



Fervency for His Supremacy

Fervency for His Supremacy

Consumed With Christ: No Holding Back. No Turning Back.



As groups formed to pray publically around flagpoles at thousands of high schools, the annual See You at the Pole (SYATP) initiative celebrated its 15th anniversary with a theme that year comprised of a single word: “*Consumed!*”

Sponsored by a national network involving hundreds of youth ministries, SYATP asked participating young people a question in its promotional literature that most Christians have never had to answer:

Do you want the fire of God to fall on your campus and in your community? Do you *really*? You must realize that when fire falls, it consumes *everything* that is unholy and ungodly. The fire of Christ purifies lives, melts hearts and devours sin. **How desperately do you want Jesus to become for you the fire of God?**

By the millions, students rallied to their Savior that September day. Gathered on campuses from coast to coast, they prayed for Jesus to become the all-consuming flame in their lives and to impassion their outreach to classmates and others. Many groups continued praying in organized weekly gatherings the rest of the year.

Consumed! Grasped so completely by the grandeur of Christ and the glorious hope we have in him that it is impossible to remain dispassionate toward him for long.

Consumed! Surrendered to, changed by, and totally occupied by Jesus —

the way logs are overcome by the blazing inferno of a bonfire.

Consumed! Aflame with — fully alive to — all Jesus is *to us, for us, over us, before us, within us, through us, and upon us* at this very moment.

Consumed! It's a relationship with Christ in which there is no turning back and no holding back.

Consumed! It's what a Christian's walk with God's Son should be!

In his sermon "The Weight of Glory," C. S. Lewis calls for nothing less:

Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that **our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak** (emphasis added).

Eternity Itself Will Be Consumed With Christ

For Bible students, being "consumed" also speaks concerning the culmination of history, when everything arrives at the feet of King Jesus for final dispatch. We call that grand climax "*the Consummation*." In that hour and ever after, all creation will be openly consumed with the person and presence and power of God's Son. In other words, we'll be consumed with Christ nonstop.

That long-anticipated hour might be correctly described, therefore, as an obsession with Christ *universalized* (as we find it to be in Revelation 4-5). In the meantime, however, before the time of the Consummation arrives, the goal of daily Christian discipleship might be properly understood as an obsession with Christ *personalized*.

Or to say it another way: As Jesus followers we are destined to become *fanatics* for him forever.

"Fanatic" comes from the Latin root word "fanum," and describes a Roman "temple dweller." In ancient times, an individual was considered "fanatical" if he was so devoted to his chosen deity that he refused to leave the idol's presence, remaining to worship and serve in its temple day and night. Consumed he was, but with a cold, hard, inanimate deity.

How much more fanatical should Christians become with Jesus — not by residing in some sacred structure but by abiding directly in him even as he abides in us (John 15)?

The Bible encourages a moment by moment, wholehearted engagement with our Lord today. We should exhibit an “undying love” for him (Ephesians 6:24, NIV), even unto our own death (John 21; Revelation 12) — a love that drives us to eliminate everything in our lives incompatible with making Jesus our one and only “magnificent obsession” (Philippians 3).

How Can We Not Be Passionate for Christ Right Now?

Consider, for example:

- God promises to usher Christians into eternal blessings in heavenly realms with Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1).

Therefore, how can we not be passionate right now
for the *exaltation* given to Christ alone?

- God promises to bring every facet of Christian existence under the redemptive control of Christ Jesus (Hebrews 1).

Therefore, how can we not be passionate right now
for the *reign* that rests with Christ alone?

- God promises to conform every believer to Christ’s image, which means who he is now is who we’re becoming day by day (Romans 8).

Therefore, how can we not be passionate right now
for the *character* we see in Christ alone?

- God promises to magnify his Son’s saving ministry among the nations, using disciples like us to advance his global cause (Acts 1).

Therefore, how can we not be passionate right now
for the worldwide *mission* of Christ alone?

- God promises to take his people into immediate victories through Christ, which will culminate on the day he is revealed as our mighty Warrior (Philippians 1).

Therefore, how can we not be passionate right now
for the *triumphs* of Christ alone?

- Every eternal, God-given hope we hold is embodied in the message of Christ proclaimed among earth's peoples (Colossians 1).

Therefore, how can we not be passionate right now
for all the *promises* fulfilled in Christ alone?

Clearly, Christians can never think *too highly* of God's Son or put *too much* passion into advancing his kingdom agenda. An all-consuming devotion, an overt obsession, a fanatical focus, a supreme fervency — it all denotes the chief hallmark of every Jesus follower, in which there can be no turning back and no holding back from him.

