

Passion, Purity, Pleasure, Power

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Jesus said, “I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” (Rev. 2:4) So long as we fail or refuse to return to or remain in our first love for Christ Jesus, He will always have something against us and there will always be something between us and Him. This is true individually and it is true corporately – and this insight is the lynchpin by which we may come to understand how the people of Christ have been drawn into the labyrinth and web of deception and error that is modern “Christianity.” The early believers’ ignorant and negligent departure from their first love (which Christ here warned against) was elsewhere foretold (Mt. 13:25, 25:5, Acts 20:30, etc.) and is readily evidenced in the early church history records – for those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

But there is also perhaps yet a clearer, more modern evidence that most who claim to follow Christ have not yet returned to or entered into their first love for Him – there is an overall lack of passion for Christ that pervades nearly everywhere. This may be best understood in the context of music. For example, there are some who believe that rock music is simply from Satan and there is no possible good use for it. But even most of those who do listen to “Christian rock” don’t seem to understand what the purpose of such music is and thus are often little different from the star-struck fans and devotees of many secular rock bands. This short-sightedness fails to grasp just what the original purpose of rock music was – it was a vehicle for young people to express their passion. In a world gone shallow, superficial and stale, the original rock music exploded with passion and power in the hearts of those who saw the creeping death that was swallowing their parents and the preceding generations. The “church” of the 1950s and 60s (when rock music made its first large-scale appearance) offered no real solution because so much of the “church” had also and already abandoned their first love for Jesus and instead embraced methods, traditions and/or bylaws by which to govern their conduct and assemblies – a trend that has sadly and only and explosively proliferated throughout all of churchianity. In a similar vein, it is also interesting to note that the waltz, when first introduced into the relatively stagnant Austrian society by composers such as Johann Strauss, produced results strikingly similar to the concerts of many of rock’s early “superstars.” There is much that many “church”-ites are very unaware of – and no “pastor” who desires to maintain his stranglehold on his congregation dares to speak these truths but must instead continue to stroke and tickle the ears of his faithful sycophants and spiritual groupies and followers. (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

Rock music offers us a clear glimpse into what is wrong with and lacking in today’s believers. Primarily, rock music expresses passion – some rock musicians are very clear that rock music is valid in the Christian context only when it is used as their opportunity to express their passion for Christ (in three minutes or so) and to present it to people who might otherwise never listen to anything at all about Christ. In this light, it is interesting to note that music seems to be the only remaining avenue in which passion for Christ is even tolerated in many “church” circles. While one can debate the validity of these arguments, the passion of the people who practice this ideology is much more exemplary than that of most “Christians” and this is certainly a factor in favor of this argument.

Passion for Christ is perhaps the most absent characteristic from the midst of most of the people who claim to follow Christ. It is almost impossible to find any group – in or out of the institutional “church” – who is truly and completely committed to attaining to all of God’s will for their lives, their conduct and their corporate assemblies. There are some who believe

themselves to be “all in” for Jesus but there still remains some practice, some method, some tradition, some insight or even some carnality that competes for the hearts of these people – and the result is that one departs from meeting with such people wondering how much of what was just experienced was Jesus and how much was something else. “Jesus *and* this” or “Jesus *and* that” is the current description today of almost all who name the name of Christ. Both “salt water” and “fresh water” pour from the streams of today’s “church” – and this ought not be so. (Jas. 3:10-11)

