

## **SO YOU WANT TO BE USED BY GOD**

We have often heard people say things like: Noah was a drunkard, Abraham wasn't completely honest on two occasions, Moses committed murder, David committed adultery and was guilty of murder, Solomon worshipped false gods, Samson broke his covenant with God over a woman, and the list goes on – so if God used them, he can certainly use me/us. First of all this is faulty thinking. It is correct that those men listed had serious human failures. It would be a mistake to measure your life on the basis of these imperfect people. It is also a mistake to measure your righteousness by your own standards or based on the standards of others.

We hear people referring back to the people in the Old Testament that were mightily used by God while having shortcomings in their personal life. Such types and people who committed a sin or perhaps major sins under the Old Testament are alluded to, by people today in their attempt(s) to justify where they personally are in life. It's as, if, it is a way in which we are attempting to justify the position of ourselves or the position of others, to make the point that God can use anyone just the way we/they are. In this, they say that God used those people so he can use us.

We, on the other hand, are not under the Old Testament. We are under the New Testament where God requires more of us than he required of them. It is because the Messiah, Jesus, came to earth to resolve the sin problem in our personal lives. The times of ignorance to commit sin(s) that were done by people under the Old Testament – God overlooked, but now commands everyone, everywhere, to repent because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness (rightly) by Jesus Christ” (Ro. 17:30-31). When Jesus died on the cross he condemned sin in the

flesh (Ro. 8:3-4). Sin no longer has the legal right to rule a person's life (Ro. 6:12). Under the New Testament, all of us can be filled with the Power of the Holy Spirit to triumph over sin and over all its power.

Since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, to the ministry of John the Baptist, those in Old Testament times have been looking for a savior. These Old Testament types are not examples for us to follow today. The one example that our lives should model and gain God's approval is a life modeled after that of the Lord Jesus Christ. He and his life is our example in all things in life. The Lord cannot use a person that is living a sinful lifestyle. There are specific types or kinds of sins that can hinder a person from effectively being used by God. The people previously listed, to name a few, that were living under the Old Testament were chosen by God for a specific purpose. The purposes for them, for God's calling, ultimately pointed to the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As stated, there was a time under the Old Covenant the Lord allowed ignorance of sins in people, in which he essentially overlooked such ignorance because they indeed were weak under the covenant in which they lived. And for the past two-thousand years we have been under a far better covenant that is based on better promises (He. 8:6). Nor can we use the excuse that Peter denied Christ and therefore he was messed up in some sort of way. Jesus told Peter that after he was converted to strengthen his brethren (Lu. 22:32). And after Peter and the 120 born again (Reception of the Holy Ghost that follows repentance from sin) believers received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he (Peter) didn't deny the Lord the way he did before his conversion.

There is also Christian thought today that in order to be used by God you have to stand in a church pulpit for everyone to see and hear you. This kind of thinking doesn't line up with the Scriptures.

It should also be understood that not everyone will ever stand behind a church podium and preach to people. And if a person does stand in a pulpit-type ministry, it doesn't validate the person's calling, nor does it affirm God is using him. I've heard many preachers stand in church pulpits and preach false doctrines. I heard many lie to people and preach for personal gain with no intentions on turning people to Christ. Jesus said that many false prophets will arise and deceive many (Mt. 24:11); but you will know them by their fruit (Mt. 7:20).

When Nicodemus sneaked by night to see Jesus, he was well indoctrinated in the Hebrew Scriptures. He was called "Master Nicodemus" a master of the Jewish Law. Jesus rebuked him while he was yet considered to be a teacher of the Jews for not knowing or understanding the things of God. The problem identified with Nicodemus' way of thinking was that Jesus required something differently than what Nicodemus had believed all his life. He said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again in order to see the Kingdom of God." And "unless you are born of Water and the Spirit you cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3, 4). In Acts 2:38, Peter referred back to Jesus' teaching and incorporated it into the first sermon ever preached about salvation under the New Testament, on the Day of Pentecost.

In Jesus' words to Nicodemus, he didn't tell Nicodemus to confess with his mouth and believe in his heart. He told him, "You must be born again." God cannot use a person in a lifestyle of sin. And if you are not born again, you can't fulfill God's purposes for your life. God can use anyone and anything. But this doesn't mean that God approves of the person he is using. He can use people, animals, nature, or anything in his creation to accomplish any purpose he so chooses to accomplish. And if a person has not been born again of "Water and the Spirit" then that person is not saved.

