



**Title: Passionate Christianity**  
**Theme: Unashamedly Living for Christ**

“Then He called the crowd to Him along with His disciples and said: ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels.’” (Mark 8:34-38)

*There is a tale of the great English actor Macready. Macready was once asked by a preacher; “What is the difference between the two of them.” The actor appeared before crowds night after night proclaiming fiction and people listened with delight. The preacher spoke of the essential and of the unchanged truths of God yet, most people listened with no passion upon their hearts.*

Macready’s answer was. “I present fiction as though it was true you present truth as though it were fiction.”

That, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ is the answer to what needs to be seen in the Body of Christ. Preachers need to return to fasting, prayer and keeping their offices as a place of study. The children of God need to walk into church expecting to hear a message that is birthed from the Word of God while praying for illumination from the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ view on passionate Christianity is clearly spelled out in the gospel of Mark.

Listen as I read Mark 8:34-38, “Then He called the crowd to Him along with His disciples and said: ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels.’”

*I would propose to you that Jesus Christ desires for His disciples to live unashamedly for Him.*

*How can a Christian’s life express the same compassion that Jesus has for the Body of Christ?*

## **What Jesus taught then is still for all who are reads this message today**

In order to live passionately for Christ, Christians must grasp the truth of Jesus' message. It begins with understanding that what Jesus taught then is still for all who are within earshot of this message today.

### **Live unashamedly as His disciple**

A very key issue in expressing a passionate life for Christ is to live unashamedly as His disciple. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

Jesus knew how to separate the men from the boys. The crowds had been following Him because of the miracles. There would be those in the crowd, just like in church circles today, people who like religion, who love the works of God manifested in some way, but are unwilling to pay the cost of true discipleship. (The Bible Exposition Commentary) Discipleship is a daily discipline and true Christianity is a life that walks under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of Christ throughout the day.

Passionate Christian living is saying no to ourselves, not just simply to pleasure or possessions, but saying no to self-will. Christians know that this is not a negative, such as denying oneself something, but, rather it is a positive action. It is saying yes to the Lordship of Christ.

The heart of Christ's teaching is found in the word "deny," (*aparneoma*) meaning to disown, disregard, forsake, renounce or reject. Its practical application is to subdue the flesh and bring it under submission to a higher authority. The Greek word for "deny" means that the person enters a new state or condition. (Corinthians 5:17) The apostle Paul wrote: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:24)

Passionate Christian living enables the child of God to reject self-interest and self-fulfillment and diligently seek out how to fulfill the will of God in his life by becoming a disciple of Christ. The closest contemporary word to "disciple" is probably "apprentice." A disciple is more than a student who learns lessons by means of lectures and books. He is one who learns by living and working with his teacher in daily hands-on experiences.

Jesus sets the style of true Christianity by the way of taking up one's own cross daily and He commands Christians to live as He did. Passionate Christianity trusts God in every situation of life.

The heart factor to passionate living for the Lord is found in many places in the Word of God. One great instance is found in Daniel Chapter 1. Verse 8 tells us this about a man who grasped his purpose for living, "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way." (Daniel 1:8)

Daniel is a man of God who stayed devoted to his calling and faithful to God's will for him in the midst of a sin-centered world no matter what cross was laid upon him. He was a spiritual leader whose way of life and faith is to be considered and imitated. (Hebrews 13:7)

Daniel was taken in captivity to Babylon when King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. (Daniel 1:1: Who's Who in the Bible) He was chosen with three others (Daniel 1:6) to be trained in the language and literature of the Babylonians so they could become administrators for the Babylonian Empire. While being a part of the Royal Academy, Daniel and His fellow servants of the Lord were given the opportunity to enjoy a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table.

Daniel and his friends could have easily have justified their circumstances as being a blessing. They could have said "We will obey what the king wants and just be loyal to God on the inside." This is not the case with a man of God who has Biblical integrity.

I love the way the King James Bible puts it, "But Daniel purposed in his heart..." The Babylonians could change Daniel's home, textbooks, menu, but they could not change his heart. He and his friends purposed in their hearts that they would obey God's Word they refused to become conformed to the world around them.

Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abendnego had their first real test of faithfulness to God here. Daniel knew what was right and the other three captives resolved to do what was right also. To eat meat and to drink wine from the king's table would have caused them to become involved in indirect worship to the Babylonian deities.

It was the custom of the Babylonians to throw a small part of the meat and wine upon the earth, as an initiatory offering to the gods, so as to consecrate to the gods the whole entertainment of the feast. To have partaken of such a feast would have been to sanction idolatry and the worship of the Babylonian gods.

There was only one true God and these four men proved their faithfulness of not bowing to other gods. Later on in the Book of Daniel we read of his faithfulness in praying to God even when it came against the decree of king Darius to do so. Because of his faithfulness in prayer he saw the Lord deliver him from the mouths of the lions. (Daniel 6:1-22) Shadrach, Meshack, and Abendigo were delivered by God out of the fiery furnace they were thrown into because they refused to bow down to the image made by Nebuchadnezzar. These four men lived a passionate life before God and they carried their cross daily, choosing to obey the Lord rather than man.

