

Doing It Yourself

Ponder: Can you do it yourself?

Scripture: “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3, NKJV).

Have you read the Sesame Street book, “I Can Do It Myself,” over and over to your children? Youngsters should learn to do certain things themselves rather than relying on others. For example: “I can comb my hair; I can do it myself!”

In some ways, self-reliance is good. Scripture requires us to work to provide for ourselves, our families, and those in genuine need. However, “I can do it myself” can be taken to an unhealthy extreme, particularly concerning our relationship with God.

Psalm 115:1 gets it right: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory.” Likewise Psalm 100:3 reminds us, “Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.”

First-century Jews thought they could keep enough commandments enough times to punch their ticket to heaven. “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3). Here, “righteousness” doesn’t mean good behavior. It means being “right” with God. The Jews knew that God is righteous. But they rejected God’s way of making sinners right with Himself through the sacrifice of Jesus. They basically said, “We can do it ourselves.” So they listed 248 positive commands and 365 negative commands in the Old Testament. Then they attempted to obey enough commands enough times to merit a good relationship with God.

Regarding atonement for sin, not one of us can accurately say, “I can do it myself.” Jesus did it for us, and we must humble ourselves to accept it as a gift, not as something we earn. Yes, there are conditions for receiving this gift, including repentance from sin, confession of Jesus as the Son of God, and immersion in water. But none of those things is a work of merit; we do not earn fellowship with God, nor can we in any way put God in our debt.

Saying “I can’t do it myself” is, in one sense, bad news. But the good news is that Jesus has already made the way for us to be right w/ God.

Song: “Amazing Grace”