“The Devil Made Me Do It”

Only those of us who are a little older will remember Clero Wilson, better known as “Flip” Wilson. Flip was hilarious. His routines included scenes in which he played Geraldine, a hip lady who always had an answer for everything. When she got caught doing something wrong, she had a rejoinder which became famous, “Honey, the Devil made me do it.” Sadly, while this may be amusing in some respects, the truth of the matter is that it may reflect more than just Flip’s signature self-justification.

In politics, sports, Hollywood, and in everyday life, no one is accountable. There is always somewhere to place the blame; “My parents didn’t raise me right,” “Inflation is due to Putin’s war,” “He egged me on,” “She was asking for it,” etc. You get the picture.

However, God does not make room for blaming others. Adam was the first to try it when he blamed Eve for their sin. Later, in 1 Samuel 15:19, Saul tried to excuse his disobedience by blaming it on the people, “But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal." God and Samuel were in no mood to accept Saul’s blame game. Consequently, Saul lost his position as king.

Deflecting blame is also recorded in the New Testament. Peter held Ananias and Saphira accountable for lying to God (Acts 5:1-11). Their blame game did not work and they paid the ultimate price.

Is this tendency any different in the Lord’s church? Here are some blame-deflecting statements often presented:

“The sermons are too long.”
“The sermons are too short.”
“I do not feel fed.”
“The music was not inspirational to me.”
“The church is not very friendly.”
“I don’t like large churches.”
“The Bible does not tell us to attend every service.”
“The elders/deacons/members have never visited me.”
“I can worship God without attending services.”

God’s word is exacting regarding personal accountability. Notice the following scriptures as recorded in the English Standard Version:

• 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

• Romans 14:12, “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

• Revelation 20:11-15, “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

It is tremendously challenging to do a humble self-examination of our spiritual lives. The Bible is replete with those who have placed blame for their own conduct elsewhere. There are a rare few who have humbly confessed, “I have sinned.”

NOW is the time to examine one’s spiritual life. It is not the time for excuses such as, “Well, no one is perfect,” or, “Maybe I could have done better.” It is time to humbly approach God, prayerfully confessing who and what we really are.

“Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (James 1:13-15).

The Devil doesn’t make us do it.

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