

Call to Obedience #266
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Every sin, spiritual neglect, and excuse is a result of a lack of passion for God.

Pressures and Passion

By Reimar Schultze

"My soul followeth hard after thee..." (Psalm 68:3).

Has life ever seemed to you like a pressure cooker? Have you ever felt that you had pressures from every side? Have you ever yearned for a day or a week or a job without pressure? Have you ever heard it said, "I just can't stand the pressure anymore," or "My son has lost his faith because of the pressures at college," or "My husband has quit his job because of the pressures at work," or "My daughter was pressured into a marriage she did not want"? Have there been times when you felt like you could not resist the pressures of the world anymore? Pressures have led to mental breakdowns, to family breakups, to suicides, to anger, to anxiety, to drug addiction, to alcoholism, and to any and every kind of excuse and sin.

Well, my friend, I have news for you. We will never get away from these pressures. Pressure is inevitably tied to human existence. The first pressure man ever experienced was in the Garden of Eden when Satan pressured Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. And our adversary has kept up the pressure on humankind ever since to have it his way. So let us consider, one by one, the pressures faced by various classes of people.

The Pressures of the World.

Ministers face tremendous pressures for church growth. Whenever two ministers meet, almost inevitably, the questions begin: How large is your church? How many are in your Sunday School? How many did you baptize last year? The questions are repeated every year from church headquarters or bishops: How many? and How much?

Almost the whole life of the minister is about whether he can produce the numbers. If he can't, he is looked upon with disdain and pushed aside as a failure, who might best serve in some small country church. Consequently, many ministers, because of the pressures, devise or copy all kinds of human methods to make the church grow and, in the process of selling out to the world, they lose their health, family, and sanity. Is it any wonder that less than one out of three ministers make it to the finish line of their ministerial calling? Most everyone in the church has different expectations from the man of God. And, too often, the minister kills himself trying to please everyone.

Working men have pressures. There is the pressure of these men and their families moving to another city every time the boss whistles. The family life and church life is uprooted again and again. There is the pressure to sell his Sunday worship with the family for overtime, to abdicate his role as a priest in the home to only become a distant follower of Christ, and to blame it all on the job. There is the pressure of the Christian

worker to give in to sexual temptation, to pornographic posters, literature, and videos passed around at the work place, and to foul talk accompanying the coffee breaks. There is the pressure to move up the ladder of success to keep up with the standards of friends and associates.

Housewives have pressures: the pressures to get a job, to go to work, to "make something out of their lives," more than changing diapers, washing dishes, and ironing shirts. There is the pressure from the fledgling children who want clothes like the rest of the school children, who want the privilege of having a boy or girl friend, who demand to watch television shows that others watch, to have their own stereos at age fourteen, to experience sex at sixteen, and to have a car with no curfew at seventeen! Add to that the pressure of the school, which does not only want the child for education but to take him away from the home and church for band practice and basketball games.

College students have pressures. They enter college with traditional Christian values, and most of them leave college having abandoned their faith under the onslaught of four years of intellectual bombardment of secular philosophies, coming out believing nothing.

The Answer to Pressure Is Passion.

It does not take the mind of a physicist to know that pressure must be overcome by pressure. And, in this case, we call the overcoming pressure: passion for God! If your passion for God is greater than the pressures of the world, you win every step of the way. **Every falling into sin and yielding to the world's pressures is preceded by a decline of passion for the things of God.**

If there is one common denominator amongst all conquering saints, it is this: they are all in a daily hot pursuit of God. All of their desires, ambitions, and motives are thrown into a big box called the will of God, and anything that does not fit into the will of God's box is brushed aside and considered wood, hay, and stubble, waiting to be burned up on that great Judgment Day.

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was rent in two, and every man was bidden to enter the holy of holies to live there forever in intimate fellowship with God. It is there where our passion for the Triune God is heated to red and white-hot, consuming all of our other passions, desires, and motives, to ever behold the beauty of his holiness. With this divine inferno in the human heart, this zeal for God, the burning of the soul for the things of eternity, all the pressures in the world become as if they are nothing but earthly irritations waiting for their day of absolute doom.

