

A PASSION FOR GOD

ACTS 1:1-11

Acts 1:3 | ³ After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:8 | ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:11 | ¹¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.”

INTRODUCTION

A. This message is called *A Passion for God*.

B. Webster’s Dictionary defines the word “*passion*” as:

1. Intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction

2. A strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept

3. Passion applies to an emotion that is deeply stirring.

C. Everyone is passionate about something.

Expression may differ – some are more reserved; others are more overt, but EVERYONE is passionate about something – a relationship, sports, work, hobbies, a cause, even religion.

D. What are you passionate about?

What are the *deep* and *intense* and *overmastering feelings* and *convictions* that stirs and drives *you* in life?

E. The book of Acts is the account of the early church — and the first Christians were marked by a real passion for Jesus.

- Passionate in their *love* for Jesus
- Passionate in their *worship* of Jesus
- Passionate in their *learning* about Jesus
- Passionate in their *fellowship* with Jesus
- Passionate in their *service* for Jesus

F. This was not hype, nor was it self-manufactured; it was result of three realities found in the opening verses of Acts 1:

1. First, they personally encountered the Risen Christ.
2. Second, they experienced God's power in the Mission of Christ.
3. Third, they expected the return of the Ascended Christ.

F. Let's learn from Acts 1:1-11 and may God re-ignite us to be His people who demonstrate a real passion for Him in this world.

A PASSION FOR GOD

I. THEY PERSONALLY ENCOUNTERED THE RISEN CHRIST

[1:1-3](#) ¹ I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After he had

suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

A. Jesus died, then rose again from the dead.

B. After His resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with His apostles before returning to Heaven.

1. In the Bible, the number 40 is generally associated with a period of *testing*.

2. During these 40 days, the Risen Jesus appeared to His followers so they could test and verify that He was not a hallucination nor a ghost nor an imposter, but really risen and alive.

C. Luke the Historian tells us that Jesus “presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs – *infallible proofs (NKJV) – unquestionable evidences (AMP) – , appearing to them over a period of forty days*”.

1. Jesus did this by appearing to His followers and speaking with them.

He “presented himself alive to them ... and speaking about the kingdom of God”.

2. Jesus did this by inviting them to see and feel His wounds.

a. **Luke 24:36-40** (NLT), ³⁶...Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ³⁷ But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

³⁸ “Why are you frightened?” he asked. “Why are your hearts filled with doubt? ³⁹ Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do.” ⁴⁰ As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

3. Jesus did this by eating with them. *There’s something about “dudes and food”.*

Luke 24:41-43 (NLT), ⁴¹ Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he ate it as they watched.

4. Jesus conversed with them and His followers interacted with Him. (We see this happening in vv. 4-8.)

D. Jesus was risen and alive and Jesus' followers believed it – and this reality impacted their whole lives.

1. It impacted their view of Jesus of Nazareth.

a. Romans 1:3-4 (NLT), ³ In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, ⁴ and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.

b. The Risen Jesus is the exalted, all-powerful Son of God.

2. It impacted their conviction of the veracity of the Christian faith.

1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-20 (NLT), ¹⁴...if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. ... ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. ¹⁸ In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! ¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

3. It impacted their worship of the Lord Jesus.

a. **John 20:27-28**, ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless, but believe.”

²⁸ Thomas responded to him, “My Lord and my God!”

b. The Church gathers on Sunday to celebrate and worship the Risen Christ.

4. It impacted their future hope in the resurrection of God’s redeemed people.

1 Corinthians 15:20, 23 (NLT), ²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. ... ²³ there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

5. It impacted their belief in God’s future judgment of all humanity and the urgency to respond to the Gospel NOW.

Acts 17:30-31, ³⁰ “... God now commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

6. It impacted their submission and obedience to the rule of King Jesus.

Romans 14:8-9 (NLT), ⁸ If we live, it’s to honor the Lord. And if we die, it’s to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

⁹ Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

7. It impacted their dedication to the mission of Jesus.

Luke 24:45-48 (NLT), ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of all these things.

E. Has the resurrection of Jesus impacted you the same way? Have you personally encountered the Risen Christ?

1. This story is told of the German Reformer, Martin Luther:

One day, while he was being despondent, his wife, Catherine, passed by dressed in a black-mourner's dress. Martin asked her what was wrong. Catherine replied, "It is a sad day. God has died today."

"Don't speak such blasphemies!" Martin responded in shock.

"Then stop living like it, Martin," Catherine said to Martin.

b. There are far too many Christians who resemble mourners at a funeral, rather than representing our new and powerful resurrection life of Christ.

i. Listen to the Apostle Paul's challenging question and description of the Christian life:

Romans 6:3-4 (NLT), ³ ...have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism.

And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

ii. This life is ours in Christ Jesus. Are you living it?

c. Jesus said: “I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.” (Revelation 1:17-18, NLT)

II. THEY EXPERIENCED GOD’S POWER IN THE MISSION OF CHRIST

1:4-8 ⁴ While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father’s promise. “Which,” he said, “you have heard me speak about; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days.”

