

WEEK 8

The word “hope” has been rolling around in my mind and heart for several weeks now. After studying James 1:1-18 I understand why. The first seventeen verses of James are full of instructions on how to handle trials and temptations and sin. At times, counting it all joy in the face of tragedy is a little daunting and seemingly insurmountable. Resisting the urge to act on our desires when they will surely lead us to destruction seems not only impossible at times, but just not a whole lot of fun! I would venture to say that many of us wonder how in the world do I do this thing? How do I not only “talk the talk” but “walk the walk”? How do I keep my heart and mind where they need to be? How is my life ever going to be a reflection of His glory and one that points others to Jesus? Many would wonder how am I ever going to be happy with the life I have been “dealt”? How will this mess ever turn out right and good? We want to know the why, when, and how of what in the world is going on in our lives. We want answers! But God tells us over and over in His word that we must wait on Him, and let’s face it--- waiting is sometimes, no-most of the time, extremely hard. In the waiting we become impatient and hopeless. The world out there without Jesus IS hopeless. Those who suffer great tragedy, without Jesus, have no hope. But those of us who know the Risen Savior as our Lord and King HAVE HOPE!!!

The world’s definition of hope is pretty empty. Hope, in the secular sense, is “a feeling that what is wanted will happen.” How confusing and defeating to have hope in a feeling, in a want. In fact, how hopeless! In spiritual terms, “hope is faithful expectation, especially with reference to the fulfillment of God’s promises. Biblical hope is the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God’s guidance and it is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future.” (Quoted from the Illustrated Hollman Bible Dictionary).

Hope in God began when He fulfilled His promises to Abraham

I believe hope was introduced in the Bible when God called Noah and his family out of destruction from the flood. God gave Noah a way out of the punishment for the sins of the people of the earth. He gave Noah hope that if he would obey all that God commanded him to do in building the ark and taking his family and two of every living creature, that he would save them and bring new life to the earth through their lineage. This had to be a very

scarey thing to go through, because Noah and his family were mocked, scorned, and shamed for building an ark with no rain in sight. There had to be hope and trust that what God said He would do, He would do. Then the rains came and the earth was flooded and all life was destroyed. Floating about on the waters, not knowing where they would end up, knowing all their friends and everything familiar to them were gone, would have brought despair, fear, confusion, etc. to each of them. However, God had spoken and Noah believed Him. Therefore, with all of the desolation around them, Noah had hope that one day there would be dry land again and new life to live and experience.

Read Genesis 12:1-3

1. What did God promise Abram if he would obey Him by leaving his country and going to the land that God showed him? _____

God did just as He had promised. He redeemed the Israelites, Abram's (Abraham) people, from Egyptian bondage; provided for their needs in the wilderness; formed them into a covenant community at Sinai, and led them into the land of Canaan. These fulfilled promises provided a firm base from which they and all of those who are children of God, to have hope that He has purpose and meaning for all of us. Just like the Israelites when they rebelled and disobeyed, hope is not lost for any of us because we serve a "God who is always for us, not against us." We can always count on God's help when we have messed up and return to Him in repentance.

Read Malachi 3:6-7

2. According to v. 6 Is God changeable or does He never change?

3. In what way could this affect our depth of hope in all circumstances?

4. According to v. 7 what does God promise He will do if we return to Him?

God is the best parent in the world! We can be sure He will always help us when we cry out for His help. All He has ever required of us is obedience to Him and when we mess up and come back, He is there waiting all the time. Now, we may suffer the consequences of our actions, and not reap the blessings we would have had originally, but He reaches out His helping and healing hands to help us up again.

His forgiveness is already there for those who are His children and He gives deliverance from our enemies.

Read II Chronicles 7:14 and Psalms 86:5

4. What response to these promises from God stir in your heart?

Read Jeremiah 14:8

5. What does Jeremiah call God? _____

Because we are now Israel, God's people, He is our Hope. He is the Hope of _____! Write your name in the space. Doesn't that have a beautiful ring to it?