You take a man with such fire for God, when he is asked to sacrifice Sunday worship for work in the office, he has nothing but a quick and powerful, "Thanks but no thanks," rolling out of his heart. Such men see ever so clearly that on Judgment Day, when the books will be opened, they will be judged not by how they pleased their boss but by how they fulfilled their divine priestly role as spiritual heads of their families. When there is such passion for God, the working man will be drawn to prayer meeting as a bee is drawn to a pot of honey.

When a housewife is passionately in love with God, the pressures of the requests of her not-so-godly children to have the things of the world will seem no more than the little

tugs of a two-year-old on a mother's skirt. Such mothers of passion have their goals set to "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6), and they will be so fixed upon that goal that all whimpers, whinings or fussings will be rebuked before they can raise the slightest speck of sympathy. Such women know that there is no higher calling for a mother than full-time motherhood. They know that such a calling rises above women lawyers, women doctors, women scientists, and women newscasters.

The answer to the pressures of the world is a passion for God that leads to lives of absolutely no compromise with the world, to lives that kill even all of the best of King Agag's sheep and goats and, yes, even Agag himself (1 Sam. 15:1-9). Such passion for God is of the Holy Spirit and will not deny Jesus at the fires outside of the high priest's home.

Such passion for God will keep our college students from buckling under secular pressures and will bring them out of college having brought unbelievers to conviction or having set other students ablaze for God! Such passion for God will create college students who are more concerned with the lost state of their classmates than with their grade point averages.

Let us not blame the world for destroying the faith of our youth. Rather, blame their lack of passion for God. The apostle Paul, over and over again, threw himself into the most secular, pagan environments, always coming out with a few more names written down in glory because he was ever pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

How Do We Get a Passion for God?

First, we must think rightly about our salvation. We must realize that, to begin with, we must confess all of our sins, repent of them, and be born of God (1 John 1:9; Luke 13:3; Rev. 3:20). The Old Testament typology for this is found in Israel experiencing the blood of the Lamb in Egypt. We must experience the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts and lintels of our hearts. But, then, we must go on with the pillar and the cloud. It is only as we go on in our walk with God, following the pillar and the cloud that we will experience further cleansing. The cleansing of the blood is where the light is. Hence, John says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

If, once you are born of God, you do not move with the light, if you become a squatter in Egypt where you first saw the light, you will be without blood coverage. The whole context of Paul's salvation doctrine is expressed by these words, "in Christ," which means, "in the light," and by the words, "let us go on unto perfection," and "pressing toward the mark for the prize," (Heb. 6:1; Phil. 2:14).

If you don't capture the importance of walking with God, you will never get a passion for the Lord. Without that, you will walk into Satan's traps over and over again, even as Eve did in the Garden of Eden. You will become a "carnal" Christian, which is a lukewarm Christian who Jesus will spit out of his mouth on Judgment Day (Rev. 3:16). Don't be deceived!

Secondly, we must develop spiritual habits. Having been born again, we must from the time of our rebirth never allow the Self-life to make another choice (Luke 9:23). Self

will never take one step after Jesus. It is the archenemy of Jesus. It crucified Jesus, and it will continue to do so even though it may be dressed in a beautiful, religious robe (Matt. 23:27). My friend, we are on our way to a passion for God, and if we don't take this way, we will never develop a passion for God. Never! We must become witnesses and press to witness at every opportunity (Prov. 3:6; Rev. 12:11). Only witnessing Christians are overcomers. We must pray without ceasing, rejoice evermore, give thanks in everything, for God inhabits the praises of his people (1 Thess. 5:16–17; Ps. 22:3).

And, finally, we must send everything away each morning to meet alone with God: for the reading of Scripture, for waiting upon God for his direction, allowing him to convict us and to encourage us, for us to be inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and for us to draw nigh unto God so that he will draw nigh unto us. It is absolutely impossible for Christians to catch the fire, the passion of God, unless they spend intimate time near God's fireside.

Pressures? We all have them. But none of us need to succumb to the pressures of this world. And none of us will if we develop a passion for God greater than any pressure the world or the devil can throw at us. That is true for all children, for all high school and college youth, and for all adults.