

## Seeing the Help of God

Franklin Church of Christ  
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February 10, 2008  
AM Assembly

### Introduction:

Have you ever read a familiar passage and some phrase or statement that you had overlooked before just jumped out at you and grabbed you, shaking you around a little bit saying, “Look at me. I’m important?” I don’t know if it was because I have started using the English Standard Version and it is worded differently or if it was just because of my state of mind. But, while reading **Acts 26, vs. 22** grabbed my attention. Paul said, “To this day I have had the help that comes from God...” (ESV). But wait a minute. Wasn’t he in prison? Hadn’t he been beaten? Stoned? Left for dead by his opponents? Weren’t his listeners trying to consider what to say about him to Caesar because he was about to stand trial for nothing more than being a Christian? Despite all that, Paul claimed he had the help that comes from God all along. How? How could he see that help? I think you will admit, in the face of adversities, it is difficult to see God’s help and we are left wondering if He is helping at all. How was Paul able to see the help of God despite all that?

### Discussion:

- I. Because he was still alive.
  - A. Let’s face it, Paul went through some difficult times. We could scan what we have all read through Acts and see the hardships. But consider Paul’s own summary in **II Corinthians 11:23-28**—labors, beatings, imprisonment, near death, stoned, shipwrecked. Paul faced a hard life. Many would look at that and think he was unhelped. But he saw help.
  - B. Look at what he told Festus and Agrippa in **Acts 26:16-17**. Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus because he was going to be a witness to the things Jesus revealed to him and Jesus would deliver him from the Jews and Gentiles. If Paul was going to need delivering, that meant he was first going to be held in their hands. But Jesus would deliver him. Paul was not blinded against God’s help because he had been through tough times. Rather, he saw God’s help because he was still alive. He was delivered from the beatings, the stonings, the attempts on his life.
  - C. We need to see this. Whatever we have been through, we are still here. God has carried us this far. He will continue to carry us. It hasn’t killed us yet. But of course, if it did kill us, then that too would be deliverance as Paul explained in **Philippians 1:23**.
- II. Because his goal was being accomplished.
  - A. Paul saw God’s help because his will was aligned with God’s and he saw the goal being accomplished. Paul’s goal wasn’t personal safety. His goal wasn’t to be popular. His goal wasn’t to be wealthy. His goal wasn’t to be injury free. His goal was to teach the word and get the gospel out. Notice how he concludes his statement about the help of God. In **Acts 26:22**, he went on to say he was able to stand before both small and great and preach the gospel.
  - B. He was able to see the help of God because the issue about which he was most concerned was getting accomplished. Even in this difficult setting he was getting to proclaim the gospel to a Roman governor and the Jewish king. Consider Paul’s similar statement in **Philippians 1:12-14**. He was able to see his imprisonment in Rome as a positive thing because he was able even to preach to the imperial guard. Could he have accomplished that without being imprisoned? Not likely.
  - C. If we want to see God’s help, we need to align our will with God’s and see what He is accomplishing there through us. Sadly, some of us may not see God’s help, because we are not trying to help God.
- III. Because he looked to Jesus as an example.
  - A. In **Acts 26:23**, he continued his preaching and talked about his great example—Jesus. Jesus suffered, but He arose from the dead. Why should it be any different for Paul? If Jesus suffered, but was still helped by God, why wouldn’t Paul also suffer but be helped by God? Because Paul looked at the example of Jesus and saw that God’s help didn’t equal an easy life, he was able to see it in his own life more readily.

- B. Jesus told His apostles, when the world hated them to remember it hated Him first. The servant is not greater than the master (**John 15:18-21**). They will do all kinds of things to us. Not to mention the fact that we live in a world where there is sorrow and suffering. God's help doesn't come by keeping us out of the suffering. It comes by carrying us through the suffering.
- C. If we want to see God's help, let's look to the author and finisher of our faith and remember what He went through.

IV. Because he understood his own weakness.

- A. Implicit in Paul's statement about the help he had received is recognition that he needed help. He understood he was standing before both great and small teaching the gospel but not because of his own strength. He did not see himself as the reason he was able to talk to the Roman governor or the Jewish king. Think about it. How many people do you think had an audience with those two men? But Paul. He got to talk to them. He could easily think it was because of his own specialness and work. But instead, he knew his weakness and could only attribute it to God working and helping.
- B. Consider **II Corinthians 12:9-10**. Paul recognized how weak he was. He knew his only strength came from relying on God and allowing God to be strong through him. He was content with the hardships because they demonstrated his weaknesses. They demonstrated he needed help. They caused him to rely on God all the more. Because Paul knew how weak he was, he couldn't help but see God's help in everything he accomplished.
- C. If we want to see God's help, we have to get past looking at ourselves. We have to get past thinking about what we have accomplished and recognize we are too weak to accomplish anything. Therefore, anything we accomplish we have done through God's help.

V. Because he was able to look past the moment.

- A. In **Acts 26:29**, Paul responded to Agrippa's question about being persuaded to be a Christian by saying whether in a short or long time he hoped to see all who heard him to be Christians. Paul wasn't just thinking about the moment. He was thinking about the future. He wasn't just thinking about the suffering he was enduring, but about the good that could come from it down the line. Too often we think about right now only. Since we are suffering or nobody is listening right now, we think we are doing no good. But Paul was able to think about where things might lead in the future.
- B. I can't help but think about **Romans 8:28**. Paul knew if he loved God, He would cause all things to work together for good. No matter what he suffered, God would work it out for His glory and for Paul's good. Knowing that, he was able to take his eyes off the moment and think about the future and where what he was doing would lead. Perhaps it would lead to the salvation of some of those who heard.
- C. If we want to be able to see God's help, we have to take our eyes off the moment and consider the big picture and the future. What we are dealing with now won't last forever (though it may seem like it). We have to see how God can use it for His glory and our good in the long run.

**Conclusion:**

We need to look at our lives and see the help of God. We need to get our eyes off ourselves and off our momentary situations and, instead, focus our eyes on how great our God is and what He really is doing for us. Our God is great. Our God is carrying us through it all. Let us rely on Him and see His help as Paul was able to.