



"Great modesty often hides great merit."
—Benjamin Franklin

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The Role of the Outcasts (Part Three)

In the first two essays of this series, we have seen that [God](#) has a special role for the outcasts of society—rejects, castaways, and exiles. We have learned that such people possess or develop certain character traits that God desires us, as His children, to emulate. Chief among these, it seems, is the virtue of humility, as the Bible many times promises that "He [gives grace to the humble](#)" ([Proverbs 3:34](#); [James 4:6](#); [I Peter 5:5](#); etc.). Last time, we saw that God often brings his servants low, as He did to the apostle Paul with his "thorn in the flesh" ([II Corinthians 12:7-9](#)).

As the same apostle expands the olive tree metaphor in Romans 11, he feels compelled to admonish the Gentiles that their being grafted in to the tree is conditional, subject to their humility, [faith](#), and submission to God's purpose. He warns in [Romans 11:18-20](#):

Do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

The humility of the poor contrasts with the haughty supercilious attitudes of people who let riches go to their heads in [Proverbs 18:23](#), "The poor man uses entreaties [humbly and respectfully petitions], but the rich answers roughly [arrogantly and disrespectfully]."

God the Father did not spare our Elder Brother from the humility of rejection and scorn: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" ([Psalm 118:22-23](#)).

In the well-known "Suffering Servant" passage, the prophet graphically portrays the Messiah as despised, rejected, and quite ordinary looking:

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of the dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ([Isaiah 53:2-3](#))

God the Father in His sovereignty evidently looks upon the experience of rejection, scorn, and humiliation as necessary precursors to godly service. We find further proof of this in [Hebrews 5:8](#): ". . . though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

What about us? Have we learned any obedience by the things we have suffered? Most of us in the greater church of God have been uprooted and transplanted twice and maybe are destined for some more uprooting and transplanting before this story is concluded. Virtually every one of us, as we came out of the religious traditions of [the world](#), became instantaneous outcasts, serving as a perpetual irritant to the world's prevailing customs. As a large segment of our former fellowship tried to re-attach themselves to the customs, traditions, and practices despised by Almighty God ([Deuteronomy 12:30](#)), He in His loving mercy had to uproot us a second time. From this second uprooting, it is hoped we have learned not to trust in our own understanding, but instead in the [sovereignty of God](#) Almighty (see [Proverbs 3:4-5](#)).

It may be strange to think of ourselves this way, but God has called a group of misfits, through which He desires to accomplish a miraculous feat. Virtually every prophetic vision indicates that God will assemble outcasts and rejects with a repentant and broken spirit, willing to yield to His purpose for a marvelous calling.

- The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the *outcasts* of Israel. He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground. ([Psalm 147:2-3](#), 6; emphasis ours throughout)
- He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the *outcasts* of Israel, and [gather together the dispersed](#) of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ([Isaiah 11:12](#))
- So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are *outcasts* in the land of Egypt, and shall worship in the holy mount at Jerusalem, ([Isaiah 27:13](#))
- "For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds," says the LORD, "because they called you an *outcast* saying: 'This is Zion; no one seeks her.'" ([Jeremiah 30:17](#))

The reference referring to the defeated and exiled Jews after the fall of Jerusalem in [Lamentations 3:45](#) could certainly apply to the current scattered, confused, and disoriented condition experienced by the greater church of God: "You have made us an *offscouring* and *refuse* in the midst of the peoples."

The ultimate miracle—perhaps God Almighty loves a challenge!—consists of the transforming of these misfits, offscourings, outcasts, or undesirables into a unified nation or family under the eternal rule of God. As He says in [Micah 4:6-7](#): "'In that day,' says the LORD, 'I will assemble the lame, I will gather the *outcast* and those whom I have [afflicted](#); I will make the lame a remnant, and the *outcast* a strong nation; so the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever.'"

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

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