

Christian Accountability



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Compiled by
Robert C May
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cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

Our accountability in Christ's Church

Most Christians cannot name a trusted spiritual mentor committed to seeing them transformed into the image of God's Son; and with whom they are an open book and absolutely honest about their struggle with the flesh in order to become complete in Christ. This is because the majority have a private secluded idea of the Christian walk which is unwilling to expose everything to the light of a trusted mentor. Their bottom line or priority for life is not the same bottom line our Father has for us in becoming like His Son. Something else has become their first priority in a life which doesn't require a mentor to help them put aside all that is earthly in them because their goal is to succeed on earth in whatever path they have chosen. They have forgotten heaven is now their home and they are to be as strangers and aliens in the world. So instead of becoming accountable and transparent before God's people, we hide and protect what must be exposed to the light if we are to walk in the light as God's children made complete in Christ. If our primary goal is to put on Christ, we have nothing to hide

since we seek to expose the darkness in order to be filled up to the fullness of God.

According to God's word, there are no individual Christians in Jesus' Church so each one can do whatever is of their own understanding. When we surrender our life to the Lord Jesus, we have surrendered our life in the flesh for His life in the Spirit. Therefore as we die to our separate life in the flesh we are joined to Christ, and we become accountable to live for the will of God. This new life we have in Christ is only possible in the context of the Church, which is His body on earth.

Consequently, as much as we are joined to Christ and are now accountable to Him, we are equally accountable to all those who make up His body the Church. And since it is the Spirit who gives life to individual Christian (Rom 8:11) it is the same Spirit who gives life to the body of Christ. And it is the same Spirit who enables all those in Christ with spiritual gifts so they can live the Christ life according to His plan, which is a plan to see each one transformed into the likeness of Christ as they carry out His work on earth. According to 1 Cor 12 all those who are part of the

Church are accountable to the Spirit and each other. 1 Cor 12 1, 4-5, 7, 11-15, 18-21, 24-25, 27-31

Accountability means we need each other

When we join the Church, we have arrived at a crucial juncture in our life, and the time is at hand to shake off any encumbrance that may hinder the work awaiting us as we move forward in the best possible way. Each increase in growth and responsibility requires an increase in our sanctification. But there is no new life in the individual without some further death to the darkness which remains. Each of us must fulfil this task in order to make use of the opportunities that are coming our way. God's tells us we need others to help us with our growing pains, and we need to show others how this transforming work is done so that the body of Christ may benefit.

Accountability to each other is necessary because we cannot always see all that there is to see, whether it is the darkness which remains in us or the ignorance that is still part of our thinking.

Jesus Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good

deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Titus 2:11-15

Therefore each of us remains accountable to all the faithful members of Christ for our spiritual growth, along with the work that remains to be done within us and in the world. Consequently we no longer live for ourselves but for Christ who now lives in us for the glory of God. Gal 2:20

If the Holy Spirit is going to have His way, there is a need for all those in the Church to be accountable to one another. For when we join ourselves to someone in marriage we become accountable to them. In the same way, in the Church under the Governance of the Spirit we have made ourselves accountable to others, and they to us as we become the bride of Christ.

Therefore we need to consider the nature of our accountability to be all Jesus has called us to be. If those to whom we are joined cannot do as Jesus commands, how can we rely on them to be partners in our work? Don't all of us who are in Christ aspire to live Christ's life in our daily walk? Haven't we committed ourselves to walk as He

walked? How can we go on doing what we know falls short of His glory and still claim to have His life in us?

Accountability is uncompromising

As it is written: *‘His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness.’*

2 Pet 1:3-6

So *‘be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.’*

Eph 5:21

Accountability begins with the leaders

Those who are gifted to lead and teach are even more accountable to the Church as those with

whom they minister the word of God. Therefore, *'Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.'* James 3:1

Those who are called to shepherd the flock are to set the highest example of Christ living and working amongst His people. The *teachers need to be above reproach.* (1 Tim 3:2) They must be *able to manage their own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.* (1 Tim 3:4) They are *not to be a new convert, so that they will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.* (1 Tim 3:6) They *must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so as not to fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.* (1 Tim 3:7) They are *to jealously guard the gift they have received.* (1 Tim 4:14) They are *to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* (2 Tim 2:1) They are *to diligently present themselves approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.* (2 Tim 2:15) They are *to refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.* 2 Tim 2:23

They must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim 2:24-25) They are to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to sound doctrine, even to avoid them. Such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Rom 16:17-18

They are called to *‘Preach the word; to be ready in season and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.’* (2 Tim 4:2) This means sticking to the written word as it has been given by God. There is no room for deviating from God’s word in order to pursue some favourite theme or to tickle people ears by only speaking words that please their earthly nature. Leaders are charged to keep the brethren on the right path to completeness in Christ.

