



Account-  
ability

## PERSONAL GROWTH THROUGH PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

JESSE DILLINGER

(Jeremiah 3:11)

**P**eople need someone with whom they can be totally honest, someone with whom they can share their deep feelings and thoughts, someone with whom they can discuss their walk with God. People who have such a friend have learned a powerful secret to success in Christian growth—personal accountability.

Accountability means accounting for personal thoughts and behaviors, which are held up to a standard and evaluated. Another person or a group will hold someone accountable and offer encouragement and support as he or she tries to meet that standard. With voluntary accountability, people choose to place themselves in a relationship where someone else will ask them to account for their thoughts and behaviors.

Everyone, Christian and non-Christian, is accountable to one ultimate standard: the Word of God (Phil. 2:9-11). For Christians, the Bible remains the standard for daily decisions. Personal accountability builds a bridge between the Bible and the practice of its principles. While Christians remain on the earth, their objective is to grow spiritually into Christ's image (Phil. 3:13, 14). Accountability helps one to progress in the spiritual process of maturing.

### PARTNERS IN ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability requires self-evaluation, pure motives, and the absence of hypocritical judgment. People must not hold someone else accountable to a standard they are not willing to meet themselves. Accountability partners should be maturing Christians who have the desire and the time to invest in relationships with others. They must be able to keep reasonable confidences and be concerned enough with

others' personal growth that they can be tough when it is needed.

### TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Virtually any area of life can be placed in an accountability arrangement. A person may seek accountability to assist in following through with a specific task, like developing a regular pattern of family time. Someone may ask another to help in dealing honestly at work or remaining financially sound. A married couple may wish to meet with another married couple concerning healthy communication and loving treatment of each other. Changing one's attitude at work, developing a pattern of reading the Bible, telling the truth instead of "white lies," or maintaining purity in one's thought life may also represent areas in need of accountability.

Personal accountability is every Christian's privilege and responsibility (2 Cor. 5:10). People may ask God in prayer to show them what needs to be addressed in their lives. Not only will God reveal what they can't see, but He will also use others to reveal their personal weaknesses. At that point, they may desire to take advantage of other types of accountability with an individual or a group. In the individual arrangement, another person enters in to help a person. In a group setting, two or more individuals hold each other accountable. With a group devoted to living accord-

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ing to Scripture, there will be more praying, more encouraging, and more investment among more people.

### **CATEGORIES OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

*Restorative accountability* can restore others to a relationship or church membership after they have been involved in sin substantial enough to sever the original tie (Gal. 6:1). Prior to an agreement to accountability, there must be genuine repentance on the part of the offender. Thorough forgiveness must precede accountability (2 Cor. 2:7).

*Preventative accountability* is sought to guard against weakness or sin (Mark 14:38; James 5:16). Examples include sexual thoughts and actions (lust and pornography), sins of indulgence (greed and gluttony), sins of the tongue (lying, gossip, slander) and sins of omission (failure to show compassion, etc.). The length of this type of accountability varies depending on the situation. For example, people traveling on business may set up a system of accountability specifically for the times they are away from their family to guard against temptation.

*Constructive accountability* aims at encouragement and the development of believers' spiritual growth (Heb. 10:23). These groups may meet for six months or more and may be guided by a specific Bible study.

*Task-oriented accountability* includes being held accountable for important activities such as keeping specific promises or meeting specific goals. This accountability ends with the completion of the task.

### **ENEMIES OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Enemies of accountability include denial (2 Sam. 12:1-7) and lies (Col. 3:9). If a person is not willing to admit mistakes or failures, there can be no accountability. Although one may be tempted to stretch the

truth when meeting with an accountability partner, lying about one's success does not help the process.

Other obstacles to accountability include blame (Gen. 3:11-13) and pride (Rom. 12:16). Humility is a cornerstone of accountability. It is not easy to make oneself vulnerable to another person's scrutiny. However, a partner who reacts with a prideful, haughty attitude toward one's admission of disobedience is not a suitable partner for accountability. Encouragement should be used instead of insult.

