

# Accountability

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want to address tonight a subject essential for every believer.

! Something essential for every believer. Something that's critical for our spiritual growth and maturity, for our character development. ! Something that we all need. We all need it. And this subject is accountability. Accountability.

We read here in Romans 14 verse 12, So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Accountability. It means that we accept responsibility for our actions. It means that we're willing to be answerable, to be authentic, to be honest, to be transparent, to be vulnerable, to be teachable. Daniel Webster said, My greatest thought is my accountability to God. My accountability to God. And every believer has this accountability.

[ 1 : 12 ] We're all going to give account of our lives unto God. Some people say, I don't need church. I don't need to belong to a church. Accountability is one good reason why we do need that vital commitment to our local Bible believing church.

If we're isolated, as we covered this morning, we can be like the sheep away from the flock. We can become an easy prey, easy target, if we're isolated.

We need that fellowship, that accountability. And Ephesians 5 verse 21 is what I'd like to especially hone in on tonight. Ephesians 5 verse 21.

It says, Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Submitting yourselves one to the other in the fear of God.

God wants his church to be together. A community of people in a relationship. A community that can strengthen one another. We can encourage one another.

[ 2 : 15 ] We can spur one another on in this race that we're running. And the church is that accountability. That community where we can have accountability.

Where we let go of selfish pride. Where we can submit one to another. Being subject one to another. Letting go of pride and having that mutual submission.

So that we can spur one another on and encourage one another. And it takes a willingness to listen. A willingness to accept rebuke. A willingness to learn from each other.

And for ministers there's an even greater degree of accountability. For we that preach, that lead. Some teach that the pastor is the final authority.

Who is to be obeyed. And never questioned. But this is not so. Not so. It's not the pastor that is the final authority.

[ 3 : 12 ] It's God's word. And God will hold the preacher accountable. God will hold the preacher. The ministers. The elders. The servants of the church. Responsible for how they serve.

And that's why as a church we encourage a shared ministry. A joint ministry of servant leadership. I know. I've heard reports of late. Some significant figures in the USA falling into sin.

In the very movement that we are in. And it's where a man can get so lofty and high. That he's not accountable to one another. And that's why as a church I like that we have some godly men.

That we can bounce things off one another. In the committee of the church. As well as those that serve in different capacities in the church.

I read this. A wise pastor realizing he does not possess all wisdom. Will surround himself with spiritually mature men and women. Of wisdom. Integrity.

[ 4 : 15 ] Leading righteous lifestyles. Excellence in their personal lives. Understanding of financial principles. And having a good report. Of the congregation.

And from the community. He should not be looking for yes men. But men and women who will contend for what is right. And that's what we want as a church. To have that mutual accountability. That mutual submission. Because we are all accountable to God. Every one of us is accountable to God. The pastor has not got some untouchable status. Or some being above counsel.

The pastor and those who preach need to be tested. And what they say. And so I want to look for a start at five areas. Five areas where we are all accountable unto God.

Five areas that we must be held accountable. For sexual integrity. For our speech. For our finances. For our thought life.

[ 5 : 19 ] And for our relationships. We'll cover each of these quickly in turn. Number one for our sexual integrity. In Ephesians 5 verse 3. It says. But fornication.

Or immorality. And all uncleanness. Or covetousness. Let it not be once named among you. As becometh saints. As God's people. As God's holy people. We want to walk in integrity.

In integrity. Secondly. For our speech. God holds us accountable for our speech. Ephesians 4 verse 25. It says. Wherefore putting away lying. Speak every man truth unto his neighbour.

In Matthew 12 it says. But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak. They shall give account. Give account thereof in the day of judgment. So. We're accountable unto God for our speech. Thirdly.

For our finances. In 1 Timothy 6 verse 10 it says. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world. And it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment or clothing. Let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich. Fall into temptation.

