

Accountability

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[0 : 00] All right, as the offerings are being received, if you'll turn to the book of Malachi, and I want to talk about a word that's been said several times tonight. I've said it several times tonight, and it's this word, accountability.

It's kind of a buzzword, not just in church, but in the world in which we live in. I don't know if I've shared this story with you, but my Tinsley, my daughter, she went to, she needed braces, and so I took her to the orthodontist and to the receptionist.

I gave him a very large check, right, because that's what braces cost, and I don't understand. It's not a whole lot of metal, but apparently the application of the braces costs a lot of money, and so I was, you know, I'd just done that, and so I went in, and she has a tooth growing that needs to be taken out, and if she doesn't, it will mess up with her braces.

And so there's a young guy, and nothing makes you feel older than thinking that the doctor looks like a kid, right? I'm like, how can you look like a kid and be old enough to be a doctor? And I'm thinking, how am I so old that I'm thinking that about you, right? And so this guy comes in, and I'm asking him, I said, all right, so she needs to get this tooth removed.

When is it going to happen? What's your game plan for it? And he says, just keep me accountable, bro, and he sticks his fist out to give me a fist bump. And I'm like, keep you accountable, bro.

[1 : 17] I just gave your secretary, like, thousands of dollars. Like, how about she keeps you accountable? How about Google Calendar keeps you accountable? How about anybody in the world but me keep you accountable? Like, you're working for me.

Don't ask me to do your job here for you. And my response was not very kind to him because I'm like, put your fist down. We are not bros, all right? We're not in some fraternity together where we have mutual accountability, all right, together.

But it was kind of funny because he's like, we're not in a Bible study. Here we are at the orthodontist, and he's like, keep me accountable. Like, who even teaches you to talk like that, you know? But I say it's a buzzword, and it's one of those words that maybe we don't define very well.

We call for it. We say that we need it, but we don't take a lot of time to say what it really is. Just like if we tell teenagers we need to read the Bible, but we never tell them how to read their Bible, if we never give them any instructions in it or show them what would be reasonable.

Then they're not going to have, they're not going to continue in it very often. Same with accountability. I've probably said a million times we ought to be held accountable. You should find somebody to hold you accountable. But defining the Word is what we should, we really need to do.

[2 : 27] But the time remaining, I want to talk about what accountability is and maybe what it isn't. And 1 Corinthians 10, 12 tells us, Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Well, consistent accountability has been a means of God's protection in my life. And as I expect it's been a means of protection in your life. You should know that about yourself.

You know that the basketball coach that I speak about often after going a decade without speaking about him because he was overtaken in sin and he fell.

And because of this, he was no longer at the church. And we went a long time without having that friendship that was there.

And when he finally reached out to me and I met with him with tears in his eyes, he said, Trent, I've lost my opportunity in many ways in your life, but there's just one thing that I want you to know is this.

[3 : 25] Now, what happened with me could also happen to you. Take heed lest you fall. And I said, I do know that. I know that to be true. Any sin that any other man could be incapable of, I'm capable as well.

And so I need a means of protection. I need to live my life in an open and transparent way where people will see me and they can help me in that area. God-fearing people know we need one another.

God-fearing people know that we need one another. Malachi 3, 16. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another. I just love that statement. Those that feared the Lord spoke often to other people that feared the Lord.

God-fearing people speak to one another. God-fearing people are not the monks up on a mountain that don't have any communication. God-fearing people know that they need other God-fearing people in their life. And the Lord hearkened and he heard it.

And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. God-fearing people talking together often. And when we talk together, the God of heaven, he hears it.

[4 : 27] And so not everyone can benefit from accountability, but we should be the kind of people that can. This is the kind of person that can benefit from accountability. It's that the people that fear the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the tremble at the thought of offending him by unbelief and disobedience. We recognize that we could sin, but we have a proper fear of doing that because we want to bring honor to God in our lives.

