

Sermon Discussion Questions



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"USING GOD FOR PERSONAL GAIN"

Big Idea: Profession of faith and possession of faith are vastly different things.

Discuss

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian is shown seven different rooms in the "House of the Interpreter." In one of them sits a man in an iron cage. Christian asks the man how he came to be imprisoned, and the man answers (in part) that he promised himself much delight in the "lusts, pleasures, and profits of the world." The result was not joy, however, but a gnawing within "like a burning worm." As with Simon the sorcerer, he had once professed belief in Christ but then was drawn away by other things. The strong cage, it is implied, was of his own making, and he now sat in it with downcast eyes and folded hands, sighing as if his heart was about to break.

- 1) Simon, we are told, "believed and was baptized," but later Peter strongly rebuked him and told him that he saw that Simon was "full of bitterness and captive to sin." (See vv. 13 and 20-24) We could spend time speculating whether Simon was ever a true believer or not (as many commentators have done). It might be more profitable, however, to consider what exactly Simon was seeking and why Peter spoke out so strongly against him.
 - What did Simon apparently want more than anything else?
 - Not many people today are hoping to be, well, a wizard, but what other kinds of power do people strongly desire?
 - Why might people today give at least the appearance of converting, even if they do not truly believe?
 - What exactly provoked Peter's rebuke? The offer of money? The desire to perform signs and wonders? The state of Simon's heart?
- 2) What do you think should characterize a true profession of faith? If time, read Colossians 3:1-16 as you consider your answer.
- 3) Hebrews 6:4-8 talks about the impossibility of bringing back to repentance someone who has "tasted the heavenly gift" and "the goodness of the word of God" but then "falls away."
 - Can someone truly believe and then "fall away?" Why or why not? You may want to look at *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (easily found online), chapter 17, and Romans 8:38-39 as you consider your answer.
 - What is the danger of professing faith without truly believing?
- 4) Different topic here at the end! What do you think was accomplished by both the apostles' coming to Samaria and the two-step process of the Samaritans' conversion (believing and then later receiving the Spirit)?

DATE: November 24, 2019

SPEAKER: Aaron/Chad

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 8:9-25

Pray

O GOD OF GRACE

You have imputed our sin to our substitute, Jesus, and have imputed his righteousness to our souls, clothing us with a bridegroom's robes, decking us with jewels of holiness.

Grant us never to lose sight of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the exceeding righteousness of salvation, the exceeding glory of Christ, the exceeding beauty of holiness, the exceeding wonder of grace.

Empower us to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, so that we can run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

- based on "Continual Repentance," *The Valley of Vision*, p. 76, and *Hebrews 12:1*

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

House of Refuge

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Christ Church Leeds