In the old Testament, wind was a sign and symbol of **God's life!** The sound of a rushing mighty wind said this is God's life-giving presence!
- If we were to continue to dig a little deeper into some word meanings in the Old Testament, we would also discover that fire was used as sign and symbol of God's acceptance! God proved He accepted the sacrifice of Elijah by consuming the offering with fire from heaven! On two occasions in the Old Testament God accepted the dedication of a new temple (a dwelling place) by sending fire from heaven! And when the disciples saw the fire from above it was evidence to them of God's acceptance.
- And in the writings of the Old Testament, the use of prophetic speech was also a sign and symbol of God's presence! Prophetic speaking ... was an undeniable sign of God's presence upon an individual ... and as the disciples began to proclaim God's greatness and mighty works in languages they had never learned it was an incredible confirmation that God was not only with them, but he was working in them and through them as well!
- The disciples and the early believer's were passionate because they saw God working right in front of them!

They were passionate because:

2. They were witnesses to the life and events of Jesus (Acts 2:22-41)

- So here's a little background to what was taking place.....Jesus had been arrested, he had been crucified, he had been buried, and then he rose again!
- After He had risen from the dead, he appeared to Mary Magdalene, and to Thomas – the doubter, and on more than one occasion, he appeared to the disciples.
- And so we come to where Peter was addressing the crowd of people and he said in vs. 22-24
- "Men of Israel, LISTEN TO THIS!! – Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, **which God did among you** through him, **as you yourselves know**. This man was **handed over to you** by God's set purpose and foreknowledge, **and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross**. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."
- What Peter is saying is that the Jewish people had front row seats to the life of Jesus! Many of them had probably seen Jesus at one point or another. They had heard the news about his death and resurrection, some of them may have even been there as witnesses to the actual death! And there really wasn't any way that you could have been a Jew in that day and in that part of the world, without knowing who Jesus was and what had happened.
- And Peter was challenging them to not forget it when he said, "as you yourselves know!"

- He goes on to say in vs. 32 – “God has raised this Jesus to life and **WE ARE ALL WITNESSES OF THAT FACT!**
- Ill. There is a great show on ABC the titled, “What would you do”. And on that show, they essentially set people up as eye witnesses to certain events. In of the events, they had a person walk into a bar and steal a ladies purse. They had cameras all around so that they could the response of other people eating and drinking. And as predicted, there were some who saw what took place, and did nothing. Others saw what took place and told somebody else. And then there were some who saw what took place and did something about it.
- A number of people had been an eye-witness to the purse being stolen, but only a few really did anything about it.
- This is exactly the same situation here in Acts 2. There were people who saw what took place, and did nothing. Others saw what took place and told somebody else. And then there were some who saw what took place and did something about it.
- The ones who “did something about it” were the ones who upon hearing Peter’s message, and knowing that what they had seen was true, accepted the message that Peter was telling and the repented and came to Christ.
- They early church believer’s were passionate because they were witnesses and acted upon what they had seen first hand!

They were passionate because:

3. They were witnesses to the fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 2: 14-41)

- Again, as Peter is addressing the crowd and he says, “Fellow Jews.....and everybody else who lives in Jerusalem..... Let me explain to you what is taking place! Listen carefully to what I have to say!”
- “The prophet Joel (who you have heard about, and read about, and studied), said this.....“In the last days, God says.....” and then Peter lists a series of prophecies regarding this very event at Pentecost!
- Then in verses 25-28, he refers back to the prophetic words of King David (who as Jewish people, they highly respected because he had been one of their Kings earlier in their history as people)
- And in verse 29 he says, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the **patriarch David** died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30But **he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.** 31Seeing what was ahead, **he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ**, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.
- And as those who were listening to Peter’s words, and remembering what they had learned as young kids and in the temple of the Jewish tradition, I think what was happening was that there were light bulbs going on in their hearts and minds.
- They began recognizing that Jesus was the fulfillment of so many prophecies that they had read and heard about! There are over 400 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled and there is a good chance that they were well versed in most of the prophecies.
- And Peter was absolutely brilliant with his speech. He knew that with the words he said, he would be speaking to their intellect, and to their knowledge, to their training, and most importantly to the reality that they were witnesses to this fulfillment of prophecy.
- Again, can you imagine being there that day and experiencing all of what the early believer’s were experiencing!? Wouldn’t that give you some motivation, some drive, some passion!? I think so.....and it did for the early believer’s as well.
- Friends, you and I are witnesses to prophecy being fulfilled everyday of our lives. Turn on the news this week and then take out your bible and begin reading about some of the prophecies. Although slightly dismal in these “last days”, you and I can have passion in our lives because we too are witnesses to the fulfillment of prophecy!

