

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

One of America's favorite games is the Blame Game. Nearly everyone plays it. This is the game where people like to blame someone else when something goes wrong, especially when they themselves are obviously at fault. It is so easy to point the finger and blame others for our mistakes. Do you play this game often?

The drunkard is not at fault because he drank too much. He can blame his parents who gave him the genes that make him uncontrollably desire the addictive alcohol. The heinous murderer points his finger at his environment and his mistreatment as a child which led him to his crimes of bloodshed. And the homosexual blames God, of all people, for allowing him to be "born" into that lifestyle. Isn't this what we see in America today?

In most cases, people do not want to be held accountable for their own actions. They have neglected their personal responsibilities as creatures of God. They want to feel justified in their sins and thus, judge others as the source of their downfall. *"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."* (Rom. 14:10-12)

It is very plain, from verse 10, that we are to be very careful when we judge others (and blame them) because we ourselves will be judged -- by someone much greater than us! Therefore, we do not need to spend so much time pointing fingers at others, but accepting personal responsibility for our own life because *"every one of us shall give account of himself to God."* Now let us discuss a few of the things for which we are personally responsible.

First of all, each one of us is accountable for what we acquire. *"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."* (2 Cor. 9:6,7) The farmer who sows a million seeds is most likely to reap more than the farmer who only sows

a hundred seeds. Therefore, the lesson of verse 6 is simple: Give generously! *"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor."* (Prov. 22:9) What we own and how much we own will determine whether we have sowed sparingly or bountifully. It will also tell whether we have sowed the right things. A man who is rich materially may be poor spiritually. *"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."* (Luke 12:21) It is our responsibility to see that we become rich in the right things and in the right ways. *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Matt. 6:21)

Second, we must all be answerable for the things that we say in our lifetime. We cannot blame others for our own speech. *"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."* (Matt. 12:36,37) In verse 36, the Greek word for "idle" is defined as "inactive, lazy, useless, barren, or slow." I wonder how many of us are guilty of speaking "idle" words? Do we ever say things that we later regret? Now we can truly appreciate the wise saying found in Prov. 25:11, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."* In verse 37 of Matt. 12, we find that our words have a heavy influence on our eternal destiny. Those who confess Christ with the mouth shall be saved (Rom. 10:9); those who deny Him will be lost (Matt. 10:33). Because God takes notice of every single word we say, we have a personal responsibility to see that our speech is always pure and not "idle." *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."* (Col. 4:6)

Third on our list is the responsibility of the deeds we do here on earth. *"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 all realize that there are only two kinds of deeds that can possibly be done: good deeds and bad deeds. There are no "in-between" deeds nor "part-time" doers, either. If a man tries to do good works only 99% of the time, he is not a Christian in the sight of God! *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* (Jas. 2:10) See also Ezek. 33:13. Likewise, there can only be two kinds of rewards which can be bestowed upon man: a crown of life for the doer of good deeds or a sentence of death for the doer of bad deeds. Therefore, if we want that incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25) we must see to it that we always do good

deeds. *"This is a faithful saying, and these things, I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."* (Titus 3:8) Last of all, we are all accountable for what we know. *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* (Jas. 4:17) The Word of God is very clear concerning those who "know better", yet point the finger at others. If you do something that you know is wrong, the sin is that much greater on account of your knowledge. The reason is that you are sinning against your own God-given conscience. Paul himself stated: *"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."* (Acts 24:16) See also Rom. 7:15-23. Hence, we are personally responsible to do that which we know is right.

As we grow older, we must all strive for spiritual riches, to say pure things, to do good works, and to know the right things to do. Instead of blaming others for our shortcomings, we must accept personal responsibility for our own actions. *"For every man shall bear his own burden."* (Gal. 6:5)

RAY McMANUS

AN ONION IS A ROSE

The preacher reached into a paper sack and pulled out an onion. He held it up for all to see and said: "This is a Rose."

"In an age when being cool is hot and being bad is good and being really great is wicked, this is a rose.

When you have to be a low life to lead the high life, and children choose to take their own lives, this is a rose.

When a so-called Christian nation refuses to pray, when heaven can only be had on earth, when hell is only a joke, this is a rose.

To a generation that thinks that fornication is love and drunken stupor is a good time, this is a rose.

When the right to kill an unwanted baby is called the right to choose, and when what God calls an abomination we call gay, this is a rose.

In a place where liquor referendum is a restaurant referendum, and more sin means more prosperity, this is a rose.

When fathers no longer try to be Dads, and mothers refuse to be Moms, and families are defined as homeless, this is a rose.

When shepherd scatter the sheep, when the blind see the light but choose darkness, when the stained can be washed but the individual returns to the mire, when the thirsty refuse to drink from the fountain, this is a rose."

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20). Dear Lord, help us to know the difference between your truth and the lies Satan tells us every day.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What was the only city in the northern promised land that Joshua burned?
2. What kind of seed is the kingdom of heaven like, according to Matthew 13?
3. What was the occupation of Aquila and Priscilla?
4. According to Psalm 4, the Lord has set apart the godly for whom?
5. What type of metal was used to overlay the ark of the covenant?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. In Romans 16, who does Paul greet who has a church meeting at their house? PRISCILLA AND AQUILA (Rom. 16:3-5)
2. In what part of Eden was the garden? EASTERN PART (Gen. 2:8)
3. God was going to use the Canaanites, Hittites, etc., to test the Israelites but He was also going to use them to teach the Israelites something. What? WARFARE (Judg. 3:2)

4. Who asked that the legs be broken of the men on the crosses on the day of the crucifixion? THE JEWS (John 19:31)
 5. Righteousness and peace do what to each other according to Psalm 85? KISS (Psa. 85:10)
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BLOOMING WHERE WE ARE

When a place needs flowers
To freshen the air,
God arranges for flowers
To be planted there.

On obscure mountain trails
And in deep woods enchanted
And by uncharted streams
God's flowers are planted.

Near the Arctic Circle,
When summer melts the snow,
And with few to behold,
Such brilliant flowers grow.

Like roses in the desert
Spreading fragrance afar,
May we keep on growing
And blooming where we are.

-- Perry Tanksley