

*You disobey not because you lack the God-given grace to obey, but because you love something more than the God who's given you that grace.*

Your disobedience is never God's fault. Maybe you're thinking: "Of course it's not, Paul. You don't really think that I think that, do you?" As much as we know theologically that God is not responsible for our behavior, we have subtle ways of shifting the blame to him. We say:

- "If only my pastor was more available in times of need, then I would've . . ."
- "If only I had had a better job at the time, I wouldn't have . . ."
- "If only my parents had been better models for me, I could've . . ."
- "If only I had come to Christ earlier in my life, I'm sure I would've . . ."
- "If only I hadn't gotten sick, there would've . . ."
- "If only my husband had been more romantic, I wouldn't have . . ."
- "If only my children weren't so rebellious, I wouldn't be . . ."
- "If only there weren't so much pornography on the Internet, I wouldn't have been tempted to . . ."
- "If only I weren't so busy, I could take more time to . . ."

If God is present with you everywhere you go (and he is), and if he is sovereign over every situation, relationship, and location of your life (and he is), then when you blame other people for your circumstances or for the wrongs that you do, you are, in fact, blaming God. You are saying that God didn't give you what you needed to be what he has called you to be and to do what he has called you to do. You are essentially saying: "My problem isn't a heart problem; my problem is a *poverty of grace* problem. If only God had given me \_\_\_\_\_, I wouldn't have had to do what I did." This is the final argument of a self-excusing lifestyle. This argument was first made in the garden of Eden after the rebellion of Adam and Eve. Adam: "The woman you gave me made me do it." Eve: "The Devil made me do it." It is the age-old self-defensive lie of a person who doesn't want to face the ugliness of the sin that still resides in his or her heart.

It is hard for us to accept that our words and behavior are not caused by what's outside us, but by what's inside us (see Luke 6:43–45). But the Scriptures are clear that every wrong you and I do flows out of the thoughts and desires of our hearts. It is only when you admit and confess this that you begin to feel the need for and get excited about God's grace. If you have convinced yourself that you're not your problem, but people and situations are, you are not excited about God's provision of powerful forgiving and transforming grace, because, frankly, you don't think you need it. For many of us, subtle patterns of blaming God are in the way of receiving the grace that we need at the very moment we are working to convince ourselves that we don't need it.

*For further study and encouragement: Deuteronomy 30*