Consumed: Discipleship as Jesus Means It to Be

None of this emphasis on passion should catch us by surprise, however. Have no doubt: From the beginning this is precisely why our Father redeemed us. He made us and remade us in order to give ourselves over to his Son with unqualified abandon. His perfect love for us can settle for no less.

The Master who marched out of a graveyard to ascend to the throne of the universe deserves radical commitment from us — as he spelled it out in the Scriptures (NIV, emphases added):

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and *take up their cross and follow me*. For whoever . . . *loses their life for me and for the gospel* will save it [a call to consuming passion!] (Mark 8).

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — *yes, even their own life* — such a person cannot be my disciple . . . those of you who do not *give up everything you have* cannot be my disciples [a call to consuming passion!] (Luke 14).

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son nor daughter more than me is not worthy of me . . . *whoever loses their life for my sake* [a call to consuming passion!] will find it (Matthew 10).

When Jesus beckoned his first disciples to “leave everything and follow me” this meant that from that point on there would be no return and no retreat. They became fully invested not only in what his mission was all about (no turning back) but also even more in the person for whose sake that mission existed (no holding back).

The New Testament community exhibited the same intense affection for Jesus, embodied in the apostle who pointed to himself as an example of how all disciples should respond to their Master:

Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant — dog dung. *I’ve dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him . . .*

I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it.

I’m not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. *But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me* (Philippians 3, MSG, emphasis added).

These resolves show us what it is like to be as passionate for God’s Son as the Father himself is, which merely reinforces Paul’s main point in Colossians 1 when he writes that “in everything Christ is to have the supremacy.” In other words, fervency for the supremacy of the Savior requires every born-again heart to be increasingly wrapped up in the totality of who Christ is right now. No turning back. No holding back. Not now. Not ever.

Remarkable!

Feeding On and Fascinated With Christ Now

Last Sunday nearly 400,000 sermons were delivered from pulpits across America, most of which were soon forgotten, most likely. Even so, out of the millions of words spoken how many would you guess made the wonder of Christ and the agenda for his current reign their primary focus? How many people left the worship service consciously feeding on and fascinated with who Christ is now?

How many ever witness anything like what a congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, heard on a Sunday in 1742, when the popular New England theologian and pastor Jonathan Edwards preached what many scholars consider to be one of the greatest sermons in US history. The entire message, lasting close to two hours, was a call to fervency for Christ's supremacy. Edwards' opening premise boiled down to this:

There is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ.

From there his message proceeded to lay out how justice and grace, glory and humility, majesty and meekness, obedience and dominion, resignation and sovereignty all converge in Christ to form an infinite display of his sovereignty.

Next, Edwards spoke candidly of his own zeal for such a magnificent Savior, urging his people to join him, saying:

The excellency of Jesus Christ is suitable food of the rational soul. The soul that comes to Christ feeds upon this, and lives upon it . . . *It is impossible for those who have tasted of this fountain, and know the sweetness of it, ever to forsake it* (emphasis added).

Here was a pastor exhorting his people to be so thoroughly consumed with Christ that turning back or holding back from their Savior was unthinkable.

Again, in "The Weight of Glory," Lewis compares the experience of one's obsession with Christ to the experience of being transfixed by something of great beauty, like the splendor and brightness of the morning sun. He says:

We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put

into words — to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.

Similarly, Jesus' own do not seek merely to see the beauty of their Savior. They yearn to be more deeply *united* with the Jesus they see — to know his heart and his presence intimately, to remain in him as he remains in us (John 15:4).

Consumed: to enter into more of Jesus as we grow to know him in the fullness of his majesty. It's the pursuit of him that will occupy all saints for all ages to come. It's the flame the Holy Spirit wants to ignite in *you* today.

So, "do not put out the Spirit's fire" (1 Thessalonians 5, ISV).

Questions to Help You Uncover Your "Passion Quotient"

When it comes to your ongoing relationship with our reigning Lord Jesus where does *your PQ* come out? In other words, what is your "*passion quotient*"?

To get an answer, test-drive this set of questions — questions most Christians have never tackled. You'll find them quite enlightening. Each one probes where your obsession with Christ stands right now as well as where it needs to burn stronger. Ask yourself:

1. On a daily basis what usually captures my affections? What do I get excited about? What issues regularly preoccupy my thoughts? More practically, how do I spend my time? Where do I spend my money? Generally, what am I most fervent about? How would people who observe me answer that question? Where does Jesus fit into my answers to these questions?
2. What challenges arouse my concerns? What causes inspire my commitments? Where do my true ambitions lie? In what ways does the cause of Christ inspire me and absorb me in conscious steps of involvement in it, both with him and for him? Are there *daily* expressions of this? What does that look like?
3. What would I define as the pinnacle of my life's purpose — the reason

for which I was created and redeemed in the first place? Where does Jesus fit into this overarching narrative? Along the same line, in what sense has my Lord become for me in himself not only my identity but also my destiny? How intentional am I about living far more at the center of who he is, where he is headed, what he is doing, and how he gets blessed rather than seeking what I want him to do for me?

