



Lie #5: “God Helps Those Who Help Themselves”

Opening Prayer

Introduction

Focus: Where did this lie come from? Is it in the Bible? No, but you will find a form of it in the *Koran*: “Indeed, Allah will not change the conditions of a population until they change what is in themselves” (Ar-Ra’d 13:11). This lie about God has its roots in pagan religion. Five hundred years before Christ, Aesop wrote, “The gods help them that help themselves.” Our current wording was used by the deist Ben Franklin, who said in *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, “God helps those who help themselves.” Satan often couches his lies in half-truths. Today, we seek to expose this lie and to give an answer for the hope that we have!

Activity: Amen, Brother!

As we saw in our first lesson, the message of the “prosperity gospel” is popular today. It is theology based on the premise that God wants us to be successful and rich if we only do our part. A common theme expressed in these messages is that *your determination* and *your positive thinking* will produce good things in your life.

- In your opinion, why do people want to believe this lie?
- Often, an element of truth is contained in lies about God. Perhaps that is one thing that makes them so appealing. Based on the following passages identify the element of truth in “God helps those who help themselves.”

Proverbs 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Proverbs 24:30-34 I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; ³¹ thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. ³² I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

Where Does My Help Come From?

1. My sinful nature leads me to believe that I can do something to be right with God. This is called the *opinio legis*, which means “the opinion of the law.” Give specific examples of how you see this truth in other religions, denominations, and even in your own hearts.
2. How do the following passages refute the *opinio legis*?

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

Acts 26:17-18 “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

3. God must do 100% of the work to make us alive (the definition of a miracle!). What does Paul compare God’s work of conversion to? How so?

2 Corinthians 4:6 “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”

4. How do the following passages underscore the truth that God helps *only* those who *can’t* help themselves?

Luke 18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Romans 4:4-5 Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.”

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

5. Made alive in Christ, we will live for him. What fuels our desire to obey God's Word?

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Group Discussion

- In Acts 14:22 we read, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." The truth is, even if we are living faithfully, God does not always *help* in a worldly sense. Using your Bible knowledge, give an example of someone for whom this was true. (*Think prophets, apostles, patriarchs, and even your own life.*)
- In his explanation to the conclusion of the commandments, Martin Luther said, "God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands." Is Luther saying, "God helps those who help themselves"?

Matthew 5:3-10 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 17:10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

- Describe what life will be like for those who believe "God helps those who help themselves."