

The Failure Of Others

Often, when a person is confronted with sin in his life, a response is given, "But, she...", "But, he...", "But, they...", followed by some failure of the one or ones indicated. In other words, because someone else, or some group of people, did not do right, neither has the one now guilty-- "It is someone else's fault that I have sinned." Will this work?

When David committed adultery, deceit, and murder, do you suppose the citizens of his kingdom would be justified in their sin (2 Sam. 11)? Would it have been right for a man caught stealing sheep from his neighbor to defend himself by saying, "Well, the king stole Uriah's wife" (cf. 2 Sam. 12:1-6)? No. No matter what the king had done, each man was still accountable for his own actions. The citizens of David's kingdom could not use his failure as an excuse to do wrong.

In the New Testament we read of many who fell short of God's glory at one time or another. We read of Simon who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-18). We are told about Demas who forsook Paul, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). Do you suppose a Christian of the first century could have been justified in sin by pointing out the failure of these? Would God have excused a saint upon hearing, "I may drink intoxicating drinks, but at least I have not left the church like Demas," or "Yes, I gamble, but that's not as bad as what Simon wanted to do."? The failure of these two Christians to live right was no excuse for other's to sin.

Consider Peter. He was a man who swore adamantly that he would not deny the Lord, but did (Matt. 26:69-75). Can you imagine a person guilty of committing adultery saying, "At least I did not deny the Lord, like Peter!"? What of Peter's hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-21)? If Barnabas had said, "We Peter did it too. He led the way," would he have been excused? Peter's shortcomings were no justification for Barnabas or anyone else.

Today, we cannot allow the sin of others, their failure, to be used as an excuse for us to fail to obey God's will. We cannot point to the sin of a brother in Christ, or anyone else, and think it will justify us in our sin. We cannot even point to the failure (real or imagined) of elders or preachers and think that God will excuse us, or that our brethren should either. If your wife sins, you cannot use it to "sin back." If your husband is "no good," you cannot be justified in malice and bitterness. Each individual is accountable to God based upon his or her own deeds, words, and

thoughts. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Let any and all who are using another's failure as an excuse to sin, cease from so doing. Let us all realize that we must do right, regardless of the actions of others--all others. We, each one of us, have the obligation and responsibility to submit to God's will (Ecc. 12:13-14). If we do not, no excuse will be accepted, no plea considered, when the Lord judges us on that great day (Matt. 25:14-30).

Steven F. Deaton