



Day 7:

May Our Hearts Be Enlightened

by Beckie Kiddoo

What is your greatest hope? I posed this question to a few random strangers I've met in the mornings during my daily walk. I assumed they would want to win the lottery or pay off their mortgage. But I was surprised by their answers which included . . . a desire for world peace, to live a life of contentment, to be healthy and that my children will survive longer than me (this from a lady who had lost her son to cancer at a young age).

These are all lofty desires, but sadly none are guaranteed or in their control. The dictionary defines hope as to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true.

In the Bible, however, hope is the confident expectation, the sure certainty that what God has promised in His Word is true, has occurred, and or will in accordance with God's sure Word.

Our theme for Know Your Bible week is 'anchored in hope'.

Today we're going to look at hope in the context of Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 1. I'm reading from verse 15 . . .

'15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.'

Paul prayed that the eyes of the Ephesian Christians would be opened. The Message renders this 'that their hearts will be flooded with light' which will lead them to realise all that God has made available to them. Paul then prays that they would know the hope of their calling.

As Christians with our eyes opened spiritually we can peer back through eternity past and see that we have been chosen, called, by God. Through the Gospel God has called us out of darkness to salvation. 2 Timothy 1:9 reminds us that, **'9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.'**

Once we have taken the long look back, the present is filled with hope. If God chose us, He chose us for a purpose. In Philippians 1:4-6 Paul **writes 'In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'**

This brings us to the future, since it is attached to the hope of eternal glory, as we're reminded in Titus 2:13 – **'while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.'** Paul knew by experience what it was to look into the future with hope when the going got tough. In 2 Corinthians 4:18 he **writes '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.'**

I know very little about football, but I am a staunch Crystal Palace fan. When my daughter married James, she was aware that he was a life-long Palace fan and that she would always be second in his affections. So James and I were thrilled at their recent FA cup victory. Prior to the win this would have been James's greatest hope as they've never won a trophy before in his more than 30 years supporting them. He recorded the match and I'm sure will watch it over and over. Only this time, he'll know the outcome before the match starts. As believers we know the outcome. God has promised us an inheritance with him. It's a done deal.

I'll close with a prayer adapted from John Piper:

O God, awaken and sustain my hope in you. Be my treasure now. And be my inheritance always. Please open the eyes of my heart to see the wonder of who you are. Grant me the spiritual taste buds to taste and see and savour all that you are. And so sustain my hope. And may this hope sustain my joy in tribulation and may this joy sustain my endurance and may this endurance sustain my love for people, and may my love make you irresistibly attractive to the world around me.

*In the precious name of Jesus,
Amen*