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?”

⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

A. Jesus commissioned His followers to a global mission:

Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT), ¹⁹...go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

B. Jesus promised to empower His followers with God's power to do and accomplish this task.

1. **Luke 24:49** (NLT), ⁴⁹ "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

2. ⁸...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

a. "Power" is God's supernatural accomplishing power. The source of this power is *God the Holy Spirit*.

b. “**Witnesses**” are God’s empowered people who testify of Christ through words and actions in this world.

c. The *mission of God* is accomplished by the *people of God* who are empowered by *the Spirit of God*.

C. In Acts 2, the Risen Jesus poured out God’s Spirit on His disciples and they were empowered and emboldened to go and impact the world for God and God’s Kingdom.

1. On Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit appeared as a sound of rushing wind and the appearance of flames of fire (see Acts 2:1-4).

Warren Wiersbe (1929-2019), “Combine wind and fire and you have—a blaze!”

2. Here is a description of what was happening in the early days of Christian history –

Acts 4:31-33 (NLT), ³¹...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

³² All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.

³³ The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all.

D. The Early Church was blazing and bright with the presence of God's Spirit and power like the burning bush in Exodus 3, and the world took notice and saw them burn bright for Christ in this dark world.

E. This is the need of the modern Church today.

1. A.W. Tozer (1897-1963), "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

2. Vance Havner (1901-1986), "We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God."

F. This is also the need of the modern Christians today.

1. Many "Christians" are embracing *naturalism* over the *supernatural reality* of Christianity.

2. Many “Christians” are caught-up in the trend of *deconstructing* Christianity instead of living in the unshakable and unrelenting reality of the Gospel of God.

3. As a result, “Christians” are *powerless* in doubt; *powerless* against sin; *powerless* in hardships; *powerless* in their Christian witness; *powerless* in endurance for Christ.

4. Also, *passionless* in personal and corporate worship; *passionless* in the Scriptures; *passionless* in prayer; *passionless* in Christian service; *passionless* in devotion and dedication for Christ.

5. The Early Church exemplified *fervor for Christ* because she was *daily* living in the reality of the presence and power of God’s Spirit.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones observed that there is no talk about the need for spiritual revival in the Book of Acts because the first Christians didn’t need it. They were *alive* and *living* in realities and certainties of God’s presence and power.

6. Does this describe your life, or do you need God to revive your whole life today? If so, ask Him for it.

a. Jesus said, “If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” (Luke 11:13, NLT).

b. So, ask Him.

III. THEY EXPECTED THE RETURN OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

1:9-11 ⁹ After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.”

A. The Risen Jesus *ascended to Heaven*.

- The ascended Christ is exalted.
- The ascended Christ poured out God’s Spirit on God’s people.
- The ascended Christ is our Mediator and High Priest and Intercessor.

B. The Ascended Christ will *return to earth*.

1. ¹¹ This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.

Revelation 1:7 (NLT), ⁷ Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him—even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for him. Yes! Amen!

2. After He returns, there will be new heavens and a new earth and a New Jerusalem. There will be no more sin; no more curse; no more sadness; no more death; no more goodbyes. There will be eternal life and endless peace and joy and adventures in God’s universal glorious kingdom.

3. Paul refers to the Returning Christ as “our blessed hope” (see Titus 2:13).

4. The hope of Christ’s return is a repeated theme in the Bible. Both the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles wrote about it as “our blessed hope”.

5. The hope of Christ’s *future* return impacts our *present* life in Jesus.

a. This hope *comforts us*.

Revelation 21:3-4 (NLT), ³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

b. This hope *purifies us*.

1 John 2:2-3 (NLT), ² Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. ³ And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.

c. This hope *alerts us to wake-up and be watchful*.

i. Romans 13:11 (NLT), ¹¹ This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

ii. **Matthew 24:13** (NLT), ¹³ “So you...must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.

d. This hope *motivates us to remain in Christ*.

1 John 2:28 (NLT), ²⁸ And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame.

e. This hope *motivates us in our Christian worship and service*.

i. **1 Corinthians 11:26** (NLT), ²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord’s death until he comes again.

ii. **Revelation 22:12** (NLT), ¹² “Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds.

C. Are you living in the hope of Christ’s return?

1. Someone said that to not be homesick for Heaven is a good indication that your love for Jesus has grown cold.

If this present life means more than our forever life, then Christ is no longer “our blessed hope”.

2. Seek God and ask Him to re-ignite a deep love in your heart for Jesus, and then we will once again long to see Him face to face.

*Though I don't see You
Still, Lord, I love You
You've given me hope
You've given me life*

*Through all my trials
Still, Lord, You're with me
I have Your Word
You're coming back for me*

*It might be today I look into Your eyes
It might be today I see Your face
It might be today You place Your wounded hands
On my tear-stained face
It might be today*

Greg Fadness, 1995

3. “Maranatha!” Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20).