

You Did It!

One of the most heated cultural debates of our day involves an attempt to understand "victimization" in light of each person's responsibility for his or her own actions. As intriguing as the discourse may be, it is even more pressing that the people of God ponder the issue in terms of matters spiritual.

The practice of avoiding individual responsibility by finding someone besides ourselves to blame for our flaws is not new. Trying to absolve ourselves by pointing to others for our own boneheaded actions has been around since the beginning, and I mean "the literal beginning." In Eden, Eve was the first to disobey God by partaking of forbidden fruit. She enticed Adam to follow suit. Adam must have reasoned that this simple fact of chronology would compel God to go easy on Him and to focus His wrath on Eve. God found Adam (he had been hiding) and asked him:

"... Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" - Genesis 3:11

The courageousness of Adam's response leaves a bit to be desired:

"... The woman you put here with me - she gave me some of the fruit from the tree, and I ate it." - Genesis 3:12

Eve was no more noble in 'fessing up. When God turned to her, she blamed the serpent. Had the serpent had the creativity of our age at his disposal, he surely would have complained to God, "Hey! You're the one that made me a serpent!"

But, Adam was the leader. It is his name attached to the Fall, so we must fix our attention on him. Inherent in Adam's excuse-making was a two-fold shifting of responsibility. Clearly, he was attempting to blame Eve. But, it was God Himself Who put that woman in the garden with him. "I was doing fine when my dog was my best friend!" he may have protested. Adam's attempt to pass the buck appears to have fallen flat as both he and Eve were banished from Eden and subjected to the curse.

Sure, I've taken a little liberty with the story, but that is only because I've heard some pretty heavy-duty, industrial-strength (*i.e.* stupid) blame-shifting in my day. The words of Paul to the childish Corinthians compel us to revisit this issue of crediting others for our shortcomings:

"... For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." - II Corinthians 5:10

This may be as difficult a lesson to master as any in the Christian's walk. I have known so many people who have clearly set priorities in life that bypass God. They have made choices about specific sinful patterns that defy His expressed will. There is simply no way that their personal relationship with God should or could prosper. Yet, there is always someone else to credit for the futility of their Christian experience. We will each give an account of ourselves. What exactly is the solace to be found in looking for others to whom we might deflect our personal guilt? Would a deeper commitment on someone else's part really cause you to be more deeply committed to Jesus?

For the sake of the Kingdom of God and for the sake of the mission Christ has placed in our hands, it's time to knock it off! Each child of God must stand before God and take responsibility for his or her own loyalty or lack thereof. If repentance is the need of the hour, then do so from the heart. Only let us cease these silly attempts to avoid personal responsibility. Let us dare to be answerable to God Who has invited each of us into personal fellowship with Himself.

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