Note, while the Lord's children are living in this sin cursed world with all its false man made gods, they are to take special care to be living a life that is after the heart of God. They are called to be a holy priesthood and not participate in the sins of the flesh, and the world. Even when facing an attack on their faith, they are to express a life that is passionately pleasing to the Lord. Christians are to be a peculiar people acting upon the spiritual light they have and the Lord will protect them. Those who desire to excel in God's wisdom and a holy life say in their heart as did King David, "Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies." (Psalm 141:4)

The Lord has always done extraordinary things with people who are sold out to Him and His work. The joy of seeing God use such people came after they had allowed the Lord to show His faithfulness in their act of denying themselves for the Lord. One such man was George Mueller and when asked "What was his secret" he said, "There was a day when I died, utterly died - died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will—died to the world, its approval or censure—died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends—and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

The child of God who finds his value in what is done for Christ and Christ alone knows the joy of passionately living for the Lord. (This portion of the message came about as I studied material from, Daily Study Bible Series; The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge; Word Pictures of the New Testament; Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament; New American Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary; British Weekly; Encyclopedia of 7,700 illustration; The Readers Companion; A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory Commentary; The Teacher's Commentary; Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary: Barnes Notes and The Expository Bible Commentary and the Bible)

***Unashamedly living for Christ and His cause***

*Passionate Christianity is expressed through denying self, taking up our cross daily and unashamedly living for Christ and His cause.* Jesus is very direct in pointing out an eternal fact, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it. (Mark 8:35)

The foundational truth worth grasping is found in the words, “loses his life for Me...” It is better translated in the New American Standard Bible as, “...for My sake...” The phrase, “The only thing that will count for eternal life is what is done for Christ” is a powerful truth to grasp. Discipleship is a matter of profit and loss, a question of whether we will waste our lives or invest them for the sake of Christ and His work. Personal devotion to Christ will lead to practical duties being done for the sake of Jesus.

To waste our lives is to use the spiritual gifts, talents, opportunities and possessions that He has given us on ourselves in order to gain ungodly wealth, power and fame. Christians who invest their lives for the glory of Jesus and for the good of the kingdom of God sacrificially exercise their spiritual gifts and talents through sacrificial love. They see all opportunities and possessions they have as coming from God. They sacrifice pleasure, time and energy to develop and grow God given endowments for the good of others in hopes to bring attention to Christ and reaching the lost with the Gospel.

Many have learned the joy of no longer working for themselves and have started using all they have for the Lord and for the sake of furthering the Gospel to family members, friends and co-workers. I knew of a man who had a trade that he was very gifted at. He loved his trade and spent all his time getting good at. After reaching his goal he found that wasn't satisfying, so he set his goal on making money and becoming famous. Some money started coming in and his fame most certainly grew. After a few years that did not satisfy. Instead of repenting and turning to the Lord for forgiveness, he was surrendered over the lust of his sinful flesh. (Roman's 1:21,24)

After coming to His senses, he gave His life to the Lord and ever since he has done all his work, used his gifts and talents for the glory of Christ and for the good of others.

Youth Companion ran the true story of Abraham Bininger, a Swiss boy from Zurich, who came over with his parents on the same ship as John Wesley whose preaching Abraham was exposed to. The father and mother of the lad died on the voyage and were buried at sea. When Abraham grew to manhood he gave his entire life and heart to Jesus Christ.

After hearing of the misery and the degradation of the negroes on the island St.

Thomas, he wanted to go and take the gospel of Christ to them. He sacrificed all he had to make it to St. Thomas and upon his arrival he learned that it was against the law for any person but a slave to preach to other slaves. It was the policy of the planters to keep the blacks in ignorance and superstition.

Abraham wrote a letter to the governor of St. Thomas begging urgently to become a slave for the rest of his life, promising to serve as a slave faithfully, providing he could give his leisure time to preaching the gospel of Christ to his fellow-slaves. The governor was so touched by this man's sacrifice of freedom for the sake of His Lord and for the Gospel he wrote an edict empowering Abraham Bininger to tell the story of Jesus Christ when and where ever he felt led of the Lord to do so, to black or white, bond or free man."

(Much of the teaching found in this second division of the message came to my mind as I read these study books, The Bible Exposition Commentary; The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible; Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations and the Bible)

### ***Unashamedly grasp His values***

*Those who give their entire life for the Lord and His gospel will be used of God and Christians are to unashamedly grasp His values.* Jesus points Christians to eternal values, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37)

No man can gain the whole world. But what if he could? All the pleasures and wealth and power and fame are nothing without it being obtained in the perfect will of God. The Apostle Paul wrote the young pastor Timothy and gives a truth, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." (1 Timothy 6:6-7)

Evangelist Billy Graham has done funerals for the rich and famous and through his years of ministry he has never seen a U-Hall trailer loaded with the possessions of those who have passed away being driven to the cemetery for a reason. The physically dead are not taking their worldly wealth with them.

