

The Devil Made Me Do It?

The sleek, red sports car zoomed around me then slid to a screeching halt at the traffic light ahead. As I drove up behind, full-volume rock music blasted my eardrums.

The light changed, and then bro-o-o-o-m, there I sat in a cloud of fumes. I caught a glimpse of the bumper sticker that read, “The Devil Made Me Do It!”

Whatever did the devil make you do? I murmured to myself. *Did he make you buy the red sports car? Or fall for rock music? Or perhaps he made you burn rubber on the road. I’m certainly glad you and the devil didn’t cause an accident at the intersection!*

That bumper sticker “stuck” with me the rest of that day. Does the devil really make people do the things they do? When I let an idle word slip or think an unkindness, is it the devil’s fault?

“The Devil Made Me Do It!” seems like a plausible conclusion, at first. After all, the devil was responsible for tempting our first parents to rebel against God. But on second thought, “The Devil Made Me Do It!” is often nothing more than an empty attempt to pass the blame, to avoid personal responsibility. The devil tempted that fellow in the red sports car to “do it.” The fellow yielded. However, he could have chosen otherwise.

We say that people bound by habits have no choice but to obey their driving urges, but they did choose to yield that first time. Once they had a choice, and they took the wrong road. Now it seems they have no choice. They are bound by the sins they have succumbed to. Now it is easy to blame it all on the devil.

As I mused over the bumper sticker, I began to wonder about myself. Do I use the same kind of reasoning when I do wrong? I probably would not lay the blame on the devil, but have you ever heard: “That’s just the way I am,” or “That’s only the natural thing to do,” or “I just couldn’t help it”? There are restraints that would probably stop you from doing what you want if it were murder or some other serious crime. However, you need to recognize God’s restraints for anything that His Word reveals as wrong.

Such declarations still pass the blame and are little better than “The Devil Made Me Do It!” We are responsible for what we do, and we do have choices to make.

What we do reflects our own desires and not what the devil, Mother Nature, or anyone else has forced on us. “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matthew 12:35).

Let’s face it, our actions tell the world our character and who our owner is, the devil or Christ.

Only what comes out of our own hearts will condemn us or justify us before God. “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:37).

If the devil could make us do something so we had no choice, then God would not hold us responsible. The devil can woo and beg and lie and tempt, but he cannot force us to do evil.

We must admit that the devil's temptations are oftentimes strong, almost overwhelming. That's why some people conclude that the devil is responsible if they fall into sin.

But listen to one of the most dramatic promises in God's Word. "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

This promise has no exception clause and no loop holes. It doesn't promise you immunity from temptation nor does it promise that your temptations will be light. It does promise you a sure getaway from even the strongest temptations.

Suppose your big temptation is anger. Your temper rages like a stalking lion. God doesn't guarantee a dead lion, but He provides some ways to cope with it. He gives you such weapons as prayer, fasting, and devil-defying Bible passages. He may also help you avoid temper-escalating situations, or He might give you presence of mind to keep your mouth shut until you are calmer.

As for the devil, who wants you to blame it all on him, your weapons are prayer, Scripture, and a determined, "*Get thee behind me, Satan.*" This is not easy to do. It requires submission to Christ, obedience to His Word, and a life of prayer.

"*Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.*" He won't let the devil make you do it!