

DOES GOD HELP THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES? : PART 1

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Published On : April 29, 2023

Last Updated : April 29, 2023

Common Axiom: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves, Widespread Deception, Test/Prove All Things Against The Holy Scriptures, Don't Be Overly Legalistic When Reading The Scriptures, Be Led By The Spirit In Your Understanding, Taking Bible Verses Out Of Context, Drawing Lessons From Unrelated Scriptures, Romans 14: Apostle Paul's Fight With Legalists, Verses About Doctrinal Unity, Legalistic Jews And Mosaic Law, The Letter Killeth, Laws of Moses Reveal That We Are Sinners, To Sin Is To Transgress God's Laws, Impossible For Anyone To Keep The Mosaic Law In Its Entirety, Wages Of Sin Is Death, The Mosaic Law Was A Schoolmaster To Bring Us To Christ, Faith In Christ Instead Of In The Law, Let Every Man Be Fully Persuaded In His Own Mind, Don't Box In God's Word, See Spirit And Intent Of Each Verse, Learn From The Past, Be Led And Taught By The Holy Spirit, Implied Truths In The Bible, God Helps Those Who Help Themselves Is Implied In The Scriptures, Old Testament Examples: Noah's Ark, Conquest Of Canaan, God's Promise To Abraham Isaac And Jacob, Israelites Had To Fight For The Land Of Canaan, God Promises Them A Mighty Warrior Angel To Assist

"God helps those who help themselves." We have all heard the saying throughout our lives. But is there any truth to this well-known axiom, or is it simply another piece of misguided wisdom which has been promoted by the world? Well, based on a few scattered online comments which I have occasionally come across, it seems that some Christians are a bit ruffled by this common saying. In fact, sad to say, there are some Christians who are quite adamant regarding this issue, and who outright reject this popular saying as being in any way Bible-based.

Well, on one hand, I understand where they are coming from. After all, as I point out in a number of my articles, and as we all know, there is a lot of deception in the world today, As such, it is imperative that we each be extremely careful concerning who we listen to, who we choose to believe, and

what doctrines we choose to embrace. And, of course, as I have mentioned many times before, the way that we do that is by comparing everything that we hear or read with the Holy Scriptures, in order to validate their truthfulness. As you may know, this is exactly what the people in Berea did after Paul and Silas had preached the Gospel message to them, as we can determine by the following group of verses:

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Acts 17:10-11, KJV

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

"Prove [test, examine] all things; hold fast that which is good."

1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

1 John 4:1, KJV

So again, we do need to be very careful with regards to what we choose to believe. Otherwise, we could very easily fall under deception. However, at the same time, I also believe that some Christians go to the opposite extreme, and become rather legalistic in their approach to understanding God's Word. They are very conservative, and allow little room for the leading of the Holy Spirit. We might say that they are relying on the letter of the law -- in other words, what is seen in the plain black and white text -- instead of being led by the Spirit in their understanding.

One of the accusations which is commonly made by such folks is "Oh, you are taking that verse out of context!". There is obviously truth to this claim. Scripture can indeed be taken out of context in order to support and validate some false belief or doctrine. I have seen a lot of online comments in which this is done. Yet at the same time, I also believe we

can draw important lessons from Scriptures which may not be directly related to what we are actually talking about. If you have read enough of my articles, then you may already know that I do this quite often in my writings.

Let me give you a simple example. If you are familiar with Romans 14, then you will know that in this chapter, Apostle Paul addresses a serious problem which repeatedly cropped up in the First Century Church. In fact, it continues to occur to our present time as well. I am referring to legalism. On one side of the fence were those Jewish Christians who were firmly convinced that despite their belief in Christ, new Disciples were still obligated to observe the mandates -- or mitzvot -- of the Mosaic Law. That is to say, Laws of Moses. In other words, all of the Jewish feast days still had to be observed, all of the dietary laws still had to be adhered to, etc. In fact, the issue was so divisive, that in Acts chapter fifteen, a meeting was finally held in Jerusalem in order to try to bring doctrinal unity to the Church. I am reminded of the following verses regarding doctrinal and spiritual unity:

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Amos 3:3, KJV

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, as we are . . . THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ONE IN US: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, even as WE ARE ONE: I in them, and thou in me, THAT THEY MAY BE MADE PERFECT IN ONE; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

John 17:11, 21-23, KJV

"That ye may with ONE MIND and ONE MOUTH glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 15:6, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all SPEAK THE SAME THING, and that there be NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU; but that ye be perfectly joined together IN THE SAME MIND and IN THE SAME JUDGMENT."

