

The Principle of Accountability to God

by David A. DePra

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48)

For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. (Luke 19:26)

The principle of accountability is not a legalistic law which God has laid down. Rather, it is a Truth which is directly related to our personal relationship with God. And that Truth is this: Each of us is accountable to God for the light He has revealed TO US and IN US. Or, to be more specific, we are each accountable ONLY for the light given – but that accountability is inescapable.

Now, to some of us, this might seem harsh. The word, “accountable,” puts a responsibility upon us. And immediately our natural mind tends to associate the notion of PUNISHMENT with accountability. But that kind of thinking is, of itself, part of the darkness from which we need freedom. God brings Truth and light to set us FREE. Our responsibility – and our choice – is to embrace the Truth of Christ rather than to hold on to our darkness.

As a person grows to know Jesus Christ, accountability to God is something they will WANT to embrace. We will view it, not as a, “requirement,” but as a gift. We will more and more desire Truth and light. We will choose light rather than darkness because we love God and know He loves us. We will realize that accountability is not something that God IMPOSES upon us. Rather, it is something we ought to SEEK from Him. God is seeking an eternal LOVE relationship and fellowship. This is impossible unless we know Him; unless we walk in the light and He is in the Light. Hopefully, we can see that by it's very nature, that this requires uncompromised Truth that is received in love.

But someone might ask, “Why would anyone choose darkness rather than light?” John, the apostle, tell us why:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprove. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:16-21)

Here we see the eternal pivot point for each one of us. There are going to be seasons in our experience wherein God brings LIGHT. It is when God brings light that we can

choose light rather than darkness – or darkness rather than light. Before God brings light the choice is NOT there – before God brings light there is no, “rather” – but there is only darkness. But when God brings light we are facing accountability. And as we can see from this passage, this accountability is not – at the core -- theological, doctrinal, or religious. No. At the core, our accountability to God is moral, spiritual, and based in FAITH.

God is light. Thus, when God brings light it is really God revealing HIMSELF to us through Christ. And this means that whether we are seeing light for the first time, or whether we are seeing more light than before – it means that God never withdraws this light. Rather, we are going to be faced with light in Christ forever. God intends for us to LIVE in the light because He intends us to live in Christ and to walk in Christ. So again we see that we are here talking about a relationship with God that is based in light and Truth. There is simply NO OTHER relationship possible because the simple fact is: GOD IS LIGHT.

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:5-10)

So, when we speak of accountability to God, we are talking about the result of coming face to face with God Himself through Jesus Christ. God reveals Himself TO US and IN US – and in the light of Jesus Christ we see ourselves. We see our great need for Him. We see how we have sinned against Him – not just through outward deeds, but through the inward deeds of self-ownership, self-righteousness, and unbelief. Perhaps we see a thousand different ways in which we have side-stepped the light in our past. But we cannot pick and choose aspects of light – we cannot pick and choose portions of Christ. If we truly want Jesus Christ then we must come fully into the light – we must give ALL of ourselves to Him.

If we do come into the light of Christ and fully open ourselves to Him – whether we are unsaved or saved – we are going to realize that the destination for the person we see in His light is the CROSS. We will know that we MUST take our place in HIS CROSS – and be crucified with Him. We can make this commitment to Him by unconditionally asking God to do whatever it takes to bring His light and set us free. Of course, this will be progressive in experience – but we can, and must, make that commitment. The result will be a life in Christ wherein we are, “always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” But it will be in order that we might, “manifest the life of the Lord Jesus.” Conviction, repentance, and being exposed, is always unto FREEDOM and a greater release of LIFE in Christ.

Refusing the Light

God tells us in His Word that we must, “Speak the Truth in LOVE.” Thus, we can be sure that this is what God does -- when He speaks it is ALWAYS the TRUTH, but it is IN LOVE. He will feed us with what we can take -- but God will not adjust the Truth or His love to fit us -- or it would not be Truth or love. God will never misrepresent Himself to us. He has not left it up to us to make Him to be as we please. Jesus said the spirit of God was given to guide us into all Truth. If this sounds like God is imposing Himself on

us, we do not see our great need. We must see that LIGHT is a gift of God for our freedom -- and that we should cry out to Him for as much as we are able to embrace.

So, again, why would anyone refuse the light? Why would anyone resist that which God intends for our good; because He loves us? John says that people will not come to the Light, "because their deeds are evil," and, "lest their deeds be reproved." In other words, there are crossroads in each life where we are faced with the light and what the light exposes. And as noted, what the light exposes might include false beliefs, theological error, heresy, and outward sin. But those things are only the fruits of the real problem: Living in unbelief. Standing aloof from God. Owning myself FOR myself – even if only in a religious way.