4. In what sense does my current vision of the greatness, goodness, and glory of God's Son instill in me a determination to live in such a way that all I do and say expresses fervency for his supremacy? As this vision of Christ increasingly motivates me, what will I do on a regular basis to enlarge and enrich and expand how I view Jesus and all the wonders found in him?
5. How has Christ's passion for me ennobled and shaped my passions and desires toward him? How frequently do I meditate specifically on the manifestations of his love for me as seen in his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension? Am I regularly aware that day by day I am living in his presence, under his reign, by his power, as the focus of his sovereign care? If so, in what ways am I responding to him each day by word and deed, to love him more fully the way he deserves?
6. How much do I think about the relationship of the Father to the Son — especially the depth of the Father's affection for and commitment to his Son from all eternity? In what ways has the Father's passion for his Son stirred up my desire to be much more passionate for Jesus? How often do I turn that passion into worship and praise toward the Triune God?
7. Do I ever fear being labeled as someone who is too fanatical toward the Lord Jesus? How often do I tone down for fellow believers, or even hide from them, that I have a growing passion for more of him? In any sense am I ashamed to openly express to other *Christians* (let alone non-Christians) a personal fervency for his supremacy?
8. In what ways do I intend to confront such fears as publically I declare, first of all to believers, how devoted I am to Jesus and his dominion? Am I willing to talk openly with fellow Christians about new wonders

I'm discovering every week about Christ? Am I willing to risk being misunderstood by my friends in my efforts to make much of Christ in every facet of my discipleship?

9. In practical ways, how do I intend to *increase* the evidence that my life is consumed with my Redeemer? How will my growing devotion to Jesus — by what I say about his glory and how my daily walk seeks to bring him glory — make a positive difference for other believers, inciting them to become more passionate for him themselves?
10. Am I prepared to pour out my life for the Christ Awakening movement that must come to the Church? Am I willing to foster Christ Awakenings within my own congregation by lovingly reintroducing fellow disciples to Christ for *all* he is — no matter what it may cost?

Be a Moth

Utterly the opposite of the deadly demise of a moth drawn to and then incinerated by the deceptive warmth and beauty of a candle flame, the closer Christians get to our Radiant Redeemer the greater our joys become in him, the more energized our labors become for him, the more enticing become our prospects in him — the more *alive* we become toward him.

Still, the example of the moth is worth considering. Like the irresistible attraction of moths to the flame, day by day we must allow ourselves — we must *dare* — to continue drawing closer to our Life-giving Flame, God's Son. As a way of life we must seek to "meet him again for the first time" — over and over. We must continue to explore and experience daily "Christ Awakenings" of our own.

So, be a moth.

In fact, for starters try this for just one day. Carry a 3 x 5 card with you wherever you go. Write on it any insights you gain during the day — every fresh revelation of the elevation of Jesus that the Holy Spirit gives you. In an early morning prayer time. While commuting to work. Out shopping. Sitting in class. During your lunch break. Using single words or phrases, jot down

thoughts about what impresses you about our Savior and the reasons why Christians should be more passionate about him — why *you* should be more passionate about him!

For example, record reflections about:

- who Christ is as a person, alive and active and filling the universe — that is, some of the wonders of who he is TO us and FOR us.
- where Christ is headed as he leads us into the fulfillment of God's purposes — including some of the wonders of who he is OVER us and BEFORE us.
- what Christ is doing to unleash some of God's kingdom promises to you as well as for others around you and across the world — that is, some of the wonders of who he is WITHIN us, THROUGH us, and UPON us
- how Christ should get blessed by those who know him and love him and serve him — ways he deserves to be more fully exalted right where you live

Then at the close of the day, before turning in for the night, take five minutes to review what's on your card. Then translate each insight into a brief prayer.

Praise the Father for everything about King Jesus that the Holy Spirit has shared with you during the day. Tell him how much more your Savior means to you personally, in light of these reflections. Pray for the Father to give you greater manifestations of the glory of the supremacy of Christ. Pray for a larger work of God in the Church and among the nations that will help to magnify his name, spread his fame, extend his reign, increase his gain, and ratify his claim.

In other words, be a moth! By prayer draw as near to the Flame as you can get.

Then, fall asleep ready to wake up the next morning to spend another day consumed with Christ — another day in which you foster fervency for his supremacy in yourself and others, another day being a disciple fully alive to all of who Christ is right now.

No turning back. No holding back.