1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, BE OF ONE MIND, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

2 Corinthians 13:11, KJV

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT in the bond of peace."

Ephesians 4:1-3, KJV

Wow! What a difference we see in the Christian Church today! But on the other side of the fence were those Christians who adopted a more relaxed position regarding the Laws of Moses. So there was poor Paul trying to bring some level of peace between these two very different schools of thought. It was by no means an easy task.

If you've read enough of Paul's Epistles, then you will know that he invested a considerable amount of time in addressing this particular issue, because, as I said, it was creating a great deal of division within the First Century Church. No matter where he went, those legalistic Jews would constantly stir up trouble against Paul and his companions. Those Jews were so beholden to the mandates of the Mosaic Law, and were trying so hard to establish their own righteousness through observance of the Mosaic Law, that it was not possible for them to understand the things of the Spirit, or to embrace the Grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. But as Paul wrote, "the letter killeth." Consider the following verses:

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: FOR THE LETTER KILLETH, BUT THE SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE."

2 Corinthians 3:4-6, KJV

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and NOT IN THE LETTER; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Romans 2:28-29, KJV

"But now we are DELIVERED FROM THE LAW, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and NOT IN THE OLDNESS OF THE LETTER."

Romans 7:6, KJV

"Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of Gods righteousness, and GOING ABOUT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH."

Romans 10:1-4, KJV

In a very real sense, the letter of the Mosaic Law does in fact kill. Why does it kill? Well, for two main reasons. The first reason is because the purpose of the Law was not just to serve as a model regarding the right way to live. It was also to show the Israelites that they were sinners. Exactly what is meant by sin? As the verses below clearly explain, sin is in fact transgression of the Law. Sin means to break or to violate God's holy Laws. By the way, there are 613 of them mentioned in the Old Testament.

So why were the Israelites -- and everyone born since then -- sinners? Because absolutely nobody -- not thousands of years ago, and not even today -- is capable of keeping the entire Laws of Moses. You just cannot do it. Furthermore, if you break just one of them, you are viewed as being guilty of having broken all 613 of them. To make matters worse, as the following verses reveal, the wages of sin is death. So that is the second reason why the letter of the Law kills. We ALL had -- past tense -- a death sentence hanging over us.

But do not fret, because therein lies the beauty of God's wonderful Salvation plan. As these verses also inform us, the purpose of the Law was to serve as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. It was to show us the impossibility of trying to save ourselves through our own self-righteous works. God had to provide a better way, an easier way; and this He did through the Sacrifice of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. So now, instead of placing our faith in the Law to save us, we place our faith in the atoning Blood of Christ. All of the various points which I just mentioned to you in the last three paragraphs are clearly verified in this set

of verses:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW."

1 John 3:4, KJV

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is GUILTY OF ALL."

James 2:10, KJV

"For THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 6:23, KJV

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN."

Romans 3:20, KJV

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I HAD NOT KNOWN SIN, BUT BY THE LAW: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Romans 7:7, KJV

"Wherefore THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US UNTO CHRIST, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

Galatians 3:24-25, KJV

Being as I discuss this subject in considerable detail in a number of my other articles -- please refer to the list at the end of this current article -- I won't be spending a lot of time with it here. To continue, as you may already know, in offering his counsel regarding this particular issue of whether or not to observe Jewish feast days and to abide by Jewish dietary laws, one of the things which Paul wrote in Romans 14 was the following:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Romans 14:5, KJV

Now, as we have seen, in that chapter, Paul was dealing with the legalists with regards to Jewish feast days and Jewish kosher laws. And then he writes the above verse. As you can hopefully see, there is a very important lesson contained in

that verse. The Apostle Paul is saying that we must each be fully persuaded in our own minds. But you see, that advice can be extended way beyond just talking about feast days and Jewish kosher laws. In other words, that advice can likewise be applied to other areas of our Christian lives as well. No matter what we are talking about with regards to our faith, the advice in that verse still applies, even if we are not talking about Jewish feast days and Jewish kosher laws.

