

“DON’T BLAME ME OR MINE...”

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God created man with the ability of choice. We have the freedom to choose what we want to do. God could have created us so as to never stray, but God is love (1 John 4:8) and He desired a creation which would choose to love Him based on His goodness and His severity.

When He placed man in the garden, God placed him in an environment of work along with direct fellowship with heaven. In spite of those blessings, Adam and Eve chose to sin, forfeiting their fellowship at that point. When questioned about their actions, they both “passed the blame to someone else.” Moses records for us: *"And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."* -- Gen 3:11-13. Notice how Adam placed the blame on Eve and Eve pointed to the serpent. There is no doubt she may have had some feminine persuasive power over her husband, however, Adam should have kept his head. The Bible also records for us that Satan did in fact beguile Eve: *"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."* -- 2 Cor 11:3. She should not have usurped Adam’s authority and tried to become the spiritual leader, but instead, she should have been submissive and listened to Adam who should have led her in the paths God would have them to go. Ever since the garden of Eden, mankind has handed down the tradition of “passing the blame to someone else.”

This is a problem which plagues mankind even now. Some say it is “human nature” to do this. The “nature” we have, we received from God. The Hebrews writer tells us of the origin of our nature: *"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"* -- Heb 12:9. God is the One who gave us our spirits so if there is a flaw in our “nature” it would be God’s fault. The fact of the matter is we hand our customs and practices down to the next generations and it has been a custom since the creation for man to blame someone else for his trouble. We do not have to hand this practice to the next generation, but many people do this.

Let’s observe some principles from authority which are laid out for us in the word of God and then notice some practical applications which we can make to our lives. Hopefully, by doing so we will not blame others for our problems, and we will face up to our own responsibilities.

Principles from authority

First and foremost, the Bible teaches each person will give account for himself or herself. This was made vividly clear when God punished Adam and Eve just as He said He would do. He had said relative to their sin in the garden: *"And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man,*

saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

-- **Gen 2:15-17.** When they sinned, God punished Adam and Eve because they believed the lie of the serpent. They had God's word and they did not rely in it and rest on its promises. They placed their reasoning on God's level and sinned. Although the serpent beguiled Eve, God punished Adam and Eve for disobedience to His will.

The nation of Israel was punished because she followed Jeroboam and did not follow God. Notice what the Bible says: **"For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger. And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin."**

-- **1 Ki 14:15-16.** Notice, Jeroboam made Israel to sin. This means he tempted them to worship idols, but they were held responsible for their sinning. Although Jeroboam tempted Israel, Israel should not have sinned and could have chosen to follow God instead of Jeroboam.

By the time of Ezekiel, the children of God were using an old proverb and trying to avoid responsibility for their sin. Notice what God said: **"The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." -- Ezek 18:1-4.** While God was actually correcting their idea of inheriting sin from their fathers, He emphasized the fact that the one who sins will die himself (that is unless he repents). God drives that fact home in verse twenty: **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." -- Ezek 18:20.**

When we turn to the New Testament, we see this principle cast before us often. Paul writes: **"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." -- Rom 14:12.....For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." -- 2 Cor 5:10.** We are personally held responsible for our sin. We can not lay the blame at the feet of someone else. The Bible ends with this admonition: **"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." -- Rev 20:12.** Thus we learn first, we all are accountable for our sins.

Second, we must understand that we can cause others to stumble by casting stumbling blocks before them. We will be held accountable before God for causing others to stumble. Jesus Himself said: **"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" -- Mat 18:6-7.** The idea of "offend" means to to entrap, i.e. trip up (fig. stumble [trans.] or entice to sin - [Strong's]). Thus if we entice others to sin, we

ourselves actually sin. This DOES NOT relieve the other person of his sin!! That person is also held accountable for his sin. We find no harbor for own weakness or sin by saying, "He caused me to do it!" Both sin before God when this happens and both must repent! We need to get out of the blaming business and get into the repenting business!

So, we are all held accountable for our sin, and we all must be careful that we do not cause others to stumble by enticing them to sin.

Practical applications of these principles

It is one thing to know what the Bible says, and it is another to make the proper application to our lives. We know we are all held accountable and we must be careful, but how does this figure into our lives?

As we consider first ourselves we observe that we can not blame others for our shortcomings. We are all to hear and obey the word of God for ourselves. Many are the verses which show those who are obedient to God's word are the ones who will be saved. The Hebrews writer said: ***"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" -- Heb 5:8-9.*** Those ones who will be saved by the Captain of our salvation are the ones who will obey the word of God. The parable of the soils teaches this very important point. The four types of soil are listed and together they represent the whole of mankind's reactions to the seed of the kingdom. It is imperative for one to hear the word and allow that word lodging in his heart. Luke records: ***"Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."*** -- Luke 8:18. We have a responsibility to hear in a proper manner as to heed. Mark records: ***"And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."*** -- Mark 4:24. We are told to be careful what and how we hear. We ought to hear the word of God, allow it to take root, and bring forth fruit to God. That is the responsibility of each person. There might be factors in each person's life and these factors differ person to person, but the truth of the matter is, each person is responsible to know what God requires of him. Ignorance will not allow one to go to heaven.

Husbands and wives must be careful as they conduct their lives. Sometimes one or both of them blame the other one for their own mistakes. Granted, our mates can and do have an influence on our lives, but we must be mature enough to understand we are responsible ourselves before God. We can not escape our duty by saying it was someone else's fault. Adam and Eve tried it and they could not escape.

When it comes to our children we also must be mature enough to understand they are accountable to God. Many young people are easily impressed by others, but parents must stay aware of how their children think and keep constant communication with them. Parents must also not fall into Satan's trap of blaming other people for their children's sins. Young people learn early in life how to try and avoid owning up to their own sins. They learn from society how to blame others and we must not help in this error. We must ever keep before them the fact they must answer to God for

themselves. Parents can help them out of many cases, but those who reach the age of accountability, must answer for themselves. Parents do their children a grave injustice by helping them try and escape their duty.

Brethren in the church need to understand this principle. We do not need to try and blame other brethren for own mistakes. We must know enough and be mature enough to obey God for ourselves. Brethren who cause others to stumble will be held accountable as we have already pointed out. Mature brethren should be wise enough to avoid this trap. Brethren who seek to blame everyone else are brethren who are weak and sleep spiritually. We need to “grow up” and quit acting like children in this area if we are guilty.

Second, we need to see the Bible for what God says it is – a mirror of the soul: ***"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*** -- James 1:25. If we will look into the Bible we will see ourselves for what we really are. We need to then go forth and make the necessary changes so we can be pleasing to God.

May we never fall into Satan's trap and try and blame others for our own or our family's mistakes. Let us seek to put God first, heed His word, obey it from our heart and enjoy the blessings of His Son!!