

EVEN MORE LOCKDOWN

Read: Ephesians Ch.1v15-23

Just when we thought things were getting better many places in the north west area are having to cope with further restrictions which can lead to even further isolation. Despite being out of “close fellowship” because of worship restrictions it doesn’t mean that we cannot go on growing and deepening in our faith and in this passage from Ephesians Ch.1 we read one of Paul’s great prayers for Christian believers in which he uses the word KNOW to express his continuing desires for their lives.

Lockdown can continue to be a time when we increase in our knowledge, but not in an academic way but rather in a way which deepens our understanding and faith. It has been said that “knowledge is the ladder by which faith climbs higher, the springboard from which it leaps further.”

So we can continue to take the opportunity as Paul says to “KNOW HIM BETTER”. It is after all our great privilege as Christians not just to know facts about God but to know him personally in relationship through Jesus Christ his Son and our Saviour. Richard Coekin wrote “The greatest blessing that anyone can experience is to know God, and to know him better every day.” It was Charles Spurgeon who said “Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself in the godhead’s deepest sea; be lost in his immensity, and you shall come forth as from a bed of rest, refreshed and invigorated.” Over fifty years ago when I was a teacher I was present at a school folk concert and enjoyed coffee at the interval with “The Spinners” who were a famous folk group at the time. I was keen afterwards to say that I’d met and been in the presence of these celebrities but on reflection something like that can never compare with meeting and knowing the One who is the Supreme Being, our Creator and in Jesus Christ our Saviour God and getting to know him better.

We also have the opportunity to get to know and understand in greater measure what Paul calls “THE HOPE TO WHICH HE HAS CALLED YOU”. I do wonder how much realistic hope there is for many people in our communities and perhaps that is why someone said that “Being a Christian is essentially about living a life of confident hope that is unique in this world.” In the gospel to which we have responded God has called us to an invisible but completely certain future. Maybe it’s because I’m getting that bit older but in recent years

I have come to understand and appreciate more and more what many Christian writers have called the eternal security of the believers. When we lose loved ones we naturally experience a deep sense of loss and grief but for Christians that loss and grief is undergirded by hope and so Paul can write that “we do not grieve as those who have no hope.” (1Thessalonians Ch.4v13) So Paul is calling us to take the opportunity to get a greater grasp of the hope to which we are called in Jesus Christ – the hope of a great eternal future.

Then Paul encourages us to know and have a greater grasp of God’s “INCOMPARABLY GREAT POWER FOR US WHO BELIEVE.” Between now and our great eternal future Paul urges us to realise that there is a great power available to us as Christian believers and it’s the kind of power that was demonstrated when Jesus was raised from the dead and was seated at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Christ’s resurrection guarantees our future resurrection but it also demonstrates the kind of power available to us to strengthen and sustain us in the varying situations of our lives in the here and now, and the kind of power available to us to live lives that could be described as consistently Christian no matter what situation we find ourselves in. We may be in lockdown but there is no limit to the power available to us to strengthen us and sustain us until we all emerge from it whether it be before Christmas or beyond. If you move on to Ephesians Ch.6 Paul there calls us “to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Ch.6v10) Those words were echoed by Charles Wesley when he called us to be “Strong in the Lord of hosts and in his mighty power” and to “Stand then in his great strength, with all his strength endued.” Let us continue to lay hold experimentally of this great power available to us and which reaches to us through the Holy Spirit, the Person, Presence and Power of God.

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