However, no accountability relationship can tolerate continued sin on the part of one or both parties (Matt. 5:29, 30). There is no purpose in a group that makes a continuous litany of excuses for undisciplined behavior.

### **RESULTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

When a group meets for accountability, questions are asked that encourage honesty and revelation. "Have you lied to anyone since we last met?" is an example of the type of questions that can provide structure for the meeting. Participants should also request information to monitor the development of desired thoughts and behaviors. "What specific truths have you told while being tempted to lie?"

Accountability brings the body of Christ together in a supportive way to encourage us to grow in Christ. It allows the development and use of our gifts and promotes unity within the body. We grow by doing what is right. Through accountability, our faith is strengthened by the example of others' obedience.

### **FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of accountability include:

- Proverbs 12:15; 13:20; 27:6
- Galatians 6:1-5

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To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on accountability at Romans 14:12 on page 1487. See also the personality profile of David and Nathan on page 401.

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other; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup>He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord;<sup>a</sup> and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. <sup>7</sup>For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. <sup>8</sup>For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and rose<sup>a</sup> and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. <sup>10</sup>But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.<sup>a</sup> <sup>11</sup>For it is written:

*"As I live, says the LORD,  
Every knee shall bow to Me,  
And every tongue shall confess to God."*<sup>a</sup>

<sup>12</sup>So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. <sup>13</sup>Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

#### THE LAW OF LOVE

<sup>14</sup>I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is nothing* unclean of itself;

but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. <sup>15</sup>Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup>Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; <sup>17</sup>for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>For he who serves Christ in these things<sup>a</sup> is acceptable to God and approved by men.

<sup>19</sup>Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. <sup>20</sup>Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense. <sup>21</sup>*It is* good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor *do anything* by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.<sup>a</sup> <sup>22</sup>Do you have faith? Have<sup>a</sup> *it* to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. <sup>23</sup>But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does not eat* from faith; for *whatever is* not from faith is *sin*.<sup>a</sup>

14:6 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits the rest of this sentence.

14:9 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *and rose*. 14:10 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads of *God*. 14:11 <sup>a</sup>Isaiah 45:23 14:18 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *this*. 14:21 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *or is offended or is made weak*. 14:22 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *The faith which you have—have*. 14:23 <sup>a</sup>M-Text puts Romans 16:25–27 here.

#### KEY PASSAGE

### BEFORE THE THRONE

(14:12)



**Accountability**

The sobering words of this verse describe a day when each individual will stand alone before God Almighty to "give account." At that moment, there will be no excuses, no hidden agendas, no chance to lie and get away with it.

Each person is ultimately accountable to Christ, not to others. The context of this verse speaks of the diversity in the Christian fellowship, encouraging believers to allow for differences of opinion in matters that do not conflict with God's Word. Elsewhere Paul encourages believers in this diversity, saying, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

We must each seek to grow in our faith, on our own before God. Accountability to others can help this process, but ultimately we will be accountable to God for how we have lived. Follow God's Word—it is a sure guide.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about accountability on pages 966, 967. See also the personality profile of David and Nathan on page 401.

the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

#### NATHAN'S PARABLE AND DAVID'S CONFESSION

**12** Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. <sup>3</sup>But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup>And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the way-faring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

<sup>5</sup>So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this

shall surely die! <sup>6</sup>And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

<sup>7</sup>Then Nathan said to David, "You *are* the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup>I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! <sup>9</sup>Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.

<sup>10</sup>Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' <sup>11</sup>Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your

#### PERSONALITY PROFILE



Accountability

### NATHAN—AN HONEST FRIEND

(2 SAMUEL 12)

Everyone can use a friend like Nathan. Such a friend shows up not only when wanted, but especially when needed. In Nathan, David had the added benefit of a friend who brought God's perspective into their relationship.

Shortly after David succeeded in covering up a shocking episode of sexual sin followed by conspiracy and murder, his friend Nathan showed up one day with a story (2 Sam. 12:1–12). Nathan's vivid parable became a tool God used to shatter David's denial of sin. Nathan confronted David about his sin and called him into accountability before God. Sometimes such accountability can be done privately and personally. Other times, sins of a public nature must be dealt with in a public manner.