There are some folks who will NOT face the Truth about themselves in the light of Christ. Instead, they hold onto the core of who they have become in Adam. This can be quite deceptive. Many are deceived by false religion – and much false religion is geared to legitimizing the natural man with what appears to be the Truth. Many have spent years building walls around themselves – and each time God has tried to bring down those walls they have denied that it is God. They will not accept that a God of love would draw them out into such a terrible exposure. The moment such an exposure begins they recoil against it – they are gripped by fear and dread of what it might mean. They retreat into a comfort zone of self-preservation.

Again, we must see that the issue here is unbelief. And unbelief can be so, "built in," that the person may not be fully aware that they are resisting God. But thankfully, part of what happens when God begins to deal with a person is that even that hardness of unbelief will be shattered. They will have the choice to embrace darkness or light. Not darkness or light as THING unto themselves. But they will have the choice to embrace Jesus Christ or their old man in Adam.

Now, of course, what a person personally believes about God will emerge from this choice. Often the doctrine people believe and teach is the result of refusing the light. We will tend to develop a theology that is based upon our inner relationship with God. We will either develop it independently, or buy into it from another source. Some of the biggest heretics have become heretics because they have been given light – but have chosen darkness. They have refused the Cross of Christ.

There are people who believe that God is a tyrant who is eager to punish. This is NOT the Truth. But they are governed by this darkness. Often such a deception is reflected in their theology. There are others who say that, "God is love" – and HE IS – but what they mean by that is that God does not care about Truth, does not hold us accountable, does not care about holiness – and some have even gone so far as to say that because God is love that there are many ways to the Father, and not just Christ. This is also darkness. It is often reflected in their theology. On both ends of the spectrum of deception there can be signs and wonders, spiritual experiences, wonderful feelings, huge ministries and churches, and many very loving and nice people – yet fully immersed in darkness.

We are to know NO ONE after the flesh. (II Cor. 5:16) We are not to know them through the filter of OUR flesh, and we are not to know them through the filter of THEIR flesh. We are to know them according to Christ. Now, that is a tall order – but is only possible if we KNOW CHRIST. But all of that being said, it ought to at least indicate to us that outward personality – that what a person is in their natural man – is NOT the real person. That is a fact about them and about us.

This is vital to know with regards to discernment. Some of the nicest and most outgoing people can be the most deceived people. There are people who are so confident in their

own righteousness – so confident and at home in their darkness – that their natural man will seem to be loving, full of grace, and joyful. They seem to want only the best for you – but the best for you is defined by their error. I know this sounds awful to say, but these kinds of folks can be, “angels of light.” They may be fully deceived and have no ill intent. And if we do not realize that what we are experiencing is their natural, religious man, we might be greatly influenced by them. Yet the possible damage can be terrible.

I once knew someone who, out of curiosity, walked into a Buddhist temple. They were overwhelmed by the love and acceptance they were shown by the Buddhists there – they said they could, “feel the love.” But does that conduct, or those feelings, prove the Truth? No. The love of God could not have been flowing through those who worship false, even demonic, gods. What governed that situation was religious flesh, based in the psychic realm. The power of religious, natural man, backed by evil spirits, cannot be taken lightly. “But they were so loving!” Well, so can be an angel of light.

There are also other folks who we might consider to be temperamental. They may not come across as very loving at all. But maybe they are under great trial. Maybe their inner faith and intent is strong and of God. Yet if we know them by their flesh, or judge them through our flesh, we will never see the Truth. Again – the key here is not to judge others and analyze everyone. Rather, it is to KNOW CHRIST. Then we will be able to better know others according to Him – and will be able to do so with HIS LOVE.

Again -- how many realize that Satan appears as an angel of light? A false angel of light will religiously appeal to something in our natural man – we might feel as if we have found IT; we will FEEL liberated. A false angel of light will legitimize the side-stepping of the Cross. If natural man refuses the Cross of Jesus Christ there will come a natural feeling of freedom – a sense of escaping death. But what deception! True freedom comes, not if natural man escapes death, but only if natural man embraces it by taking our place in the Cross of Jesus Christ. But is this not, “the offense of the Cross?”

If we embrace the light of Jesus Christ then we will not only be set free from our natural man – but we will be set free to live with, walk with, and to know Jesus Christ. Our walk with Christ, “in the light as He is in the light,” will govern us. Our personal relationship with Jesus Christ will not eliminate the need for doctrine – but will govern it. We will believe true doctrine because we know the One of Whom our doctrine speaks. In other words, if Truth governs us, then we will tell the Truth about the Truth Himself.

