

August 2008

Good Morning,

I'm forever amazed at the odds of probability on what we believe, teach and do. The underdog victories of David vs. Goliath, Gideon and his 300, Moses against Pharaoh—these all underscore how God's people have never been your odd's on favorites to win.

Amidst impossible *natural* odds, our Father *supernaturally* overrules all odds.

But none of His otherwise over-the-top deeds can match the incalculable odds of His master plan of salvation. That, above all else, takes the cake; the details defy the possibilities. Here's what I mean:

- In 700 BC, Micah prophesied that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem. But, what are the odds? Most bets would have the Messiah birthed in Jerusalem, the home of royalty, the Temple and Jewish history. But, setting that aside, there were about 200 different cities and towns in Israel during Christ's lifetime, any of which Micah could have chosen. So let's say the odds were one chance in 200.
- In 1000 BC, David said the Savior would be betrayed by a friend. What are the odds? Pretty simple really. Either He would be or He wouldn't. Odds: one in two.
- In 600 BC, Zechariah said the Savior would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. What are the odds? Judas could have set the price at any amount, but he chose to demean Christ by accepting the going rate for a damaged slave. Conservative odds: one in 50.
- In 1000 BC, the Psalmist described in detail the then-unknown method of execution to be used on the Savior. What are the odds? Very conservative odds: one in 100.
- In 700 BC, Isaiah prophesied the Savior would be born of a virgin. What are the odds?

Now, the likelihood of all of these events happening as prophesied requires that we multiply each of the probabilities with the others to determine the true odds. In other words;  $200 \times 2 \times 50 \times 100 =$  one chance in 2,000,000. And we still haven't factored in that little matter of the virgin birth. But wait; there are hundreds more just like these. All of which sets our faith completely apart from all others.

But God's degree of difficulty didn't stop there. He brought it into ministry too.

What are the odds that Tertullian, a self indulgent pagan and favorite patron of the Roman nightclubs, would convert to Christianity and ultimately become its brightest voice and strongest defender? He chastised the tolerant church for permitting the very sins he had repented of in paganism.

What are the odds that Martin Luther, who graduated 37<sup>th</sup> in a class of 53 students, would create a church-shattering reformation by nailing 95 topics of conversation to a church door in Wittenberg?

What are the odds that John Knox who, more than once, was burned in effigy—at a church, no less—would rock Scotland with his preaching, becoming Mary Queen of Scot’s worst nightmare?

What are the odds that broken hearted Soren Kierkegaard, whose fiancé married another because of his fear of commitment, would be the one to demand that his heartless church take a “leap of faith”?

What are the odds that Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pacifist Lutheran pastor, would break ranks with other pastors and defiantly speak out against the atrocities in Nazi-crazy Germany?

What are the odds that Charles Simeon would survive his first pastorate at Holy Trinity Church at Cambridge University? Church members boycotted because he taught that they were sinners in need of a Savior. Students protested by shouting obscenities during worship. Faculty slandered him. Yet he continued for 54 years. And when God called him home, all classes were suspended and all shops were closed as the city ringed the school to mourn the loss of their beloved pastor.

It’s possible you feel the odds are against your work too. If so, you’re in good company and right on schedule.

Blessings,

Ron Walters  
Vice President of Church Relations

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