

Responsibility

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4). **“Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord . . . [and] join me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life . . . because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time”** (2 Timothy 1:8-9). **“. . . a faith and knowledge with a view to the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time”** (Titus 1:2). These several verses (there are others) reveal that before God created, it was His eternal intention and plan to make creatures who would be holy and dwell with Him in His time-less reality. So because of this, Paul correctly reasons that in this life we have responsibilities. The responsibilities in these verses are to live in holiness, to share Christ with others, and suffer loss and/or persecution for doing it. Elsewhere Paul reveals many other responsibilities that accrue because of our election to salvation and our receipt of grace.

Paul doesn't use the word privilege here, but I'm sure that's what he has in mind. God is an infinitely moral Being, so in granting privileges to creatures that He made with a moral capacity also, they necessarily will have responsibilities. God Himself, the most privileged Person in existence, bears responsibilities, and we do too. It's inescapable. God didn't create humanity in His image to live happily, comfortably and self-indulgently according to its own pleasures. He created humans for whom He planned a great destiny, but who, having God's image, would also have responsibilities to bear. Because of how our cosmos is structured reflecting God's justice and perfectly moral character, privilege necessarily carries with it responsibility.

Looking at it slightly differently, we were created with a will. Not just with a mind and with emotions, but also with a will and a degree of freedom with which to express that will. But justice requires that freedom to choose carries with it responsibility for the choices that are made. Responsibility is being held accountable to God for the expression of our will, for the choices we make. It's unavoidable because it's built into creation.

All Scripture, beginning to end, is a plea to choose rightly and accept the responsibilities that God has placed on us. The first couple in the Garden were given several responsibilities. They failed, as you know, in one key issue. Implicit in the text is the plea that we readers not repeat their offense. Why the Genesis Flood? God wiped out all humanity, except Noah and his family. We must assume that that God had given that civilization instructions how to live righteously, but they repudiated that responsibility. So they were judged. The Nation of Israel at Sinai was given layers of areas in which they were instructed to be responsible to God. The New Testament is filled with similar instructions. Consider the Book of Revelation: a number of persons and groups are highlighted, but the evident purpose of the Book is for us readers not to repeat the failures and rebellions narrated there, but instead to be responsible and fulfill God's will that we be loyal to Christ.

Responsibilities are ineluctable. God gave us revelation, and that itself creates the responsibility to know it. God revealed Himself to us, and that itself creates the responsibility to know Him. God gave instructions how to live, and that itself creates the responsibility to obey Him. We live in a world of uncertainties, unable to know the future, and that itself creates the responsibility to trust God. God placed us in community, and not all in that community are equal, so that itself creates the responsibility to care for others who have needs. God has provided each of us with certain gifts or talents, perhaps wealth, etc, and those endowments create the responsibility to use them to glorify God. As humans we unavoidably have many responsibilities.

Many of the specific responsibilities we bear are revealed in God's Word. They mainly focus on three domains: (1) obeying something that God commanded; (2) fulfilling His revealed will in some way; or (3) trusting God that some proposition He has revealed is truth and/or to fulfill something He has promised regarding the future, and then by acting on that proposition or promise.

Revelation received requires a right response, which is a response of faith, which is a change of life appropriate to the revelation. To ignore or to be indifferent to revelation invites dire consequences, and that is done at one's peril. The failure to understand God's revelation is due to hard-heartedness. Faith unlocks understanding, not the other way around. Likewise . . . Grace received requires a right response, which is a response of faith, which is a change of life appropriate to the grace. Grace is never passively received. Privileges create responsibilities. It has to be thus in this cosmos created by an infinitely moral God. To ignore or be indifferent to one's responsibilities invites dire consequences

– the grace notwithstanding. Grace is an aspect of God’s revelation, and we are expected to respond to it in an appropriate way, namely obedience, trust, loyalty, repentance, etc.

