

MOTIVATED BY ETERNITY

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed... 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- It is such a blessing to have all of you in the house this morning and welcome to 2025 – like they say “new year and new me”. I hope that statement is true for you and may the new you arise in 2025.
- It is not an easy thing to preach the first sermon going into a new season because you are expected to give people silver bullet type of solutions like 21 keys for prosperity or 7 laws to avoid disappointment and so forth. I am afraid that I might not meet your requirements and expectations, but I will try and give it my best.
- Ok, lets get into our message right away – allow me to say that 2025 will not bring anything new. There will be challenges and opportunities just like in 1995 or 2005. The Bible says *What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun¹.*
- The issue is not whether you will experience sorrow or not but rather how you are going to handle yourself in seasons of sorrow is the issue.
- The issue is not whether you will prosper or not but rather how you will handle yourself in seasons of prosperity is the issue.
- It is not whether you are going to wait or not but rather how and what you do in the waiting room is what matters.
- You are going to be presented with both opportunities and threats but how you are going to respond to either is what I am here to talk about.
- This morning, I want to talk to you on the subject **MOTIVATED BY ETERNITY**. Your motivation determines what and why you do certain things. Your motivation determines what attracts you and what you run away from.
- Motivation determines behavior and attitude – there are many stories that highlight this principle and one of them is the story behind the movie called Harriet, based on a true story of Harriet Tubman. The story goes like this:

¹ Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NIV)

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Harriet Tubman was born to enslaved parents in Dorchester County, Maryland, in about 1822. She was six years old when her owner sent her to a neighbor's house, where she was hired to be a house slave and nursemaid; eventually, she worked in the fields. In her twenties, she married a free black man named John Tubman.

On the plantation, Tubman was exposed to the horrors of the institution of slavery. She experienced a harsh life of difficult labor and physical punishment, which left permanent scars from lashes and neurological damage from unrestrained beatings. When she was 12 years old, she was sent on an errand to a store, where a man insisted that she restrain an enslaved boy who was attempting to run away. When she refused, the man threw a 1 kg tool and hit her in the head. She never received proper medical treatment for the injury and never fully recovered from the damage. She continued to live with seizures and headaches for the rest of her life. The scars and mistreatment reminded her of the horrid existence of a slave and were the catalyst for her run from bondage in 1849.

After Tubman made her own escape to Pennsylvania, she became a conductor on the Underground Railroad and returned south multiple times to help others flee slavery. These undertakings were extremely dangerous because runaway slaves were whipped, and those who abetted them were subject to criminal prosecution after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Members of the Quaker religion, who opposed slavery, and many African Americans helped Tubman on her journeys.

Tubman decided to help others run away because she believed their freedom was more important than her own safety and that it was her responsibility to help those who could not rescue themselves. During the eight years before the Civil War, she traveled to the South about 12 times to lead to freedom approximately 70 of her family and friends who were slaves. She dressed in disguises to avoid being captured and overcame many obstacles to make the journeys. For each trip, for example, she walked for seven weeks, traveling by night to avoid detection by bloodhounds, and covered nearly 90 miles to Philadelphia, where she found work and saved money to return.

- Now, Harriet's motivation to face danger was the freedom of enslaved people. It means that when you have a motivation compelling enough, you will face any challenge with a different outlook.
- What should motivate your behavior and choices in 2025 – it must be something that makes pain to feel painless.

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- Paul gives us an idea of what should motivate a believer to live through this fallen world and come out unscathed.
- When you read the entire chapter 4, you will discover that Paul is going to great lengths to highlight the need to be correctly motivated to live victoriously in the middle of challenges.
- Life is brutal and confusing and without the correct motivation, man has no hope for the future.
- He starts off by talking about the trials he faced in comparison to the other so called servants of Christ:

2 Corinthians 11: 23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

- These trials hard pressed him on every side, but he was not crushed.
- The trials that Paul faced were perplexing and embarrassed him, but he was never hopeless or in despair.
- Paul was pursued and victimized like a criminal but even through that he never felt alone or abandoned.
- He was struck down, dragged around like a dead pig, but was never destroyed.
- What you need to understand about Paul's trials is that they continued through many years, but he continued to serve God faithfully.
- Something outside of Paul must have been the driving factor behind such tenacity and courage in the face of adversity.
- In dealing with these sufferings, Paul adopted a view of them:

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

- Paul called the sufferings light and momentary. Consider all suffering as temporary and passing whilst God is permanent and ever present.

