

Personal Accountability or Responsibility

This is an area where we, as individuals, are held responsible for our own sins and wrongs committed without the involvement of any other person.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, **according to that he hath done**, whether it be good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works...and they were judged every man according to their works." Revelation 20:12-13 (see also Daniel 7:10).

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. **For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.**" Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (see also Revelation 22:11-12; Matthew 16:27, 22:11-17; Psalms 9:7-8, 50:4; Zephaniah 1:12; Romans 2:6 & 9 & 12-16; Acts 17:30-31; Mark 13:34; 2 Corinthians 11:15).

But there is NO excuse for our sins, because sin is made from choice!

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you..." Romans 6:13-14.

To yield yourself to either commit sin or instead to do righteousness unto God, involves your choice to do it.

"No man can plead his circumstances, his education, or his temperament, as an excuse for living in rebellion against God. **The sinner is such by his own deliberate choice.**" Signs of the Times, March 9, 1882 (vol 1, p 290) (See also October 14, 1880, June 16, 1890).

"The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. No matter how severe the pressure brought to bear upon you, **sin is your own act**. The seat of difficulty is the unrenewed heart." Adventist Home, p 331.

"It is not in the power of Satan to force anyone to sin. Sin is the sinner's individual act. Before sin exists in the heart, the consent of the will must be given, and as soon as it is given, sin is triumphant, and hell rejoices. But there is no excuse for sin, either great or little." Signs of the Times, December 18, 1893 (vol 3, p 85) (See also Maranatha, p 82 & 225; Testimonies, vol 4, p 623; This Day With God, p 318; Manuscript Releases, vol 20, p 385-386).

Others excuse themselves from personal accountability by claiming that: "Christ has already kept God's law for me, so I do not have to worry about my continued sinning."

"You will hear the cry 'Only believe.' Satan believed and trembled. We must have a faith that works by love and purifies the heart. The idea prevails that Christ has done all for us, and that we can go on transgressing the commandments and will not be held accountable for it. This is the greatest deception that the enemy ever devised." Selected Messages, book 3, p 153.

In fact, every minister, church leader, and individual who have led others to believe this great deception--that they can disregard any portion of God's law--are held responsible for all the sins committed by the individuals who believed them!

"Those who wrest the scriptures to sustain error, greatly dishonor God, and in the day of judgment, they **will be held responsible for the disobedience of those who through their sophistries have been led to disregard the divine law.**" Review and Herald, August 13, 1959 (vol 6, p 526).

We are not born sinners, but are born with the tendency towards sin because of a fallen nature received from our parents – all the way back to Adam. This is exactly the same nature that Jesus took upon Himself at birth.

"For verily He (Christ) took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore **in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren...**" Hebrews 2:16-17.

"For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, **but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.**" Hebrews 4:15.

"He was ever pure and undefiled; yet **He took upon Him our sinful nature.**" Review and Herald, December 15, 1896 (vol 3, p 421).

"It was in the order of God that Christ should **take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man, that He might be made perfect through suffering, and Himself endure the strength of Satan's fierce temptations, that He might understand how to succor those who should be tempted.**" Spirit of Prophecy, vol 2, p 39 (see also SDA Bible Commentary, vol 4, p 1147, vol 6, p 1074; Review and Herald, February 24, 1874, November 24, 1904).

Satan himself cannot find any excuse for originating sin!

"There is no excuse for sin. It will be the final condemnation of Lucifer and his angels that when God shall ask, 'Why have ye done this?' they will be able to assign no reason. And when at the last great day sinners are confronted with their sins, and are asked, 'Why did you transgress?' every mouth will be stopped. The sinful will stand speechless before God." Review and Herald, September 24, 1901 (vol 4, p 337).

We choose our own sinful habits--they are not given to us at birth. We develop them by the choices we make in various situations. We can either accept Jesus and stop sinning through His grace and strength, or we can reject Jesus and cling to our sins. It is either one or the other, but never both.

"The Saviour prayed for His disciples, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.' But if the receiver of Bible knowledge makes no change in his habits or practices to correspond to the light of truth, what then? The spirit is warring against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit; and one of these must conquer. If the truth sanctifies the soul, sin is hated and shunned, because Christ is accepted as an honored guest. **But Christ cannot share a divided heart; sin and Jesus are never in copartnership.**" Testimony to Ministers, p 160.