Thus, in a number of my articles, I may be discussing some topic which has absolutely nothing to do with Jewish feast days and Jewish dietary laws, but I will quote Romans 14:5. Why do I do this? Because while Paul was writing about a completely different subject in Romans 14, the advice that is contained in Romans 14:5 regarding being fully persuaded in our own minds applies to whatever I happen to be writing about. No matter what aspect of our faith we are talking about, we must be convinced and fully persuaded in our own minds that it is true. We cannot just rely on what someone else believes or teaches. We have to operate according to our OWN faith, and not according to THEIR faith.

Do you see my point? That is why I said earlier that it is very important that we not become so legalistic, so rigid, and so conservative in our approach to both reading and understanding the Scriptures, that we miss out on important lessons and important points. We must be led by the Spirit in our understanding. We cannot and should not box in God's Word so that all we see is what is printed in black and white. We need to be able to see beyond that, if the Spirit leads us in that direction. We need to see the spirit and intent of each passage. We need to be able to draw lessons from Biblical events and teachings, even though said events occurred thousands of years ago, and even though those teachings were directed to someone else. We need to learn from the past. I was just reminded of the following verses:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:"

Romans 15:4-5, KJV

"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted . . . Now all these things happened unto them FOR ENSAMPLES: and they

are WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

1 Corinthians 10:6, 11, KJV

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are SET FORTH FOR AN EXAMPLE, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Jude 1:7, KJV

Of course, despite writing the previous paragraphs, I know that there will still be legalistic Christians who read this article, who will continue to insist that I am taking Romans 14:5 out of context. They will probably continue to insist that we should only view the verse and understand the verse, in the context of observing Jewish feast days and keeping Jewish dietary laws. Oh well. Whatever. I tried. Following are a few related verses regarding being led and taught by the Spirit of God, for your consideration:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall TEACH YOU ALL THINGS, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14:26, KJV

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

John 16:13, KJV

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Psalms 119:18, KJV

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

James 1:5, KJV

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the

sons of God."

Romans 8:14, KJV

At any rate, continuing with our primary discussion, in my view -- and I am no doubt stepping on certain toes just by even saying this -- while certain things may not be plainly written in black and white in the Bible, nevertheless, they are implied in the Scriptures through different stories and events that we read. In other words, there are what we might refer to as "implied truths" to be found throughout the Holy Scriptures. The Bible might not say something outright and directly, but it is nevertheless there, if we can just get beyond an overly strict reading of the Scriptures. In short, as I have already said, we need to be led by the Spirit in order to see them.

I believe that such is the case with the popular adage "God helps those who help themselves." As I just said, while it is not spelled out for us clearly in black and white in one particular verse as certain legalistic Christians require, nevertheless, that thought is definitely implied in quite a number of Bible stories. Despite this fact, these Christians will use the absence of a specific verse which says this to refute the axiom altogether. Personally, I believe that such Christians are in error, because they are doing exactly what I said we should not do. They are approaching the Scriptures from such a narrow view, that they are in fact boxing in the Word of God, instead of being led by the Spirit in their understanding.

What is amazing about this -- at least to me -- is the fact that there are so many stories and events in the Scriptures where this popular saying is implied, that it is easy to see and rather hard to miss. So, in the following paragraphs I will be providing you with some of the examples which came to my mind as I was writing this current article.

The very first example which popped into my mind concerns the story of Noah and the Ark. We are told that the Lord gave Noah very specific instructions regarding how to build the Ark, as we can determine by the following four verses:

"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the

fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it."