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- The word rendered “light” means that which is easy to bear and is usually applied to a burden. Being bitten and left for dead cannot be called light and easy but because of his motivation, Paul saw them as light.
- Not only did he see them as light and easy, but he also saw his suffering as quickly coming to an end – momentary suffering. The moment you see your suffering as transient and temporary, you will be able to endure the season better.
- Not only did he consider his sufferings as light and momentary, but he also saw suffering as an instrument to prepare him for eternal glory. Consider affliction as an instrument that produces eternal glory.
- It is through suffering that you find no pleasure in the world – you are weaned from the world.
- Suffering is like purifying fire is to gold.
- In times of suffering, you are more inclined to look to God. In other words, do not waste your moments of suffering.
- In affliction we gain an appreciation of the value of eternal glory.
- Above all the motivations that Paul had, the greatest one was the anticipation of the eternal glory that awaited him.

2 Corinthians 4: 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- Paul had a great understanding of eternal life and the glory that came with it. He was not prepared to jeopardize eternity by giving in to temporary matters.
- Look at the contrast here: Paul called afflictions light and momentary, but he called the glory to come as weighty and eternal.
- Earthly affliction is light and temporary but heavenly glory is weighty and eternal.
- There is a reward being prepared for you in eternity – it outweighs all the pain you will ever go through here on earth.
- The eternal glory that awaits God’s people exceeds any glory you can think of here on earth – fame, wealth and good health.
- The glory that awaits you is heavy, denoting its worth and value and not its burdensome.
- When you are motivated by eternity, all the issues of life become light and of no consequence.
- The glory of heaven is eternal as opposed to the momentary nature of your suffering.
- When Paul considered suffering and the eternal glory of God, he chose to live his life in the light of eternity.
- Lets close off by considering Paul’s wisdom on how to live in light of eternity.

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2 Corinthians 4: 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- Here Paul says that we need to focus our attention from the trial of this world to that which is permanent.
- When your mind is fixated on the current pain and absorbed in them, they will appear unending and permanent.
- When you draw your attention to the things of heaven, and how short these trials are, you will start making choices that have eternal value.
- There are things that can be seen and things that cannot be seen. But things that can be seen are temporary whilst things that cannot be seen are eternal.
- Things we see are earthly – poverty, want, need, trials, houses, cars. These things die with us, or we leave them behind.
- Things we can't see are of eternal value:
 - God is eternal and will never leave us like our earthly friends
 - Jesus our savior is eternal and is an everlasting friend
 - God's people are eternal, and we will be with them forever.
 - Your works are eternal, they determine the reward in heaven.
- Let your life be motivated by eternity in 2025. Your decisions must be motivated by eternity. If what you are about to do does not impact eternity, then it must not receive too much attention.

Colossians 3: 1 Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

John 6:26-27 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.

- There is food that spoils and there is that which does not spoil – fight for food that leads to eternity in this season. Don't be lazy in prayer and in word, don't seek for comfort but for eternity.

John 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

- When you are motivated by eternity, you will look to Jesus for everything in your life. You will take Him at His word. Choose to always believe Jesus and trust Him with your life.

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- Harriet's obsession and motivation was the freedom of every slave. This woman was singly handedly able to free over 500 slaves.
- This was freedom from physical enslavement, how much more freeing people from spiritual enslavement.
- You need your spiritual eyes to be open to the spiritual slavery that is around you and rise and be like our spiritual Harriet. See people through the eyes of eternity.