

Does God Help Them Who Help Themselves? Genesis 27:1 - 45

“God helps them who help themselves.” Although frequently quoted as a Biblical verse, don’t be fooled. This saying is not found in the Scriptures.¹ However, it may have been difficult to convince Jacob of this. Jacob was born under the blessing that was first promised to his grandfather Abraham and later to his father Isaac (Genesis 12:2 – 3 and 17:19). Although Jacob was the second-born of his mother’s twin sons, God had told Rebekah, *“The older will serve the younger.”*² And so Jacob entered the world grasping at his older brother’s heel (Genesis 25:19 - 26). In fact Jacob’s name literally means ‘he grasps the heel’ (which is an ancient Hebrew euphemism for someone that overtakes by deceit). It appears that Jacob was keen to live up to his name. First he used his cunning to ‘help himself’ to his older brother’s inheritance. Then he tricked Isaac into giving him Esau’s blessing. Consequently Jacob was forced to flee his family due to his frustrated big brother’s murderous rage. But as Jacob slept like an outlaw under the night sky, God graciously confirmed to him in a dream that the promised blessing of Abraham and Isaac also included him (Genesis 28:10 – 15). But first God had some lessons to teach Jacob about human deceit and God’s power...

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1. Read Genesis 12:1 – 3. What are the major components of God’s blessing to Abraham and his descendents?
 2. Read Genesis 25:19 – 34. Why was God’s blessing passed along from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob instead of from Abraham to Isaac to Esau?
 3. According to Hebrews 12:15 – 17 what lessons can we learn from Esau’s error?
 4. Read Genesis 27:1 – 29. Why do you think Jacob felt he had to take his brother’s birthright and blessing through cunning and deceit?
 5. Despite the deceitful way that Jacob pursued God’s blessing, how does Jacob exhibit a form of faith that Esau sadly lacks?
 6. Read Genesis 27:30 – 45. What are some of the consequences of Jacob’s deceit?
 7. Read Genesis 28:10 – 15. How is the blessing promised to Jacob related to our gracious blessing in Christ? (See John 1:47 – 51).

¹ This saying was made popular by Ben Franklin in his 1736 edition of ‘Poor Richard’s Almanack’.

² Traditionally the first born son would receive his father’s blessing.