Jesus is not saying having wealth is wrong, for God has given many, Christians and no-Christians the gift to make and manage all kinds of wealth. He is clearly teaching for mankind not to place his eternal value on how much they have or can obtain down here. Passionate Christians keep their earthly possession in the proper place, for they know that death is the grave of earthly pleasures, but it is a gateway of heavenly joys. They know to pass through this gate and not having a right relationship with Christ is to pay an eternal cost which cannot be purchased back even with the wealth of the entire world.

In His parable of the Rich Fool Jesus teaches us that, "...a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions ." (Luke 12:15b) In this parable the rich fool found his security in the fact that he was blessed with a good crop. "He thought to himself, 'What shall I do?... He said [I] have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" (Luke 12:19) In the parable, "God said to him, 'you fool! This very night your very life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself.'" (Luke 12:20) Jesus went on to say, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up for himself but is not rich toward God." (Thoughts coming to my mind and heart as I read these study books, The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible; The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary and the Bible)

### **Confesses unashamedly the Lordship of Christ**

*Lastly, passionate Christianity confesses unashamedly the Lordship of Christ.* Jesus gives a powerful warning, "If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38) Whosoever denies Christ Lordship over them, whether through pride, wickedness or fear here on this side will be rejected by Christ on the other side and this has an eternal cost. On the other hand those who openly confess Him as Savior and Lord will have the privilege of having Jesus acknowledging them in heaven before God and all the angels.

Passionate Christianity speaks out as the apostle Paul did, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes..." (Romans 1:16)

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He knew God's forgiveness and the power of it to save people from their sins. This gospel message has power to free all who surrender to the Lordship of Christ from the bondage of sin. Like this adulterous and sinful generation, Paul was carrying the same message Christians are to give today.

Like many in America who are without Christ, Rome was a proud city. The Gospel came from Jerusalem, the capital city of one of the most insignificant nations in Paul's time, according to Romans. Christians in that day were not commonly known among the elite of society; they were common people and some even slaves.

Any message handed down from Caesar would immediately get the attention of most in Rome. Paul called his message, "The Gospel of God." (Romans 1:1) I have just recently read the testimony of one great Bible scholar who shared about a season in his life in high school when he held the position of office monitor. He had the privilege of and was entrusted to take important messages to teachers and the school staff. Often he had to walk in on the class and interrupt its lesson to give an important message. No teacher ever scolded him, because they all knew his position and his message came from the principal's office. He was never afraid or ashamed because he knew by what authority it was given.

Passionate Christians are like the Apostle Paul, they are taking the only life giving message that can be proclaimed to a lost sin sick world that offers hope, forgiveness and empowerment to live victoriously over all that strives to keep mankind out of fellowship with the Lord. They are not ashamed and they know that all authority has been given to Christ and He has called them to be involved in the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20) (This portion of the message is birthed by studying these research material, The Preacher's Outline & Sermon; Barnes Notes; The Pulpit Commentary; The Bible Exposition Commentary and the Bible)

## **Word of God holds truth and not fiction**

*Passionate Christianity lives in a way that causes all onlookers to see that the Word of God holds truth and not fiction.* This lifestyle knows the joy of dying to self and trusting in God's ever-loving and protecting hand, regardless of what circumstance Christians may be facing. Passionate Christianity lives for the sake of Christ and causes Christians to fulfill their part in the Great Commission. Passionate Christianity places the same value on their souls that Christ does and lastly passionate Christianity expresses a lifestyle that confesses Christ as Savior and Lord unashamedly.

A few years ago I had the privilege to meet Pastor Carter Conlon of Times Square Church in New York City. His entire life expresses a passion for Christ. His devotion to preparing the preaching of God's Word comes from a close intimate relationship with Jesus, thus his preaching reflects his passion for Christ. The way he lives his life, proclaims to others that God's Word is truth.

Before his encounter with the our living Lord he was a man who lived a life that was full of anger, loudness and bitterness that even his presence would at times cause his little girl to run to her room. Then one day he experienced the power of the Holy Spirit of Christ coming into his life and heart and he was immediately changed.

His little girl is now a young woman, who puts her trust in Christ because she has seen just how much the Lord changed her dad. She had seen her dad continue to live passionately for the Lord even in the mist of having to carry a very difficult cross. He is a man who has given up what he did so well so as to be obedient to God's call on his life. He has the same value on his soul as Christ does and He says no to the passions of the world to feed his soul the Word of God so he can fully enjoy the benefits of living passionately for Christ. He is a man of God who has no problem with confessing to all in ear shot, that Jesus Christ is his Savior and Lord.

For the sake of application, are you a Christian that lives a life that says Word of God is truth and must be lived out or does your life present God's Words as fiction before the eyes of those who see your life? Do you trust in the Lord Jesus to empower you to carry your cross? Have you surrendered your life over to God for the sake of Christ and how much are you involved in fulfilling the Great Commission? Do you unashamedly express the Lordship of Christ in your life?

Let us pray!!!

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