

Accountability

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord ...”
2 Samuel 12:13

Of all the scorned words in America’s mind, accountability must be near the front. Accountability has become a by-word in a nation that seeks to blame other people or events for their own misdeeds. Since the Bible never uses the word accountability, we must turn to other sources for its definition. According to Webster’s, accountability is “the quality or state of being accountable; answerable or bound to give an explanation.” With so many Americans seeing a therapist or mental health professional, the tendency has become to find events in someone’s past and blame the current problem on the past event. In the final analysis, accountability is lost because personal choices can no longer be controlled.

How many have witnessed people blame their sin-filled lives on abuse or a childhood trauma? I do not intend to seem cold-hearted because I know people who have legitimate problems because of past events. However, the problem with this widespread diagnosis is that it become a self-fulfilling prophecy. More and more find it easier to shirk responsibility because they do not feel responsible.

Simply put, a loss of accountability translates into a loss of guilt or remorse for sin. When there is no remorse or guilt, sin is unrestrained. Ezekiel 18:20 makes it clear that the responsibility lies squarely on our shoulders. We are accountable for what we do because we ultimately make the decision to act in a certain way. If someone in our past sinned against us by treating us a certain way, they will answer to God for their sins.

In contrast to the “spirit of the age,” accountability is prominent in the Bible. We will be accountable to God for our individual actions (Romans 14:12; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Luke 16:2; Revelation 20:11-15), our words (Matthew 12:36), our sins (Romans 3:19), and our faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Matthew 25:21). We are accountable to Christ because of His authority in the judgment (John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16), His judgment of human works (Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 4:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10), and His judgment of local churches (Revelations 2:1-3:21; 1 Peter 4:17). We also cannot forget our accountability to the elders of the church (Hebrews 13:17) and our accountability to governmental officials (Daniel 6:2; Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14). As you can see, mankind is very accountable.

In order for people to turn from their sins, the “spirit of this age” must be vanquished. Responsibility for sins is a reality each of us face regardless of popular psychology. Do not be worn down by subtle semantics or the shifting of blame to escape accountability. The drunkard is an alcoholic because he decided to take the first drink. A smoker is addicted to nicotine because he decided to smoke the first cigarette. An unwed mother must care for her children the best she can because she decided to commit fornication. As painful as the consequences are, the truth still stands that we make those decisions.

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