

Small groups – Week beginning Monday 27th July 2020

Introduction/icebreaker

- How was your week? What went well? What were the challenges?
- If you had to relive one day of your life over and over again, which would it be?

Recap from Sunday's teaching [Hope – Acts 26]

- Hope is...
 - The feeling that events will turn out for the best – with reasonable grounds to believe this.
 - The opposite of despair. Despair embraces the negative, hope searches for the positive. Despair comes from not being able to control a situation, hope comes from being able to trust God in any situation.
- Paul's hope meant he wasn't bothered or distracted by his chains or his years spent in prison.
- Reasons for Paul's hope:
 - Jesus had loved even him (v5,9-13)
 - Jesus had a purpose for him (v16-18)
 - Jesus promised to protect him (v17)
 - Jesus was faithful to every promise made (v19-22)
 - Promise of eternal life (Philippians 1:20)
 - The voice of Jesus, in the middle of his darkest moments, strengthened him (23:10-11)
- Result of Paul's hope:
 - Saved from riots, false accusations, plots & attempts on his life
 - Chains don't affect/distract him
 - He allows his circumstance to be used by God – everywhere he goes, everyone he meets is a gospel opportunity.
 - Doesn't care what people think about him – he knows the truth of the gospel (v24-25)
- Paul wasn't immediately released from prison because he trusted God. From here he gets taken to Rome and spends another 2 years imprisoned there – but uses that as a gospel opportunity, inviting people to his house to share the gospel with them, and using the time to write Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians & Philemon.
- Can you, like Paul, be accused of having hope?

Discussion questions

1. Did anything stick out or resonate with you from Sunday's teaching?
2. What comes to mind when you think of "hope"?
3. Do you feel like you have hope right now? If so, why? If not, why?
4. We explored the reasons for Paul's hope. All of them are available to us as believers. Do you have an example/testimony of any of these things?

Digging deeper

Take a look at some of the words Paul wrote to fellow believers and churches whilst he was a prisoner in Rome. What do they teach us about having hope as Christians?

- Ephesians 1:3 (Praise regardless, our circumstances are not an indication of God's blessing – our ultimate blessing is heaven)
- Ephesians 1:15-16 (Paul continues to pray without ceasing)
- Ephesians 1:22 (God in control of all things)
- Ephesians 3:20 (Submitting to the purposes and authority of God)
- Ephesians 4:1-3 (Paul reacts to imprisonment differently to how you might expect, because his focus is on better things to come)
- Ephesians 6:19-20 (Every situation an opportunity)
- Philippians 1:7 (Imprisonment = God's purpose!)
- Philippians 2:19 (Looking ahead to the future – but acknowledging it is God who holds the future)
- Philippians 3:1 (Whatever happens! – Hope not dependant on circumstance)
- Philippians 3:21
- Colossians 3:1-3

5. Any thoughts/reflections/observations?

6. How might the hope that is available to us as Christians change your outlook this week?

7. Bill Hybels wrote: "The local church is the hope of the world". How can you, as part of a local church, bring hope to others?

Discuss – thoughts, takeaways, tangents...

Prayer

Take time to share prayer requests and pray for each other.