‘For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from

listening to the truth and wander off into myths.'
(2 Tim 4:3-4) Leaders are to destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and ready to punish all disobedience.(2 Cor 10:5-6) They are to proclaim Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that they may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose they labour, striving according to His power, which mightily works within them. (Col 1:28-29) They are to admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak and patient with all.

1 Thess 5:14

They are to continue in what they have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom they have learned the sacred writings which are able to give the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Tim 3:14-17

Accountability is looking out for each other

‘My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.’ James 5:19-20

‘Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.’ (Eph4:25) ‘Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.’

Heb3:12-13

Accountability in Church discipline and the integrity of the body Christ

The whole Church is responsible for maintaining the integrity of God’s word and the holiness which is befitting the people of God.

‘Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch

on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' (Gal 6:1-2) *'Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?'* (2 Cor 6:14) *'I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.'* (1 Cor 5:9) *'As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.'* (Titus 3:10) *'I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.'* (Rom 16:17) *'If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them.'* 2 John 1:10

'But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a

form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.’ 2 Tim 3:1-5

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

Matt18:15-17

Uncompromising love always looks for repentance with a complete turnaround, the putting right the wrong done, full reconciliation among all parties, and restoration to the body of Christ. *‘Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.’* James 5:16

Matt 18 cannot be used for every infraction of God’s word. Expulsion from the Church is serious business and should not be handled lightly. We must always remember the principle given us in

Eph 6:4, where fathers are not to provoke their children to anger; Church discipline should be seen in the light of grace and the teaching elsewhere concerning the forgiveness of obedience. Immature Christians who compromise God's word don't need to be excommunicated, they need to be encouraged to obey God and taught to see things from God's perspective.

There are many passages in the Bible which call us to forgive obediently. None of these adds, "If the one who offended you is sorry." For example, in Mark 11:25 Jesus says, "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses." This passage says nothing about what the offender thinks or feels. It in no way implies that before we finish your prayer, we should run out and find the one who offended us and get that person to repent, and then return to our prayer. Rather, Jesus connects our own forgiveness by God with the forgiveness we give to someone else. He clearly sees forgiveness as something we can do without relying on the repentance of the one who wronged us.

Forgiveness is giving over to God the wrong done to us. It's saying to God, "Okay, Lord, I'm not going to hold onto this offense any more. I'm surrendering it to you." Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. When we forgive like this, say to the Lord, "God, this person really hurt me. But I'm giving it all to you. I do not want this offense to be a breach in relationship any further. I will not harbor it my soul. Here you go, Lord, here's the hurt."

Jesus is not asking us to say "That's okay, no problem." Our willingness to Forgive isn't saying that what was done to us is okay. In fact, forgiveness assumes that it was not okay. Only real wrongs need to be forgiven. Second, Jesus is not asking us to understand why somebody did something wrong. Forgiveness is choosing before God to let go of the offense, even if we don't understand why the offender did it.

In the end there are three possible areas that could lead to possible excommunication. Where there is a deliberately immoral life. Where there are major doctrinal aberrations. Where there exists a loveless and fundamentally divisive spirit. All attested to in Paul's letters to the Church.

If the Church won't support us after we have followed all the requirements of Matt 18:15-17 in that we have spoken to the person in private, and we have taken other witnesses to establish the charge; we have no option but to leave it to God and fall back on the grace God gives us in the forgiveness of obedience.

Accountability means we obey our leaders

'Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are

seeking the city which is to come. Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honourably in all things.’ Heb 13:7-18

Accountability is not to be blind

Handling the word of God correctly doesn't allow anyone the freedom to use any verse or verses out of their original context in which they were first given to us by the Spirit of God. When this error occurs, mistakes creeps into the Church, and God's word isn't proclaimed exactly as it was intended by Him. When deviation from God's intention occurs, there will be division in the body of Christ, along with the real possibility of heresy

sneaking in to destroy the life of those who are ignorant of such things.

Accountability in the body of Christ is threatened if what is taught and preached isn't faithful to the original text. If those who are reputed to be leaders of God's people are not faithful to the original meaning and intention as it was written, they are not conforming to God's will, they hold another opinion, and they have become obstacles to the life of the faithful, destroying the purpose of God which accountability is meant to preserve.

If leaders are not accountable to God because they want to establish their own gospel, they are not to be listened to, and their error should be exposed so the integrity of the gospel can be preserved. This is of vital importance, for if leaders are not true, there is little hope for those who follow.

We need to be able to name those to whom we are directly accountable

The question is who are we accountable too? Many in this latter day consider themselves accountable to no one except the Holy Spirit; forgetting that the Spirit has made us accountable to all the faithful brethren in the Church. There are

many who agree with the modern worldly way of thinking, insisting we can all have our own opinion and do what is right in our own eyes.

We need to put names to those we know are faithful in conduct and in explaining the word of God; who don't take God's word out of context or distort it to suit some particular preference for this life. Because we don't know what we don't know, we need at least one mentor who can challenge our ideas and open our minds to better ways of thinking so we remain accountable to God.

‘So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.’

2 Cor 5:9-10

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