



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

26 – Simon the Sorcerer

Announcements:

4/25 @6:30 -

—~~Men's Discipleship~~

~~CANCELED~~

4/27 @7:00 -

Corporate

Prayer

4/28 @6:30 -

~~Grace Group~~

~~CANCELED~~

5/1 @7:00 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: Finish the following: (*Your Name*) The _____ (For example: Simon the Magician or Alexander the Great)

In the sending of the twelve disciples, there are many beautiful thoughts. One that we did not have too much time to cover on Sunday, but is of critical importance, speaks of the nature of the Gospel. Jesus says: “You received without paying; give without pay.” (Matthew 10:8b). This is such a beautiful description of both the free gift of the Gospel, but also how we should interact with it. Today, We are going to change gears just a little bit, because in the book of Acts there is an exciting and important story about a person who did not seem to understand this particular part of the commands of Jesus. It is the story of Simon the Magician.

READ: Acts 8:9-25

As we are introduced to Simon we see that he is a rich and powerful man. He has much respect and everyone (including himself, it seems) thinks he is “someone great”. But as Philip comes preaching the Gospel and performing actual miracles, the people realize that what *he* is sharing is great too. And so the people “believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God” and the people were baptized. Usually when we read of the gospel coming in and taking the love and adoration that people are used to getting it is met with opposition (see the pharasses every time they are in the story!). But with Simon it is different. He believes and is baptized (verse 13). And here is where the problem starts. Though he believed and received a free gospel, it seems that was not good enough. He wants more. He desires the ability to lay hands on people and they receive the Holy spirit. So what is a man to do when he is rich and powerful and wants something? He offers to buy it (see verse 18). But even this betrays Simon, for from the get go what he misunderstands is the first part of Jesus proclaimed: “You received without paying!”

DISCUSS: What about grace as a free gift makes it so difficult for us to grasp?

Continuing on we should make some more observations. The problem, I believe, is NOT that Simon wanted to do great things for God. I would say that it is good and right in gratitude to desire to serve God. There are two issues. One discussed above is that he does not understand the free nature of grace. The second, and in some sense the more tragic, is that his heart was not right before God. It is not a misordered step to assume that part of the reason that he wants this particular power is NOT so that God gets glory, but he does. He was once a man of power, he sees this great power and desires it. So more than just a misunderstanding, his “heart is not right before God” (verse 21)! It is critical to note, just because he believed, and just because he was baptized, there is still sin that clouds his judgment, there are things in his life that still need work. We are often the same way!

DISCUSS: Why is it important to understand that there are still parts of our lives that we need to work on?

But as we close, I would like to note that the TWO things that are offered to Simon, to rectify his heart, are the same things we need. Repentance and prayer. In verse 22 Peter tells him to REPENT. As John (who was there for this event), would later say: “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. In verse 24 Simon pleads: PRAY FOR ME! The same should be true of us. We need prayer both for us and by us to battle the bastions of sin that might remain. Sanctification is a long and difficult process, and we need the Lord to work in us if we are to have any hope in its progress!

DISCUSS: Which is more difficult for you, to repent or ask for prayer?