

# Somebody's Wrong, and I Think That We Are!

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It seems that more and more people, in an effort to circumvent their own guilt and accountability for wrong doing, either plead ignorance or temporary insanity, unless of course they just simply shift the blame to something or someone else. In the early 1970's Flip Wilson played the character Geraldine Jones, a sassy woman that was always warning people that her boyfriend Killer (who, if not in prison was at the pool hall) would soon be home. Geraldine was often somewhere she should not have been, or doing something she should not have been doing. When someone would confront her about it she would say, "The devil made me do it." While the variety show, The Flip Wilson Show, was popular from 1970 through 1974 the concept of 'the devil made me do it' goes back much farther; it was in essence the excuse Eve gave God when she tried to put the blame for her sinful conduct on the serpent in Genesis 3. In that same narrative Adam pointed the finger of blame for his sinful conduct in the direction of both the woman and God when he said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (emphasis mine, bjf).

There is a tendency among some to try to avoid personal accountability by resisting the truth and shifting attention from the real issue of personal wrongdoing. When confronted by Samuel about his disobedience to the word of the Lord regarding the complete destruction of the Amalekites and their animals, King Saul resisted the truth and tried directing the attention away from his personal accountability. Samuel turned up the heat by asking him that if he had obeyed the commands of God "what then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" When Saul tried to absolve himself and even blame those over whom he reigned, Samuel poignantly reminded him that he was responsible for his own actions and that because he rejected doing God's will God would reject him as king (1 Samuel 15:1ff).

While religious service and moral behavior is important (Titus 2:11-14) they do not inherently exonerate a person. Cornelius in Acts 10 is a case in point - he was both religious and moral (Acts 10:2) but he still needed to obey Heavens Will (Acts 10:6, 33, 35, 47, 48). Not all religious service is pleasing to God. Just because one may be religiously active is no assurance that it is acceptable to the Lord. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." He went on to say, "Many will say to Me

in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' To which the Lord replied, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (emphasis mine, bjf).

There comes a time in a person's life when he needs to recognize that, as Samuel told Saul, "**obedience is better than sacrifice**" (1 Samuel 15:22) and when one does things that are wrong, even in matters of religious service, the Lord will not hold him guiltless. There is no amount of truth that one can reject, no amount of ignorance that one can plead, and no diversion away from one's own guilt, that can turn wrongful behavior into an accepted practice. When the truth of God Word is revealed and its power deeply penetrates the heart, it's time for action; it's time to do something about it! Don't try to avoid it. Don't reject it. Don't try to weaken its power. And don't try to justify the sin by shifting blame to something or someone else. Just admit the wrong, repent of it, and obey the Lord! May we be reminded once again of Samuel's candidness when he told King Saul that "**Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry**" (1 Samuel 15:23). There are times when a person allows his own pride to prevent him from obeying the truth; sometimes it is a relationship with a parent, a spouse, or even another religious group that prevent him from changing directions and following the Lord unequivocally (Matthew 10:34-37; Luke 14:26, 33). There are even times when one starts out living for the Lord but for some reason or another - a job, a disaster, a guilty conscience, a sense of unworthiness, or even the sin of another person - the finger of blame is pointed. However, the end result doesn't justify the means and it still all comes down to Paul's reminder that "**each of us shall give account of himself to God**" (Romans 14:12).

When Alexander Campbell came to Nashville, Tennessee to preach, there was a Baptist preacher by the name of Calvin Curlee who went to hear him. Mr. Curlee remained several days in Nashville and heard every discourse preached by Mr. Campbell. After returning home he was so disturbed by what he had heard that he could scarcely eat or sleep for several days. He walked the floor as he pondered the scriptural truths which kept gnawing at his heart. He would pace awhile, and then he would sit down and read his Bible to justify his conclusion. He continued this for several days, and finally after much deliberation, while walking the floor, he paused and remarked to his wife: "Becky, somebody is wrong, and I think that we are."

Mr. Curlee would not accept the new-found truths until he had fully justified them by the Bible; but when he learned that he was in error, he did not hesitate to give up the error and embrace the truth. Mr. Curlee didn't criticize the messenger, he didn't try to justify his former religion or

his preaching, and he didn't point the finger of blame elsewhere; instead, with much humility, he simply said, "Becky, somebody is wrong, and I think that we are."

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