

Introduction

About 20 years ago, billionaire real estate tycoon Leona Helmsley was convicted of tax evasion. During the trial, a former housekeeper of hers took the stand and testified about what she had heard Helmsley say: **"We don't pay taxes. Only little people pay taxes."** By **"little people,"** she meant common people like most of us are. Let's face it. Elitists like Helmsley was don't think very highly of us. But that's okay because God does. The fact is that He believes in you and me. How do I know? The Bible tells me so, in the text we read.

God Believes in Us

Let's start with the words **"But by His (God's) doing"** in verse 30. **"God's doing"** there refers to the **"the finished work of Jesus."** Jesus came to earth in the flesh, served the humanity around Him for 33 years, died the most painful and shameful death in human history for our sins, and rose from the dead. That finished work of His reveals the terrifying investment God has made in individual human beings. I've said it before and I'll say it again. The incarnation, life, and crucifixion of Jesus were, by far, the gravest sacrifices in human history.

Verse 30 reveals the result. The Corinthian Christians were **"in Christ Jesus,"** meaning in relationship with Him. And because they were, they were wise, righteous, sanctified, and redeemed, to quote that verse. God transformed them into an extraordinary kind of humanity, in other words, what Paul called elsewhere **"new creatures in Christ."** That is to what the words **"your calling"** in verse 26 refer.

Now, Paul described these Corinthian Christians that God called in verses 26-28. He tells us three things. First, they weren't **"wise"** but **"foolish."** That referred to their education. They had very little even for the day. A modern equivalent would be my mother who *only* had an eighth grade education. Second, they weren't **"mighty"** or **"strong"** but **"weak."** That referred to their influence. We talk about **"movers and**

shakers,” people who wield the power to initiate and direct important events. There weren’t any of those in the Corinthian church. And finally third, they weren’t “**noble**” but “**despised**” and “**base.**” That referred to their social standing or rank. They didn’t have any. Our lower middle class and lower class would be equivalents today.

Those then were the people God called to be extraordinary, and what they teach us is this. He believes in common people – as much as He does uncommon ones. I wrote down a text in my Bible beside verses 26-28 that illustrates this principle they teach, Judges 6:15. God called Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midian, to which he replied: “**O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.**” God used him, nonetheless, to do just that.

That reminds me of a maxim that most of us know, “**God must believe in common people because He made so many of them.**” The logic isn’t valid but the conclusion is. Our text makes it clear. God believes in common people as much as He does uncommon ones. He believes in you and me. There isn’t anything abstract about what that means. He thinks each of us has potentialities for greatness. He thinks He can transform all of us to become extraordinary people and empower us to do extraordinary things and does. *He* believes in us!

We Don’t Believe in Us

The problem is we don’t *we* believe in us – many of us don’t at least. I’ve learned something from 40 years in people professions. Many if not most underestimate, not overestimate themselves. They sell themselves short. They underrate what they’re capable of being and doing.

The “**they**” about whom I’m speaking includes professing Christians of course. Many have the same poor self-concept that non-Christians have. Job’s friend Bildad, for instance, was a passionate believer in God. But in Job 25:6, he told Job that man is “**that maggot**” and the son of man “**that worm.**” Maggot! Worm! There’s an even worse word that

Martin Luther, the Father of the Protestant Reformation, repeatedly used. Luther described himself, his life, and his work as **“dung.”**

It's true. Many professing Christians have poor self-concepts. They sell themselves short by focusing on how limited they are instead. Renowned Christian apologist Francis Schaeffer described their posture this way: **“It is wonderful to be a Christian, but I am such a small person, so limited in talents – or energy or psychological strength or knowledge – that what I do is not really important.”** He was right. That is the posture of many Christians.

Notice what Schaeffer mentioned: talents, energy, psychological strength, and knowledge. Let me ask you. Are you selling yourself short when it comes to those things? Are you underestimating what you're capable of being and/or doing?

Consider something that at least 20 people have told me over the years, **“Pastor, the Bible is too difficult for me to understand.”** What they were implying is clear. They weren't smart enough to understand it. But in reality, I know that all 20 were. They illustrate it. Many Christians don't believe in themselves.

And one of the most highly regarded psychologists of the 20th century, Abraham Maslow, explained why they don't. He taught that most of us are afraid of our own potentialities for greatness. The awareness of our potential, he said, is too much for us. We're so afraid that we won't live up to our personal possibilities that we try to escape them.

We do that, Maslow argued, by denying our strengths and focusing on our weaknesses. We deceive ourselves into thinking that we're maggots and worms. If we're maggots and worms, then we won't be haunted by our abilities to be and do great things. We purposely choose a poor self-concept so that we don't have to face up to the awesome challenges of our potentialities for greatness.