In David's case, the sin may have seemed private, but the cover-up and the consequences were public. Not only did the child conceived with Bathsheba die, but God also announced that the sword of violence would never depart from David's house (2 Sam. 12:10). His own family would try to betray and kill him.

Nathan remained a friend to David and Bathsheba. His confrontation of their sin was not intended to destroy them, but to help them clear their consciences and deal with their behavior properly. Although he couldn't change the consequences that followed, Nathan's faithful friendship allowed David and Bathsheba to make the best before God of a shameful event. They may not have wanted everything he offered them as a friend, but he gave it to them anyway. God showed him what they really needed.

Do you have any friends like Nathan? Could you be a friend like Nathan?

To Learn More: Turn to the article about accountability on pages 966, 967. See also the key passage note at Romans 14:12 on page 1487.

the forces with Ephraim according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Ephraim *shall be* Elishama the son of Ammihud."

<sup>19</sup>And his army was numbered at forty thousand five hundred.

<sup>20</sup>"Next to him *comes* the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the children of Manasseh *shall be* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur." <sup>21</sup>And his army was numbered at thirty-two thousand two hundred.

<sup>22</sup>"Then *comes* the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the children of Benjamin *shall be* Abidan the son of Gideoni." <sup>23</sup>And his army was numbered at thirty-five thousand four hundred. <sup>24</sup>"All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Ephraim, one hundred and eight thousand one hundred—they shall be the third to break camp.

<sup>25</sup>"The standard of the forces with Dan *shall be* on the north side according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Dan *shall be* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai." <sup>26</sup>And his army was numbered at sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

<sup>27</sup>"Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the children of Asher *shall be* Pagiel the son of Ocran." <sup>28</sup>And his army was numbered at forty-one thousand five hundred.

<sup>29</sup>"Then *comes* the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the children of Naphtali *shall be* Ahira the son of Enan." <sup>30</sup>And his army was numbered at fifty-three thousand four hundred. <sup>31</sup>"All who were numbered of the forces with Dan, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred—they shall break camp last, with their standards."

<sup>32</sup>These *are* the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces *were* six hundred and three

thousand five hundred and fifty. <sup>33</sup>But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

<sup>34</sup>Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses.

#### THE SONS OF AARON

**3** Now these *are* the records of Aaron and Moses when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. <sup>2</sup>And these *are* the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. <sup>3</sup>These *are* the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister as priests. <sup>4</sup>Nadab and Abihu had died before the LORD when they offered profane fire before the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father.

#### THE LEVITES SERVE IN THE TABERNACLE

<sup>5</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>6</sup>"Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. <sup>7</sup>And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. <sup>8</sup>Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle. <sup>9</sup>And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they *are* given entirely to him<sup>a</sup> from among the children of Israel. <sup>10</sup>So you shall appoint

3:9 <sup>a</sup>Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint read *Me*.



#### SOUL NOTE

**Who's Calling?** (3:1-13) When God gives us a calling, it's accompanied by responsibility and accountability. God chose Aaron and his descendants to be the priests of Israel, and He chose the tribe of Levi to serve under Aaron "to do the work of the tabernacle" (3:7). God greatly honored the Levites when He separated them for special service and said, "They shall be Mine" (3:13). With this honor came the responsibility of performing their duties as God commanded. When God calls us to serve Him, He both honors us and gives us great responsibility. As we serve, we must remember that we are accountable to Him (Eph. 6:7). **Topic: Accountability**

mies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. <sup>15</sup>Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

<sup>16</sup>Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. <sup>17</sup>Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so.

<sup>18</sup>And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. <sup>19</sup>And it

came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow

down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

<sup>20</sup>Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, <sup>21</sup>I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, <sup>22</sup>so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not." <sup>23</sup>Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immedi-

ately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

#### THE NATIONS REMAINING IN THE LAND

**3** Now these are the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan <sup>2</sup>(this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it), <sup>3</sup>namely, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. <sup>4</sup>And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

<sup>5</sup>Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>6</sup>And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and

When the children of Israel  
cried out to the LORD, the LORD  
raised up a deliverer.