The Need for True Doctrine

True doctrine tells the Truth about the Bible. But the Bible tells the Truth about God Himself. Therefore, true doctrine tells the Truth about God Himself. In contrast, error contradicts the Bible. But that is because error contradicts God. Therefore, false doctrine lies about God Himself. Thus, we see the importance of doctrine. Doctrine is a written or verbal statement about God and His Son, Jesus Christ – and about God’s plan and purpose through Christ. False doctrine misrepresents God – lies about God. Truth doctrine tells the Truth about Him.

There is only ONE Truth – it is a PERSON. Doctrine is written or verbal Truth – but will always fully agree with the Living Truth. So what we present as true doctrine is what we are stating about God Himself. Thus, we must not be wrong in our doctrine. Neither must we dismiss doctrine as unimportant. No. Doctrine is not God. It is not the object of our faith. But it represents God – it represents His plan and purpose in Christ. It directs our lives.

We may not think that we have a personal statement of faith. We may not be able to list all of our beliefs. But we DO have a personal statement of faith. We DO believe doctrine. Indeed, even if we dare to say that doctrine doesn't matter then that statement that doctrine doesn't matter IS OUR DOCTRINE. Can we see that even though doctrine itself is not faith, that nevertheless faith, one way or another, is going to be expressed and communicated. Is it possible that those who claim that doctrine is not necessary are saying this because they do not want to face what Biblical doctrine clearly states – especially about themselves? Only God can judge each person.

It should not be necessary to quote the hundreds of passages from scripture that proclaim the importance of true doctrine. Sure, it is possible to know very little doctrine – to be in great ignorance of the Bible – but to have a heart of faith towards God. Yet the Lord – if given the time – wants us to go on to more.

In the final analysis, it is impossible to believe false doctrine if we know Jesus Christ – if we know Him in an inward way – if we know Him as the result of seeing the light of God. Yes, this is progressive. And yes, the vital thing is our inward relationship with Christ based upon our personal faith. And none of us are perfect. But knowing Christ is not a meaningless, mindless, condition. Rather, our minds will be renewed according to the Truth – that is, our heart attitude, and our moral intent will be impacted. This will result in discernment, thinking, living, and communicating – according to the TRUTH.

This is what happened in the early church. Christianity – the reality of Christ in His people – did not emerge from doctrine. Rather, doctrine emerged from Christianity. But doctrine DID emerge. Our danger is to be blind to Christ Himself and exalt the doctrine. This will lead to dead religion. No. God wants us to know Christ Himself – to come into an inward realization of Christ. But if we do, then we will come to understand the Truth of the Bible and hold to sound doctrine. We will not be able to continue in false doctrine.

God Loves All Equally

There have been millions, if not billions, of people who have lived and died – but many of them have either never heard of Christ, or have come into very little of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is because of this fact that it is vital that we see that each of us are held accountable only for the light we have received from God – and are not accountable for light we have never received.

Many of us have known people, perhaps loved ones, who have shown some evidence of interest in Christ – who have professed Christ – but whose lives never evidenced much fruit. It is easy to dismiss these folks. But we don't know as God knows. If a person has been given some light and they have turned to Christ – if only at the end of an otherwise sinful life – did Jesus not die for them? Who are we to judge?

There are professing Christians who so easily, almost with the wave of their hand, condemn billions to hell. Often, this is based upon their own false doctrine. Calvinists believe God, before the foundation of the world, ordained by specific person, who He would save or not save. Others condemn millions to hell because they don't belong to their church. Still others condemn others based on law. And then there are those who don't believe anyone at all are going to hell. But we need to be clear: God desires for ALL to be saved and to come into the knowledge of the Truth. And there is only ONE name given by which we can be saved: Jesus Christ. And finally, God takes no pleasure in the death, even of the wicked. Gather all of this up, and you see that God IS love, and all that He does is for redemptive purposes. Yet without a compromise with the Truth.

Did someone show evidence that they had at least a spark of life in them by faith in Christ – even if they did not know much doctrine? God knows their heart. But if that was real, then they were saved – because they may have embraced whatever light God gave them. Because God is love and God is just we can be sure than NOT ONE person falls through the cracks, and that there is NOT ONE person to whom God is indifferent. He never makes mistakes. Ever.

The principle holds: God holds us responsible for the light we have received. “To whom much is given, much will be required. To whom little is given, little will be required.” We must never play God in the life of someone else. Jesus promised to never, “quench a smoking flax.” God will take even the slightest turning to Christ. While it is true that God will never compromise with the Truth – the only way of salvation is Jesus Christ – it is just as true that we cannot know whether someone has turned to Christ; whether they have chosen what might have been the smallest amount of light. God knows.

