

#246 "The Person the Lord Uses"

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I believed several lies when I was younger. I used to hear various preachers, whether in person or on the radio, and I would stand in awe because they had achieved such recognition, such fame, and such renown. I used to go to the Christian bookstore, and I would look at the popular authors of the day, and I would conclude that they were being majorly used of God. I browsed the section of Christian biographies, and I envied those Christians of recognized success. I believed that there were normal Christians and that there were extraordinary Christians. I thought that there were the average types of believers and then the special types of believers, those who were really "called" or "anointed" of God to do "great" and even "miraculous" types of things. Obviously, my thinking was highly flawed on several levels. First, fame does not guarantee faithfulness, for some who have written famous hymns or started historical church movements have abandoned the gospel. Yet we exalt them and glorify their testimony. Man can be very wrong in his judgment of success. Furthermore, just because a pastor or author has gained renown or the respect of the church masses does not mean that he is better than the rest of us. After all, it is possible to build a ministry simply upon charm and money alone. But that which is truly of eternal value is something only God can build (Psalm 127:1). All else is in vain. Finally, the most egregious lie that I believed was that of status or rank among Christians. The fact remains that God uses each and every believer, for He has prepared good works beforehand for all who receive Him by faith (Ephesians 2:10). Every believer has the right to God's promises, every believer is indwelt by God's Spirit, every believer is a member of God's royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), every believer is responsible for the Great Commission, and every believer has the God-given authority to proclaim the gospel and defend the truth. Religion exalts particular "saints," but the Bible calls every believer a saint in Christ (Romans 1:7). Certain denominations exalt clergy above laity, but the Bible says that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We have the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 16:19 says, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." This is a picture of Christ giving His church absolute authority via His earned authority as Lord of all. This authority is not just for the well-known Christians, but it is for all Christians. We all are called, sealed, led by the Spirit, empowered by Christ, and chosen as ministers of the gospel. In fact, the whole work of the church depends upon each part of the body doing what it is supposed to do (1 Corinthians 12). In other words, there is not a select group of people that the Lord uses while He fails to distribute His Spirit and power equally among the rest of us. No! We all are to be filled with the Spirit, for that is a command of Christ to every believer (Ephesians 5:18). There is no secret higher plane that we should want to achieve, and no man or woman ought to dare hold some sort of "inner circle" relationship with God over us.

We far too often exalt earthly talent and exchange it for true spirituality. We so easily look for earthly figures to do the work for us, but it is our work to do. It is easy to pass off evangelism on the pastor, but it is our calling as a whole. It is easy to feel dwarfed by numbers of conversions cited or certain documented achievements of saints in the past, but only God's approval matters. There is no earthly

hall of fame for Christians, only a heavenly crown. We can all be joined with the faithful saints of old as recorded by Hebrews 11 if only we, too, are faithful. We must recognize that God's "spotlight" shines down on each one of us every day in the sense that we are put on the spiritual stage and given the opportunity to praise or to curse, to obey or to falter, and to stand for the truth or to waffle. There are to be no benchwarmers in the Christian life, and there is no dichotomy between spiritual "starters" and a spiritual "second string." **While gifts differ, we cannot forget that all are gifted by the Spirit, and thus there can never be an inferior gift.**

2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." A totally devoted and committed heart is what God scans the earth looking for. He desires to use those who want His will and His glory above all else. His criteria say nothing about talent, height, weight, gender, education, skin color, intellect, etc. Rather, it is those who desire Him and Him alone with all of their hearts, souls, minds, and strength who are those He will support. A divided heart and a double-minded faith will not suffice. God must have all of us, not just some of us, not even most of us. He wants all. When He says, "You, come with me, follow, and be my disciple," the heart that is completely His says, like Isaiah, unwaveringly and without hesitation, "Here I am, send me." God will be faithful to ready, prepare, and purify us, but we must take the step of drawing near to Him in total devotion, and then He will draw near to us in due time to exalt us as He gives us opportunity to serve and suffer for His name's sake (1 Peter 5:6, James 4:8). God wasn't only interested in Isaiah when He called him in Isaiah 6, for He wanted the entire nation to repent and be used in His service. Sadly, few were interested in God as Isaiah was, and thus Isaiah was one the Lord could use.

Isaiah 66:2b says, "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." This three-fold descriptor of humility is the God-ordained prerequisite for serving God by His power and strength and not of our own. We must be willing to bow the knee before God unconditionally, we must be broken over our sin such that we deal with it in true repentance, and we must take God's Word so seriously that we tremble before it in spirit. It is that holy, that true, that needed, and that right. If we want to be used of God, we must take God at His Word because we view His Word to be of utmost importance, of unilateral authority, and of heavenly and eternal value. It changes everything in terms of what we think, how we act, what we choose to believe, and how we will make choices with our lives. Those who view God's Word in such a way and who have humbled themselves are those whom God can and will use.

It is never a mistake to want to be used of God, for we are all called to service. However, we must let God fix us, shape us, mold us, and prepare us so that we are truly humble, totally devoted, and have rightly studied His Word so that we can present an accurate gospel and a God-honoring life. Spiritual fruit is inevitable for the faithful believer, and only His evaluation of faithfulness counts.