It's the opposite attitude in Malachi 3, 13 and 14, this arrogance. It says, Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet you say, we have spoken so much against thee, you have said it is vain to serve God.

And what profit is it that we have kept as ordinance that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy. Yea, that work the wickedness are set up.

Yea, they tempt God, are even delivered. Those who fear God shudder at the thought of speaking that way about the Father. There's some people that would say, what's the purpose in serving God?

[5 : 29] What does it really, really matter? If you have a low view of the words of God, you can't be held accountable. If you have no fear for God, then you will not have the proper fear that is necessary for another God-fearing person that holds you accountable.

Simply, if the words of God don't matter to you, me reminding you of the words of God aren't going to make any difference in your life. So if you want to be a person that benefits from this type of accountability, you're first going to have to be a God-fearing man that says, God, your view of sin is the view of sin that I want to have.

And we have to listen to His Word. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord. People who do not value God's Word will not value you, reminding them. Fear the Lord, be willing to listen to His Word.

And then thirdly is serving. We are to be the kind of people who serve God the way a son serves a father. Malachi 3, 17. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

That relationship in contrast to that one of verse 14 where it said, It's just vain to serve the Lord. I just don't understand why I want to do this. I'm just kind of, I did all the things that you told me to do, but I just don't see any value in it.

[6 : 52] Kind of the older brother. I've served you. I've served you for what? For what reason, Father? I've served you all these years, and you're not killing the fatty calf for me. You're not giving me the coat. Why does it even matter?

That's not the relationship we have. We are as a son serving a father. We have a personal relationship with him, one that we're guarding and protecting and that we care about.

God will hear, remember, and spare those that fear him as we should. He will hear us, he will remember us, and he will spare us. There's a distinction between our lives and that of an unbeliever.

Malachi 3, 18. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. There's a distinction in the world between God-fearing people and those who do not have that relationship with him.

And if you're not a God-fearing person, you cannot be held accountable. Many people have asked to be held accountable, which is a good thing to do. But our role is limited. Your role is limited in a person.

[7 : 52] We need to remember that we can help other people fight sin, but we correct, we reprove, but we are not responsible to convict them of their hearts. That is the role of the Holy Spirit.

If they don't allow the Holy Spirit to have the rightful place in their heart, then you can't have the rightful role in their life to hold them accountable. Somebody sent me a text a couple weeks ago and it said, Trent, I need to come by with you.

Do you do any confessions outside of your service time? I need to come by and make confession to you. Can I meet you? And it was worded really weird, and I didn't know I had the number on my phone.

And so I'm thinking, how do I say, no, you don't do confession to me? There's no confession box here. I needed to make sure that was clear, but also be like, please get to the church, because I don't know who you are, but I certainly want to talk to you, right?

And so I responded to it, and the person went back and forth, and then somebody wrote, just kidding, this is a new number. I just wanted to see how you would respond. I'm like, thank you so much for the pop-up quiz to the pastor to see how I would respond.

[8 : 53] I thought about sending them a Venmo account and say, send \$75 to this account. All your sins will be taken care of, all right? And so that confession, a limited role. Men, if you get to a place and you just know that you need accountability, everybody's telling you that you need accountability, you've hit the wall, and then you've crashed, and everybody's saying you need to go get accountability.

So you walk to somebody and just try to hand them your life and say, make this work for me, it's not going to work. It's just not going to work. That's not accountability. Asking another man to micromanage your life is not accountability.

But if you fear God, you allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life, that person, if you will ask them for help and you will give them permission into your life, can make a world of difference.

Kind of a comical story Brother John's been sharing recently is about him and Kyle being given out that track a day. I might have told that in church the other day. And Brother John didn't. It was on a Sunday, and he said, I hadn't been around unbelievers today.

You know, I've been at church all day. And he told that to Kyle Shreve, who's been, they've been holding each other accountable. Kyle wrote back and said, Waffle House is 24-7, all right? There's plenty of unbelievers at Waffle House, all right?