JUDGES 3:9

they served their gods.

#### OTHNIEL

<sup>7</sup>So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. <sup>8</sup>Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years. <sup>9</sup>When the children of Israel

3:7 <sup>a</sup>Name or symbol for Canaanite goddesses

#### SOUL NOTE



**Cycles** (3:7, 8) The Book of Judges describes cycles of sin and judgment in Israel. When everything was going great, the nation would forget God and turn to idols. God would punish them for it, then they would cry out to Him in repentance, and He would send a deliverer (judge) to help them against their oppressors (3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:33; 10:6; 13:1). When the people sinned, they were held accountable and were punished for breaking their covenant with God. While God is rich in mercy, He still holds people accountable for their sins and allows them to face the consequences of their behavior in their lives. **Topic: Accountability**



### SOLOMON DEDICATES THE TEMPLE

<sup>62</sup>Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. <sup>63</sup>And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. <sup>64</sup>On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

<sup>65</sup>At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days—fourteen days. <sup>66</sup>On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

### GOD'S SECOND APPEARANCE TO SOLOMON

**9** And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he wanted to do, <sup>2</sup>that the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. <sup>3</sup>And the LORD said to him: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

<sup>4</sup>Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, *and* if you keep My statutes and My judgments, <sup>5</sup>then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.' <sup>6</sup>But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments *and* My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, <sup>7</sup>then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. <sup>8</sup>And *as for* this house, *which* is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' <sup>9</sup>Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought all this calamity on them.' "

### SOLOMON AND HIRAM EXCHANGE GIFTS

<sup>10</sup>Now it happened at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house <sup>11</sup>(Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress and gold, as much as he desired), *that* King Solomon then gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. <sup>12</sup>Then Hiram went from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, but they did not please him. <sup>13</sup>So he said, "What *kind of* cities are these which you have given me, my brother?" And he called them the land of

### SOUL NOTE



**Seriously (9:5)** God told Solomon that He would establish his kingdom forever.

At the same time, God warned Solomon that if he turned away from Him, He would deal severely with both Solomon and Israel. This passage contains both potential blessings and curses, based on people's responses. Believers are accountable to God. Their choices will not only affect them, but others as well, such as family and friends. The king's choices affected the entire nation. God is serious about His relationship with us; we should be just as serious in our responses to Him.

**Topic: Accountability**

## PSALM 74

## A PLEA FOR RELIEF FROM OPPRESSORS

*A Contemplation<sup>a</sup> of Asaph.*

- 1 O God, why have You cast us off forever?  
*Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?*  
 Remember Your congregation, *which* You have purchased of old,  
 The tribe of Your inheritance, *which* You have redeemed—  
 This Mount Zion where You have dwelt.
- 3 Lift up Your feet to the perpetual desolations.  
 The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary.  
 Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place;  
 They set up their banners *for* signs.  
 They seem like men who lift up axes among the thick trees.  
 And now they break down its carved work, all at once,  
 With axes and hammers.
- 7 They have set fire to Your sanctuary;  
 They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground.  
 They said in their hearts,  
 "Let us destroy them altogether."  
 They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land.
- We do not see our signs;  
*There is no longer any prophet;*  
 Nor *is there* any among us who knows how long.
- 10 O God, how long will the adversary reproach?  
 Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?

- 11 Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?  
*Take it out of Your bosom and destroy them.*  
 For God *is* my King from of old,  
 Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
- 13 You divided the sea by Your strength;  
 You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters.
- 14 You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces,  
*And gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.*  
 You broke open the fountain and the flood;  
 You dried up mighty rivers.
- 16 The day *is* Yours, the night also *is* Yours;  
 You have prepared the light and the sun.
- 17 You have set all the borders of the earth;  
 You have made summer and winter.
- Remember this, *that* the enemy has reproached, O LORD,  
 And *that* a foolish people has blasphemed Your name.
- 19 Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast!  
 Do not forget the life of Your poor forever.  
 Have respect to the covenant;  
 For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty.  
 Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed!  
 Let the poor and needy praise Your name.

