



Berean Christian Fellowship

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Looking for a Scapegoat?

“For no guilt of *mine*, they run and set themselves against me. Arouse Yourself to help me, and see!” (Psalm 59:4 NASB)

Like David’s enemies here, our first reaction when things aren’t going well is often to search for someone else to blame, rather than admit any responsibility we might have in the situation. It is the path of least resistance in our hearts, budding from our *“boastful pride of life”* (1 John 2:16). Even when we acknowledge guilt, we like to spread blame and accuse others, so that they “share” in our guilt.

This stems from the Fall when Adam tried to pin his guilt on Eve, while she in turn accused the serpent. Neither one took responsibility for their guilt before God, because they were trying to distance themselves from blame out of fear and pride. In the same way, when we sin, we often choose something or someone to share our guilt or take the full blame. In doing so, we become an “accuser.” This is no surprise, since our sin is an imitation of Satan, *“the accuser of our brethren...who accuses them before our God day and night”* (Rev. 12:10). Satan stands as an accuser of others, always looking to spread his guilt to everyone else or blame others for the evil that he does.

God created a picture in Israel of our ungodly “need” to distance ourselves from our sin and blame something or someone else. Under the Law, the High Priest confessed over a “scapegoat” (Lev. 16:10), *“all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness”* (Lev. 16:21-22). The goat bore the guilt

of the people for their sins and was shunned, spurned, and rejected by the community. In our struggle with sin, our flesh desperately tries to avoid responsibility. We feel more comfortable with ourselves when others share our guilt or when we can accuse someone else. We don’t always send our “scapegoats” out from our midst, because they’re handy to keep around to blame for things. They are accepted inside “the group” so long as they perform their duty as a “whipping boy.” At any moment, we can send them into a “wilderness” of rejection, bearing our reproach.

Why did God give this idea of the scapegoat in His Law? God was foreshadowing the time when His Son would become a literal scapegoat for all mankind. Rather than coming to accuse us of our sins, Jesus came to be accused for our sins: *“the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him”* (Isa. 53:6), for *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus humbled Himself to become the scapegoat of the entire world—all the sad, sick, and evil things we are responsible for having done in our lives were put on Him and He bore them away *“as far as the east is from the west”* (Psalm 103:12a), so that those who believe might be saved from them. *“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him”* (Phil. 2:8b-9a).

Looking to imitate Jesus, how can we possibly still try to shift responsibility and blame away from ourselves and towards others like Satan does? We cannot! In our struggles with sin, may we not give into fear of punishment or pride of life to scapegoat others for our sin. May we humble ourselves, take responsibility for our sin, and confess it to the Lord, knowing that *“if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). He will exalt the humble! Even so, Amen.

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