[ 6 : 17 ] And a snare and a snare and a snare. Of God's people who are not. And a snare and a snare and a snare. Of God's people who are not. And a snare and a snare and a snare. For the love of money is the root of all evil. Which while some coveteth. For we brought nothing into this world. And it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment or clothing. Let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich. Fall into temptation. And a snare.

And into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil.

Which while some coveted after. They have erred from the faith. And pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Sounds pretty serious doesn't it?

To be pierced through with many sorrows. So we want to be accountable to God for our finances. For our thought life. For our thought life. But every man it says in James 1.

[ 7 : 14 ] But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. And enticed. Then when lust hath conceived. It bringeth forth sin.

And sin when it is finished. Bringeth forth death. So we want to be accountable to God for our thought life. And ask the question. Where do our thoughts lead us? Where do our thoughts lead us?

And fifthly. We are accountable to God for our relationships. For our relationships. For our relationships. With family. With church. With friends. With strangers. In Romans 13.10.

It lists the commandments. And it says in summary. Romans 13 verse 10. For love worketh no ill to his neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

You know love thy neighbour. Is the fulfilling of the law. Love thy neighbour. Is the fulfilling of the law. Love is a relationship. With family. With church. With friends. And Colossians 3. It talks about putting on the bells of mercies.

[ 8 : 15 ] Or that tenderness of heart. Of kindness. Of humbleness of mind. Of meekness. Of long suffering. Of forbearing one another. And forgiving one another. And forgiving one another. And then putting on charity.

Or love. Which is the bond of perfectness. So relationships. Is something that God holds us accountable for. Accountability also has a great regard for authority.

They go hand in hand. Authority. Accountability. It is God who sets authority in place. As we read in Romans 13 verse 1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.

For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. So we could even think of our dear Prime Minister. At the moment.

She is ordained of God. As much as there might be some difference of opinion. With what she might declare in her government. But let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.

[ 9 : 18 ] There is an accountability and authority. I know even in the workplace. Where I work. There is accountability. It is written into our code of conduct. It is something that is expected of the people who work where I work.

There is an accountability. And we all have that as servants to our masters as it were. In the workplaces where we might serve. There is an accountability there.

We are responsible for our work. Our workmanship. And yet some today get an independent spirit. An independent spirit. Where they don't want to be subject to others.

And that's where danger comes. Disaster can occur. When we get an independent spirit. So it's a mistake that we need to avoid.

To think that we are above correction. But we don't need to answer to anyone. As we live out our faith walk. We need authentic leaders. Who can guide us. Who can encourage us.

[10:15] Counsel us. Pray for us. And support us. Submitting yourselves one to another. In the fear of God. As a family. One to another. Me to you.

You to me. We to one another. A submitting yourselves one to another. In the fear of God. It's there that we can find that healthy balance. That healthy spiritual family status.

That we need to grow. To be accountable. It needs to be willing to go to others for advice. And scrutiny. It's times that I can learn. From fellow ministers in this church.

From fellow believers in this fellowship. That we can spur one another on. And as we've got the annual meeting coming up. There's an opportunity to contribute.

To have our say. We don't have to wait for a formal meeting though. All the time. We can encourage one another. Give ideas. And give your counsel. So that we can grow and learn together.

[11:12] Accountability. It's something that's very important for every believer. It protects us. It protects us from isolation. From pride. From sin. From weakness. From temptation.

Accountability. The Bible says much of it. And it says it's a very wise thing to have. In Proverbs 13 verse 1 it says. A wise son heareth his father's instruction.

You got that boys? You got to hear what dad says. A wise son heareth his father's instruction. But a scorner heareth not rebuke. The scorner will not listen to rebuke.

You know they'll just kind of laugh it off. Or not listen. Not listen. And that's when they get into trouble. Submitting yourselves therefore unto one another in the fear of God.

There's a great benefit in this mutual accountability in Proverbs 27 verse 9 it says. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart. So doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

[12:12] Hearty counsel. You know our friends can help us giving us that hearty counsel. Sometimes it might be things we don't want to hear. Amen. Could be hearty counsel.

