Men, Means and Methods

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." (I Cor. 1:26-27)

Recently I was brought to laughter when reading and contemplating the Lord's comment to Gideon in Judges 6:12. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." God pays this compliment to a man who's hiding behind a winepress for fear of being discovered by the Midianites. Without doubt, God saw something in Gideon, at this time, that no one else, including Gideon, knew he possessed. The choice of Gideon was a "foolish" thing from man's perspective. But, God's economy is not like ours. He chooses and uses different vessels than most of us would select. In fact, God's ways are often un-orthodox in nature. I want to draw your attention to three aspects on the un-orthodox way in which God often works.

First, God often uses un-orthodox MEN. In I Sam. 22:2, God led David to select men who were "in distress (depressed)...in debt and ...discontented (restless)..." I know of very few pastors or corporate presidents who would have chosen this "rag-tag" crew. Yet, David, the man after God's own heart, looked beyond where these men were, to what they could be. Is it any wonder that they served their leader with such sacrificial dedication. Years ago, I heard of a school teacher who was given a most "behaviorally challenged" class of high-school students. At the end of first semester, the entire class had excelled beyond anyone's widest expectations. When asked how she'd done it, the teacher responded that "anyone could teach such an intellectually elite group." When asked why she considered them so gifted, the teacher said that she'd seen their IQ numbers listed beside their names on her class roll. The principal tersely responded, "those numbers weren't their IQ's, but rather their locker numbers. Because the teacher saw the potential rather than the problems, the students rose to her vision for them. Likewise, David's men rose to the level of his expectation for them.

Second, God often uses un-orthodox MEANS. Who could deny that reducing your fighting force from 32,000 to 300 is a bit un-orthodox? Yet, God stated clearly to Gideon His reason for culling down the size of the army. He said, "lest Israel vaunt themselves against me saying, mine own hand hath saved me." While I'm in degrading talent or giftedness, God is more interested in integrity and faithfulness. He'll use any and all who, in honesty and dedication, have made themselves available to Him, gifted or not.

Third, God often uses un-orthodox METHODS. What laughter must have erupted as Gideon's 300 armed themselves to the teeth with pitchers, lamps and trumpets. Yet, through these, God gave great victory. The longer I live and serve in the ministry, the more firmly I become convinced that "tradition" may well be the greatest enemy that Christianity has. Jesus, Himself, often broke with tradition in His ministry. His doing so raised the ire of the religious elite of His day. While "tradition-breaking" must never be the goal, in itself, there will be times that we will have to break with the norm to do the will of God. Jesus' talking with a woman at a well in Samaria broke with the tradition of His day. His disciple plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath broke with tradition, as well. Praise God that He often uses the un-orthodox, otherwise, many of us would never have the opportunity of service we now enjoy. Rather than living in dreaded fear of the un-orthodox, may we embrace it, knowing that He often uses such MEN, MEANS and METHODS.

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