74:title <sup>a</sup>Hebrew *Maschil*

## SOUL NOTE

**The Best Counselor** (73:23–26) God is the ultimate counselor who is constantly with His people. The psalmist declared, "You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (73:24). Though friends, counselors, and advisors can be helpful, we ultimately must depend on and be accountable to God. We have no one in heaven but God, no one upon earth whom we should desire more than Him. We can take comfort in knowing that God hears our deepest cries, counsels us, and promises eternity with Him. **Topic: Accountability**



- 5 Open rebuke *is* better  
Than love carefully concealed.
- 6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend,  
But the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.
- 7 A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb,  
But to a hungry soul every bitter thing *is*  
sweet.
- 8 Like a bird that wanders from its nest  
Is a man who wanders from his place.
- 9 Ointment and perfume delight the heart,  
And the sweetness of a man's friend  
*gives delight* by hearty counsel.
- 10 Do not forsake your own friend or your  
father's friend,  
Nor go to your brother's house in the  
day of your calamity;  
Better *is* a neighbor nearby than a  
brother far away.
- 11 My son, be wise, and make my heart  
glad,  
That I may answer him who reproaches  
me.
- 12 A prudent *man* foresees evil *and* hides  
himself;  
The simple pass on *and* are punished.
- 13 Take the garment of him who is surety  
for a stranger,  
And hold it in pledge *when* he is surety  
for a seductress.
- 14 He who blesses his friend with a loud  
voice, rising early in the morning,  
It will be counted a curse to him.
- 15 A continual dripping on a very rainy  
day  
And a contentious woman are alike;  
16 Whoever restrains her restrains the  
wind,  
And grasps oil with his right hand.
- 17 As iron sharpens iron,  
So a man sharpens the countenance of  
his friend.
- 18 Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its  
fruit;  
So he who waits on his master will be  
honored.
- 19 As in water face *reflects* face,  
So a man's heart *reveals* the man
- 20 Hell<sup>a</sup> and Destruction<sup>b</sup> are never full;  
So the eyes of man are never satisfied.
- 21 The refining pot *is* for silver and the  
furnace for gold,  
And a man *is valued* by what others say  
of him.
- 22 Though you grind a fool in a mortar  
with a pestle along with crushed  
grain,  
Yet his foolishness will not depart from  
him.
- 23 Be diligent to know the state of your  
flocks,  
And attend to your herds;
- 24 For riches *are* not forever,  
Nor does a crown *endure* to all  
generations.

27:20 <sup>a</sup>Or Sheol <sup>b</sup>Hebrew Abaddon

#### SOUL NOTE

**Sharpener (27:17)** Believers' interaction with other believers is one of the most important aspects of Christian friendship and fellowship. Because they love us, Christian friends can hold us accountable, help us see our blind spots, and show us better ways to live. "As iron sharpens iron," one Christian can sharpen the other Christian's character by holding them accountable for words and actions. When we allow Christian friends to sharpen us, we can learn and grow in areas that we might never have noticed on our own. God can work through our believing friends to teach us and guide us. **Topic: Accountability**

And I will cause you to serve your  
enemies  
In the land which you do not know;  
For you have kindled a fire in My anger  
*which shall burn forever."*

<sup>5</sup>Thus says the LORD:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man  
And makes flesh his strength,  
Whose heart departs from the LORD.  
For he shall be like a shrub in the  
desert,  
And shall not see when good comes,  
But shall inhabit the parched places in  
the wilderness,  
In a salt land  
which is not  
inhabited.

“Blessed

7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,  
And whose hope is in the LORD.  
For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,  
Which spreads out its roots by the river,  
And will not fear<sup>a</sup> when heat comes;  
But its leaf will be green,  
And will not be anxious in the year of drought,  
Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

9 "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*,  
**And desperately wicked;**  
 Who can know it?  
 10 I, the LORD, search the heart,  
 I test the mind,  
 Even to give every man according to his  
 ways.

According to the fruit of his doings.

11 "As a partridge that broods but does not hatch,  
So is he who gets riches, but not by right;  
It will leave him in the midst of his days  
And at his end he will be a fool."

