

Study Guide

Lenten Sermon Series: Case For Hope

Week 2 – Exhibit B: Forgiveness

Sunday March 12th

Review

Last week we looked at how suffering can be a hindrance to our hope. In our struggles, we're tempted to turn on God and say "not me, I don't deserve this." Do you remember a difficult time in your life, and the way you felt in it? Looking back is your view of that experience changed because of the clarity of hindsight?

Introduction

This is week two of our series looking at the circumstances that challenge our hope in God. We are looking at four pivotal chapters from Paul's "fifth Gospel" the Letter to the Romans. This week we find ourselves in the courtroom as two men are placed on the witness stand: Adam and Jesus. We're looking at how through one man sin, condemnation, and death came into the world. And through another man life, forgiveness, and grace reign in the world.

Specifically, how is it that shame and guilt continue to have dominion over us and keep us from knowing grace. And how do we claim the grace that is offered by Jesus?

Read: Romans 5:12-21 and Genesis 3:6-10

Pray

Lord open our hearts to receive your forgiveness. Allow us to let go of the shame we hold on to for past failures that keep us in the dominion of death. Help us to see that through Jesus, the one man, we are free to live with an orientation to the future, rather than bound to our past. Amen.

Discussion

1. How is guilt a *generational* hope killer? How does our society attempt to explain our sin away or shift the blame?
2. How does keeping an *orientation to the past* keep you from knowing and experiencing God's grace in your present?
3. Look at Genesis 3:9-10, why is Adam's response to God's inquiry so heartbreaking? Have you experienced the isolation of shame? This is how Paul suggests that death continues to reign or have dominion over us.
4. Read at Romans 5:15-17 again, how does Jesus release us from the fear of condemnation and judgment?

Application

Paul says that through one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. This week name that shameful act that, perhaps, you are the only one who remembers. Let the perfect life and forgiveness of Jesus release you from its grip and free you to live in hope.

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for accepting our guilt and offering your life in exchange for ours. Help us to receive your forgiveness in our life, free us from the grip of shame, and help us to live a life filled with hope in you. Amen