



"Knowledge without humility is vanity."  
—A.W. Tozer

28-Jul-17

## The Role of the Outcasts (Part Two)

In the previous essay, we learned that [God](#), in His supreme wisdom and sovereignty, carves out a singular role for rejects, off-scourings, and castaways. From this observation, we can deduce that God sees something in such people that He desires in His children—and that these particular characteristics are ones we need to emulate. God, Scripture tells us in several places, "[gives grace to the humble](#)" ([Proverbs 3:34](#); [James 4:6](#); [I Peter 5:5](#)).

Jesus' brother, James, when he warned against snob appeal and favoritism, reminds us, "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in [faith](#) and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" ([James 2:5](#)). Poverty is not inherently virtuous, but the condition of poverty, with its attendant feelings of helplessness and failure, often brings about a lowliness of spirit that God can use to accomplish His work.

Paradoxically, when [Moses](#) perceived himself as "not eloquent . . . slow of speech and slow of tongue" ([Exodus 4:10](#)), God looked upon that needy and helpless condition as a precondition for godly service. As long as Moses retained the moldable, teachable attitude, God used him mightily.

However, for our admonition and example ([I Corinthians 10:6](#)), God made Moses an object lesson of what can happen when this humility is breached. In [Numbers 20:8](#), the Lord explicitly commanded His servant Moses to "speak to the rock" in front of the assembly of the children of Israel. Apparently, Moses—to give him the benefit of the doubt—tried to use a little theatrical flair, upstaging God. Notice [Numbers 20:10-12](#):

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

We begin to get the picture that if an act of [presumptuousness](#) cannot be tolerated in the man who was designated as "very humble" [[meek](#), KJV], more than all the men who were on the face of the earth" ([Numbers 12:3](#)), how much more abominable must it appear in those who have reinforced this trait through their habitual practice of self-satisfied pride and arrogance?

A humble spirit is a teachable and moldable spirit, but a haughty, self-satisfied, pride-filled spirit cannot be molded or shaped into a godly vessel. Herbert W. Armstrong used to say, "God will not call anyone He can't rule." In his particular case, it was not until he had failed twice in business, after having achieved major prosperity, that God could penetrate his pride-filled attitude. Only when he was willing to sacrifice his reputation, enduring ridicule among his former business associates, did he develop a lowly, humble, submissive attitude, calling himself "a burned-out, old hunk of junk." At this point of recognition, the admission of total, abject failure (as the Almighty metaphorically splatted this piece of ceramic clay as flat as a pancake), God began working His purpose through him.

In a similar way, not until the learned, zealous Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, was knocked to the ground by a blinding light, rendering him as weak and helpless as a newborn kitten, could this cut-down-to-size Pharisee—Paul, now an apostle of Christ—become an instrument in God's hands ([Acts 9:3-9](#)). In his humbled state, he realized that all his previous accomplishments and honor among the Jews appeared as rubbish or dung alongside his calling ([Philippians 3:8](#)).

Paul eventually realized that becoming an instrument in God's hands may seem to the "wise of [the world](#)" as foolish, dishonorable, weak, and downright filthy! He writes in [I Corinthians 4:9-10](#), 13:

For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to the angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! . . . [B]eing defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

When Paul contemplates the possible reasons for a chronic physical [affliction](#) he had been experiencing, he considers it a kind of check-and-balance against self-exaltation. As he explains in [II Corinthians 12:8-9](#): "Concerning this thing [the metaphorical thorn in the flesh], I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is *made perfect in weakness*'" (emphasis ours).

God is not hindered by weakness, but in fact, the weakness of a servant aids in his spiritual development, becoming a strength! Despite human nature's strenuous objections to the contrary, being in a position of weakness, being humble and lacking in resources, is not an insurmountable disadvantage. If we demonstrate the mind of God, we realize it is a tremendous benefit in our quest to become like our Savior [Jesus Christ](#).

In the concluding essay, we will see that Christ Himself was made to experience the same humbling and denigration to become perfect. It is fitting, then, that God makes us follow His steps.

- David F. Maas

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