Genesis 6:13-16, KJV

Now think about that for a minute. The fact of the matter is that Noah and his three sons had to do their part. God did not do everything for them. They had to help themselves, in order to be saved from the Flood waters. While God provided the instructions for building the Ark, Noah and his sons had to have the faith to actually obey the Lord by building that huge boat. Remember; it was quite possible that it had never even rained before that time, because the Book of Genesis also informs us of the following:

"And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God HAD NOT CAUSED IT TO RAIN UPON THE EARTH, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground."

Genesis 2:5-6, KJV

So I believe that it must have required great faith on the part of Noah and his three sons -- Shem, Ham and Japheth -- to work on building that Ark for so many years. Even more so when we consider all of the wicked, unbelieving people who must have scoffed at their endeavors. Imagine if Noah had said, "Well, Lord, you are God, so why don't you just build it for us?" I don't think that the Lord would have been very pleased. Not only that, but if Noah had refused to build the Ark due to unbelief, none of us would be here today. At any rate, God made Noah and his three sons do what they could do to help themselves, and then He did the rest. He made that Ark rise above the Flood waters; and thus eight souls were saved, as we see by this verse:

"Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

1 Peter 3:20, KJV

So this story is the first example where we can see that God

indeed helps those who help themselves. Another very obvious Scriptural example which comes to mind concerns the nation of Israel and their conquest of the land of Canaan. As you may know, God had clearly promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would give them that land for an inheritance. This point is made evident by verses such as the following:

"And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers . . . And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD."
Exodus 6:2-4, 8, KJV

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:"
Exodus 33:1, KJV

"Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land."
Leviticus 26:42, KJV

"Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD."
Numbers 32:11-12, KJV

"Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them."
Deuteronomy 1:8, KJV

"And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of

all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."
Deuteronomy 6:10-12, KJV

"Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:"
Deuteronomy 9:5, 26-27, KJV

"That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."
Deuteronomy 29:12-13, KJV

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."
Deuteronomy 30:19-20, KJV

"And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."
Deuteronomy 34:4, KJV

"And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant

with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet."

2 Kings 13:23, KJV

"O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it."

Psalms 105:6-12, KJV

So what happened? Well, after God used Moses to liberate the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, and following the golden calf incident, did God just miraculously give the descendants of Jacob the land of Canaan? Did He just wave His hand, destroy all of the inhabitants of the land, and say "There you go boys! It is now yours! Enjoy!?" No, He most certainly did not. The Israelites didn't just walk in without a fight. In fact, as you probably know, God had to allow the whole older generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt, to just die off during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Why did this happen? Due to their constant complaining and lack of faith.

So while God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would give them Canaan for their inheritance, when the time came for that to actually happen, Joshua and the descendants of Jacob did not just walk in like it was a party. God was indeed there to help them, but they had to do their part as well, and help themselves. They had to fight for every inch of that land. Again, Canaan was not just handed to them on a silver platter. They had to fight hard and prove themselves first. However, God did make them a promise, which He indeed fulfilled, as we see by the following group of verses:

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the

Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off."
Exodus 23:20-23, KJV

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORDS host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."
Joshua 5:13-15, KJV

Wow! Thus, again we see that God does indeed help those who help themselves; and in this particular case, He sent Joshua and the Israelites a mighty warrior Angel to do battle with them! Their enemies didn't stand a chance!

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com
<https://www.billkochman.com>
<https://www.csnet.live>

DOES GOD HELP THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES? : PART 2

Copyright 1994 - 2023 Bill's Bible Basics

Published On : April 29, 2023

Last Updated : April 29, 2023

Ten Plagues In Egypt, The First Passover In Egypt, Prophet Elisha and Naaman, Does God Help Those Who Help Themselves?, Jesus Heals A Blind Man, Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus, Jesus Heals A Man With A Withered Hand, Jesus Heals Woman With An Issue Of Blood, Flee Into The Mountains, First Jewish-Roman War, Remnant Spared, Self-Righteous Endeavors Of Unbelieving Jews, When We Were Yet Without Strength, Legalistic Load Of

Mosaic Law, Give Your Burdens To Jesus, Accept Jesus Today, God Helps Those Who Help Themselves And Also Those Who Cannot Help Themselves, Closing Remarks, BBB Suggested Reading List

Continuing our discussion from part one, and before leaving behind the story of Moses, Joshua and the Israelites, allow me to share with you another related incident from that same time period which likewise clearly reveals how God sometimes requires us to do something for ourselves, to help ourselves, before He will do that which we are unable to do. In this case, let's backtrack a little in time to just prior to the Israelites' liberation from Egyptian bondage.

