New Hope Global Sermon  **Crisis in Motivation?**

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| **Earlier years?** | **Now?** |

**Introduction**

In our weekly church gathering last Friday (January 29th), the discussion centered on the lack of student motivation that seems to be a global factor in education since Covid struck 3 years ago. Carol mentioned that one teenager she is counseling has not had in-person experiences in a classroom since she entered high school. All her education has been on Zoom. She is experiencing significant depression and social anxieties. Given spoke of the number of superintendents and teachers who are resigning from teaching nationally because of the problems associated with covid’s upheaval of their school systems and students’ apathy in learning. Sam noted that the lack of a balanced life with extracurricular activities and stimulating in-person relationships has caused wide-spread emotional, social and spiritual apathy

Research at the Eberly Center, associated with Carnegie Mellon University, found that students lack motivation in education when:

* They [see little value in the course or its content.](https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/solveproblem/strat-lackmotivation/lackmotivation-04.html)
* They do not perceive the classroom climate as supportive.
* They do not believe that their efforts will improve their performance.
* They are demotivated by the structure and allocation of rewards
* They have other priorities that compete for their time and attention
* [Individual students may suffer from physical, mental, or other personal problems that affect motivation.](Individual%20students%20may%20suffer%20from%20physical,%20mental,%20or%20other%20personal%20problems%20that%20affect%20motivation.) *https://www.cmu.edu › teaching › solveproblem › strat-la.*

These issues are impacting education globally. But the lack of motivation is not limited to the educational world. It raises the question:

**Is there a crisis in motivation among Christians in their walk with God?**

*The New Collegiate Dictionary* defines motivation as “some inner drive, impulse, intention that causes a person to do something in a certain way.” It has to do with one’s incentives and goals. Motivation is certainly an issue of the mind and how we think, and the emotions which affect how we act. But, for the Christian, when there is lethargy or doubt or confusion, dependence on the Spirit as our source of power, energy and direction can be the transformative key to a highly fruitful, meaningful life.

The Apostle Paul is a primary example of a highly motivated, effective follower of God. Though he went through enormous suffering as a messenger of the gospel, he never lost his passion for God and for the calling God had put on his life. As a result, he became the initial driving force in bringing the good news of the gospel to the Gentile world. What was his secret?

I want us to consider 3 D’s behind his motivation to stay strong in his walk with God:

* his description of the believer’s heart
* his dedication to God’s global agenda in one’s life
* and his complete dependence on the Holy Spirit for God-sent power.

**Passion and the use of *The Passion Translation***

The Scripture texts I will use are all from *The Passion Translation* of the New Testament. Lack of motivation is a lack of passion. *The Passion Translation* challenges the English reader’s understanding of passion. The editors explain:

“Our goal is to trigger inside every English-speaking reader an overwhelming response to the truth of the Bible. This is a heart-level translation, from the passion of God’s heart to the passion of your heart. We pray this version of God’s Word will kindle in you a burning desire for him and his heart, while impacting the church for years to come” (About the Passion Translation, Second Edition, Broad St.)

One reason this occurs is that *The Passion Translation* incorporates the Aramaic meaning of each verse in its Biblical translation. Aramaic is a more emotionally explicit language than Greek which, along with Hebrew, is the basis for other Bible translations. As the TPT website explains:

Over the past several decades, there have been many new discoveries regarding the original documents and manuscripts that have been compiled to form our Bible, especially the Aramaic manuscripts of the New Testament. Aramaic and Hebrew are related linguistically, and both are considered to be emotional and poetic. Greek speaks to the mind while Aramaic and Hebrew speak powerfully to the heart.

It is widely known that Aramaic was the language Jesus, the apostles, and the earliest Christians spoke. It was the dominant language in most settings in which Jesus taught, probably the first language of most Galileans outside urban areas and the common tongue of most Judeans. It was the lingua franca of the ancient Near East until around the third century. Recent biblical scholarship has begun tracing many of Jesus’ teachings back to an original Aramaic source. . .

We believe using the original ancient Aramaic sources in addition to the original Greek ones adds an important lens through which to read God’s Word and understand his revelation of truth and love. . . It’s time to bring this forgotten, neglected language into the translation equation because of how influential the language was during the first and second centuries on the biblical world and the Bible itself. . . The Passion Translation directly describes the passion we as Christians need in our walk with God.” <https://www.thepassiontranslation.com/faqs/>

**The Believer’s Heart**

You can see the effects of this Aramaic overlay in the translation in Paul’s description of the believers’ heart. Romans 12:10-13

10 Be devoted to tenderly loving your fellow believers as members of one family. Try to outdo yourselves in respect and honor of one another.11Be enthusiastic to serve the Lord, keeping your passion toward him boiling hot! Radiate with the glow of the Holy Spirit and let him fill you with excitement as you serve him. 12Let this hope burst forth within you, releasing a continual joy. Don’t give up in a time of trouble,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A10-13&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9579a)] but commune with God at all times. 13Take a constant interest in the needs of God’s beloved people and respond by helping them. And eagerly welcome people as guests into your home.