Thus sin is our own choice, and there is no excuse that we can offer for it. But through Jesus we can overcome all sin and thus escape personal accountability. (For further insight on how we can all overcome personal sin, please see our study on **The Will--Your Power of Choice** at our website at www.LightMinistries.com/SDA).

What are some other areas in which we are held personally responsible?

We are not only held accountable for the knowledge of the truth we now possess, but for the knowledge we neglected, and also for that knowledge we could have possessed (see Review and Herald, July 10, 1879, May 27, 1890, February 28, 1899; Temperance p 114; Testimonies, vol 5, p 280; 1888 Materials, p 1348).

"Those who have an opportunity to hear the truth, and yet take no pains to hear or understand it, thinking that if they do not hear, they will not be accountable, will be judged guilty before God the same as if they had heard and rejected. There is no excuse for those who choose to go in error when they might understand what is truth....

"Those who deliberately place themselves where they will not have an opportunity of hearing the truth, will be reckoned among those who have heard the truth, and persistently resisted its evidences." Review and Herald, April 25, 1893 (vol 3, p 42) (SDA Bible Commentary, vol 5, p 1145).

Another area is that we are held accountable for the way in which we hear or read God's word (see Peter's Counsel to Parents, p 23).

We are also held accountable for following the truth of God and "**showing to the world what is the true idea of Christianity--what it is to have a Christlike life and character**" Fundamentals of Christian Education, p 298-299.

If we do not keep God's holy law--especially the Sabbath--we are held responsible by God (see Review and Herald, May 6, 1875).

We--especially the ministers--will be held responsible for willing ignorance and disregard of the eight laws of health and nature (see Temperance, p 169; Counsels on Health, p 205-206), and also for the injury done to our body (see Youth's Instructor, August 24, 1893, September 14, 1893).

We are held accountable for doing our duty to God and to our fellow-men (see Youth's Instructor, June 21, 1894).

We are held accountable for the grace and trusts which God has placed upon us, and the talents and gifts which He has given us (see Matthew 25:14-30; Review and Herald, April 21, 1896, April 9, 1901; Youth's Instructor, June 8 & 15, 1893, August 5, 1897; Christ's Object Lessons, p 373; Publishing Ministry, p 233; SDA Bible Commentary, vol 5, p 1100; Signs of the Times, November 20, 1884).

"We shall individually be held responsible for doing an iota less than God has given us ability to do." Review and Herald, April 24, 1883 (vol 1, p 351) (Christ's Object Lessons, p 362-363).

If we place ourselves in the way of work being done for God, then we are held responsible for what might have been done, as well as "all the evil that has resulted therefrom" Manuscript Releases, vol 4, p 137 (see also General Conference Daily Bulletin, February 23, 1899).

We are held responsible for our misused time, strength, and neglected duties (see Review and Herald, April 21, 1896).

We are not only held accountable for the faculties of mind given us, but also for the improvement of these faculties!

"We should improve our faculties, and we shall be held accountable for their improvement. They are a sacred trust, and if we do not use them properly, if we do not educate ourselves to trust God, to believe and practice His word, **we shall be held accountable.**" Review and Herald, March 16, 1911 (vol 6, p 112) (see also Youth's Instructor, January 11, 1894; Review and Herald, March 7, 1893, April 25, 1893; Testimonies, vol 4, p 468-469).

We are not only held accountable for what we have done, but also for what we have not done.

"Not only are we held accountable for what we have done, but for what we have left undone. We are held to account for our undeveloped characters, our unimproved opportunities." Review and Herald, September 22, 1891 (vol 2, p 519) (SDA Bible Commentary, vol 7, p 987; That I May Know Him, p 93).

We will be held accountable for the good which we might have done "but failed to perform" because we were "too careless and indolent to gain a knowledge of the will of God" Review and Herald, May 1, 1883 (see also May 1, 1888; Youth's Instructor, December 21, 1893, January 2, 1896).