As you will recall, getting Pharaoh of Egypt to release the Hebrews from their yoke of bondage was no easy task. After all, they were his primary work force it seems. Thus, God informed Moses that He would send a series of Ten Plagues to the land of Egypt. Each time, Pharaoh would harden his evil heart -- by God's design -- and God would send yet another plague upon his land, in order that His great power might be revealed. These ten plagues of Egypt were the following:

- Plague #01 - Water Turned to Blood
- Plague #02 - Frogs
- Plague #03 - Lice
- Plague #04 - Swarms of Flies
- Plague #05 - Pestilence on the Cattle
- Plague #06 - Boils/Blisters
- Plague #07 - Hail and Fire
- Plague #08 - Locusts
- Plague #09 - Three Days of Darkness
- Plague #10 - Death of the Firstborn

With each new plague, while the Egyptians were smitten, the children of Israel who dwelled in the region of Goshen were untouched because God gave them special protection. However, with regards to the final plague -- Death of the Firstborn -- God required that the Israelites do something special so that they would be protected from it. In other words, as we have seen throughout this article, they would have to do something to help themselves, and to protect themselves. As you probably already know, I am referring to the fact that in order to be protected from death when the LORD passed over the land of Egypt on that dreadful night, the children of Israel were required to place lamb's blood on the lintel

and door posts of their dwellings, as we see by this group of verses"

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it . . . And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt . . . And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you . . . And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle."
Exodus 12:7, 13, 22-23, 29, KJV

As I explain in other articles, the act of doing this was very significant, because it served as a foreshadow of what Jesus -- the Lamb of God -- would do for us during the New Testament period, when He shed His Blood on a Roman cross.

So to reiterate a key point here, contrary to what certain Christians seem to believe, God does in fact help those who help themselves. This story concerning the Passover is clear proof of that. The simple truth of the matter is that if the Israelites had refused to obey Moses' instructions, and had not helped themselves by painting blood on their door frames as Moses had instructed them to do, they would have all been very dead men, just like the Egyptians. So it pays to obey.

Another example which we find in the Old Testament is in the story found in 2 Kings chapter five. It concerns the Prophet Elisha and Naaman, who was a great captain of the army of the king of Syria. As you may recall, Naaman had leprosy; and his wife's servant girl -- who was an Israelite -- informed his wife of the miracles which were being wrought by Elisha down in Samaria. Word of these miracles being performed by Elisha then reached the ears of the king of Syria. Thus, he gave a letter of request -- along with some silver, gold and changes of clothing -- to his captain, so that Naaman could present

himself before the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Samaria being its capital. Consider the following group of verses:

"Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment."

2 Kings 5:1-5, KJV

Well, as it turns out, that was not such a bright plan; the reason being that when the king of Israel read the letter, and realized that the king of Syria actually expected him to heal Naaman's leprosy, he -- meaning the king of Israel -- freaked out. In fact, knowing that he could not possibly do as the king of Syria had requested of him, he suspected that it was actually a trap, and that the king of Syria wanted to start a quarrel with him, as a pretext to go to war, as we can determine by the following two verses:

"And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

2 Kings 5:6-7, KJV

Word then came to the Prophet Elisha that the king of Israel was freaked out regarding this matter. Thus, Elisha sent a message to the king in which he instructed him to tell Naaman to visit him -- meaning Elisha -- at his home, so that Elisha could heal him of his leprosy. It seemed like a rather simple request. However, when Naaman arrived at the door of Elisha's house, rather than go out and greet him, Elisha sent one of

his messengers instead, with a message to tell Naaman to go and dip himself seven times in the Jordan River. Consider the following three verses:

"And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

2 Kings 5:8-10, KJV

Well, this greatly offended Naaman, because he had expected that Elisha would come out and heal him on the spot. Not so. To make matters worse, the Jordan River was known for being a rather muddy river, the reason being that as the various source streams of the northern portion of the river -- which originated at the base of Mount Hermon on the Lebanon/Syria border -- flowed down towards the Sea of Galilee -- Kinneret in Hebrew -- the river picked up a lot of silt. The silt was then dumped into the Sea of Galilee at its northern edge.