Note the commands to be “devoted to tenderly loving fellow believers… be enthusiastic to serve the Lord, keeping your passion toward Him boiling hot! Radiate the glow of the Spirit, releasing a continual joy… eagerly welcome people into your home.” These are all deeply emotional words that are the opposite of lethargy or indifference. They were Paul’s standard.

But, when we measure ourselves by these standards, how do we fare? Lukewarm, not boiling hot? Dimly lit, not radiating the glow of the Spirit? Downcast, not continually joyful? I fear the effects of the last 3 years with Covid have taken a huge emotional toll on the vitality of Christians’ emotional and spiritual life.

**The Believer’s Dedication to God’s global agenda.**

A person walking up a flight of stairs

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceThe second area where Paul was highly motivated was the focus of his daily life and how he lived out God’s call globally. A powerful goal orientation can only be achieved with strong motivation.

**A Goal Orientation**

Hear Colossians 1:28-29, first in the NIV: 28 “Christ is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29To this end, I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” *The Passion Translation* renders this as:

28–29Christ is our message! We preach to awaken hearts and bring every person into the full understanding of truth. It has become my inspiration and passion in ministry to labor with a tireless intensity, with his power flowing through me, to present to every believer the revelation of being his perfect one in Jesus Christ.

“A tireless intensity, laboring with passion in ministry, thinking globally.” These all are signs of a passionate follower of Jesus Christ. Paul’s reason for this focus was:

“For it is Christ’s love that fuels our passion and holds us tightly,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Cor.+5%3A14-17&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10208a)] because we are convinced that he has given his life for all of us. This means all died with him, 15so that those who live[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Cor.+5%3A14-17&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10209b)] should no longer live self-absorbed lives but lives that are poured out for him—the one who died for us and now lives again.” 2 Cor. 5:14-15.

According to Paul, living for Christ meant we become Christ’s ambassadors in both word and deed. We represent the Lord, motivated to do so because we personally have experienced and been transformed by the extent of Christ’s love and sacrifice for us.

Paul championed the motivated believer’s heart, and the motivated believer’s goals to be Christ’s ambassador. But Paul was wise enough to know he could not sustain those motivations without the Spirit’s power within him. The dependence on the Holy Spirit is the third D in Paul’s model of motivation.

**Dependence of the indwelling Holy Spirit**

I have always been challenged by Paul’s acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit. I first learned Col. 1:29 in the NIV where he says I work according “to all the energy God’s power mightily inspires within me.” I believe that sets the standard for all godly, fruitful Christian living. When Paul felt hampered by his thorn in the flesh, he cried out to God and heard this answer: “My grace is sufficient for you for My strength is perfected in your weakness.” “Mostly gladly,” then Paul adds, “will I glory in my weaknesses for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:8-10). And he proved the truth of those words by relying on the Holy Spirit in his walk with God.

Beloved, it is only by the Spirit that we can cast off our lethargy, our depression, our lack of motivation to perform at our highest and best because the Spirit is the One who removes our coat of heaviness and replaces it with a garment of praise. (Isa. 61:3). It is the Spirit who gives us access to the power of Christ’s resurrection. It’s in that power that we defeat any obstacle in our mind and heart and body and circumstance. (Ephesians 1:19). And it’s in that power that we can know the love of Christ poured into our hearts (Rom.5:5) and “be filled with all the fullness of God, believing that God IS able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:19-20).

**Summary**

Paul’s description of a highly motivated life for God – when believers’ hearts are “boiling hot for God,” believers are not “self-absorbed” but living under the control of Christ’s agenda, and when they are completely dependent on the Holy Spirit who indwells them with the power of Christ’s resurrection and all the fullness of God – is the antidote for the waning motivation we see even among Christians in the world today.

Let us ask the Spirit to revitalize every Christian so our hearts reflect God’s heart, our actions reflect God’s great purposes, and our empowerment by the Spirit demonstrate God’s mighty power and redeeming love. Those goals for daily living can motivate us to continually give our best to the Lord Jesus who is our “Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Everlasting Father and our Prince of Peace.”(Isa. 9:6). May it be so. For His glory. Amen.

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