

Sermon Discussion Questions



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“THE UNDENIABLE AND UNSTOPPABLE GRACE OF GOD”

Discuss

There once was a second-grader who was asked to write a brief autobiography. Since second graders are at best budding writers, his teacher helpfully supplied him and the other students with the beginning of each sentence. One of the sentences began, “I’m special because. . . .” As with all of the provided sentence openers, this one invited any number of endings. I’m special because I’m a dancer. I’m special because my parents love me. I’m special because God made me. With the splendid candor of a child, however, this second grader filled in the blank with what most people feel but leave unsaid: “I’m special because I like being special!”

The children of Israel *were* special. “Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth,” they had been told, “the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.” (Deut. 14:2) But we know that they were not chosen merely to give them the privilege of reveling in their unique and favored status. These beloved “insiders” were to welcome outsiders and be a blessing to them, something of course that was far more easily said than done.

- 1) When outsiders are welcomed or shown favor that insiders believe only they deserve, the opposition can be fierce.
 - Were there any legitimate questions to be asked by Jews at this time? What were they trying to understand?
 - Is there anything at the beginning of this passage that gives us a clue about their motives and attitude?
- 2) Much of what is said in this first half of Acts 11 repeats what is said in Acts 10.
 - What is helpful about having this repetition, and why do you think the Bible often includes more than one account of the same story? (For other examples, see Genesis 24 or Acts 9, 22, and 26.)
 - What is left out in this second account, and what is added? What difference does any of this make?
- 3) When the criticizers heard that the Gentile believers had clearly been baptized by the Holy Spirit, they stopped objecting and praised God. (v. 18)
 - What does one need to believe about God, yourself, and others to have this reaction?
 - If only the story ended here with the Jewish followers of Jesus having no further objections and praising God for granting salvation to the Gentiles! We know from the rest of the Bible, particularly from Paul’s letters (see Galatians, for example), and from church history, that over and over again religious insiders have criticized and opposed new believers who come from a different background or culture. Why has this been a perennial problem, and what is the solution?

DATE: May 3, 2020

SPEAKER: Brian

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 11:1-18

Pray

Come, thou fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it,
mount of God’s unchanging love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I’m come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.

Thou didst seek me when a stranger,
wand’ring from the fold of God;
thou hast rescued me from danger,
interposed your precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I’m constrained to be;
let that grace, now like a fetter,
bind my wand’ring heart to thee.
Prone to wander—
Lord, I feel it—prone to leave the
God I love: here’s my heart,
O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts
above.

– Robert Robinson, 1758 (slightly modified)

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Covenant College

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Lewis and Elsbeth serving in a sensitive area