Rock music – and let it also be clearly stated that very few bands (similar to the vast majority of assemblies described above) have attained to great appreciable levels of purity in presenting only Christ – *can be* a valid expression of our passion for Christ. In what may be the first recorded song of this type, Psalm 7 is said to be “A Shiggaion – i.e., ditharambic rhythm, or, wild, passionate song – of David.” (Psa. 7:1, see especially NASB and Amplified.) And yet such music – expressing untamed, unrestrained, unrestricted (but not ungoverned!) passion for Christ – is either corrupted, contaminated, entirely absent or outright condemned in many modern “church” circles. Let it be equally clearly stated that much of the wildly energetic “worship” music of many “churches” is neither true worship of God nor is it a true specimen of the “shiggaion” kind of rock music being discussed here. In fact, even though much of the “church’s” wildly energetic music uses the concepts and even the name of Christ, most often it only serves to stir up the soul and render one almost incapable of hearing the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth who most often speaks in that still, small voice deep within our hearts and souls. In many cases, the music is dominated or contaminated by a different spirit and its participants remain ignorant of this fact. Simply put, any music that is simply the world’s kind of music used for the primary purpose of luring in more numbers to increase the size of their congregation is not a “shiggaion” unto or from the Lord! Religion that God finds pure and acceptable still includes remaining unspotted from the world! (Jas. 1:27)

In contrast to the passionate first love for Christ, today’s “Christians” – in or out of the “church” – most often must be described simply as lukewarm. (Rev. 3:15-16) They neither love nor hate Christ but simply use His name or ideas as suits their own purposes, personal tastes and personalities. One rock band passionately warns their listeners: “Wake up or we go down to the songs of that lukewarm sound!” (Jerusalem, “Amos 5,” from the album *She*) There is little fire or passion or zeal in today’s “believer” though they can be easily and readily engaged at length about their own personal idols – movies, sports, politics, fashion, current events (especially the trivial, superficial distractions that go viral on Facebook and Twitter), new gadgets, etc. Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with *all* that we are (Mt. 22:37-38) – too many think we can know Him with just our mind and leave our hearts out of the equation of our relationship with God.

Rock music, as a vehicle to express one’s passions, touches upon and exposes exactly what one’s source of pleasure is. Paul wrote, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Rom. 12:2) The spirit of this world took the passions of young people and directed them into self-gratification, into rebellion against God and His order for abundant life, and even into blatant devil worship and glorification of the demonic. But simply because some took this particular vehicle and drove it to wrong places or used it to commit sins against God does not mean that the deeper emotions are entirely forbidden to us. Just as physical passion and desire for sexual pleasure must be directed into our marriage relationship with one spouse to whom we are loyal and devoted, so too must our life’s

passion and pleasure be found in pleasing Him who is our Husband and God. A genuine “shiggaion” unto or from the Lord will stir up within us a desire for a personal experience and deeper relationship with Him – the devil’s rock music (even when it is called “Christian”) will simply keep us pleasing ourselves as we remain on or return to the broad path that leads to destruction. (Mt. 7:13)

Let us be cautious here – there can be no “Christian” laws made here though many have done so with great detriment to many. The one who forbids all rock music is just as much in error and committing sin as is the one who uses rock music to merely gratify his self-centered desires or to pleasure his own soul. A band’s “Christian” but lawless or carnal song can still be a true “shiggaion” in the heart of a sincere listener just as surely as a band’s genuine “shiggaion” unto the Lord can become carnal entertainment or sensuality in the heart of a superficial fan or a prideful imitator. A band can achieve musical and even emotional perfection, working the crowd into the exact mood desired, and it will prove spiritually worthless to most who listen if still other parts of their life are lived in submission to the flesh or to error (especially the deception called “church,” perhaps the devil’s most effective scheme in diverting believers from the path to eternal life yet!) And any band who is ignorant of the built-in imbalances of the concert format (the active, superior, talented few standing over and speaking down to and performing for the passive many) are likely to struggle with the persistent inconsistencies between the spiritual experience they have experienced and earnestly seek to convey and the emotional and exciting entertainment event they present.

The only true “bottom line” that can be drawn here is that while men seek to judge according to appearances, God still weighs the heart. (Jn. 7:24, Prov. 21:2) Both listeners and performers should simply seek to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and seek to abandon all fleshly or self-centered agendas and desires and instead surrender to what God wants to achieve in each particular moment.