For the most part, Maslow was right. We've all seen it – in spouses, parents, children, friends, co-workers, church goers, and us. We play this little game. We denigrate and degrade ourselves. That way we don't

have to face up to the great things we're capable of being and doing.

Extraordinary People

But Paul won't let us get away with our little game. Notice what he writes three times about those common Corinthians in verses 27-28, "**God has chosen**" them. God chooses to transform and work through common people as surely as he does uncommon people. Verses 29, 31 reveal a reason He does. It glorifies Him. When uncommon people become and do extraordinary things, it's usually attributed to them. When common people become and do extraordinary things, it's usually attributed to God.

Dwight L. Moody was a classic case in point. He was the most successful evangelist of the 19th century. But at the same time, he was ordinary in appearance, unordained, uneducated, and even uncouth and crude to many. After analyzing his ministry on behalf of English churches, Dr. R.W. Dale told him: "**You're ministry is most plainly the work of God because I can see no relation between you personally and what you are accomplishing.**" To which Moody replied, "**I'd have it no other way.**" The boasting was in God not Moody.

And it's the same with us. God chooses to use us, common people, to be and do extraordinary things because they glorify Him not us.

Committed People

But, as the Bible teaches, He does so only if we're committed.

Grasp something about commitment. It's the most significant factor in solving the problems and achieving the aims we have. It's usually more impacting in that regard than wealth, education, talent, power, and rank are. Leadership expert John Maxwell says it this way: "**The key that unlocks the door of success is the key of commitment. Without that key, the door will never open. No amount of genius, talent, finesses, or 'right connections' will ever bring the fruit of success without a real commitment.**" His comment implies that commitment, by itself, is inherently powerful, and it is.

Consider a person who had dyslexia and struggled with learning his entire life. He had to repeat his first year at West Point after failing mathematics and ended up graduating only 46th out of a class of 103, right in the middle. He had a defining quality of character though with which he became synonymous – a dogged determination that never quit. He did whatever was necessary to succeed and did. You all know his name – General George Patton.

Patton illustrates a life-altering fact of our existence. Commitment, by itself, is inherently powerful. It's so powerful in fact that it can make common people uncommon – ordinary people extraordinary.

But there's another and supernatural factor if we're disciples of Jesus. It's that God always responds to our commitment. There are things He wants us to be and do. And He directs, empowers, and blesses us as we commit ourselves to being and doing them. We call what I'm talking about enhancement. God enhances the committed. So, let's be just that, committed. He'll make us uncommon, extraordinary, if we do.

But what does it mean to be committed? Ken Blanchard defined it well in his book *The One Minute Manager*: **"There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses – only results."**

The opposite of convenient is necessary, which helps us define committed. We're willing to do whatever is necessary to be or do what God wants. But we can define it even more specifically than that. Whatever is necessary means three things.

First, we're willing to pay a price that interested people won't pay. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the cost of discipleship. Understanding the Bible, for instance, costs concentration and time. There's a price to be paid for everything God wants us to be or do. Committed people routinely pay that price. Interested people don't.

Whatever is necessary means a second thing. We're willing to make decisions that interested people won't make. Robert Schuller once said,

“Again and again, the impossible problem is solved (or aim achieved) when we see that the problem (or aim) is only a tough decision waiting to be made.” There are four kinds of tough decisions: (1) a decision that negatively affects me; (2) a decision that is unpopular; (3) a decision that gives no immediate benefit; and (4) a decision that has an uncertain outcome. Committed people routinely make those kinds of decisions. Interested people don’t.

Whatever is necessary means a third thing. We’re willing to give to a degree that interested people won’t give. Mother Teresa once told her co-workers: **“The poor do not need your surplus. Do not give your leftovers. Give until it hurts, until you feel the pain.”** Interested people give from the surplus of their money, energy, time, and effort. Committed people give their money, energy, time and effort until it hurts.

Consider a sampling of the things God wants all of us to be or do. Love Him with our whole being. Trust Him with our whole being. Understand the Bible. Rejoice when others outshine us. Forgive those who wrong us. And receive criticism with gratitude and joy, to name a few. To be committed means to pay the price, make the decisions, and give to the degree that those things require.

Or consider things God wants you to be or do that are peculiar to you: write a book, start a jail ministry, begin a business, adopt a hard to place child, or be a Sunday school teacher to name a few. To be committed means to pay the price, make the decisions, and give to the degree that those things require.

Conclusion

We now know the meaning of our text and I close it with the words of Dwight L. Moody: **“Moses spent 40 years thinking he was a somebody, 40 years learning he was a nobody, and 40 years discovering what God can do with a nobody.”** Discover what Moses did. We can be and do extraordinary things – if we’re committed. Why? It’s because God believes in common people! He believes in you and me.