

July 24, 2020

Hello Brethren,

What do you feel strongly about? What lights the fire in your soul and for which you have focus and a lot of energy? What are you really PASSIONATE about in your life?

An example of the kind of passion I'm talking about was shown in March of 1775. Tensions between the American colonies and Great Britain were high when a fellow named Patrick Henry stood to address the Continental Congress. It was apparently a rather impromptu speech about the need to separate from the British crown and form their own union – something about which Mr. Henry felt very strongly.

Perhaps you've never heard or read the entire thing, but I'll almost guarantee you know the last seven words of his fiery and impassioned speech. As he brought his relatively short oration to its crescendo, he thundered out to the audience "Give me liberty, or give me death!" (See, I told you, you knew the last seven words...) He was passionate about the founding of a new nation.

It seems hardwired into human beings that we have strong feelings about certain things. Not everyone feels strongly about the same things or in the same way, and all of our passions certainly aren't on the same magnitude as founding a new country! But there are still a lot of different things that fire up the imagination and passions of people.

A few things about which people are commonly quite passionate are:

Fashion; Art; Health and fitness; Hobbies; Technology; Sports and sports teams; Hunting and fishing; or Anti-hunting (and maybe anti fishing too); Animal rights and more. Oddly enough, just a few days ago I was talking with someone who was very passionate about animal rights, and specifically opossum rights... OK, I gotta admit that was a new one...

On a more somber note, today there are a lot of people who are passionate and even violent about some prickly social issues. And many are very passionate about the political issues and platforms that are intractably connected to all those social issues.

That's a lot of passion, a lot of emotion, and chances are very good that YOU are passionate about some issues too. So maybe the more important question is: *Are you passionate about the right things?*

While there is nothing wrong with strong feelings about sports, art, animals or Ford vs. Chevy (the answer there is obvious!), there are some things that are more important and deserve more of our attention than others. Are we overlooking something INFINITELY more important that most people miss, yet that we should be passionate about?

In the Bible we read an account of when Jesus Christ went up to the Temple. He saw people who were doing business changing money, selling animals to be sacrificed, and so forth. Not only

were they doing business on holy ground, but very likely they weren't being honest, and were taking advantage of those who came to the Temple to worship and offer sacrifices.

We read in John 2:15-16 that He made a whip of rope, flipped over the money changers tables and with a fury DROVE them all out of the Temple! In verse 17 it says "Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE HAS EATEN ME UP."

Jesus loved people, was compassionate toward those who were hurting and in need of healing and comfort, and He taught them continually the things that would really make a difference in their lives. He had a passion for people and for serving.

But what He was most passionate about was the things of God, the standards, values and principles of the great Creator God! What about you? How passionate are you and I for the standards, values and principles of God? Have we chosen to be passionate about what is really the most important?

I want to read something from the Apostle Paul as it is translated in The God's Word translation of the Bible. They have Titus 2:11-14 reading this way:

*"After all, God's saving kindness has appeared for the benefit of all people. **It trains us to avoid ungodly lives filled with worldly desires so that we can live self-controlled, moral, and godly lives in this present world.** At the same time we can expect what we hope for – the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us to set us free from every sin and to cleanse us so that we can be **His special people who are enthusiastic about doing good things.**"*

I think most of us have that passion, that zeal, that "fire in the belly" for the things of God. But with all the distractions swirling around us, the challenges and turmoil in the world, it can be easy for us to lose our focus, and allow our greatest level of passion to be given to something else.

We need to make sure we are firmly connected to the Word of God. Read and study it daily. With prayer and periodic fasting ask God for the passion we need to have as His people. And ask Him for the guidance we need to negotiate these challenging times. If we are immersed in the Word of God, it is harder for other issues to steal all our time and energy!

I am sure we are all passionate about various things. But are we right now passionate about the most important thing? Do we have a Patrick Henry level passion for a new Kingdom, the Kingdom of God?

Tomorrow my family and I will be in Van Buren in the morning and then travel down to Mena for afternoon services. I hope you all have a good Sabbath!

Best regards,

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