It is in the act of surrender to God that the will of God will be attained to. We cannot add anything to God nor can we do anything to earn His love or our salvation. But I can give to Him something He does not yet possess - *my* obedience – but even that obedience must be done in concert with the power and working of the Holy Spirit! We are left with no means (and, as we mature, no desire) to boast of anything we accomplish in this life we live with God. We are more than aware that He is the Master Architect and, even if we become a “wise master builder” like Paul (1 Cor. 3:10), we know that we are only co-laboring with Him and utterly dependent upon Him for all things that pertain to life and godliness.

There is no “secret” to the real life in Christ more important than truly maintaining one’s first love for Christ. Indeed, the greatest danger may well be that an individual drifts away from and becomes negligent toward his or her first love toward Christ. The New Testament is replete with multiple warnings about our need to diligently attend to Him who gave His all for us (2 Cor. 5:15, etc.) and these snares are readily guarded against in much the same way we guard ourselves in regards to being faithful to our husband or wife. But there is also a second danger that is much more subtle and therefore all the more readily stumbled into. This second danger is that we will exercise all the diligence and loyalty of a faithful spouse but be deluded into believing that the deceiving spirit we give ourselves to is Christ Himself.

In the “church” context, we can be more loyal to our denomination, our “pastor” or our traditions than we are to Christ and this is simply idolatry. Outside of the “church” context, we can be more loyal to our own ideas, knowledge or beliefs than we are to Christ and this is simply the same idolatry with a different object of worship. Because many people will not (and now do

not) love the truth, Paul warned that God Himself would send strong delusion upon those who preferred unrighteousness above the righteousness that God is. (2 Ths. 2:11-12) This lie (which people prefer and which God gives them over to) is the lie that the spirit they contact, the spiritual or religious experiences they have, the knowledge they gain, etc., really is God. Whatever flavor of deception one prefers above his or her first love for Christ, God will give that individual over to it and allow them to think they are really worshiping, serving and following the one, true and living God. And they will do all manner of abominations and wickedness in His name and see not one thing wrong with what they are and say and do. This is powerful deception.

Paul wrote, “Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.” (2 Tim. 3:1) And Jesus warned of the last days, saying, “Watch out that no one deceives you.” (Mt. 24:4) The last days are perilous because no man can be trusted – only Christ who leads us by His voice and life within us can be trusted. The “church” most often denies and derides such a notion because it competes against the “pastor” overlord standing in the pulpit over the people. The “church” will prove to be as much a snare as any other aspect of this world as its practices and agendas are not of God. And the people who are content to be deceived at “church” will rise up in the devil’s fury against those who dare to stand only in and by the Spirit of Christ.

The last days are perilous because it will be, apart from divine spiritual discernment, virtually impossible to know who is friend and who is foe. Even one’s own self – the soul dominated by the carnal, flesh nature – with which one is so familiar and comfortable could prove to be one’s own worst enemy. In all this darkness and deception, however, Christ remains faithful and in the end the humble will stand with Him on the real Mt. Zion, the new Jerusalem, and they will follow Him wherever He leads. And they will participate in the completion of His work of overcoming and destroying all the deceptive works of the devil. (1 Jn. 3:8) This will be the last spiritual “revival” this world will experience – and it will happen whether we participate on the right side of it or not and whether it involves large numbers of many peoples or merely and only a few, a purified but tiny remnant. Whatever happens, we will bear the consequences of the choices we make and we will have to answer for what we have done with what the Lord gave us to be and do to further His kingdom within our own circle of influence. (Mt. 25:15) It is merely a distraction to be caught up in or worried about anything else.

Let us simply and with our every breath, thought, act and desire, display our first love for Christ by always returning to this prayer: ***“Lord, what would You have of me this day, this hour, this moment?”*** Only in this way will we be able to preserve the life of Christ within us and thereby save our own eternal lives and souls in the process. Only in this way will our love and passion for Christ remain pure, powerful and pleasing to God.

Let he who has ears hear.

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