[10:01] Just let your nose lead you to where to go, all right? And so, brother, he held him accountable. Brother John got up. He loved that, right? He said, you know, he loved that Kyle didn't just let him off the hook.

In that manner, you can help. You can only help the person who wants to be sensitive to the Spirit that is being led by him.

And realize that sin brings a lack of clarity and logic in people's lives. Proverbs 9, 7 to 9. So, as I read this verse, think about it. When you're trying to help a brother, you're trying to help somebody who needs accountability in their life.

Listen to what this verse says about the sin. He that reproveth the scorner getteth to himself shame, and he that rebuketh the wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee.

Rebuke a wise man, he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, he'll be wiser. Teach a just man, and he shall increase in learning. The wise man will increase in learning, but if you're not a wise man, then you're going to be in a position where you're going to lack clarity and logic about what needs to be done.

[11:04] There are all kinds of ways in which sin affects your thinking. Sin in your heart will work to convince your head that you're above correction. So, that's one way that when a person is in sin and you go to deal with them, they may believe they're above it.

Or above correction from that person. You know, I may be doing wrong, but you're not the one to tell me. Or that acknowledging someone's correction is to make yourself weak. These are all ways that sin will distort somebody.

You need to be mindful of it when you talk to them. Brother David said the day in our life group, sometimes I'm talking to people and I'm like, why don't you get it? Are you blind? And I'm like, oh yeah, that's what you are.

You know, you are spiritually blind. You're spiritually living in darkness. And sin, when it comes into a person's life, brings confusion. It doesn't bring instruction. It doesn't bring wisdom. When they are in that place, sin clouds their way of thinking.

Sin grows and it kills. Then when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. I'm going to talk about that positively and negatively. John Owen says, do not say, thus far it shall go and no farther.

[12:12] It will have allowance for one step. It will take another. Let me read that again. Do not say, thus far it shall go and no farther. If it has allowance for one step, it will take another.

You cannot allow it, that step in your life. That's why holding people accountable to a God-fearing person, that's why that step and that direction matters. That's when you go to somebody.

I'm not going to allow somebody deranged one step into my house. Nobody's going to knock on my door and say, and I'm going to know that they're crazy and say, oh well, I'm just going to let them into the foyer of my home.

No, I'm going to fight at the door. I'm going to step out of the door, shut the door, and fight to the death because I would say one step is far too much. Sin is that way. One step is far too much.

And so sin, small sins grow into great sins. And that's sober for us to think about that sin is never satisfied. It continues to grow.

[13 : 10] But it's also a great comfort to know that great sins will start small in our lives. That's how that happens, right? People don't start off embezzling millions of dollars from their company.

They just did it once, right, to see what they could get by with. And just in your own life, the great thing is that the great sins don't sneak upon you and say, hey, let's jump in. But it's going to come at you small.

It's going to say, just take this singular step. So it's sobering, but it's also encouraging. So here's some characteristics of life-giving accountability. You have a friendship with another God-fearing person.

They ask for accountability. You ask for accountability. Accountability takes place inside of a friendship. John 15, 17. These things I command you that you love one another.

You should express a genuine love for one another because God has transformed our friendship into something new. We were devoted to one another and to a brotherhood or to ladies and to a sisterhood.

[14 : 11] Accountability is going to come from having good Christian friendships, and you need those. Sometimes our skin is too thin to have deep friendships. Insecurities create that.

If you don't have friendships, you won't have accountability. You can't go to somebody who's not involved in your life that doesn't care about you on any level and just outsource accountability to them. It's going to take place inside of a friendship.

That person's going to have to have that permission from you. They're also going to have that influence into your life there. So, if you run from Christian friendships, then you're running from that protection that can be available to you.

Accountability requires honesty. Each of us have the opportunity to be honest, which we may not have accomplished, and we have not established as a habit. Ephesians 4, 25. Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man's truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Throughout the years, I've spoken to teenagers and young adults when they had recognized that a sin had just been constantly throwing them back and forth.