A born again lifestyle keeps a person out of sin. The Lord's command for people is a holy lifestyle. He said, "But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy" (Le. 20:26; 1 Pe. 1:15-16). The Apostle Paul proclaimed in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that, "If anyone is in Christ he or she is a new creature (creation); old things have passed away and all things have become new. A person that has been born again does not commit (practice) sin. The Lord wants to use you to be a witness for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be a witness, not only in word but in deeds, about how he can save people from sin.

One of the dearest things to the heart of Jesus is discipleship. The task of making disciples is the will of God for all believers in Christ. In order for discipleship to work, the believer in Christ has to first be an example of what they preach, are preaching, to others. Simply speaking, if you can't live it, you can't preach it! In other words, if you can't live the message you are proclaiming to others, then you are not qualified to proclaim the message to others.

Paul admonished Pastor Timothy to teach believers to "be an example of believers" (1 Tm. 4:12). This does not mean just to always talk about what is right. It means that you are to be an example to others in the way you live your life before them, in order to justify what you are telling others is right. Jesus told his disciples that, "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit" that prove out to be his disciples (see John 15:1-8). There are many people who look upon their own past and weaknesses as an excuse for justifying God's will for their lives.

At the beginning of the New Testament Christian church, those who were used mightily by God were all martyrs of Christ (with the exception of the Apostle John). The believers were butchered and murdered for entertainment and sport by unbelievers; only to seal the Christian message and bring glory to

Christ. They didn't sit up on a church pulpit to cross their legs and look cute. So do you really want God to use you? He has a tendency of moving in ways we don't expect. If you look for him one way, he is more likely to move another way. If you want God to use you, he will but it will not be as you expect. The Lord uses people to bear testimony to the witness of Jesus Christ. He doesn't use you in ways that will benefit yourself.

It is a poor example many church leaders are setting for people today. If we were subject to the physical persecution today that involves harm or risk on your life, many would not be so anxious to preach or work in Christian ministry. Martyrs in the Christian faith had a way of keeping people in line, and allowed everyone to play their own God intended role in life. Many that stand in pulpits today would abandon their post if their vocation required the shedding of blood or elimination of money. And when they are persecuted, they prove to know more about the devil than they know about Jesus.

Some famous musicians said they became pastors because they weren't making money as musicians. Many people, who already preach for fame and fortune, will lose faith in the time of severe persecution. And when their members – their church members – suffer hardships, their pastors are nowhere to be found, or are not willing to help. Many are too dignified to shake your hand and to have a conversation with you. And as long as their member is sitting in the pews, clapping their hands, and paying their tithes, they assume that everything is well with them.

A poor example is set for their followers who admire their charisma through enticing words and articulate speech. Today's prophet has given themselves over to materialism, and passes judgment based on the outer appearance of people. The person that is flashy with the flamboyant appearance and the pomp, fish for vulnerable Christians that are drawn to this type of preacher as

their role model, for what many call, “my man of God,” who deceive the hearts of the simple.

This is an example of the travesty the Christian church is facing today. There are so many who say they believe in Christ but don't understand the doctrine of salvation. When is the last time you prayed for someone to receive the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues? Do you not believe this is Biblical? Have you been baptized in water in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission (or removal) of you sins? Do you not believe this is Biblical? Rather than telling somebody to repeat some words after you to be saved, when is the last time you told people the truth? Do we no longer fast and pray? Not just pray, but fast and pray.

As said earlier, the very first sermon preached at the birth of the church was Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. He said, “Repent, and be baptized – everyone – in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission (or removal) of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is in unison with Jesus' message to Nicodemus that you must be born of Water and the Spirit in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Do you no longer believe this? We all need to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are in the faith for sure.

Many things in life just happen. Some things happen because of what we do and some things happen that are beyond our control. This is precisely where the prophet Amos, and many others, found themselves. Amos, for example said, “The LORD took me from following the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to Israel’” (7:14). If the Lord wants to use you, he will use you without you having to force your way into public ministry. So learn to serve the Lord where you are, and learn obedience in the simple things. Many times however Christian ministry is available right where you are for those who need to see Jesus through you.