Romans - Commentaries by Walter Biggar Scott

Two Trees of Paradise: God's Grace And Man's Responsibility, Christian Responsibility: Its Ground and Measure.

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

Responsibility we have already observed flows from the relationship the person is set in. What then is the ground and measure of Christian responsibility and obedience Having died in the death of Christ to sin (Rom. 6:7); to law (Rom. 7:4); to flesh (Rom. 6:6); to the world (Gal. 6:14).; we are risen in His resurrection, alive in His life, and united to Him where He is. Our responsibility therefore as Christians flows from that; and the measure of our obedience and walk (not the law, for to that we are dead) is CHRIST. In Christ's death our old life of responsibility is closed up forever; in His resurrection our new life of responsibility begins. His place as man before God measures our blessing, while His walk on earth is the measure and pattern of ours. He hath left us “an example that we should follow His steps;" not the law, or conscience, or Scripture even, but CHRIST, who is out of the reach of law, and who ever liveth in deathless regions of glory; it is He who is the definition of our position before God, and also measures our walk before men. In Him we live. "He that saith He abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." How distinctly! how firmly I how unswervingly Christ manifested God on earth—walking in love, and then in death offering Himself as a sweet smelling savor to God! The Father could not withhold the expression of His heart's delight; nor could the Spirit longer wait, but immediately on the Son identifying Himself with Jehovah's interests, and people on earth, the Father breaks out with what was in His own heart, and the Spirit, as the Spirit of Holiness sealed Him (Matt. 4.) In this blessed path He is set before us as example (Eph. 5:1, 2). The truth is, that as Christians, God has made Christ everything to us. He is our life (Phil. 1.); He is our pattern (Phil. 2); He is our object on high (Phil. 3); He is our strength (Phil. 4). His path on earth awakens our affections. His work on the cross is the peace of our consciences. Himself in the glory the strength of our souls. Himself in the air (1 Thess. 4.), the hope of our hearts; and Himself possessed our everlasting triumph (Rev. 5).

Life and responsibility unite in the Lord Jesus Christ. Adamic responsibility is closed up in His cross. Christian responsibility is founded on His resurrection.

Two Trees of Paradise: God's Grace And Man's Responsibility, Difficulties.

Before briefly tracing the course and history of human responsibility as written in the Word of God, it may be well to clear the subject of a few difficulties. It is affirmed that man's responsibility to God ceases because the sinner is unable to meet it: why press responsibility on the sinner when there is neither the will nor ability to discharge it t But responsibility, as already remarked, has its source in a positive and known relationship; it is thus independent of the state or condition in which the debtor may subsequently find himself. Suppose a case: A man goes into business on borrowed money, afterward he becomes bankrupt and is unable to discharge a single penny of the five hundred pounds he is owing. Is he thereby discharged from the obligation to pay? Is his responsibility as a debtor gone? And suppose, further, that the man has not even the desire to pay, that he lacks the honest wish as well as the ability to meet his debts, that does not touch the question of his obligation to do so. So long as the position of creditor and debtor exists, the responsibility to discharge the unsettled claims remains and may justly form the ground of judgment on the part of the creditor. Besides man—the debtor—was not always without will and power to meet his responsibility. Innocence was the state and Paradise the place where human relationships, and consequently responsibility, were first established. Adam began his history in Paradise, we commence ours outside the garden. He was able and willing to meet his creature-obligations, and in fact did so for a brief season: we are neither able nor willing, and in fact never have met our responsibility to God—as sinners. And this leads us to the solemn consideration that the fear of God and the dread of judgment to come, inherent in man, can alone be accounted for on the ground of unanswered responsibility. Does not conscience too—that inward tribunal before which actions are weighed and pronounced good or bad, and which became part of man's inheritance by the fall—bear its solemn witness to the fact that man is a sinner awaiting the sure judgment of God? And, in proportion as conscience is sensitive and supplied with light from the Scriptures, its voice becomes troublesome to the soul, and its witness to the unanswered claims of God most powerful. Nor is it what men are but what they have done which constitutes the ground of judgment. Alas! if the precious blood of Christ, the answer to the sinner's ruined responsibilities, be not the repose of the soul and the rest of the conscience; if life, eternal life in the Son of God be not the assured portion of our reader then eternal punishment is the dread alternative, "For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6).

The world, whose history began with man outside Paradise, and who will end it with men cast into the lake of fire, might be likened to a forest every tree of which is utterly corrupt and the fruit poisonous. Men are not responsible for being planted corrupt trees, they cannot help their state, "shapen in iniquity," conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5), but they are directly and immediately responsible to God for the fruit produced. If it is said, "Ah! but the corrupt tree can only bear fruit according to the character of the soil, the root, and the nature of the tree, and if every tree is bad, so must the fruit be." Well be it so, but as the fruit determines the quality and kind of tree, so that alone will come up for judgment, hence the books of works (Rev. 20:12). Additional responsibility rests upon men because of the rejected Gospel of God's grace, which is a revelation in the cross of Christ that the first man is there judicially ended, that the ax has been laid to the root of the tree and, further, that God's Paradise with its tree of life, its varied and abundant fruit, and healing leaves—planted in divine soil—is opened to the gaze and possession of all who believe. God's blessed answer in grace to a ruined responsibility is the cross of Christ; His answer to a lost paradise is the Eden above, styled "the Paradise of God." Another and collateral point may here be briefly noticed. Why should the race be doomed to death; and sin, tears, sickness, cruelty, and oppression make up the sum of man's existence here, for the mere act of eating an apple, which in itself was not evil? Where is the righteousness of visiting such a simple act of disobedience with such severe and lasting penalties? But, we would ask, Is the offender the fit person, and is he in a fit state to adequately weigh the gravity of his own offense? And if the penalty of death and other consequences were attached to such a "simple act of disobedience," then the sin became all the more heinous in view of what the

transgression of such a simple command would entail. Besides, while fully admitting that sin and death entered the world through the failure of the federal head of the race, yet we must connect each person's own responsibility and guilt with death, the sad fruit of sin, hence adds the Apostle, in Rom. 5:12—"So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." God alone can measure what sin is. It is eternally right that the Creator should choose to command, and that, however, exalted the creature's position may be, that he should obey. There is but one absolute, sovereign will, and it was right that the waiting creation should in its head, learn the lessons of obedience and subjection, hence "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" which God reserved for Himself was a necessary test of the man's obedience. The great question for the universe raised in the garden of Eden was a profoundly interesting one: who was Creator—who was the sovereign of the whole created scene and whose will was to govern all I It did not require a life's-long disobedience to constitute the man a sinner; one solitary act was enough to manifest what sin is, which is simply doing one's own will or acting independently of God. Why should one be surprised at the simplicity of the test imposed I What we might regard as a trifling command sufficiently served the purpose—which was really to distinguish the Creator from the creature, maintaining the right of the former to command, and the duty of the latter to obey.

clickbible.org