We will also be held responsible for using means--tithe included--in any other area than for what it was intended for (see Spalding and Magan Collection, p 178; Testimonies, vol 2, p 518, vol 9, p 246-250, vol 6, p 387). (For further study on the tithe subject, please see our study on **The Issue of Tithe**, at our website).

"The displeasure of God is kindled against those who claim to be His followers, yet allow consecrated workers to suffer for the necessities of life while engaged in active ministry. These selfish ones will be called to render an account, not only for the misuse of their Lord's money, but for the depression and heartache which their course has brought upon His faithful servants." Acts of the Apostles, p 340.

Those blessed with means and property "are held responsible to see and relieve the needs of God's cause" Review and Herald, December 10, 1901.

Also if we allow ourselves to be deceived by the enemy, God holds us accountable "for failing in a faithful discharge of duty" Gospel Herald, April 1, 1905.

And finally, if we preach falsehood and error regarding any of the three great Worthies of the Godhead, then we are held accountable for "greatly dishonoring God" Spalding and Magan Collection, p332.

Social Accountability or Responsibility

Social responsibility is where we are held accountable for the wrongs we involved others in--whether directly or indirectly (see Signs of the Times, November 24, 1887).

The following are some examples of social accountability.

If we do not share the truths we know with others, and they end up lost because of this, their blood is upon us!

"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou has delivered thy soul." Ezekiel 33:8-9 (see also Acts of the Apostles, p 393-394; Review and Herald, August 23, 1908; Christian Service, p 196; Testimonies, vol 6, p 331-332, vol 9, p 86-87; Signs of the Times, August 14, 1901).

We are held responsible for the medical missionary work we could have done for others (see Testimonies, vol 7, p 62-63).

We are held accountable for what effect our influence, words, actions, and impressions have upon others (see Patriarchs and Prophets, p 556; Medical Ministry, p 202-203; Signs of the Times, October 8, 1885).

"We are amid the perils of the last days, and in this evil time **everyone is held responsible by the Holy Spirit for his personal position before the church and the world.**" 1888 Materials, p 453.

"We lead others either upward to happiness and immortal life, or downward to sorrow and eternal death. And **if by our deeds we strengthen or force into activity the evil powers of those around us, we share their sin.**" Christ's Object Lessons, p 201.

We are held accountable for not being self-denying and self-sacrificing in "imparting to the most needy and suffering ones" blessings and encouragement--trying to relieve the needs of those who are worthy and do them good. But we can also be held accountable for giving to those who are unworthy of our support!

"The indiscriminate almsgiving is often more injurious than helpful. It often encourages idleness and destroys self-respect." Manuscript Releases, vol 4, p 9-10.

We are held responsible for our wrong example, whether in eating, drinking, or living (see Temperance, p 71-72).

Ministers are held accountable for the moral and religious standing of their flock (see Patriarchs and Prophets, p 190 & 578).

Ministers will be "brought under condemnation with the people" if they do not warn those who are misusing the tithe (see Counsels on Stewardship, p 86-87 & 106).

Any in positions of responsibility who choose to follow their own way, "**are held responsible for the mistakes of those who are led astray by their example**" Review and Herald, September 14, 1905.

Parents are held accountable for the salvation and physical health of, and for giving correct lessons to, their children (see Notebook Leaflets, p 78; Review and Herald, December 24, 1889, September 10, 1895, September 15, 1904; Signs of the Times, February 9, 1882, August 23, 1899; Testimonies, vol 4, p 138).

Teachers and principals are held responsible for the foolish talking, jesting, joking, the low cheap talk, and the unruly spirit allowed to exist and affect the youth (see E.G. White Biography, vol 4, p 310).

Teachers are held responsible for the children and youth under their guidance (see Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p 104).

Also, if we agree to allow an unqualified teacher to guide our children and youth, then we are held responsible (see Manuscript Releases, vol 4, p 156-157).

If we see a brother sin, and we do not bring it to his attention, then we are a sharer in his sin (see Leviticus 5:1, 19:17; Signs of the Times, November 24, 1881), and are also a sharer in any evil which might be caused because of this sin.

"Those who have too little courage to reprove wrong, or who through indolence or lack of interest make no earnest effort to purify the family or the church of God, **are held accountable for the evil that may result from their neglect of duty.** We are just as responsible for evils that we might have checked in others by exercise of parental or pastoral authority as if the acts had been our own." Patriarchs and Prophets, p 578 (see also Desire of Ages, p 441).

