

I have admired and often written about the cast of characters that God chose to work with. From John the Baptist to the twelve fishermen, tax collectors and well... we don't know all of their occupations at the time, but it's clear that none of these guys were in societies top one percent. The phrase, 'God works in mysterious ways' certainly comes to mind when looking at the people God chose to do his work, that's pretty clear.

It's not a stretch for us to understand why the religious leaders of the time had a slight reservation about this Jesus guy being the messiah they've been waiting for.

"You mean that guy who eats dinner with a bunch of tax collectors and recruits smelly fishermen to follow him is the messiah we've been waiting for and you support this by telling us that this nasty lunatic in the desert told you so? Have you totally lost your mind?!?"

You can understand their hesitation in jumping on that bandwagon. Remember, the religious leaders at the time were the highly educated people whom everyone else knew better than to debate with their expertise of religious matters - like the coming messiah.

That's what makes the story of Paul so awesome. It was as if God said, "Oh, you don't want to listen to the guys I pick because you're sooooo smart and know everything about the coming messiah, huh? Well let's see what you think about THIS guy!"

Paul was no cream-puff, people. He was a rising star in the prospective pool of budding Pharisees. This is a guy who knew the Jewish laws and did not hesitate to arrest and punish those who broke any of the laws. He witnessed and approved the stoning of the first martyr Stephen.

Though he did not personally know Jesus, his followers knew him very well and it's a pretty good guess that they did not get too excited when they heard he was in town. It must have been hard for these fishermen and tax collectors to accept that Paul was now on their team.

Paul wasn't a nice guy.

When you read his writings in Acts and many of the letters of the New Testament - understanding his background - you can really appreciate the notion that God truly does work in mysterious ways.

In simple terms, God got a 2fur when he got Paul.

On the one hand, the religious leaders of the time knew Paul very well. They knew Paul was not a person to be challenged. They knew that if Paul was on his way to settle some religious dispute, wherever he was going, they lose!

Now they hear that Paul is going from town to town spreading the good news of Jesus.... the Risen Savior the TRUE MESSIAH?!?

This was a very bad dream, right?!

There is NO WAY these reports can be true!

You're say'n Paul is telling people Jesus really was the Messiah?

GETOUTTAHERE!!!

I'm guessing things got really quiet around the Temples with each new story about Pauls travels. Paul left the religious leaders speechless and dumbfounded with every new report.

On the other hand, Paul knew everything about Jewish law and traditions. So of course, everyone was writing Paul to ask him about what laws were still okay and what laws were not.

One can only imagine Jesus looking directly into Pauls blind eyes and clearly explaining that the message he brought the world was a message of LOVE LOVE God with all your heart, mind and soul... Love your neighbor as you LOVE thyself ... ONE LAW LOVE.

Then he gave Paul back his sight and said, 'Go Get'em, Buddy!'

Many of the communities he traveled through were melting pots of many cultures and lifestyles. It would have been a very difficult time for these converted communities to gather together without some debates about laws and lifestyles. Be it circumcision, how to prepare food and all the other laws the Jewish converted grew up with, but the Gentile converts did not, it's easy to see that there would be a lot of debating within this new religion.

Paul was the perfect voice for this new religion. He understood the concerns of the Jewish converts because noone was more committed to Jewish laws than he was. But he also understood the message Jesus brought the world of living your life emotionally with love as your main focus. He was the perfect voice to answer those questions... 'Do not make ANY laws that would hinder your ability to love one another.'

God does work in mysterious ways, but the lesson is that sometimes you have to do things a little out of the ordinary in order to let love win the day.