Could be strong words that might be hard to swallow. And yet will benefit us. You know. When we get people who are honest enough to be candid enough to tell us things we can benefit from them. I'm just thinking it's kind of a bit of a worldly example. But someone was honest enough to tell me one day that I had bad breath. And so ever since I've been very conscious of that.

And that's why I squirt and used mints and so on. Because that person was doing me a favour by telling me something that was a bit personal.

It was a bit personal but it helped me to realise I need to do something about that. You know. And so sometimes we might hear things we don't really want to hear. But it will do us good when we hear them. And so there's a hearty counsel that will help us to grow.

[13:13] And we see through the word of God examples of that kind of accountability at work. For example in the life of Paul. In the life of Paul when we see his relationships with the young Timothy and Titus.

We see Paul and how he helped these younger Christians to grow. As he mentored them. As he gave himself to them. As they were responsible unto him.

And he was responsible for them. There was a spiritual maturity. There was a growing that happened. It's like in Proverbs 27 verse 17. Iron sharpeneth iron.

And so as a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. We can sharpen one another. Now if you're feeling a bit dull. If you've lost your cutting edge. Maybe you need a bit of sharpening.

Maybe you need to sharpen yourself against another. Now sometimes Christians can be a bit like sandpaper can't they? But we can grow as we buff up against each other.

[14:16] And we learn to benefit from that brutal honesty sometimes. That comes from a friend. And be willing to submit one to another.

It's going to help you grow. When you get those confronting things said to you. It will help you to grow in your faith. And someone said that every man should have three individuals in his life.

Listen to this one. A Paul. A Barnabas. And a Timothy. Three people. Three kinds of people we can benefit from. From having in our lives.

For example Paul. Paul as an older man. Someone willing to mentor and guide. Someone wanting to build into your life. Someone who's been down the road. Someone who can share his strengths and his weaknesses.

Someone who can share the things that he's learnt in the reality of life. Through the school of hard knocks. A Paul. A Paul.

[15:14] Is someone whose faith you can follow. Someone you can grow from. A Barnabas. Is a soul brother. Someone who cares. Someone who you can be accountable to. Someone who's willing to keep you honest.

Someone who can challenge you. And encourage you. Barnabas was called a son of encouragement. He was willing to challenge. And to encourage and comfort. We need a Barnabas. And thirdly. It's good to find a Timothy. In your life. Find some Timothys. In other words. Some younger man. Or not necessarily younger. But maybe younger in the faith.

Find some people that you can nurture. In their faith. That you can help to grow. That you can bring up to your level. As you help them to learn. As you as a committed mentor.

Mentor. As an instructor. Can build up. Those of your same gender. Find someone that you can build up. Men find young men. Women find younger women.

[16:12] That you can teach. That you can instruct. That you can instill godly truth into. That you can affirm. That you can correct. That you can direct. That you can pray with. These are spiritual healthy relationships in the church.

1 Corinthians 12. It says. But now God hath set the members in the body. As it has pleased him. So the eye cannot say to the hand. I have no need of thee. Nor again the head to the feet.

I have no need of you. The church is meant to be that spiritual organism. That body. Providing a mutual care. Of every part. Just as the different parts of our body.

Are together. They are unified. They are serving different functions. And places. And needs. So too. The different members. The different parts of God's family.

His organism. Which is the body. Of Christ. Needs one another. To grow. To benefit one another. To build up one another. And as a family of God's people.

[17:12] We want to learn to listen to one another. To lend support. To lift one another. We need to learn how we can implement James 5 verse 16. Confess your faults one to another.

And pray one for another. That you may be healed. You know I've got prayer needs. One is my son at the moment. One of my sons is not walking with the Lord.

I'd like to see him get on track. Pray for Peter my son. Pray for one another. Confess your faults one to another. You know we all have things that we can encourage one another about.