We need to continue being vessels of redemption for Christ unto others. That does not mean we are to be naïve. There is a time to separate and move on. But even in doing that we are to remain ambassadors of Christ.

Ignorance vs. Hardness

Ignorance means we cannot believe because we have not been given light. We are not to blame for being truly ignorant. But hardness is not the inability to believe. It is the refusal to believe. Yet those who refuse to believe aren't usually that honest about it. Usually, they refuse to believe and embrace the light in favor of something else that feeds their pride, self-ownership, or religious self-righteousness. There is always a trade off. That is what our passage from John 3 has the word RATHER. We choose darkness RATHER than light, or light RATHER than darkness.

Ignorance is blindness. Indeed, true ignorance is a condition of being blind but of not knowing you are blind. God will begin with a truly blind person by showing them that they ARE blind. They may at least begin to realize that there is Truth which they have NOT yet seen. If they turn and seek God THIS IS FAITH. They have SEEN that they have NOT SEEN and have turned to God that they MIGHT SEE. If this is real then they may indeed be a smoking flax that God will not quench. Rather, He will continue with them.

Ignorance is blindness. It is the darkness into which we are all born. But hardness is not blindness. Rather, hardness is self-imposed darkness. Truly ignorant folks cannot see because they have never been given light. But those who are hard towards God HAVE been given light – but have closed their eyes to Him.

BOTH the ignorant and the hard are in darkness. But the hard are to blame for it. And yet, even then, the light that God HAS given them CONTINUES – they need only open their eyes and embrace it. As noted earlier, God never withdraws Christ – never withdraws THE LIGHT. Rather, we either open our eyes and embrace Christ or keep them closed. Each one of us is either allowing God to adjust us to the light He has given, or we are adjusting the light given to ourselves. Once light is given we cannot go back. We HAVE seen.

Human beings are, “believing creatures.” There is no such thing as a condition of believing NOTHING. No. You and I are always believing something – we believe what is TRUTH TO US. And so once God gives light we HAVE seen. We will either believe and embrace or close our eyes. This is a choice that is continually before us.

But again – none of this is a threat of punishment. That is not the intent of God. It is a statement of fact – and a matter of relationship with God. If we choose darkness we get darkness, and everything that comes with it. But if we choose light – and we can do so even if up to this point we have chosen darkness – then the darkness will flee. God is eternally redemptive. Thus, rather than a threat of punishment, this is a promise of life and light.

When we interpret Truth as a threat of punishment it is because we are living in darkness. We do not see our true condition – and therefore do not see the need for freedom in Christ. We think our condition is normal – and that God is wrong to disrupt it. But God knows our condition is abnormal and that we need to see the Truth. The Truth will indeed completely overturn our perspective. But that is good news.

The Ramifications of Accountability to God

The fact that all humanity is accountable to God – the fact that accountability to God exists – proves several things:

First, of all, it proves that humanity was created to have a relationship with God. But not just a casual relationship – but a close, personal relationship.

Second, if we are accountable to God, it proves there IS Truth, and that He DOES reveal it, and that there is a LIFE for which we are responsible. Otherwise, accountability would not exist.

Third, once we realize it, we will see that accountability to God is necessary because of where we begin – with a sin nature and in darkness. We must be delivered. Thus, accountability is for our eternal good. For accountability to God is nothing more than God revealing Christ to us so that we must be saved and come into the full experience of the Truth.

Fourth, accountability to God shows that humanity DOES have a free will – able to choose – once God brings light. If God does NOT bring light there can be no real choice – but once God brings light then the word RATHER comes into play. We can choose light RATHER than darkness only if light is given, and we are to blame for remaining in darkness RATHER than coming to the light only once light is given. This is accountability – we are accountable to God based on the light He gives

Fifth, once God gives light He never withdraws the light. We will either embrace and stand in the light or close our eyes to it. There is no going back. We HAVE seen. But if we have closed our eyes to the Truth we can still open them – and the light will still be there. The refusal to open them is THE SIN.

Sixth, accountability to God is not a threat of punishment. It is an offer of LOVE and of life – but an offer that must be freely chosen by humanity. God gives light to set us free. He seeks an eternal relationship with us -- seeks fellowship with us. That is impossible unless we KNOW HIM. Thus accountability is not something that ought to be IMPOSED by God. It is something that ought to be sought by His people.

Seventh, accountability to God proves that there is a great plan and purpose in Christ that God has for the eternal ages. And it proves that our accountability NOW is related to that plan and purpose for the eternal ages. Jesus spoke of this continually. This shows that accountability to God carries eternal issues.