

Who's Responsible?

by Anton Bosch

God holds each individual responsible for their own soul, and it is our responsibility to seek and hold onto the truth.

Scripture: Ezekiel 18:20, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 15:14, Romans 1:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 1 John 4:1, 2 John 1:7, Revelation 19:20

Topics: "Personal Accountability", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

Anton Bosch addresses the responsibility of individuals for their own souls, emphasizing that each person is held accountable for their eternal destiny regardless of the teachings they received. He highlights the importance of seeking and loving the truth, as well as the danger of being deceived by false prophets and teachings. Bosch stresses the need to test everything against the Word of God and the prompting of the Holy Spirit to avoid deception and stand firm in the truth.

Transcript

One of the questions I often struggle with is why so many people are being deceived into believing a gospel which is patently false. Related to this question is one posed to me by a friend recently: "Does God hold people responsible when they have been deceived by their leaders into believing error?"

The fact is that God holds each individual responsible for his/her own soul. There is just no way that the Scriptures can be construed to place the responsibility for one's eternal destiny on another. In fact, a whole chapter of Ezekiel (Chapter 18) is devoted to this subject. Ezekiel 18:20 says: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." The chapter goes into great detail to show that each person is justified or condemned wholly by his own position, irrespective of the righteousness or unrighteousness of his parent.

The elders cannot buy credits for the next generation and, fortunately, the new generation is not condemned because of the failure of its predecessors. While it is true that each generation either makes it easier or harder for the next to know the truth, no one can blame his parents or teachers if they failed to deliver the truth to them. Yes, parents and teachers will give an account for the way, and what, they taught those who were in their care, but the junior cannot be saved or lost on the basis of the right or wrong teachings of the senior. I have heard it taught that if you are in a church where error is taught, you need to simply obey those who are leading since you will be judged by your submission while they will be held

accountable for the wrong teaching. This is simply not true. If you believe a lie, you will be held accountable for believing the lie as much as the propagator of the lie is held accountable for promoting the lie.

Unfortunately, millions of people find themselves in bad churches, believing a false message because none of those individuals ever bothered to check whether what they were being taught was the truth. Neither did they obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit to do so. There is great condemnation on those blind leaders, but Jesus said that when the blind leads the blind, they will both fall into the ditch. He did not say that only the leader will fall, but both will end in the ditch. (Matthew 15:14). Revelation 19:20 speaks of those who were deceived ending in the lake of fire, along with the deceiver. One could argue that if one is deceived, then one cannot be held responsible because one was fooled. However, the Scripture condemns the deceived as well as the deceiver. Revelation 22:15 says that outside of the New Jerusalem are "whoever loves and practices a lie". Notice that it does not even mention those who tell the lies, but those who love the lies. This is exactly the problem, those who follow false prophets do so because the followers love the lies that these men preach and do not really want to know the truth. 2Thessalonians 2:10 speaks about "those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

Now I know some will find this very hard but it is and remains the word of God. The fact is that the truth is available to every one. Romans 1:20 explains that even heathen people who do not have Bibles have no excuse since God is clearly revealed in creation as well as in the human conscience. If the pagan in the jungle has no excuse, then how can the person who has a Bible have any excuse? Clearly, no-one has an excuse and the first three chapters of Romans prove exactly that point. In Acts 17 Paul proves to the Greek philosophers that God is not far from those who seek Him and that we live and move and have our being in God. All we need to do is open our eyes and we will see Him. Jesus said: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8). These truths apply to the person in the jungle who has not been evangelized as well as the religious person in the pew.

So what can the average Christian do to protect himself from being deceived?

First, understand that there are many deceivers and that we are not to believe every one who claims to be a teacher of truth or even, who quotes from the Bible. "...many deceivers have gone out into the world..." (2John 1:7). "...there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers..." (Titus 1:10)

Second, test everything you hear against the witness of the Spirit and the Word of God. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1John 4:1). "Test all things; hold fast what is good." (1Thessalonians 5:21). In order to do so, you will need to know the Lord and know His Word. This knowledge cannot be bought or imparted - it comes only from spending time in prayer and in personal study (not just reading) the Bible.

Third, flee from, and reject those who have been proven to be false teachers. Far too many people stay in churches where they know the truth is not being taught. Mostly, they feel some sense of loyalty or the need to be a restraining influence. Unless you are actively speaking the truth and speaking against error, the error will eventually deceive and contaminate you. If everyone who saw error in their churches spoke up and left, the false teachers may take note but, because people continue to support erroneous churches by their presence and their giving, many other people are drawn in and deceived. Thus by their very

presence, many who know better, continue to promote the error.

Fourth, find and build relationships with those who believe, stand for, and teach the truth. There are not many who actively pursue truth and they need all the support and encouragement they can get. Seek them out and strengthen them and you will be strengthened in the process.

It is time to shake off the sloth and comfort of the false gospel and begin to "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

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