Today, the Jordan River is in even worse condition from an environmental perspective. Except for certain areas -- such as below the Sea of Galilee -- which are kept clean for the sake of Israel's tourism industry, the rest of it is heavily polluted due to mining operations, and even raw sewage being dumped into the river. But to continue our story, the fact that the Prophet Elisha did not instruct Naaman to go and bathe in one of the more pristine rivers of Syria, offended the captain. So, Naaman went off in a fit of rage, as we see by the following two verses:

"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."

2 Kings 5:11-12, KJV

However, after some prodding from his servants, and perhaps out of desperation, proud Naaman went to the Jordan River.

Then, following Elisha's instructions, the captain dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River, and he was healed of his leprosy, as we see by the following two verses:

"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

2 Kings 5:13-14, KJV

Now, I imagine that Elisha probably could have healed Naaman the minute that the captain arrived at his home. Why he did not do so, I cannot honestly say. Perhaps God simply wanted to humble the proud captain first. But one thing we can say for certain is that it was faith in, as well as obedience to, the words of the Prophet, which saved Naaman, and not the water. Just as we have seen in the previous two stories concerning Noah's Ark and the Israelites' conquest of the land of Canaan, God required that Naaman do something first. Naaman had to do what he could to help himself first. That meant obeying the words of the Prophet and dipping himself in the Jordan River. Then God performed the miracle for him and Naaman was completely cleansed of his leprosy.

So these are three easy-to-understand examples which we find in the Old Testament, which clearly prove that God expects us to help ourselves by doing what we can, and then He will do what we are unable to do for ourselves. I am sure you can probably think of other Old Testament stories where the same principle is taught: help yourself, and then wait and expect for God to do what you can't do.

Turning to the New Testament, we likewise find stories where people had to do something for themselves, before God would bestow His blessing on them. For instance, one example which immediately comes to mind concerns the blind man who we find mentioned in the Gospel of John. This man had in fact been blind from birth. Just think about that. Everyone knew that this man was blind. Perhaps that is why Jesus chose to heal him. In other words, because He knew that it would have the greatest impact. In fact, Jesus even says that this miracle was being performed so "that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

Anyway, Jesus had just escaped from a crowd of angry Jews who did not believe in Him in the temple compound, when He encountered this blind man along the way. The Scriptures do not make clear exactly where Jesus met this man. While the temple compound is believed to have been located somewhere on the summit of the temple mount -- which is presumed to be Mount Moriah -- the Pool of Siloam was located almost four hundred feet below it on the floor of the Kidron Valley, and was fed by the Gihon Spring. This pool -- and others similar to it -- is believed by some scholars to have been used for the purpose of ritual purification before one could ascend and enter the inner court of the temple complex. Consider the following group of verses:

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,"

John 9:1-6, KJV

While the Lord anointed the man's eyes with clay and healed him, for the miracle to actually occur, this man had to do something for himself first. He had to help himself. He had to demonstrate his faith by going and washing in the Pool of Siloam. As I said earlier, we don't know exactly where Jesus encountered this man along the way after leaving the temple compound. However, according to Wikipedia, the distance from the Pool of Siloam to the temple mount was 2,080 feet, which implies a rather steep ascent or descent, depending on which direction a person is going. So this could have been a very arduous journey for a blind man, depending on where Jesus first encountered him. But because the man obeyed Jesus and did as he was told, because he helped himself, his sight was restored, as we see by the following group of verses.

"And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others

said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight."

