

February 4, 2007
“Passion and Power” (part 2)

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I desire that we would be a church of people with a passionate hunger for God and therefore an intense pursuit of God. There is a promise of power when we have such a passion for Jesus. Pursuing the person of Jesus, being with Jesus, always produces a passion for Jesus and passion for Jesus always produces power. Passion is the key to spiritual power. Last week after the service Janet gave me a quote she wrote down when she heard someone else preach...she thought it was from one of the General Superintendents of the church of the Nazarene. Not only is passion the key to power, but he said, “God manifests His power in us in direct proportion to our Passion for Him!”

The First requirement to move in greater power and authority in God is to hunger for it. This is the starting place. And even this is from God: Pray for a new hunger for God. Don't put your confidence in your ability to be a good follower of Jesus. Put your confidence in the ability of Jesus to lead you. Pray for a greater love for God.

Then to continue developing that passion you must make time to be alone with God. You can't love someone or have passion for someone you don't know. We must take the time to get to know Jesus better. Set aside a regular time for personal meditation and prayer. Guard against making that time mechanical or ritualistic. Remind yourself that your purpose is to meet with a real person.

Another key in developing passion is to remove any barriers in your relationship with God. The guilt and shame of sin can keep you from coming into the presence of the Lord. There is only one thing that can remove the barrier between you and God when you have done something wrong...The sacrifice of the Son, Jesus. The guilt is taken away whenever you confess your wrong (admit it), and trust in the sacrifice and power of Jesus to forgive and cleanse you. Don't make the mistake of thinking you have to try harder, have good intentions, study your Bible more to have greater knowledge of the Bible. Just accept by faith the grace of God to forgive you and be thankful.

And what does all this talk about developing passion have to do with power? Simply this: passionate love for God is the key to power. What kind of power am I talking about.

Those who were with Jesus received power. If we are passionate for Jesus, we too will receive power, but what kind of power...power to do what? Well, what was the power of those in the NT who were with Jesus?:

1. Power to preach (Share our faith in Christ with others). Last week we read from Acts 4:13-14 (NLT) In this scripture Peter and John were questioned by a council of religious leaders. The scripture says, “The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men

who had had no special training. They also recognized them as *men who had been with Jesus*.”

This week (in our NT readings) we read about Paul, Silas, and Luke: Acts 16:13-15 NLT

On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we supposed that some people met for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had come together. One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.

Paul spoke to her about Christ, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted the word spoken by Paul. Later Paul and Silas were arrested for what they were preaching. They told the jailer he must believe in Jesus. The jailer believed and he and his whole household were saved.

These men had a boldness to speak about Jesus and they spoke effectively. When they spoke people listened and many believed. It wasn't so much what they said, it was that the people who heard them were amazed at their boldness and sensed the power behind their words. Why did they have boldness and power to speak for Jesus? Because they had been with Jesus.

Today there are many people who know the Bible and can speak with theological correctness, but do they have power. Does what they say have an effect on others? Do they sense the Lord opening hearts as they speak? The Apostles were ordinary people who had no special training, but they had been with Jesus. Today, we have training classes, training DVD's, books, Bible Studies, colleges, we have all these things, but we don't have many people who have been with Jesus. We need more Christians who have a passion for Jesus. Do you have a boldness to speak about your faith? How effective are you when you do speak about Jesus? You need more than knowledge, you need power. Jesus wants to give you power and authority to speak boldly and effectively for Him, but first you must be with Him. You must develop a passion for Him.

Second, those who were with Jesus received ...

2. Power to do the miraculous. Jesus gave power to heal sicknesses, cast out demons, and do other miracles. Let me go back one more time to the scripture in Acts when Peter and John were brought before a council of religious leaders. The reason Peter and John were questioned by this council was because of the healing of a crippled man. The story begins in Acts 3:1-6 NLT - Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting a gift. But Peter said, "I don't have any money for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

I heard, once, that someone after hearing this scripture read replied, "Well, we no longer can say, I don't have any money to give you." The person who read the scripture replied, "Yes, but neither can we say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!'" He was saying we have money to give to the poor, but we lack power. He was not saying that people can no longer be healed, he was saying we lack power to heal. It's because we are not with Jesus. We know about Jesus, but we are not with Jesus. Is our lack of power due to a lack of passion for Christ? God wants to do miracles through you, but you must first develop a passion for Jesus.

3. Power in prayer. Remember Martha and Mary. Martha was obsessed with doing, but Mary discovered the one thing worth being concerned about; sitting at the feet of Jesus, being with Him and listening to Him. When we looked at that scripture we concluded that it was teaching us that it is better to be with Jesus than to do things for Jesus. We can be busy doing, even good things, and never be with Jesus.

Well, I want to share another story about Martha and Mary. Martha and Mary's brother, Lazarus, had died. Jesus came to their home 4 days later. When He arrived Martha was the first one to come out to meet Him. We pick up the story in John 11:21-35 NLT Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. *[though Martha does express faith that Jesus could have healed her brother before he died...Do you get the feeling that Martha is complaining? Perhaps rebuking the Lord, like she did in the last story we read when she complained that Jesus was not doing anything about Mary not helping her in the kitchen.]*

(v22) But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask." *[she was not expecting Jesus to raise her brother from the dead – as we will see in the next verse – she is simply once again making a statement of faith; she is saying she believed and still believes that The Father will give Jesus whatever He asks.]*

23 Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 "Yes," Martha said, "when everyone else rises, on resurrection day." *[As we see here, she was not expecting Jesus to bring her brother back to life.]*

25 Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. 26 They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." *[again, Martha expresses her faith, she was a woman of deep faith]*

28 Then she left him and returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." 29 So Mary immediately went to him.

30 Now Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. 31 When the people who were at the house trying to console Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. 32 When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell down at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." *[the same statement her sister made, but a different action taken by Jesus.]*

33 When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, he was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. 34 "Where have you put him?" he asked them.

They told him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Then Jesus wept. *[then, we know, Jesus went to the tomb and raised Lazarus from the dead]*

Now here is my point: Martha and Mary make the same statement to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Martha gets a theology lesson, but Mary, the one who discovered the one thing worth being concerned about is being with Jesus, she touches Jesus' heart, then He raises her brother.

Could it be that people who have Mary's passion for Jesus can move Jesus in a way that others cannot? Mary's passion for the Lord Jesus gave her access to the power of Jesus.

4. Power for godly living. Heb 13:20 NLT And now, may the God of peace... equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, all that is pleasing to him... .

In John 15:5 (NLT) Jesus says, "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

If we are to have a fruitful life for Christ and live a Christlike life we must be with Him, remain in Him. What is the fruitful life. (We saw that in our NT readings when we read in Gal 5:22-23 (NLT) "...when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

Many people try to be good, and do what is right. But Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to Him, like a branch attached to a vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the Vine? If not, you are missing the key to living the Christian life.

We, like David and others in the OT and like Mary and others in the NT are promised power when we are passionate for God. Power to share our faith, power that allows God to do miracle through us, power in prayer, and power to live holy and godly lives.