



## Does God Need Me? (Part 2)

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During my college years, the insightful writings of Oswald Chambers were enriching to my understanding of the ways of God. Chambers had a way of helping you see things from another angle.

Something he wrote has stuck with me for many years: It is by God's grace that He does not allow us to see all the effectiveness we have in the world. What an interesting phrase! This came to me in the middle of yearning to see my own effectiveness and the fruit of my hard work. I sat in a dry desert of failure.

I know others can relate to this. I recently spoke to a missionary to Tibet. He spoke along my theme. Of the three generations of missionaries in his family, not one of them has seen a single person turn to the love of Jesus. In fact, he shared that despite the entire missionary work in Tibet over the last one hundred years, not a single church has been planted. That is a very long obedience.

Why is God this way? Why does Chambers say that it is God's grace that keeps us from seeing many of our successes? Maybe it is to protect us from taking pride in our successes, for all success belongs to the Lord. But maybe there is another purpose too.

I strongly suspect that God does not want us distracted into thinking that our goal in life is to bring about wonderful successes for Him. I know this sounds odd at first, but perhaps that is because in our present world we wear the glasses of success and believe that personal value comes in the things we accomplish.

But God is quite busy telling us in the Bible that our intrinsic value does not come with all the things we can do. Our function does not preclude our essence. The Psalmist says, "Your love is better than life" (see Psalm 63). This smacks hard against our success-driving culture. If we cannot live, we cannot have success for God. How could the Psalmist make such an outlandish remark to think that relating to God is more important than serving God? He says it because it is true.

In yesterday's Slice, I spoke of our desire to be needed by God and how ridiculous it must be from God's viewpoint. God is not impotent without us. He can raise up stones, if He likes, to do our work. But Jesus loves us and dies for us, not to be useful, but for our own good. He sets us free to obey.

Today, I want to continue to reflect on the contrast between being useful and being loved by God. I once heard Rich Mullins share this:

Imagine the story of the Gospel. How many people are absolutely essential to the story? How many people, without which, the story couldn't happen the way it did?

God is important to the story. Jesus, God in the flesh, is important. Mary is important, as Jesus was virgin born. Judas was important because he betrayed Christ and set the wheels in motion to send Christ to the cross. The Pharisees were important to stir up the rabble. Pontius Pilate was important because he had the power to condemn Christ. The Centurion was important because he nailed Christ to the cross. Of all the important people to the story, few of them were good people. Many of them were actually bad people.

The point is clear: God can use anybody. He can use Balaam's donkey. He can use Nebuchadnezzar. He can use Judas. In fact, Judas was the most useful of all the twelve disciples at that point.

Even James Stewart, the Scottish theologian, emphasizes that "Christ did not conquer in spite of the dark mystery of evil; He conquered through it."

However, in Mark 3:13, it says that Jesus called unto Him those that He wanted. It is a far better thing to be wanted, than to be used. And, in turn, our usefulness becomes most powerful when our obedience is out of love and gratitude in a life of worship.

I believe this is what Oswald Chambers is saying in the opening thought. Life is not about successes and failures. It is about knowing God, walking intimately with Him, and worshiping Him in our service. He will take care of the successes, and will keep us free from unnecessary distraction along the way.

Proverbs 24:16: "For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again." We have the strength to rise, because life is not about success, but walking

head-high in love to Christ the King. It is about God's love, not about His needs. It is a celebration of Him and His work that should draw our gaze, adulation, and motivation to obey.

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