

**A BIBLICALLY FUNCTIONING CHURCH**  
**Passionate Spirituality**

*(Available on CD)*

What was the driving force behind Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Wesley, William Carey, Amy Carmichael, Hudson Taylor and Eric Little?

When you hear the word passion, what comes to mind? What does it mean to be passionate about someone or something? What are you passionate about? A workable definition for the word passion is “expressing intense feelings” or “fervor” or “zeal.”

Not only does the history of Christianity reveal Christians who have lost their passion for Christ, the New Testament reveals the same has been true for some churches.

*Biblical Teaching Made Relevant in Today's World*  
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**I. The Lukewarm Church**

The Book of Revelation tells of one church which lost its spiritual passion for Christ and his church. In Revelation 3:14-19 we have Christ's message to the church of Laodicea written by the apostle John. In it we find strong words condemning the believers for settling for mediocrity. They were lukewarm. They sought to be “politically correct”, and Christ told them to repent or else he would cast them off – remove his blessing and would discipline them because they were no longer passionate about the work of his church.

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.”

The Lukewarm Church in Laodicea

Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven churches in Asia Minor and was known for its banking industry, manufacture of wool and a medical school. However, the church had become as bland as the tepid water that came into the city. In contrast to the lukewarm believers in Laodicea, we have a New Testament example of the apostle Paul's passionate pursuit to know Christ better.

## II. Paul's Passionate Pursuit

In the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, he reveals his passion for Christ and his pursuit to know Christ at a deeper experiential level. Philippians 3:4b-14 is worth our consideration! In chapter 3:4b Paul writes of a change that came over him. He writes how he no longer trusted in his worldly accomplishments and of his on-going passion to know Christ better.

Yes, Paul was a choleric personality. He was domineering at times and was an intense person. Even with his many faults, Paul passionately pursued knowing Christ at a deeper level. His obstacles were many but he kept at it.

Paul admitted he had not arrived spiritually. He said, in effect, I'm continuing to pursue Christ as Christ continues to pursue me – molding me to his likeness through trials and triumphs. Paul was not working to gain his salvation. He was saved. He wanted an even closer relationship with Jesus Christ who died to save him. Paul challenges each of us who have walked with Jesus for years never to say to ourselves, "I'm okay", "I'm fine."

Have you ever thought you have spiritually arrived? Paul would not be able to comprehend a believer in Jesus Christ ever thinking such thoughts.

Paul pressed on toward the goal to win the prize. What was Paul's goal? It was an ever deepening love for and service to Jesus. The prize is in the future. Paul knew he was going to give an account of his thoughts, actions and service for Christ and did not want to be ashamed when he faced Jesus.

## SUMMARY AND APPLICATION FOR OUR LIVES

Whatever you are passionate about is in first place. Is your purpose in life to please God and enjoy serving him? Jesus said, "Happy are those who hunger and thirst to live a holy life for they will be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6)

What is the driving force within you?

Our passionate pursuit for a deeper relationship with Jesus can take a number of paths. There are many things we can do and certainly things we must put off! I could comment on the importance of extended times of prayer, the value of fasting, the joy of going deeper in studying the Word of God and abiding in him as John 15 instructs us. But, I'll close with this. If you desire a passionate relationship with Jesus rather than a casual relation-ship with him, know this, it is the Holy Spirit who reveals Christ.

Jesus said, "When he, the Spirit of truth, [Holy Spirit] comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." (John 16:13a, 14) The joyous and hope-filled Christian life is lived in and through the Holy Spirit.  
Amen