[15 : 15] And the number one thing I remind them is that if you will move forward from this day with honesty, there's going to be great help for you. But if you continue to hide, then there will only be destruction.

There's no help for a person that will not be honest about it. You cannot help them if you do not know what it is that's going on in their lives. So, when you get to that place and you say you really need accountability and you go to somebody, if you do not come with them with the desire to be fully accountable and fully honest with them, then you're just setting yourself up for destruction.

If you're just saying, I'm only going to give this much to them, I'm only going to allow this much access, if you do not make yourself fully honest, then you're not going to have that accountability in that.

That doesn't mean gloating about sin. It doesn't mean that you have to tell everything that you've ever known in your life. But in that area, you cannot speak dishonestly about your sin. You need to be open with them.

Accountability requires extending grace. Romans 14, 13, Helping people stay accountable means extending grace to them.

[16 : 28] It means helping them fight the accuser of the brother. It means being honest with them when it comes to the sin and say, yes, there is going to be consequences for the decisions that you've made.

They've been built into it. There's no reason to sugarcoat it. A good friend is going to tell them the truth, but also to remind them that the grace is available through Jesus Christ and to help them see that. Accountability requires humility.

Romans 12, 16, Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescending the men of low state. Be not wise in your own conceit. At times we need to extend forgiveness. Honest friendship sometimes leads to hurting one another.

Also, as one person might go through a season of struggling with the same temptation you bear, and we must come at it humbly. We look at a person and say, the situation they're in is one that I most certainly could be in, and we should be humble as we look at it.

It requires carrying another one's burden. Bury one another's burden so you fulfill the law of Christ, Galatians 6, 2. As Christians, we have a tendency of not wanting to carry other people's burdens and to avoiding them.

[17 : 31] But in a friendship here of accountability, we need to be willing to bear somebody's burden and help them walk through those things. And so what is the characteristics of life-giving accountability?

Accountability takes place in friendship. It requires honesty. It requires extending grace. It requires humility. It requires carrying one another's burden. And it can only happen between God-fearing people.

You have to be concerned about what God says about sin. And if you're not, there's not enough human mechanisms in the world. You take all the Steve Covey.

You take whoever it is you like to read after. Any organizational guru, take all those people and try to get them to live out the Christian life, and there's not enough processes in place.

It only takes place as the Holy Spirit inside of you is encouraging the person to respond to the Holy Spirit inside of them. That's where accountability can really make a difference.

[18 : 29] It's not always formal either. It's not always set up in some kind of that. It's in small conversations. It's in somebody saying, hey, I know you, and you can do better than that. That's not what you think.

You need to do that. I love you, and I know that's not how you feel about that. Why don't you go and do this thing? Or, hey, man, I just really miss you. We have this thing I think will really be good for you, and you know you need more friendships.

Why don't you come to this? Make that call and reach out to them. Not always in a formal relationship, but it's what every one of us ought to be encouraging each other in, that ammunition that we're supposed to be giving, admonishing one another constantly and helping.

But God-fearing men having conversations with other God-fearing men as we fight sin for His honor and His glory. Let's pray together as we're dismissed tonight.

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word. Lord, I thank You. I thank you so many people inside of this building, outside of this building, and throughout my life, Lord, that You used to bring accountability to me, that they were God-fearing people, that when they would speak, Lord, I knew they had a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, that they were people that hated sin, that they loved me.

[19 : 44] They were people that hated sin and loved me, and when they saw sin in my life, Lord, they loved me too much to stay quiet. But because of the friendship and the honesty that I saw in their lives and their willingness to carry the burdens of my life, Lord, their conversations helped me out tremendously.

And I want to say thank You for those men. And, Lord, I want to be that type of man for the men in this room, for the God-fearing men in this room. Lord, help us keep each other accountable to live this life that You have called us to live, the walk worthy of the gospel, Lord, in a manner that would please.

Thank you.