



"Man must cease attributing his problems to his environment, and learn again to exercise his will—his personal responsibility in the realm of faith and morals."

—Albert Schweitzer

**18-Jul-03**

## **In What Way Have We Wearied Him?**

On a national radio talk show this week, the host interviewed a young man who had written a book at age 17 about ex-President Bill Clinton's immoral influence on America's youth. His conclusion seemed to be that Mr. Clinton's immorality while in the White House so profoundly and negatively affected the youth of this nation that his generation is not responsible for their immoral way of life today. According to him, it is Clinton's fault. He did concede to a caller's point that parents share in the blame for not teaching them morality and for not calling for Mr. Clinton's removal from office for his despicable behavior, including his sexual assaults on both willing and unwilling women.

Shortly afterward, a black woman called, jumping on the bandwagon to complain about Bill Clinton's immoral behavior while in the White House. Her main point was that for three generations the Democrats' leadership had intentionally encouraged blacks to shun marriage and family life in favor of single-parent, welfare status. She claimed the Democrats targeted black Americans with social programs that were available only to non-married parents, thereby encouraging teen pregnancy to increase with each

succeeding generation until it became a way of life for the black community and permanently endearing her particular race to the Democrats' welfare policy. If this were true, it would have undeniably influenced the morality of her community in a negative way. According to her, it is the Democrats' fault.

Next, a man, identifying himself as a Democrat, called to place blame on the Republican Reagan administration, which he claimed caused more immorality because people were encouraged to make money and have fun at any cost. This, he argued, had caused an increase in immorality in America through the 1980s. He asserted that Reagan encouraged sheer greed, taking people's minds off morality and placing their focus on material things. According to him, it is Republican Reagan's fault.

We cannot help but see the common thread running through each of these arguments. Hardly anyone is willing to take personal responsibility for his own actions. Was each of these arguments a factor in influencing increased immorality in this nation? Certainly! Are the people innocent when the leaders lead them astray? Can we legitimately blame others for our own actions? Do we not have an individual responsibility to "behave ourselves"?

Indeed, the leaders of this country have deceived us by calling evil good. Writing in the seventh century BC, the prophet Isaiah predicted such behavior: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" ([Isaiah 5:20](#)). Yet, even if someone tries to confuse us by calling evil good, do we not have a responsibility to resist such perverted reasoning?

Just over 200 years after Isaiah, the prophet Malachi wrote about how people who call evil good weary [God](#). "You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you say, 'In what way have we wearied Him?' In that you say, 'Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them'" ([Malachi 2:17](#)). It is not that God gets tired, as we do physically, but that He becomes annoyed by human reasoning and self-justification of [sin](#). He does not accept complaints from people who say that living His way of life is useless. His way of life is the only way to long life and happiness.

Most people are not convinced that sin has consequences until they acquire a deadly disease such as AIDS, and even then, they deny that it is spread

primarily by an immoral lifestyle. They are willfully blind and seek to place the blame on someone else. Generally, people refuse to acknowledge that their sins are their own—committed personally by them—and penalties must be paid. The continent of Africa is a case in point, where AIDS is killing off millions from the populations of many nations mostly because of the personal sin of [sexual immorality](#).

The root cause of the immoral condition of today's society lies clearly in the fact that few people truly fear and reverence God. Because God is [longsuffering](#) in his temporary [forbearance](#) of sin and His seemingly slow enactment of the penalty, each individual who does not fear and obey Him is going to do evil. King Solomon of Israel, known for his [wisdom](#), expressed it this way: "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him" ([Ecclesiastes 8:11-12](#)).

Immoral behavior is the result of a choice made by each individual, making the individual responsible. No other human being can choose our behavior for us. We choose how we will conduct ourselves. We choose whether or not to fear God. When we fear Him, it will be well with us.

- Martin G. Collins

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Self-Government and Responsibility \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

A major distinguishing characteristic of mankind is his free moral agency, presenting him with choices and the right to make decisions. We need free moral agency to be transformed into God's image. The volition to do right has to come from the core of our character or nature. Paradoxically, the way to maximum freedom is to yield to God's way of doing things. Unless one has the Spirit of God, he cannot exercise the necessary internal control to be

subject to the government of God. Even though the church is not the government of God (John 18:36; I Corinthians 15:50), we need to respect the ministry as well as lay members, being subject to one another (I Corinthians 11:1). The operation of God's government absolutely depends upon each person governing himself, never going beyond the parameters of the authority God has given him.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[The Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Of all the fruit of the Spirit, God may have left the most difficult for last! Has anyone, other than Jesus Christ, really exhibited self-control? In the end, however, this is the ultimate aim of growing in the character of Almighty God!

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