

## Living Hope In Action

### 1 Peter 4:1-11

What comes to mind when we think of putting our faith in action? Maybe we have images of defending the gospel, or sharing the good news with our friends, or even the way our lives are shaped differently now that we follow Jesus. As Peter writes this section of his letter, he does so to encourage this new believing community in two areas. The first area being how they are to live within an unbelieving world, and the second is how they are to live within the Christian community.

- Reflect on the times when you have seen another person's living hope in action, where you have seen that the way in which they live their life is shaped by Jesus.

#### Suffering In The Body (v1-2)

Last week we explored the concept of 'Living Hope In Suffering', so there we will not spend too much time going back over the concept of suffering for our faith. However Paul reminds us that we are to adopt the same attitude as Christ, who suffered in his body, and that "those who suffered in their bodies are done with sin" (v2). We don't need to get confused in thinking that our suffering somehow atones for our sin (that price has been paid already by Jesus), but that the acts or cycle of sin in one's life is broken through suffering.

- Can you think of times where suffering (for any reason) has led to changed behaviour?
- Can you think of times where suffering for the sake of the gospel has led to changed behaviour?
- Can you think of times where suffering for the sake of the gospel has led to changed behaviour in breaking the cycle/acts of sin in your life?

#### Idols & Obedience (v3-4)

Take a read of the following quote from Tim Keller...

*"Why do we lie, or fail to love, or break our promises, or live selfishly? Of course, the general answer is "Because we are weak and sinful," but the specific answer is that there is something besides Jesus Christ that we feel we must have to be happy, something that is more important to our heart than God, something that is enslaving our heart through inordinate desires."*

Peter lists a number of idolatrous behaviours that exist within the day. He says to the church that they have spent enough time chasing after those idols, and now they are to live in obedience to the gospel.

- What are the idols of our culture and society today?
- What are the ways in which our culture might be surprised by how we live?
- What are the behaviours that our culture would be surprised by our refusal to join them?
- What instead might obedience to Jesus look like for you in your context?

#### Judgment Is Coming (v5-6)

Peter makes the situation clear for the church. Judgement is coming, and it is both a dreadful and beautiful day to await. For those that chase after idols, this judgement is dreadful. Yet for those that chase after God, this judgement is a day of vindication. As we await that day, we wrestle with what it means to live as a believer in an unbelieving world, and yet also within our Christian community.

- What do the two passages of Luke 22:29-30 and Romans 8:16-17 speak about this tension that we live in right now?
- Can you think of practical examples of how this tension might look within our world today?

### **Love & Service (7-11)**

Peter transitions from speaking to how Christians ought to live within an unbelieving world, and now explores how they ought to live differently within Christian community. He focuses on what it means to love another, and to serve the body through the use of our gifts.

“Above all, love each other deeply, for love covers over a multitude of sins” (v8).

- How easy do you find it to love somebody who has sinned against you?
- Can you think of a time where love has been able to break the cycle of sin within Christian relationships?

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (v10).

- Why do you think it’s important to serve each other?
- How do you utilise your gifts for service within the body of Christ?

### **Final Questions To Consider**

- Is there anything you have sensed God saying to you?
- What are you going to do about it?
- What does accountability look like and who will hold you accountable?