

Call to Obedience # 430
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Pressures and Passions

by Reimar Schultze

My soul followeth hard after thee... (Ps. 63:8).

Has life ever seemed to you like a pressure cooker? Have you ever felt that you had pressures from every side? Have you ever heard it said: "I just cannot stand the pressure anymore," or "My son has lost his faith because of the pressures at college," or "My husband has started to work on Sundays because of the pressures at work," or "My daughter was pressured into a marriage she did not want"? 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. So let us get more specific considering, 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 did you baptize last year?" Almost the whole life of the minister is about whether he can produce the numbers. If he cannot, he is looked upon as a failure. Consequently, many ministers, because of the pressure, quit the ministry, devise all kinds of gimmicks or lower the biblical standards to make the church grow. This is the way many deal with pressure.

WORKING MEN have pressures. There is the pressure to move to a different city at the boss's whim, uprooting family and church life. There is the pressure to sell his Sunday worship with the family for overtime and abdicate his role as a priest of the home to only become a distant follower of Christ. There is the pressure of the Christian worker to give in to sexual temptation, to pornography or 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. All of these pressures can be blamed on the job.

HOUSEWIVES have pressure to get a job in order to "make something out of their lives," rather than changing diapers, washing dishes, and ironing

shirts. There is pressure from the children who want clothes like their peers, who want the privilege of having a boy-friend or girl-friend, who demand to watch inappropriate television shows, to spend hours with electronic gadgets, to experience sex at sixteen, or to have a car with no curfew at seventeen! Add to that the pressure of the school, which wants to take the child away from the home and church for band practice, basketball games and other sports or activities.

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 as unbelievers.

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 will 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 that 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 God box is brushed aside and considered as wood, hay, and stubble, waiting to be burned up on that great Judgment Day. Remember it was said of Jesus: *For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up...* (Ps. 69:9). Let that same zeal eat you up and you will not leave the course set before you.

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 in intimate fellowship with God. It is there where our passion for the Triune God is heated to white-hot, consuming all of our other passions. With this divine inferno in the human heart, this zeal for God and 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 factory, he has nothing but a quick and powerful, "Thanks, but no thanks," rolling out of his heart. When there is such

passion for God, 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 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). They will be so fixed upon that goal that all 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, doctors, scientists and 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 all 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 (Mark 14:66-72).

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 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. Oh, may we all: *...press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 3:14) as Paul did.

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). We must experience the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts and lintels of our hearts. But then we must go on in our walk with God, following the Holy Spirit, and 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, YOU WILL BECOME A SQUATTER IN EGYPT AND YOU WILL BE

WITHOUT THE BLOOD COVERAGE. The whole context of Paul's salvation doctrine is expressed by these words: "*in Christ.*" He used this expression 76 times, which means: "in the light," and by the words: *...let us go on unto perfection...* (Heb. 6:1). If you do not capture the importance of walking with God, you will never get a passion for the Lord. Without that, you will fall into Satan's traps over and over again. You will become a "carnal" Christian, which is a lukewarm Christian whom Jesus will spit out of His mouth on Judgment Day (Rev. 3:16). Do not 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 must be crucified continually. We must become witnesses and press to witness at every opportunity (Prov. 3:6; Rev. 12:11). Only witnessing Christians are overcomers. We must: *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks...* (1 Thes. 5:16–17), for God inhabits the praises of His people (Ps. 22:3).

And finally, we must put everything away each morning to meet alone with God: read the Scripture, wait upon God for His direction, allow Him to convict us and encourage us so that we will be inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and draw nigh unto God and 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 whether we are children, students or adults.

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