

Does God Work Through You?

Joe Slater

Having completed their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria. *“And when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles”* (Acts 14:27). Two crucial truths shine forth from the last part of that sentence, both of which are applicable and needed in the church today.

First, Paul and Barnabas (and Luke, who wrote Acts) gave God the glory for all of the wonderful success of the missionary journey. This was entirely fitting, for the Lord Jesus Himself told His disciples that He was the vine and they were the branches. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit unless it is connected to the vine, so Jesus told them, *“without Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

The same is true today. Like Paul and Barnabas, we may busy ourselves doing many good things, but it is the Lord who brings forth the results (see 1 Corinthians 3:6). Let us accompany our deeds with prayer that God will crown our efforts with fruitfulness. And let us give God the praise for all the good that comes from anything we do.

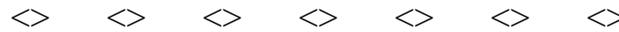
Second, God worked through Paul and Barnabas. Since we know more of Paul’s background, God’s working through him amazes us even more than His working through Barnabas. Paul acknowledged that he was the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:5). At one time he had tried to destroy the church (Galatians 1:13), inflicting suffering and even death upon the Lord’s disciples (Acts 26:9-11). Still, God worked through Him to *“open the door of faith to the Gentiles”* (Acts 14:27), that is, to

bring the gospel to them, thus producing faith within their hearts (see Romans 10:17)

Jesus said that people would be *“taught by God”* (John 6:45). God teaches people, not directly, but indirectly, by means of His word. When Paul preached the gospel, God was teaching people. When you or I communicate the truth from the Scriptures, God is teaching people.

Do you think your past is so terrible that God can’t use you? Oh yes, He can! Listen to the self-confessed chief of sinners: *“However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life”* (1 Timothy 1:16). If I may paraphrase: “If God can save me, He can save you. If God can use me, He can use you.”

But God will not force you to do what He says. So the question is: Are you willing to submit to God and be His instrument?



Ignore

*Ignore
the shifting crowd
that swings like a vane in the wind,
rejects the constant north of truth,
and cheers the tellers of tales,
while sneering at God’s
Good news*

--Randal Matheny (Brazil)

Restore My Soul

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

How long have you been a Christian? Ten years? Twenty years? Longer? If it has been a while since you believed in Jesus as your Savior and put Him on in baptism, do you still feel the joy and enthusiasm that you felt then? Sometimes, we do not. The new has worn off. You have heard it over and over. You may even take God and the sacrifice He made through His Son for granted.

The signs are many. Sermons don't hold your attention. Your mind wanders during prayers at worship services. Your own prayer life has grown weak and sparse. You find yourself arguing with Satan instead of chasing him away. Sometimes you give in to "little sins." Your love for your church family has grown cold. It doesn't matter if you miss a worship service or two. Your Bible gathers dust on the shelf, or maybe you don't know where it is. Telling God's good news is very low on your priority list.

If this sounds like you, now is the time to restore your soul! You have been away from God too long. Your faith has faltered because your heart is not in touch with God. You are weary because you need more strength from prayer and the reassurances you can get from God's Word. Your love for God and His Son is lukewarm because Satan almost has you.

God is waiting, watching, wanting you to come home. In love He reaches out to you. He will take you back into His fold and forgive you. God through His Word will remove all doubt and fear, and your faith will be renewed. He will restore your faith and courage to work for Him. Like David, you then can *“teach transgressor your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You”* (Psalm 51:12:13).

--Donna Richmond Wittlif (Denver, CO)