

Enthusiasm Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, May 6, 2018

Main Theme – Considering enthusiasm (i.e., spiritual passion) in relation to our Christian walks.

WORSHIP & PRAYER COMMUNION

At this time, I want to call forth the ushers to distribute the emblems of Communion:

- The BREAD – Symbolizing the Body of Christ (broken for us)
- The JUICE – Symbolizing the Blood of Christ (shed for us all)

Allow me to share some thoughts from a devotional I read recently:

-When you come to the Communion table, look BACK. Communion provides us with an opportunity for sacred remembrance. This is our chance to pause and contemplate the work of Christ on the Cross. Consider what He accomplished for us nearly two thousand years ago, and ponder this amazing demonstration of His great love.

-When you come to the Communion table, look AHEAD. Scripture tells us to observe the Lord's Supper "until he comes again" (1 Cor. 11:26). The first time Jesus came to this earth, He came as the Suffering Servant. Next time, He will arrive as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Communion reminds us that He shall come again in power.

-When you come to the Communion table, look WITHIN. The Lord's Supper provides the opportunity for personal evaluation and necessary spiritual assessment. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas that displease the Lord. Once we acknowledge these areas, let us repent accordingly, for He is yet forgiving and rich in mercy.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - Men's Breakfast – Saturday, June 9 (9–10:15am)
 - WM – Tuesday Evening, June 12 (6:30–8:30pm)
- **Upcoming Events (SPECIAL)**
 - Membership Packets – Due TODAY (connect w/ Pastor)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work
 -Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

BABY UPDATE

Many of you may have noticed that Misty and I did NOT arrive at church alone this morning. On Thursday, DCF contacted us – asking if we would be willing to take (at that time) a 3-day old baby girl named Royalty Ann. Prayerfully, we agreed to do so. Overnight, our whole world changed (as you can well imagine).

I don't want to get into the specifics from the pulpit re: DCF and their adoptive process. At this time, we are essentially foster parents for the child. This MAY turn into a case of full adoption in time – it may NOT. There is a chance she will go back to the birth family. There is a chance that she will become a permanent member of our family. May the will of the Lord be accomplished! All that I can say is this: we will love and care for this child like she is our own until IF/WHEN she becomes our own.

THANK YOU for the prayers, kind words, gifts, etc. I cannot tell you how amazing you all have been in recent months. You have always been so kind/generous to my family and me. But with my father's declining health—and now the placement of baby Royalty—your kindness has been so evident.

Philippians 1:3–6 (NIV)

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

The children are dismissed at this time with their teachers, Byron and Misty. May the Lord bless you as you study His Word! May the Lord bless those teens and adults who will remain in the Sunday Service!

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Main Theme – Considering enthusiasm (i.e., spiritual passion) in relation to our Christian walks.

OPENING REMARKS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today! Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. Please turn to Romans chapter 12.

SETTING THE STAGE

Last Sunday morning I shared the first installment of a three-part series on the theme of spiritual ENTHUSIASM. Allow me a few moments to recap essential elements of that teaching:

1) DEFINITION

Enthusiasm (GENERAL) – an intense fervor; a sense of passion, zeal and eagerness.

2) EXPRESSIONS

People can possess and express enthusiasm in number of ways...

- An enthusiasm for a particular HOBBY (a passion for hiking)
- An enthusiasm for a particular SPORT (a passion for the Patriots)
- An enthusiasm for a particular field of STUDY (a passion for science)
- I have a passion/enthusiasm for MARVEL films (Avengers: Infinity War)

3) SPIRITUAL ORIGINS

However, the term actually has RELIGIOUS connotations (ORIGINS):

-If you look at the dictionary (ARCHAIC usage): “Religious fervor supposedly resulting directly from divine inspiration, typically involving speaking in tongues and wild, uncoordinated movements of the body.”

-If you dig a little bit DEEPER – Enthusiasm comes THROUGH 17th-Century French/late Latin FROM the Greek enthousiasmos; from enthous ‘possessed by a god; inspired.’ Thus, enthusiasm was ORIGINALLY a compound term in the Greek: en (in) theos (god), referring to a sense of passion, zeal and eagerness that resulted from divine connection; as one was possessed by; inspired by; moved by; stirred by; energized by a god (IN OUR CASE, the Lord God v. the perverse influence of a pagan ‘god’ or demonic spirit).

4) SPIRITUAL RELEVANCE

As was noted last week, there is a place in our Christianity for biblical ENTHUSIASM. i.e., There is a place for godly passion, zeal and eagerness that flows from union with Him. I am referring to the sense of fervor we experience as He inspires us, moves us, stirs us, and energizes us!

KEY – Scripture calls us to a sense of enthusiasm OFTEN (frequently utilizing the functionally-equivalent terms passion, zeal and fervor). As we noted, it is amazing how often the Bible calls us to this spiritual condition and the number of areas we are commanded to exhibit it...

