

“Accountability” and “Covering”



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A dangerous religious fad has developed over the past couple of decades: it's the teaching of so-called “Christian accountability” and “accountability partners.” We are told that Christians need to be “held accountable” by their church, their clergy, and to each other. According to this seductive trend, Christians are to report regularly to whomever they are deemed “accountable,” reporting to them, confessing to them their failures and weaknesses, so that they may be “held accountable” by them. This is a sad step back into a Protestant form of the Catholic confessional.

If you walk with God outside of man-made religious organizations, you are apt to hear such questions as:

“Who is your covering?”

“To whom are you accountable?”

“What church are you under?”

“Who is your spiritual covering?”

“Whose authority are you under?”

Of course, if someone genuinely was to have the right to hold another person *accountable*, they would actually need to have *authority* over that person to do so. In other words, to be able to hold someone else “accountable” legitimately, one must have *jurisdiction* over the person being held “accountable.” The believer has been “*bought with a price*,” and belongs directly under the jurisdiction of only God Himself.

WARNING: There are those among us who would play God, if we allowed them!

For you suffer, if a man brings you into bondage, if a man devours you, if a man takes of you, if a man exalts himself, if a man smites you on the face (II Corinthians 11:20).

There is no hierarchy or rulership claims over, or between believers. It's impossible and contrary to Scripture for one believer to be "held accountable" to another, as members of Christ's body.¹

This does not leave us "unaccountable." No – quite the contrary! We definitely give an account; but the question is: To whom do we give this account?

To an "accountability partner"?

To a self-imposed "clergyman"?

To a man-made "church"?

No! Paul made it abundantly clear that we – every one of us – will give an account of ourselves directly to God Himself.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

What about a so-called spiritual "covering"² of others in our lives? Well, listen to God talking to Israel about their taking counsel and cover from someone other than Him.

"Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "who take counsel, but not of Me; and who cover with a covering, but not of My spirit" (Isaiah 30:1).

No clergyman (Reverend, "pastor," priest, minister, "bishop," or "elder"!), no "covering church," ("fellowship" or "ministry"), nor "accountability partner" has the right to hold *anyone* "accountable," or to provide "cover" for others.

Not even Paul, our apostle, took on such a self-imposed role among believers.

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand (II Corinthians 1:24).

Who are you who judge another man's servant? To his own Master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be held up: for God is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4).

Religious "accountability" continually focuses on *behavior* and *sin*. It is the sin of Galatia: a humanistic, legalistic approach to righteousness, holiness and sanctification. Paul did not teach that

1. Of course, if believers also have additional divinely appointed relationships, such as family or work (*i.e.*, parent/child, or employee/employer), there is accountability; but this is based on this unique relationship. For example, a believing child is accountable to a believing parent, as a *child*, but not as a believer; likewise a believing employee is accountable to a believing employer, as an *employee*, but not as a believer.
2. The husband/father has been provided by God as a covering for his wife/children, but this relationship is domestic, and does not extend to believers with each other.

someone needed to “keep us in line.” The believer’s life is all about God Himself, “*for in Him we live, and move, and have our being*” (Acts 17:28), and “*it is God Who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 3:13).

The believer’s life is about growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 3:18). The believer has died with Christ to the elemental principles of this world, so why, as though still belonging to them, do we allow ourselves to be subject to them: “*Touch Not! Taste Not! Handle Not!*” (Colossians 2:20-23)? We should be unaffected by those who attempt to lord over us.

With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or by man’s judgment ... (I Corinthians 4:3).

Others may choose to “hold us accountable” or judge us. However sincere their actions may be, or appear to be, we are not to be affected by this. When we, like Paul, walk before the Lord, their verdicts will be a “*very small thing*” in our sight, and God’s. In fact, if we are concerned about their opinions, it will have a hindering effect on God’s work in us.

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10).

Thus, we have Paul’s instruction,

Let no man therefore judge you ... (Colossians 2:16)

Do not surrender or forfeit the freedom that you have in Christ to the abuses of organized religion that pawns off itself as being God’s representative. Stand free in Christ, regardless of what religion says!

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1).

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