

beauty of virtue flourished. Nobody had told Jesus what kind of a personality Nathaniel was. When Nathaniel wanted to know how Jesus knew him, Jesus said I saw you when you were under the fig tree. Under the fig tree the soul of Nathaniel had sought peace with God often. Such a man of devotion and consecration is called to be one of the twelve.

From the reading in John 1:43-51 you can readily see that Jesus told Nathaniel more about himself than he did to any other disciple among the twelve.

Would he be worth more and do a greater work that Jesus took so much time to talk with him? To me it seems that he had to be disarmed, dispossessed and divested of narrowness, prejudices and biases before he was ready for an assignment with the twelve. His thinking had been in the furious waters of conflicting emotions. Certain areas were condemned and nothing good could come from them. People and places were readily condemned without investigation. Here Jesus is saying to him, "though you are a fine character, you must not jump to hasty conclusions without reasonable knowledge. You must rise to the tableland where God and light dwell. You must fill the vacant spaces in your thinking with the right appraisal of people. Follow me and you will see things."

We must give Nathaniel credit for being willing to lay aside his feelings

and come take a look at Jesus. He was not the only one who branded Nazareth and the whole of Galilee. It was a common saying that out of Galilee comes no prophet. IS it not true that good-intentioned people can be biased? Can we not recall some very religious people who are little in their thinking, mean, critical and carping? Give reasons for believing that Nathaniel was right in wanting to know about the Man from Nazareth. Are many people kept from Christ because of their whims?

For Further Discussion

1. Who are the hated people of your community, gamblers, bootleggers, robbers?
2. What were the outstanding characteristics of Levi according to his gospel?
3. Evaluate the implications in the supper that Levi gave for Jesus.
4. What was the outstanding contribution of Nathaniel to the program of Jesus?
5. Would you think of him as a goody-goody type of person with a sharp tongue?
6. Contrast Matthew and Bartholomew.
7. List their virtues and their weaknesses.
8. Can the Kingdom of God use such two characters today, if so for what?

Study VII

May 18, 1952

James, the Less, and Lebbaeus Thaddaeus

Matt. 10:3; I Cor. 15:7

Little Candles

James the Son of Alphaeus

Reread the first goal of this unit and you will get a better appreciation of the importance of little people in the church. Many a great stream rises from a tiny spring. Many a great movement has come rushing from the mind of little unknown characters who performed in the silence far removed from the glare of public acclaim. Their families make them known. This is the case of James the son of Alphaeus. Why would Jesus call such a little known person to an important place among the twelve? Who is he besides being the son of Alphaeus? Talk with many people in your city or community about the uses of a tiny candle, or from your own experiences, recall the time the lights went out and you had to rely upon a candle. Think of Henry Ford. The night he died all electricity was off because of weather conditions or a failure at the powerhouse. The only light available was a candle. If you will take time to study the great movements of history, behind them were little candle-people.

James, known as the Less (because there was another James the brother of John, the son of wealthy Zebedee) is an insignificant person, of common ability and limited capacity. Was he called "the Less" because of his size, work, or to contrast him with the other James? Give reasons for your answer, for or against. Read Mark 2:14. Is this James a relative of Jesus as seen in John 19:25?

There is not much known of this James. He has been identified as one of the little personalities among the twelve. He may have been a brother of Matthew. Whoever he was, from him we learn that the kingdom of God has a place for the insignificant. Christ can use the unlearned, the physically handicapped, the stupid, the slow, men of quick wit and inquiry. This James ranks with many today whose role in the church appears very small. Men like Carey the cobbler, Mackay the mechanic, William Murry the postman, Mackenzie the physician, Livingstone the weaver, Moffat the gardener and Allan Gardnier the sailor occupied small places to begin with but rose to great heights of service.

Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus

In Luke 6:16 R.V. he is named Judas the son of James. He too is a tiny drop in the ocean of the renowned. All ministers are not famous for eloquence or great pastorages. Many great acts are performed by them but there is no public acclaim or celebrated day to their honor. Many a rural pastor is doing a better job for Christ than many of us in metropolitan centers. Many great physicians in rural hamlets have performed feats of skill but they have never headed a hospital of renown. The great souls of many churches are not the ones who hold offices but some little unknown mother whose love for the church is not measured by the offices she holds. Like the woman who gave her mite gave more than they who