Find some ways you can help others to grow. Pray for one another. Be open with one another. You know that's about accountability isn't it? It's saying I've got some needs. I've got some things that I'm worried and concerned about.

As it reads in Galatians 6 verse 2. Bear ye one another's burdens. And so fulfill the law of Christ. Bear one another's burdens. Find a burden that your brother, your sister is carrying.

[18:13] And help shoulder that. Ask others how can I pray for you? What challenges are you facing that I can pray for you about? Accountability is a part of our fellowshiping together.

There's a mutual accountability. It says in Ecclesiastes 4 verse 9. Two are better than one. Because one will lift up the fellow. When something happens when they fall.

One will lift up the other. And friends we can lift one another up. We need to. We need to. And there's a strength there that can come to all of us jointly together.

That mutual accountability. When the Lord Jesus sent the people out to preach in Mark 6 verse 7. He sent them out two by two. There's a strength there.

As we fellowship together. As we minister together. There's a stewardship that we're going to have to give account. As Luke 16 verse 2 says in the proverb. The man is called to account.

[19:09] He says give an account of thy stewardship. We've got to give an account of the stewardship of our lives. Or the stewardship that we have as parents. As parents.

We are accountable. It's a big thing. Being a parent. As the husband. Husbands are very accountable in particular. Four ways you are accountable.

Four ways you are accountable. To the word. The church. Each other. And to yourself. Four ways. Number one. The word of God. The word of God holds you accountable. The word. The word is the authority from God.

It corrects. It rebukes. It trains. Into godliness. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. And is profitable. For doctrine. For reproof. For correction.

For instruction. In righteousness. That the man of God. May be perfect. Truly furnished unto. All good works. The word of God. Holds you accountable. The church. The church. The church.

[ 20 : 07 ] Holds you accountable. We are called to admonish one another. We are called to exhort one another. Encourage one another. Help one another. Be patient with all. Seek that which is good for one another. As it reads in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 14. It says, Now we exhort your brethren. Warn them that are unruling.

Comfort the feeble minded. Support the weak. Be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man. But ever follow that which is good both among yourselves and to all men. It covers everybody there, doesn't it? The unruly. The feeble minded. The weak. All men. The unruly, the feeble-minded, the weak, all men. We've all got to be patient with one another and urge one another on.

As God's people, we're urging in Philippians 3, verse 17, to follow those who set a godly example. Hebrews 10, 24, Let us consider one another, provoking unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more.

As you see the day approaching, we're accountable to the church. Thirdly, we're to hold each other accountable. In Ezekiel 3, verses 18 to 21, it talks of blood on people's hands.

[ 21 : 40 ] That's a very graphic picture, isn't it? Be your brother's keeper. Encourage others to continue in righteousness and to confront sin.

If you don't do this, you'll be held accountable. Ezekiel 3, 18 to 21, we want to hold each other accountable. If we see a brother slipping, we want to caution them in love, speak the truth in love, that we can restore them.

That's the intent. Friends, you know, I'm sad in ministry a long time now, seeing many slip and slide and out of fellowship, and they're not accountable, and they've lost their way.

And friends, we need to hold them accountable, hold each other accountable. I urge them, and yet some will not listen. Friends, we can only hold, do what we can to warn, to warn.

And fourthly, hold yourself accountable. 2 Timothy 1, verse 7, it talks about, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love, and of a sound mind, or of self-discipline, of self-control.

[ 22 : 51 ] There's a discipline, there's an empowerment that comes that holds us accountable. And in 1 Timothy 4, 7, it says to train yourself, exercise yourself unto godliness.

Now, friends, just to draw to a close, I don't want to leave you with the thought that this is all too hard to achieve. The wonder of accountability is that we see the dimension of God's grace.

When we see the accountability that we are under, of our having to give account to Him, we see how much we can appreciate grace. It's amazing.

