

RESPONSIBILITY

It is a word we all hear from time to time and a point brought up frequently in sermons. With that in mind, tonight I would like to address the subject of responsibility directly and make spiritual application.

I. What is responsibility?

- a. Webster's dictionary defines the word *responsible* as "1. Liable to be called on to answer", 2. Able to answer for one's conduct or obligation."¹ Synonyms include answerable and accountable.
- b. The word is also used to describe one who realizes his obligations and carries them out, and thus he can be counted upon to do what is needed. Someone who is trustworthy. "He is a responsible person". Consider the example of Job – Job 1:8, 2:3 – he feared God and holds to his integrity.
- c. *Responsibility* means something for which YOU are responsible or accountable.
- d. Simply stated, responsibility is something that is your obligation to do and for which you have to answer. We sometimes use the "formula" - ability + opportunity = responsibility
- e. Spiritually, we have responsibilities. It clearly addresses throughout scripture: From the consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve, multitudes of examples of those who did and did not follow God's instructions, to the commands we are given for which we are accountable.

II. You cannot avoid your responsibilities

- a. ***We all have responsibilities.*** They will be different from others, but we still have them.
 - i. Romans 12:3-8 – whatever your "gifts", use them to the glory of God.
 - ii. Philippians 2:12 – work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling.
- b. ***One day we will give an accounting for ourselves*** – 2 Corinthians 5:10. On that day, we will be judged by the choices we make. Matthew 12:36 warns that we will give an accounting for every idle word we speak. When it comes to my responsibilities – I AM going to answer – Revelation 20:11-13 paints a picture of this judgment scene.
- c. ***You cannot blame others for your failures*** –
 - i. We live in a society where so many refuse to take responsibility for their own actions. Instead, they blame anyone or everyone else for their faults and failures. It is a major failure of the brokenness in our society. And rarely does it fix problems, and most often makes matters worse. The first step in dealing with any addiction – whether chemical or behavioral is to admit that YOU are the one with the problem.
 - ii. Genesis 3:12-13 – both Adam and Eve blamed others.
 - iii. Ezekiel 18:20 - the soul who sins will die. The son will not bear the guilt...;
 - iv. When you stand before God in judgment, you cannot blame your parents, the elders, false teachers, your environment, friends, etc. While each of these will have a bearing on who you become, they cannot be used to justify who you are.
 - v. That is not to say that we will not give an accounting for how we have affected others – we will. But my accounting will be for what I was supposed to be doing. My failure to properly raise my children or honor my spouse will be factored into what I was supposed to do.
- d. ***You cannot excuse it by blaming Adam or your ancestors*** –
 - i. Many today want to blame Adam for their sins. They might say something like, "That is just the way I am" or "That is my nature". Again, that will NOT produce needed changes.
 - ii. While we do suffer because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-13ff, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). We inherit the consequences of His sin, but we do NOT inherit his sin.

¹ "Responsible." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/responsible>. Accessed 18 Nov. 2022.

- iii. There are far too many examples both good and evil, that IN SPITE of upbringing, environment, etc. they made changes. Why? Because they took responsibility for themselves.
- e. **You cannot claim ignorance** –
 - i. Ignorance does not change the reality of something. When one breaks the law, whether he was aware of it or not, does not change that it was a law. If you do not see the speed limit, does not change what the speed limit is.
 - ii. Acts 17:30-31 – God does not overlook ignorance. Romans 10:2-3 speaking of the zeal of the Jews that rejected Jesus (or Gentiles), Paul spoke of their being ignorant of God’s righteousness.
 - iii. God’s word has been made available to all and we are expected to learn it and understand it – cf. Ephesians 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:15.
 - iv. Paul continually challenged brethren concerning their errors to NOT be ignorant – e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:1, 2 Corinthians 1:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, etc. He taught them, because ignorance will NOT be an acceptable excuse on the day of Judgment.
- f. **Unbelief will not excuse you** – often a form of ignorance, but also stubborn rejection of reality
 - i. Mark 16:15 notes that he who does not believe will be condemned.
 - ii. There are many who know what God’s word says, but they do not really believe it. For one reason or another, they choose to reject what God teaches. These run the gamut from total rejection of God, blatant immorality, following false gods to following a false standard of truth.
 - iii. Unbelief was the problem Jesus dealt with as He confronted the corrupt Jews. John 8:46 Jesus challenged them, “If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?” John 3:18-20 finds John contrasting darkness with light – the light came into the world, but men loved darkness. Thus they did not believe Him.
 - iv. Hebrews 3:12 – even a Christian can become an unbeliever and depart from the living God.
 - v. There are many who think they are ok with God, but they are not. That is what Jesus warned in Matthew 7:21-23.
 - vi. In this world, you can choose to reject God’s word and His warnings. But understand that you are responsible for your decision AND the consequences that follow. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.
- g. Thus we can see that we CANNOT avoid our responsibilities – whether we are talking about what we are obligated to do OR our accountability based upon our choices.

III. How much responsibility do you have?

- a. **FIRST, that is a question only you can answer.** Most of us know deep down whether or not we are doing what we can do. Understand, we all have different abilities and are placed in different circumstances. Because of that we have different responsibilities. Let’s consider these.
- b. **As you have ability** –
 - i. Consider the parable of the talents – Matthew 25:14-30 we again are reminded of the parable of the talents. Understand that each servant we given responsibility based upon their ability (25:15). And when the master returned, they were held responsible based upon that ability. Let us understand that God does not expect more of you than you are capable, but He DOES expect you to give your best.
 - ii. 1 Peter 4:11 – as with the ability which God supplies.
 - iii. **If you have privilege** – privilege is a factor of your ability. It refers to that which you have a right to do, but it also references those who have abundantly blessed in some area. Those with greater resources will be accountable for such. Consider wealth as an example – 1 Timothy 6:17-18 – you have more, you can do more. We are so abundantly blessed in so

many ways in this country – wealth, health, knowledge, even freedoms. We take many these things for granted.

- iv. ***BUT, I want us to understand that with privilege comes responsibility.*** That was the point of both 1 Peter 4:11 and Romans 12:3-8, as well as Ecclesiastes 9:10, etc.
- c. ***You have opportunity –***
 - i. Galatians 6:10 – as we have opportunity, do good to all...
- d. ***Apply this to obeying the gospel –***
 - i. Do you have the ability to obey the gospel? Sure you do.
 - 1. If you are here and understand what you need to both to be saved and to stay saved, you have the ability to do so.
 - 2. God has not given us a standard that is impossible to obey. It may not be easy, but it is simple!
 - 3. Consider what one must do to obey the gospel – the plan of salvation
 - 4. Consider what one must do if as Christians they have sin they need to take care of – Repent – Acts 8:22, Confess and pray – 1 John 1:9. God wants you to be saved – 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4.
 - ii. Do you have the opportunity to obey the gospel? Again, the answer is yes.
 - 1. Many believed in Jesus but did not confess Him – John 12:42-43. Think of the opportunities they had.
 - 2. Matthew 11:20-24 – Jesus pronounced woes on Chorazin and Bethsaida, noting the opportunity they had to receive Him, BUT they chose not to.
 - 3. John 15:21-25 – Jesus, identifying the corrupt Jewish leaders, noted they had opportunity to obey, but chose not to and therefore they had no excuse.
 - iii. You then have responsibility to obey – in the above examples, because they rejected God, they will stand before Him and be responsible for their own decisions. They had no excuse, and neither will we. We WILL be held responsible before God.

This world desperately needs more people who are responsible in every way. But even more, we need to realize that we are responsible to prepare to stand before God.