John 9:7-11, KJV

We find a similar story regarding a blind man in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. As you can see by the following group of verses, this man -- whose name was Bartimaeus -- was in fact quite determined to be healed by Jesus. He simply would not accept "no" for an answer. People in the crowd who followed the Lord tried to shut him up, but he would have nothing of it. Thus, he kept making a ruckus and shouting for dear life until Jesus finally called for him. As a result, his faith and persistence were rewarded when his sight was restored by the Lord. So again we see another example where someone did everything they possibly could to help themselves, and then God stepped in and did what seemed impossible. Consider this group of verses. This very same story is likewise repeated in Luke 18:35-43:

"And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

Mark 10:46-52, KJV

Another New Testament example which also demonstrates how God helps those who help themselves is found in Mark chapter three. It concerns a man who had a withered hand. While this incident may not be quite as dramatic as the story of blind Bartimaeus, nevertheless, it demonstrates again a personal act of faith, and the fact that this individual too had to help himself by being willing to stretch forth his hand when

Jesus commanded him to do so. Keep in mind that because it was the Sabbath, the wolves -- the legalistic, unbelieving Jews -- were just waiting to pounce on Jesus, if He dared to perform a miracle. This same story is likewise found in Luke 6:6-10:

"And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."

Mark 3:1-5, KJV

So consider now this man who had the withered hand. No doubt he realized that the Jews were just waiting to attack Jesus. The atmosphere in that synagogue must have been electrifying and perhaps filled with anticipation regarding what the Lord would say and do. As I explain in other articles, the common people feared the harsh religious hierarchy who ruled over them. Yet here, in their very own synagogue, was Jesus, the great healer everyone had been talking about.

So exactly what was this man supposed to do? After the Lord commanded him to stretch forth his hand, perhaps for a very brief moment, this man thought to himself, "If I do as Jesus commands me to do, I am surely going to get in trouble with the rabbis. On the other hand, this may very well be the one opportunity I ever get to have my hand restored." Of course, as we know, he made the right choice, stretched forth his hand, and was immediately and miraculously healed. So again, he helped himself and did his part through that simple act of faith. Then, Jesus did what that man could not do for himself.

Another well-known Bible story which again confirms that God helps those who help themselves concerns a certain woman who for many years had suffered from an issue of blood. In fact, we are informed that this poor woman was so desperate to be healed, that she had spent all of her money on doctors, none of whom were able to help her with her problem. Furthermore, her health only continued to grow worse. Clearly, she needed

a miracle, and right quick, because she had been plagued by her disease for twelve long years.

Well, similar to blind Bartimaeus, this woman also was on a mission, and was quite determined to reach out to her last hope. Jesus was in town, and she was not going to let this opportunity pass her by. Thus, as we all know, she reached out from the crowd of people and touched the hem of Jesus' garment, and her issue of blood was immediately stanchd. This story of Divine Healing is found in all three of the synoptic Gospels. That is to say, in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Following is the account, as found in the Gospel of Luke:

"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."
Luke 8:43-48, KJV

Please notice what Jesus said to the woman: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." You see, while it was the healing power of God's Spirit which resided in Jesus -- referred to here as "virtue" -- which healed the woman, the Lord makes it clear that it was a combination of God's Spirit and this woman's faith. She had to do her part. She had to help herself. She had to have the faith to reach out from that crowd of people and touch Jesus' garment. So she did what she could do, and then God did the rest through His Son, Jesus.

We have now examined eight different Scriptural examples in which people were required to do something, where they had to do their part to help themselves, before God performed the required miracle. This lesson is very clear in all eight of them. There should be no doubt then that God helps those who help themselves. Let me conclude these examples with one more. This next example is found in Jesus' Olivet Discourse in the three Synoptic Gospels -- Matthew, Mark and Luke --

where the Lord specifically warns His followers to "flee to the mountains" when they see the Abomination of Desolation standing in the holy place. Consider the following verses:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:"

Matthew 24:15-16, KJV

"But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:"

Mark 13:14, KJV

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto."

