

## Shifting Responsibility

When God questioned Adam as to whether he had eaten of the forbidden fruit his first response was to blame Eve (and even God) for his disobedience. His reply was, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). Eve does the same thing when she is questioned. She said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13). Even though both of their statements were true it did not change the fact that they had disobeyed God and were responsible for their actions.

One of the greatest needs in our society today is getting men and women to accept responsibility for their actions. Someone commits a horrible crime and the explanation is that he was influenced by some movie or TV show he had seen. While that may be true it does not justify his action.

The person who truly repents is one who recognizes that he is responsible for his action and, being moved by godly sorrow, repents of that sin (2 Cor. 7:10). He will not try to justify himself by blaming others.

Another way that some refuse to accept responsibility is to reject the one who exposes their sin. When John condemned Herod and Herodias for their sinful relationship Herodias had John beheaded. However, John's death did not change the fact that they were still guilty.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said, *"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you"* (1 Corinthians 1:11). Note, Paul does not condemn those of the house of Chloe for telling him of the problems at Corinth. Had there been no contentions then there would have been no contentions to report to Paul. Paul deals with the real problem, i.e., the contentions among them. Can you imagine the Corinthians defending themselves by saying that Chloe and those in his house had no business saying anything to Paul about what they were doing? The wrong involved was not Chloe's reporting of the contentions. The wrong was the contentions among them.

I knew of an incident where it was necessary for brethren to withdraw from a member because they were walking disorderly. This is exactly what the Bible teaches should be done (2 Thessalonians 3:6). When the action was taken the guilty individual condemned the brethren for "the way they handled the situation" instead of dealing with the thing that brought about the "situation," i.e. their unfaithfulness.

We need to learn that our obedience to God is not dependent upon what someone else does or does not do. I have heard people who may be involved in some dispute with another person make the statement, "I'll repent if he will." If the person is truly penitent he will repent and do what is right regardless of what someone else may do or not do. He can repent of his sin and be right with God whether the other person does or not.

All of these situations demonstrate what pride does to an individual. It demands humility for one to say, "I have sinned" and accept responsibility for that sin (See Luke 15:18-21), however, if we desire to please God and gain that wonderful home in heaven this is exactly what we will do. We will not try to justify ourselves by blaming someone else.

✍ James Hahn