

Doing Our Part?

Obviously, God is omnipotent (all-powerful), and can do anything He desires. But it is also true that sometimes He elects to *act* through *agents*, even *human* ones. For example, as great and powerful as the gospel is, it often *carried* and *dispersed* through “*earthen vessels*,” 2Cor.4:6-7; as Paul said in 2Cor.5:20, “*as though God were entreating through us...*” (though I believe he was specifically referring to *inspired apostles* in this passage, as they were still “*uneducated and untrained men*,” Acts 4:13).

I know that when I or other brethren pray for God to act in ways “that only You can,” we recognize and are petitioning for Him to assist in ways that **we cannot**. But on such occasions, **I also wonder if I/we have done or will do what I/we could in the matter.**

Jesus refused to rebuke and in fact praised the woman who anointed Him with “*an alabaster vial of costly perfume of pure nard*” by saying “*She has done a good deed to Me... She has done what she could...*”, cf. Mark 14:6,8. I, therefore, many times wonder, when asking God to perform “what only You can do,” if I have done “what **I could**” toward the same ends? Or, am I just wanting/asking God to “take over” in a way that somehow excuses me from doing what **I could, but haven’t... or won’t, do?**

The Bible is filled with accounts of **God acting through people**- ordinary people of faith doing extraordinary things, which often didn’t require any miraculous power or direct input from God. Consider a few N.T. examples:

- **Barnabas led and encouraged, Acts 4:36-37.** At a time when God’s people were suffering physical hardships, Barnabas *led by example* when he sold property and “*brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet*” to help care for needy saints, v.37. But Barnabas didn’t just *do* good things, he also *said* good things- *encouraging* things; so much so that he was given the name *Barnabas*, which means “*Son of Encouragement*,” v.36. When we ask God to *encourage* someone “as only You can,” have we done “**what we could**” to encourage them, Heb.3:12-13; 10:23-25? Typically, I have not.
- **Titus comforted the depressed, 2Cor.7:6.** The verse specifically says, “*But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;*” God *provided* the *comfort* (cf. 2Cor.1:3), but He did so through Titus! What did Titus actually do? He traveled to Corinth to find out about the brethren there, and then returned and reported to Paul and his companions. He simply provided needed and desired *information*. Sometimes, that’s all it takes to “*comfort the depressed*”- **information**. If we don’t have it, go get it and bring it to those who need it, cp. Mark 6:34. God *comforted*, but He did so through Titus. Have I/we asked God to “comfort in ways that only You can” **while not doing our part to provide comfort through needed information?** I have.
- **Tabitha/Dorcas continuously abounded with deeds of kindness and charity, Acts 9:36-39.** The text does not specify *how poor* the city of Joppa may have been at the time, but when Tabitha died, “*all the widows*” came “*weeping*” and “*showing all*

the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them," v.39. Neither does the text provide information regarding how *rich* or *poor* Tabitha was. But what is obvious from what it *does* say is that she *continuously abounded* with "*deeds of kindness and charity*"- she did "what she could" to meet others' needs. When we pray for God to provide "in ways that only You can," are we **providing needs with *deeds of kindness and charity* in ways that we can?** I have not always done so.

Conclusions:

1. It is often said that "God works in mysterious ways." Such is undoubtedly true.
2. But many of "the ways" in which God works are not so mysterious at all. They're just **people of faith like you and me doing "what *they* can."** Such "tilling" often improves the prospects of "*soil*" to become "*good*" and *productive*, cp. Matt.13:23 with Acts 9:42.
3. I need to be more like them. How about **you?** Will you:

Lead by example and encourage your brethren?

Comfort the depressed with the *information* they need?

Continuously abound with *deeds of kindness and charity*?