- We are to be passionate about our SERVICE to God
- We are to be passionate about the GREAT COMMISSION
- We are to earnestly seek the GIFTS of the Holy Spirit of God
- We are to possess a sense of fervor in our fields of WORK/labor
- We are to be a people zealous for/fervent in the discipline of PRAYER
- We are to be a people zealous for/fervent in our LOVE FOR OTHERS
- We are to be passionate about our LOVE FOR GOD (expression)

Romans 12:11 (NIV)

11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

TRANSITIONS PT. 1

FYI – I would like to use this passage from the Book of Romans as a LAUNCHING POINT to explore some new facets of spiritual enthusiasm.

Romans 12:11 (NIV)

11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

NOTE – Noteworthy Items:

- 1) Zeal is something we are to PRIORITIZE (hence Paul's commandment)
- 2) Zeal CAN wane, fade, decrease and diminish (can't be taken, but 'forfeited')
- 3) Zeal is something that we are told to KEEP (maintain, retain, sustain & preserve)

NOTE – It is this third point that I want to identify as the FOUNDATION for today's material...

TRANSITIONS PT. 2

Since we are told to keep our sense of spiritual enthusiasm, there must be PRACTICAL STEPS that we can take to obey this commandment. Moreover, it also follows that there are practical steps that we can take IF & WHEN our passion begins to diminish.

KEY – The point I am making is that YOU determine your level of passion!

- If you HAVE spiritual fervor – there are steps you must take to PRESERVE it
- If you have LOST your fervor – there are steps you can take to REKINDLE it

1) We must realize that we are engaged against a spiritual and worldly-system that does NOT want you energized in serving the Lord. The last thing Satan wants is to contend with a passionate follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will work to sap you of your enthusiasm, so you must proactively work to PRESERVE it. Easy? NO! Beneficial? YES!

2) We must realize the difficulty in being a Christian who has lost his or her zeal. Of all the spiritual conditions we can/do face as believers, this is among the most challenging. i.e., You know that you should be passionate about serving God, etc., but you simply don't FEEL anything. There is great joy/power in discovering that YOU can work to resolve this in Christ, REKINDLING your passion utilizing biblical principles.

TRANSITIONS PT. 3

And THIS is what I want to address this morning and next Sunday. I want to put forth an array of clear, down-to-earth principles that can help you to KEEP &/or RENEW your spiritual enthusiasm.

- These are principles found in the Word of God
- These are precepts commonly shared in literature on the topic
- These are things that have benefited me in my spiritual journey with Christ

LET'S DELVE IN

PRINCIPLE #1

The first principle I want to share—as it relates to spiritual enthusiasm—actually has to do with our PHYSICAL bodies.

NOTE – We do well to realize that man is a complex being, uniquely comprised of an immortal spirit, an immaterial soul (i.e., seat of our mind, will and emotions), and a material body. Moreover, God has a unique purpose and plan for the WHOLE of you! Consider the following...

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE – I don't think we humans fully understand the relationships between the three elements that comprise our makeup. There is an intricate INTERPLAY between our spirit, soul and body that transcends understanding: but it is a reality we must contend with...

-i.e., Our spiritual health impacts/influences our emotional/mental health (spirit→soul)

-i.e., Our emotional/mental health impacts/influences our physical bodies (soul→body)

KEY – And I posit that the manner in which we treat our earthly body impacts the more spiritual and soulful elements of our being. Thus, a great way to FORFEIT your spiritual vigor is to allow for physical BURNOUT.

-Let yourself get stretched too thin

-Exhaust yourself and forfeit proper rest

-Never exercise &/or eat and drink properly

KEY – If you want to KEEP your spiritual fervor, you must prioritize your physical being!

KEY – If you want to RENEW your spiritual passion, maybe it starts with your physical being!

ILL – In 1 Kings 18, the prophet Elijah experienced a tremendous spiritual VICTORY opposing the false prophets that had misled the nation of Israel (under the influence of Queen Jezebel and King Ahab). On Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah supernaturally worked to establish the reality that the Lord God is the One True God worthy of worship and obedience!

Yet, this great victory brought about a RESPONSE from Queen Jezebel:

1 Kings 19:1–3 (NIV)

1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

Q. How did Elijah respond? Quite poorly, in fact:

1 Kings 19:1–3 (NIV)

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

Q. How many realize that Elijah is sounding pretty down right now! Spiritual fervor has WANED!

KEY – Yet, let's look at what takes place, as the Lord begins to restore this mighty prophet...

1 Kings 19:3b–8 (NIV)

...All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Q. How did the Lord (through an angel in this case) begin to restore Elijah?

BEFORE God released a divine word to the prophet (which would come later in the chapter), he made the prophet Elijah get some rest and eat a good meal. He was in NO PHYSICAL SHAPE to commence the SPIRITUAL journey that was ahead of him. God—in His practicality—wisely began to address this issue with a good meal and a good nap.

SUMMATIONS...