The Serpent in the Garden attempted to relieve us of our responsibilities to God, saying in essence, “you shall be as God.” In other words, we would be autonomous. Satan wants us to be free, free from God’s demands (and thus condemned). He puts Darwinian evolution and various Marxist narratives on offer to entice us away from our human responsibilities to God. Why? Because being responsible molds character, and character is of supreme importance to God because we’re to reflect the perfect character of His Person. And that glorifies Him. So for example, woke ideology promotes “equity,” which is really an enforced absolute equality. That’s a Satanic goal, because equality erases personal responsibility [government will make everyone equal], so there’s no character development and, therefore, we cannot glorify God.

Consider also that we who are chosen need to show that we are worthy of having been chosen. [Note: I am not saying we need to show that we are worthy *to be* chosen but, *having been chosen*, that we are in some way worthy. Be clear on the difference!] Thus, Abraham showed he was worthy of God’s choice by his trust and self-sacrificing obedience. David was chosen by God, and subsequent to being anointed he took the initiative to carry out God’s will and defeat the pagan giant, Goliath. Paul too, by his life of ministry, showed he was worthy of God’s choice. So did many, many others in the Scriptures. They were responsible. Samson showed that he was not worthy. Likewise Saul and others. Being responsible is showing that God’s choice of us was wise, good and just.

We misunderstand life. We suppose that this physical life that we have is an end in itself. It isn’t! (Seculars think it is, because ignoring Scripture, they have no way of knowing otherwise.) But we who have been chosen by God should realize that this physical life is only a probation. It’s a test. Of what? Of whether we’re responsible and worthy of all that God includes in the term, “eternal life.” Faith is the means to attaining eternal life, but faith must be lived out responsibly to God for it be genuine. **“To whom much is given, much is required”** (Luke 12:48).

My readers will now accuse me of legalism. This is not legalism. Believers have a responsibility to be faithful to Christ and to be mature in the faith. God expects those who are trusting in Christ for salvation to be transformed into a new mature person that imitates Christ’s perfect Person. **“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. . . And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”** (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). This doesn’t occur automatically, as if we’re simply passive recipients and the Lord does it for us. A bit later Paul writes, **“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God”** (2 Corinthians 7:1). Who bears the responsibility? We do. Paul, by the Spirit, penned heaps of instructions for us to live by, to enable this transformation.

Some in America’s churches eschew any kind of good works because, they say, “In Galatians, Paul teaches that Christ has delivered us from the works of the Law, and the works of the Law don’t justify. We’re in an age of grace; we don’t *have* to do anything.” This is grotesque theology and misunderstood Scripture. The “works of the Law” are the specific practices (circumcision, Sabbath observance, special festival days, and the food laws) that identify a person with the Jewish people and their covenant. The “works of the Law” are not the same as “good works” (God’s righteousness), which God has enjoined on us (e.g., Eph 2:10; Col 1:10).

Something I’ve heard that’s even worse is this: “I’m saved by grace. It’s all because of what God has done, not what I do. I can live however I want to. My salvation is based entirely on Christ’s atoning work and God’s promises. I made a decision for Christ, and that settles it.” The problem with this pious-sounding but false belief is, it turns salvation into a business contract. It holds God in bondage to a deal He offers to us in the Gospel. Yes, God has made precious promises. And, Yes, God is faithful to His Word. But the Gospel calls us into an intimate, loving relationship with God, not a negotiated business deal. There’s no love in a contract. A contract is needed precisely because love is absent. To believe in Christ is to love Him. And to love Him is to fear Him, to trust Him, and to obey Him. In love for Christ, we should want to please Him and to serve Him as He wants to be served. So if there’s a love relationship, our desire to please Him means we have responsibilities to carry out. We dare not be indifferent about remaining immature or sensing the freedom to live as we please.

Going forward, may our minds be filled with this sense of deep purpose, of living responsibly before God’s face, and may our hearts rejoice in obeying His will, that is, His Word, because we’re pleasing the eternal, living Creator God.