It's like I was reading, in fact, sometimes the most telling falls of ministers and of people falling into sin are sometimes in churches just like ours. Or ministers who preached against sin quite strongly, yet they're the ones who felt the hardest.

And so it's needful for all of us, as the Word says, to you that think you stand, take heed, lest you fall. You know, sometimes we talk a lot against sin, and we must and we should, but we need to be very careful that it is grace that has the emphasis.

[ 24 : 10 ] Because God accepts us not on the basis of how well we behave, but as a matter of pure grace. It's when we understand God's grace that when we see people who fail, we will not shoot the wounded.

We want to restore them. We want to restore them. Our heart goes out to them. Not to condemn them, but to pick them up and help them get back on track. To restore them.

That is the heart that our Lord gives to us. Not to shoot the wounded. Where there is failure, there can be restoration. That's the wonder of grace. It's not moralism that can save, but it's grace.

It's grace, and it's grace still. It's grace now, and it's grace till we meet Him. It's grace every day, brother. It's grace every day, sister. It's not moralism that can free us or save us from sinful urges, but it's the grace of God that motivates us and helps us to draw closer to Him.

It's radical grace that is what helps us take every thought captive. It's radical grace that helps us to consider our ways. It's the gospel of grace that can truly transform hearts.

[ 25 : 24 ] When people are battling against ungodly thoughts, when we know we're sinful and we're inclined to sin, and we're inclined to bitterness, to pride, to jealousy, to ungodly ways, it's grace that we can turn to.

And it's grace that can help us overcome. And so, friends, just to close, let's make it personal now. Because we want to be accountable, we will be honest about questions like these.

Questions like these. Make this your question. Ask this question of yourself tonight. Where am I at spiritually? Is there any unconfessed sin in my life that I'm unwilling to deal with?

Have I been consistent in my prayer and devotional life? Have I been faithful in my giving? Have I infested time and energy into my family this week?

In recreation, in conversation, in spiritual instruction. Have I lied or misrepresented the truth to anyone this week? Has my thought life been pure before God?

[ 26 : 28 ] Has my conversation, my opinions, my jokes, my expressions been consistent with a sound commitment to Christ's likeness? Have I been faithful in sharing my faith as God has given me opportunities to?

They're very telling questions, aren't they? Submitting yourselves once or another in the fear of God. Submission is a letting go. A letting go of pride. It's a letting go of putting on that fake veneer that sometimes we can cover our lack with and being honest with one another.

Being honest with one another. Letting go of that pride, of that self-centeredness, of that sense that we've got it all together and that reality that it is grace that we must depend upon.

It is grace that must be our focus. And to close, accountability is a part of discipleship and it covers all angles of our lives. of things like spending time with the Word of God, spending time with God, of giving priority and care for our family, of integrity in our financial dealings, of avoiding compromising situations, of being very cautious of such matters, of watching the area of unforgiveness and of holding grudges.

All of these things are part of accountability, of developing that, of asking ourselves, am I honouring God? Am I giving God the glory in my life?

[ 28 : 00 ] Young people, as you're thinking of your future, as you're thinking of planning your life ahead, does God, right to mention, is it God that is the all-deciding factor of what you're going to do with your life ahead?

you know, friends, develop that accountability. Not resisting Him, but submitting to Him and to other godly people in our lives, making it your goal to please Him and trusting in God, to place in your lives those who can provide that spiritual authority that's needed for your journey.

And that can come by older brothers and sisters in the Lord that you can find that Paul in your life, find that Barnabas in your life and find some Timothys that you can invest your life into so that you're bringing others through with that sense of accountability.

It's not a yoke of bondage, it's a release, it's a freedom, a liberty of grace that we want to live in that grace. We want that grace to impact our lives so that we're submitting ourselves together in the fear of God, learning from one another, growing together and finding that way that the authority is God and His will is what is centre stage in deciding the decisions of life ahead.

Let us pray. Amen.