- 1) If you want to KEEP your passion – take care of your physical body/being
- 2) If you want to RENEW your passion – maybe begin with a good meal/sleep

PRINCIPLE #2

The second principle I want to share—as it relates to spiritual enthusiasm—deals with SIN.

SIN—being a violation of God’s ways and heart—does NOTHING positive concerning spiritual fervor and passion. In fact, sin works against a healthy enthusiasm! As one author writes, “You cannot be enthusiastic and guilty at the same time!”

KEY – If you want to KEEP your spiritual fervor, be vigilant against sin.

Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses [i.e., faithful biblical examples of the faith from ch. 11 who cheer us on in this great race called life], let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Q. How is the Christian life characterized in this text? As a race that we are to effectively run...

Q. How is sin characterized in this text? As an entangling element/hindrance in our running...

Show me a Christian that is indulging in sin, and I will show you a Christian that cannot maximize their spiritual potential or ZEAL. How can they? They are running with unnecessary weights on their backs and cords tied around their feet! They are encumbered!

KEY – If you want to KEEP your spiritual fervor, be vigilant against sin IN ALL its forms.

Scripture offers a principle in Song of Solomon 2: “Little foxes spoil the vines” (i.e., small elements—tiny foxes—can have a huge impact on entire vineyards. IN THE SAME WAY small sins can have a disastrous impact on life and living. Little sins (if there is such a thing) become bigger and bigger sins!

-Be WARY against the vile/disastrous nature of sin! Remember the aharit!

James 1:13–15 (NIV)

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

KEY – If you want to RENEW your spiritual fervor, maybe it’s time for a meaningful REPENTANCE. Maybe it is time to allow the Lord to speak to you regarding areas that have displeased Him and sapped/diminished the fervor you once had for Him.

In such times, live in and utilize Psalm 51 (David’s prayer after being confronted w/ his sin)...

Psalm 51:1–12 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
- 5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;**
let the bones you have crushed **rejoice**.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and **renew** a steadfast spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 **Restore** to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

SUMMATIONS...

- 1) If you want to KEEP your passion – stay on guard against sin and its influence
- 2) If you want to RENEW your passion – maybe practice confession & repentance

PRINCIPLE #3

The third principle I want to share is vital as it relates to maintaining and/or renewing passion: REMEMBER YOUR FIRST LOVE.

NOTE – The Book of Revelation was penned about sixty-years after the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. All of the apostles were dead, save the apostle John, who was in exile on the Isle of Patmos. In exile, the Lord appears to an aged John, and speaks to him about a great many things—a great many things that are prophetic in nature for the end of the age. YET, the Lord had much to say to a series of church existing in the days of John.

-Let's consider one portion of the message of Christ to the church at Ephesus:

Revelation 2:1–5 (NIV)

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

KEY – A few things stand out about this message from Christ to His church:

1) The church had all the markings of a HEALTHY church! I would love for New Life to have such a spiritual resume (v. 2–3). EXTERNALLY, they were doing everything a church should be doing!

2) Yet, INTERNALLY, something was amiss—something which the Lord highlighted. For all of their hard work and Christian duty, they had lost their love (i.e., their passion and enthusiasm for the Lord). They were so busy DOING His work they forgot about BEING His.

Q. What was the solution?

A. The Lord called them to consider how far they had DRIFTED from this place of intimacy and passion, making the determination to GO BACK to that place of spiritual passion.

NOTE – They were to remember their first love (the love that they had at first).

KEY – If you want to KEEP your spiritual fervor, think continually of your first love.

- Go back often in your mind to where you were when God saved you
- Go back often in your mind to what your life was like when He first rescued you
- Recall what you felt in those early moments of your faith (when all was new & exciting)
- Think often of what first made you want to come to Christ; what about Him energized you, etc.

There's a spiritual value in looking back and remembering your first love! KEEPS YOU ENTHUSED

KEY – If you want to RENEW your spiritual fervor, think back to the days of your first love.

I have found that the longer one is a Christian, the more they forget about their point of origin and the passion they once had. When one's passion is depleted, it is NECESSARY for such a one to REMEMBER and REDISCOVER what they had previously experienced in Christ.

- Go back often in your mind to where you were when God saved you
- Go back often in your mind to what your life was like when He first rescued you
- Recall what you felt in those early moments of your faith (when all was new & exciting)
- Think often of what first made you want to come to Christ; what about Him energized you, etc.

- Maybe you can go back by literally reading your journals/diaries
- Maybe you can go back by listening to some songs that take you back
- Maybe you can go back by thinking of & sharing stories of your first days
- Maybe you can go back & listen to some sermons/preachers of your youth

KEY – Find SOMETHING that takes you back to that place of origin! Go back & remember!

SUMMATIONS...

- 1) If you want to KEEP your passion – remember your first love
- 2) If you want to RENEW your passion – remember your first love

CONCLUSION

- 1) Care for your physical being (rest, food, etc.)
- 2) Be vigilant against sin & deal with the pet sin(s)
- 3) Remember your first love (go back to the origin)