

Responsibility

Joe Slater

Employer to job applicant: “Are you responsible?”
Applicant to employer: “I guess so. Every time something goes wrong, they tell me I’m responsible!”

Responsibility, like most issues, can be taken to extremes. Sometimes we disclaim any responsibility at all; other times we assume more responsibility than is rightfully ours. What is our actual responsibility as to teaching people the word of God?

Paul understood that he was responsible to teach the truth. *“For necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16). However, he was not responsible for the way other people reacted. When stubborn sinners refused to heed God’s word, Paul told them, *“Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean”* (Acts 18:6). On another occasion he said, *“I am innocent (literally ‘clean’) from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:26, 27).

Similarly, God told Ezekiel to be like a watchman upon the wall of an ancient city (3:17-21). The prophet’s responsibility was to warn the people against their sins. If he remained silent, the people would die in their sins, but God would hold Ezekiel accountable. If, on the other hand, he warned the people, but they did not heed his words, they would still die in their sins; but it would no longer be the prophet’s responsibility.

First, then, we bear individual responsibility for our own behavior. People are lost because of their own sins; they cannot successfully say, “I am not responsible because I didn’t know.” Remember, Ezekiel’s people would die in their sins even if he didn’t warn them.

Ignorance is not bliss, nor does it remove responsibility for sin.

Second, as children of God, we are responsible for taking God’s message to the lost, as well as warning the saved not to stray away. If we fail to do that, God will hold us accountable. We will have the blood of lost souls on our hands, as it were.

Third, assuming we have taught the truth of God’s word with persuasion (not coercion) in a spirit of love, we have fulfilled our responsibility. We should not burden ourselves with guilt because those we taught didn’t believe and obey.

Let us take our responsibilities seriously! At the same time, let us realize that others are also responsible for themselves.

◊ ◊ ◊ ◊ ◊ ◊ ◊ What Makes A Great Church?

- Not big budgets, but big hearts;
- Not money received, but service rendered;
- Not tall buildings, but lofty vision;
- Not record-breaking attendance, but God’s presence;
- Not frantic motion, but dedicated action;
- Not soft seats and bright lights, but courageous leadership;
- Not loud talking, but quiet doing;
- Not members in beautiful clothes, but members stressing truth;
- Not actions in the past, but things being done now!

--Via *Bulletin Gold*

Offering Thanks at the Lord’s Table

Jesus offered a prayer of thanksgiving before distributing the bread, and another before giving the fruit of the vine. Two accounts tell us that Jesus took bread and *“blessed”* it (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22), and Paul calls the fruit of the vine *“the cup of blessing which we bless”* (1 Corinthians 10:16).

There is no evidence, however, that Jesus or the early Christians asked the Father to “bless the bread” as some have expressed it in prayers at the Lord’s table. It was Jesus who blessed the bread, and it is *“we”* who bless the cup. This is done simply by giving thanks for it (Luke 22:19).

Mathew and Mark say that Jesus *“blessed”* the bread of the Lord’s Supper and gave *“thanks”* for the cup, whereas Luke and Paul say that Jesus *“gave thanks”* for the bread and *“in like manner”* the cup. The two expressions (blessed and gave thanks) are obviously used interchangeably.

In our prayers at the Lord’s table, we need to simply give thanks for the bread and the fruit of the vine. Whatever else is mentioned about the Lord, His death, etc., this thanksgiving for the elements of the supper should not be neglected, yet it often is.

Gary Workman (via *The Restorer*, Dec. 1983); adapted