If we try to excuse sin we see in another, then we become a sharer in their guilt (see Signs of the Times, November 24, 1881).

If we ignore or become indifferent to sins we see in another, then we are held responsible for these sins!

"If wrongs are apparent among His people, and if the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, **and are alike guilty and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty.**" Testimonies, vol 3, p 265-266.

If we do not give the trumpet the correct and certain sound of warning--including giving the names of certain wicked men (see Manuscript Releases, vol 12, p 3-4; 2 Timothy 4:14-15; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:15, 2:17, 4:10)--then we will be held accountable for every soul that is lost because of our unfaithfulness (see Ezekiel 33:2-6; Youth's Instructor, December 21, 1893; Testimonies to Ministers, p 405).

If we allow any minister who is living in any known sin and refusing to repent, to stand in the sacred pulpit of our church and speak or minister to us, then we become a sharer in his sin (see Pamphlet #28, p 17; Special Testimonies, Series A#1b, p 23).

If we give our support, means, and blessings to any minister who is living in any known sin, or who is preaching any false doctrine, then we are guilty of supporting his sin and the spreading of his error, we become a partaker of his evil deeds, and heaven's woe is upon us!

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God... If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed **is a partaker of his evil deeds.**" 2 John 9-11.

"There are fearful woes for those who preach the truth, but are not sanctified by it, and also for those who consent to receive and maintain the unsanctified to minister to them in word and doctrine." Testimonies, vol 1, p 261-262 (see also Testimonies, vol 2, p 552).

If we choose to sympathize with those who are in the wrong, comforting them in their wrongs instead of trying to help them repent and forsake them, then we are a sharer in their wrongs.

"There will be men and women who despise reproof and whose feelings will ever rise up against it. It is not pleasant to be told of our wrongs. In almost every case where reproof is necessary, there will be some who entirely overlook the fact that the Spirit of the Lord has been grieved and His cause reproached. These will pity those who deserved reproof, because personal feelings have been hurt. **All this unsanctified sympathy places the sympathizers where they are sharers in the guilt of the one reproved.** In nine cases out of ten if the one reproved had been left under a sense of his wrongs, he might have been helped to see them and thereby have been reformed." Testimonies, vol 3, p 359 (see also Testimonies, vol 1, p 212-213).

Also, if we shield any criminal from the just punishment of his crime when we know them to be guilty – especially in the case of murder, then we are a partaker of their sin (see SDA Bible Commentary, vol 2, p 999).

Those who sow dissension, bickering, suspicion, dis-union and criticism among their brethren, will have the blood of every soul misled by these wrong impressions and unsanctified words--including even those souls that were misled after the death of those who misled them!

"The wrong impression made upon human minds may live long after those who made it are dead." Review and Herald, April 27, 1897 (vol 3, p 460) (see also Mind, Character, and Personality, vol 2, p 399).

If we sustain any one who is boastful, proud, or vain, then we are "held accountable by God for confirming him in a perilous delusion" Spalding and Magan Collection, p 333 (see also Testimonies, vol 2, p 181).

If we praise the unfaithful and flatter the unconsecrated, we are sharers in their sin (see Testimonies, vol 3, p 88).

We can also become a sharer in the guilt of another if we take a hard, unadvised course against them (see Review and Herald, March 21, 1893).

If we are involved in any way with the making, distributing, selling, or the leading of others to drink liquor, then we are held accountable for all the sins caused by them while drunk! (see Review and Herald, May 22, 1892; Temperance p 28-29, 40-41; Ministry of Healing, p 341).

If we choose to vote for individuals, regardless of party affiliations, then we are held responsible for their sins committed while in office (see Gospel Workers, p 391-96; Fundamentals of Christian Education, p 475-486).

And finally, if we choose to vote for any proposed legislation, which will lead others to break God's law, and it becomes law, then we are held responsible for these sins committed (see Temperance, p 255).

God very simply warns His people regarding social accountability, by stating:

"Lay hands suddenly on no man, **neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.**" 2 Timothy 5:22.

For more information, please visit: www.LightMinistries.com