



Self Help or Dying to Self?

“Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26a).

Pastors and ministries have failed generations by preaching different gospels than *The Gospel*. This is no slight matter for Paul declared, “*even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*” (Galatians 1:8). One false gospel that is widely being preached today is the good news of “self-help.” Haven’t you heard? God wants you to be “happy,” so do what makes you happy! “Self Help” teachers tell us to “give God a try” as if He is a brand of lip balm or a new shampoo. They tell us that if we use “God’s plan” correctly (in “easy” steps), we’ll get what WE want, because God “gets His pleasure out of our happiness.” These shameful teachers misuse Scripture to build the “I” up in us rather than Christ, and their prayers are a business transaction: “God, I’ll do what you want, but give me what I want in return.”

After all, doesn’t the Bible say, “God helps those who help themselves”? Many Christians believe this is a verse in the Bible, but it is not. This “self-help” motto finds a comfortable seat with the Self-Improvement or Self Help movement, which teaches “the use of one’s own efforts to achieve things and better oneself without relying on others” (Oxford Dictionaries/Merriam Webster). It is contrary to God’s message of Grace and reliance on Him for all things, “*Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD’*” (Jeremiah 17:5), for as Paul explained, “*I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not*” (Romans

7:28). Self-help only leads to spiritual death.

“Self-Help” teachers are not just scattering God’s seed among thorns, they’re mixing weed seed with God’s seed, so it is no wonder that “*thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop*” (Mark 4:7b). People seeking God under a “Self Help” gospel are “choked” away from the True Gospel because, “we tried that, but it didn’t work for us.” They are always searching for the “elusive” blessings of God in this life because their focus is HERE and NOW instead of eternity. But, Jesus preached, “*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23) for “*he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life*” (John 5:24b). We understand “*that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin*” (Romans 6:6), “*but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*” (John 3:36b).

The Cross is not a “I’ll see if this works for me” approach. It is obedience all the way, not a “self-help” plan, for we are to take up our cross and follow Christ’s example Who “*emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*” (Philippians 2:7-8). Just so, we are to lay our lives down in trust and obedience to God, that HE can raise them up into eternal life. So, “*lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth*” (Ephesians 4:21-24). Amen.

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