Luke 21:20-21, KJV

Now just imagine if they had thought to themselves, "We don't need to flee. God is all-powerful. He can protect us, even if we remain right here in Jerusalem." It would have been very foolish of them indeed, because Jesus had warned them to flee when these events began to occur. So once again we see that they had to help themselves first. They had to do what they could do, and then rely on God for His protection. This is in fact a lesson which we have now discussed several times in this article. Noah had to build the Ark in order to protect himself and his family from the Flood waters. The Israelites had to paint their door frames with lamb's blood in order to be protected from death. And now we see the First Century disciples being warned to flee to the hills in order to be protected from the wrath to come.

As you may already know, and as I discuss more at length in a number of my other articles, that Divine Wrath came in the form of the seven-year First Jewish-Roman War, which lasted from 66 AD to 73 AD. In the middle of that war, in 70 AD, the Jews were once again soundly defeated. Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, and the temple compound was burned to the ground by General Titus and his Roman legions. As a result of that great war, historical sources state that somewhere between six hundred thousand and one million Jews perished, either as

a direct result of the war, or due to famine, pestilence and Roman crucifixion. Furthermore, as had occurred with both the Assyrian and the Babylonian invasions, many thousands of Jews were once again carried off as slaves to other parts of the Roman Empire.

But guess what? A remnant was spared. Who were these people? They were the ones who wisely paid heed to Jesus' advice by fleeing to the mountains. That's who. I was just reminded of the following two verses:

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."

Proverbs 22:3, KJV

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."

Proverbs 27:12, KJV

Now that we have clearly established through multiple Bible stories that God does indeed help those who help themselves, we are going to take a 180-degree turn and look at the other end of the spectrum. You see, while God helps those who help themselves, He also helps those who cannot help themselves. While I could spend time discussing multiple examples where we find such occurring in the Scriptures, instead, I'm going to concentrate on just one example; not only because it is the most important example, but because it is also the most convincing example. In fact, we already discussed it in the first part of this article.

As we discussed in part one, the self-righteous Jews of the First Century were convinced that they could save themselves simply by observing the many mandates -- or commandments -- of the Laws of Moses. They thought that they could establish their own righteousness, and thus merit Salvation. However, as we already learned, it is totally impossible for anyone to keep all 613 mitzvot of the Mosaic Law. No one has the strength or the will power to do so. In short, we can't help ourselves with regards to this matter. That also means that we cannot possibly save ourselves either. That is why God provided a better way through Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul so beautifully wrote in his Epistle to the Romans:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Romans 5:6, KJV

We were without strength. We could not bear the legalistic load of the Mosaic Law. It was weighing us down with all of its dos and don'ts, and harsh restrictions. It was in fact crushing us and killing us; because as we learned in part one, "the letter killeth". That is why in the Gospels, the Lord said the following among many other things:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30, KJV

"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:17-19, KJV

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

John 8:31-32, 36, KJV

So without Jesus Christ, it is a totally hopeless situation. We cannot help ourselves, and we cannot save ourselves; but Jesus most certainly can! Have you accepted Him as your Lord and Savior yet? If not, please do so today!

In conclusion, what we have learned through this article is that God helps those who help themselves, and He also helps those who cannot help themselves. He has got all the bases covered, and we should each be very thankful for that!

With these thoughts I will bring this article to a close. I trust that you have enjoyed it, learned something from it, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you would

take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thank you so very much! May God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics website:

A Biblical Cafeteria, or the Whole Course?
Abomination of Desolation: Explained!
Are Personal Tragedies Due to Sin?
Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia, Terminal Sedation
Dead to the Law: God's Laws Written on Our Hearts
Death: Final Battle, Final Victory!
Demonic Possession and Sickness: A Biblical Perspective
Divine Healing or Medical Healing?
Free From the Fear of Death: Law and Works vs Grace
Genesis Flood: The Urantia Book Exposed Again!
Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word
Is Science Better Than the Bible?
Is the Modern Medical Symbol Evil?
Noah's Ark and the Genesis Flood
Organ Transplants and Blood Transfusions
Science and Technology: The Forbidden Knowledge?
Welcome to Greater Israel, USA!
Why Doesn't God Heal Me?

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com

<https://www.billkochman.com>

<https://www.csnet.live>