Sadly, most people, even children of God, put their hope and trust in material things. We hear in our minds, "If I only had a huge bank account, then I would be happy and could serve the Lord. If I had a better husband/wife I would be happy and could serve the Lord better. If I had a beautiful home and lots of land so no one could bother me, then I would be happy. If only I was beautiful, then people would like me and I would have happiness. If only I _____ You fill in the blank.

When we have pursued and attained all that we think will fulfill us, we find ourselves right where we started: empty and hopeless.

We must, as Jeremiah did, put our hope in the only One Who will never betray or disappoint us; the only One Who truly cares about every aspect of our lives; the only One Who sent His Son to die that we can have forgiveness of sins, deliverance from evil, and eternal life with Him. Jesus

Christ is our Hope for the future, the Promise of a new day. He is the one in Whom we can place all of our dreams and hopes.

Unlike Scarlett O'Hara in Gone with the Wind, who put her hope in Tara, her family's beloved plantation, our hope is built on Solid Ground! Truly all other ground is sinking sand except the Rock of Jesus Christ!

Read and write the following verses concerning the promise of hope in God and His Son Jesus Christ:

Psalm 38:15 _____

Psalm 31:24 _____

Psalm 38:7 _____

Psalm 42:1-11 _____

Psalm 147:11 _____

Acts 24: 15 & 16 _____

Romans 4: 16-25 You do not have to write out the entire verse, but please read all of it and write your thoughts on verses 23-25, which give the reason for this report on Abraham's faith and hope in Jesus. _____

Romans 8:20-25 This verse explains what real hope is. In your own words what is real hope? _____

Romans 12:12 rejoicing in _____, patient in _____,
continuing steadfastly in _____;
What are we to do in hope? How are we to endure tribulations? _____

How are we to pray? _____

So then, when things aren't going the way we want them to immediately, we are to patiently hope and stand steadfast in prayer! Thank You, Jesus!

Not only do we have hope in our circumstances through Jesus Christ, we have hope in the future in Him.

Read the following:

Colossians 1:5

Titus 2:13

Colossians 1:27

Titus 3:7

I Timothy 1:1

Hebrews 6:11, 18

Titus 1:2

I John 3:2-3

There are many more verses about hope. God is serious about hope. He gives hope and wants our hope to be in Him. When you find yourself down and seeming without hope, PLEASE turn to Him in word and prayer. Read the Psalms; they are full of hope and praises to our God. He promises to "inhabit the praises of His people", so if you praise Him, the forces of evil that have thrown you into hopelessness and despair must flee. His light forces out the darkness. Read scripture back to Him. Find some specific verses that speak directly to your heart, and have them ready to say to yourself and the enemy that is trying to drag you down. You are the daughter of the MOST HIGH GOD and in HIM dwells all the hope and joy you will ever need!

Following is a poem my precious daddy carried in his wallet at all times. He was a big, strong, gentle giant of a man who walked the walk more than he talked it. There was no doubt in my mind or heart that my daddy loved God, but he wasn't one to have formal Bible study or prayer with us. Without a doubt, his life spoke volumes to me and taught me to follow after God. On one occasion when I was going through a really rough time as a young teenage girl, I felt like I had lost all hope of ever being happy. My sweet daddy pulled this poem out of his wallet and told me that when he was down he would read it and God would quickly comfort and lift him up. Though it is simple, it is a treasure to me and I hope it will bring you comfort, too.

HOPE

**So strange and beautiful a thing is HOPE,
So wide its reach, so infinite its scope.
For yesterday when I was bent with care,
With burdens far more than I could bare;
My heart cried out in bitterness and grief,
And faith was well-nigh crushed by un-relief.
Then suddenly my spirit knew release---
In place of doubt I found lovely peace.
For Someone softly seemed to say,
“Be still and wait—this, too, will pass away.”
I never realized before----how odd;
That HOPE is just another word for GOD!**

Author unknown