

Saturday evening session – The Goal of Your Faith

-Without naming any names, can you think of people who professed faith in Christ, were baptized and maybe were even serving or leading in a church, but then ultimately walked away from the faith? Why did they leave?

-We thought this morning about genuine faith. For review, what are some characteristics of genuine faith?

-Is it possible for someone with genuine faith to turn his back on God?

Read 1 Peter 1:1-12

-What is hope? More specifically, what is the hope that Christians have? (v.3-5; Titus 1:1-2; Romans 8:23-25; 1 John 3:2-3)

-How does the Christian's hope differ from worldly hope, and why? (v.1-5; Hebrews 6:19; Romans 5:5; 1 Timothy 6:17; Titus 1:1-2)

-What does Peter mean, by saying that our hope is a 'living hope'? (v.3) (for an interesting illustration, see Romans 4:18-25)

-What is the relationship between faith and hope? (you might also consider Ephesians 2:11-13 with Colossians 1:21-23; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 11:1)

-In light of what we've considered today about faith and hope, what is the ultimate goal of genuine faith? (v.5-9)
(consider also Genesis 15:1; 1 John 3:2-3 and John 17:1-3)

-Why do people with genuine faith persevere in faith, while others may fall away? (v.2-9; also John 6:66-69;
Psalm 73:25-26)

Toward the goal...

While genuine followers of Christ may at times stumble, they will never fully or finally turn away from God. While it is true that from the perspective of God's sovereignty, they persevere because have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God and are kept by His power, it is equally true that from the perspective of Man's responsibility, they remain faithful because cling to Him as their only hope. Come what may, they say with the apostle Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68-69). More than that, while they enjoy all the different blessings God brings into their lives, He Himself is their highest treasure, their greatest inheritance. They want to know God and to be like Him, and thus in Him to find eternal life. With the Psalmist, they say, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:25-26) In contrast, those who fall away from God show that their hopes and their desires lie elsewhere, rather than in God Himself.

Consider your life and your walk with God this evening. Is God the deepest desire of your heart? Or are you just desiring the gifts rather than the Giver? Spend some time this evening in prayer, seeking after God. If you're not seeking Him first, repent and ask Him to help you treasure Him above all else.