They were passionate because:

4. They experienced transformation in their own lives

Ill. One of the most amazing miracles of nature is the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. When you look at the before and after of the same creature, it is like night and day. It changes from being slow and fat and crawling on the ground, to colorful and thin and flying through the air. Yet the actual metamorphosis is a rather boring procedure from our point of view. All we actually can see is the cocoon on the outside, while all of the change is going on inside. When a caterpillar is turning into a butterfly, the process is slow. The last thing you and I would want to do is to hurry up the

process. You and I are also under the process of a change - a transformation. It's a part of our nature. And as we look to our scripture that we have been studying, we find that

- Peter, as the leader of this group, and the speaker of the day, was a testimony to the transformational work of God in a person's life!
- Again, here's a little background for us..... Peter was one of the original disciples of Jesus! There had been a three year journey that was undoubtedly a journey of a lifetime. Peter was able to experience firsthand the miraculous healings, the teachings, and the love that flowed from Jesus' life. And in the last days of Jesus, something took place in Peter's heart and mind and when asked about his association with Jesus, Peter denied that he had ever known or ever had walked with Jesus. He gave it all up, he feared for his reputation, his friendships, and for his life.
- And after Jesus had been buried and rose from the dead, like I said earlier, he appeared to the disciples on more than one occasion. The last time he appeared to them was on the beach at the Sea of Galilee. And it's at this place where Jesus reinstates Peter to be the spokesperson, the forefront witness, the great evangelist who would go on to share the message of Christ throughout all Jerusalem and beyond.
- It is an incredible testimony of the grace and mercy that Christ offers to every one of us for the purpose of transformation!
- And the early believer's were passionate because they had experienced that same Grace and Mercy in their lives!
- Peter said in verse 38 – “repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.....and you will receive the gift of the Holy spirit. This gift has been a promise to you, to your children, and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call.”
- He went on to say, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation!”
- And those who accepted this message were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.
- 3,000 people experienced began their journey of transformation that day!!!! What was, is no longer! They had a change in their heart and mind.
- Transformation in our lives takes some time. We aren't going to change 100% overnight. There is a process.
- **In your notes I've listed a simple process of how transformation works in our lives..**

3 simple stages in our Spiritual Journey

- 1. Inquisitive Stage**– The fact that 3,000 plus people were there, gives us proof that there was a level of interest about what was going on. And then in vs.37 they asked “What then shall we do?” It's good to ask questions!! It's good to be inquisitive as we are making the journey toward God.
- 2. Intentional Stage** – vs. 41- “those who accepted the message”they made a decision based on what they had heard. At some point in our journey, we have to be intentional about the decisions that we make.
- 3. Inspirational Stage** – vs. 41 – “3,000 were added to their number that day”they were inspired to tell others about what had taken place in their own lives.

Transformation in our lives creates passion because we see the changes taking place!

And lastly, they were passionate because:

5. They wanted others to know Christ.

- Friends, this is a recurring theme for us as we walk through scripture from week to week. I think God is trying to tell us something don't you?
- If the early believer's out of this passage had been content with just going to “church” and doing it more out of obligation than anything else and maybe they didn't really have the desire to share Christ with others, they would have completely missed the idea of what Jesus had taught, and what Peter was saying to them in that day.
- Evangelism, telling others about Christ, is an essential part of why you and I are here! We are here on this earth to worship God and part of worshipping him is to share our faith with others!

- You see, Jesus had really set them up with an understanding that evangelism would be expected. In Acts 1:8 – Just before Christ returned to heaven, he said to his disciples that every person who receives the holy spirit will receive power and will be witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- And as we read further into the book of Acts there are numerous times we can read statements like, “and many were added to their number that day”
- In a recent survey on churches, 75% of churches are declining or dying. 24% of churches are growing, but they’re basically getting members from other churches, and 1% of all churches are growing by reaching people who have never heard of having a relationship with Christ.
- Jesus said he came to seek and to save those who were lost. The challenge before us today is, do we want to be a part of the 1% club that’s doing what Jesus commanded His church to do.
- In order to do it, we are going to need a passion for God and a heart for those who do not yet believe!
- They early church was passionate about sharing their faith!
- God has brought together those of us who love Him and love lost souls in order to reach our world for Christ. To reach our world for Jesus, we must have a passion.