**Who Is to Blame for This Mess? – Wayne Welsh**

We’ve all been there. Maybe you’re dissatisfied with your job. Maybe you’re unhappy with the status of the nation. Maybe something is wrong in your family life. Maybe you’re just feeling lonely and depressed because you feel like no one will be friends with you. Or maybe (just maybe) you are even dissatisfied with the way things are at church right now. The natural human response to any bad situation is to assign blame. If only *he* would get his act together! If only *she* would behave differently! If only *they* had elected someone else! If only *other people* were more committed!

**And it’s completely wrong in every way.**

Assigning blame is a technique that’s almost as old as the creation itself. Whenever Adam and Eve violated the commandment and ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which God had commanded them not to eat, Adam’s first recourse was to blame Eve. Maybe he had *some* fault to acknowledge, but he could certainly make himself save face by pointing out that Eve had some blame to share as well! (Implicitly, he also blames God a little bit, since God was the one who made Eve). Eve similarly does not take responsibility. She passes blame to the serpent, because the serpent tricked her, and she was ill-prepared to deal with this.

Readers familiar with the story will remember that no one gets “off the hook.” Man, woman, and serpent all share in punishment. The Lord is not fooled by such attempts to deflect one’s guilt and blame one’s sinful behavior on others. Nor is he fooled today by the casual usage of, *“I know I’m not perfect, but…”* Such phrasing is a sorry attempt to minimize the impact of one’s own wrongdoing, while maximizing the grossness of others’ iniquity. I should know. I’ve said it before.

Blaming others is an efficient way to fixate on all of the nasty bits of life that one can’t change. We can blame the bad state of the world on the sinfulness of others, but sooner or later we will need to confront the sobering condemnation of Paul: *“Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things”* (**Rom 2:1 NRSV**). Like it or not, the bad things in our lives are in part owed to our own doing. We cannot escape our share of responsibility in what is wrong. And while we cannot change the hearts and minds of others, we ought to change our own hearts and minds in response to whatever is wrong in our lives.

The titular question *“****Who is to blame for this mess****?”* is the wrong question to ask! We should instead be asking, *“****How am I contributing to this mess****?”* and better still, *“****What can I do to help clean it up****?”* So what can we do? Here’s a few suggestions from the scriptures.

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* (**Gal 6:2**)

*“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”* (**Gal 6:9-10**)

*“If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”* (**Rom 12:18**)

More passages could be cited. The main point though is this: instead of agonizing and complaining and fretting about all of the wrong things in one’s life, one’s time is better spent trying to find new ways to practice godliness and show kindness to others. May God help us to do this with renewed vigor!