12 A glorious high throne from the  
beginning  
Is the place of our sanctuary.  
13 O LORD, the hope of Israel,  
All who forsake You shall be ashamed.

“Those who depart from Me  
Shall be written in the  
earth,  
man who  
Because they have  
and whose  
forsaken the  
LORD.”  
LORD,  
17:7 The fountain of living  
waters.”

## JEREMIAH PRAYS FOR DELIVERANCE

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;  
Save me, and I shall be saved,  
For You *are* my praise.

15 Indeed they say to me,  
"Where *is* the word of the LORD?  
Let it come now!"


16 As for me, I have not hurried away from  
*being* a shepherd *who* follows You,  
Nor have I desired the woeful day;  
You know what came out of my lips;  
**It was right there before You.**

17 Do not be a terror to me;  
You *are* my hope in the day of doom.  
**Let them be ashamed who persecute me.**

17:8 <sup>a</sup>Qere and Targum read see.



## SOUL NOTE



**Heart Condition (17:9, 10)** The masks and false fronts people wear to disguise their real feelings, intentions, or selves may fool the people around them but are useless against God. With a gaze more powerful than any X ray, the Lord peers beyond all facades, straight into the heart, the core of our being. What is there cannot be masked. All of our jealousies, deceitfulness, rage, and ugliness are on display for Him and subject to His judgment. The Lord does more than just *look* at the heart, however; He can transform hearts and renew people from the inside out. **Topic: Accountability**

**Figure 1.**

<sup>19</sup>Thus the gate which the LORD

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- 12 If he has oppressed the poor and needy,  
Robbed by violence,  
Not restored the pledge,  
Lifted his eyes to the idols,  
Or committed abomination;
- 13 If he has exacted usury  
Or taken increase—  
Shall he then live?  
He shall not live!  
If he has done any of these abominations,  
He shall surely die;  
His blood shall be upon him.
- 14 "If, however, he begets a son  
Who sees all the sins which his father  
has done,  
And considers but does not do likewise;
- 15 Who has not eaten on the mountains,  
Nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the  
house of Israel,  
Nor defiled his neighbor's wife;
- 16 Has not oppressed anyone,  
Nor withheld a pledge,  
Nor robbed by violence,  
But has given his bread to the hungry  
And covered the naked with clothing;
- 17 Who has withdrawn his hand from the  
poor<sup>a</sup>  
And not received usury or increase,  
But has executed My judgments  
And walked in My statutes—  
He shall not die for the iniquity of his  
father;  
He shall surely live!
- 18 "As for his father,  
Because he cruelly oppressed,  
Robbed his brother by violence,  
And did what is not good among his  
people,  
Behold, he shall die for his iniquity.

## TURN AND LIVE

<sup>19</sup>"Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. <sup>20</sup>The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

<sup>21</sup>"But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. <sup>22</sup>None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. <sup>23</sup>Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?

<sup>24</sup>"But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

<sup>25</sup>"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? <sup>26</sup>When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. <sup>27</sup>Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which

18:17 <sup>a</sup>Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *iniquity* (compare verse 8).

## SOUL NOTE



**The Verdict (18:1–22)** This passage describes how God would not punish children for their parents' sins, but instead would hold individuals responsible for their own sins. He promised to punish the wicked, but those who turn away from all their sins and obey God will be forgiven. In fact, "none of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him," says God (18:22). God does not judge according to the extenuating circumstances of our lives. He asks but one question: "Did you turn from sin and obey Me?" Being able to answer "Yes" is the life's work of every believer. **Topic: Accountability**

<sup>2</sup> But I will send a fire upon Moab,  
And it shall devour the palaces of  
Kerioth;  
Moab shall die with tumult,  
With shouting *and* trumpet sound.  
<sup>3</sup> And I will cut off the judge from its  
midst,  
And slay all its princes with him,"  
Says the LORD.

## JUDGMENT ON JUDAH

<sup>4</sup>Thus says the LORD:

"For three transgressions of Judah, and  
for four,  
I will not turn away its *punishment*,  
Because they have despised the law of  
the LORD,  
And have not kept His commandments.  
Their lies lead them astray,  
*Lies* which their fathers followed.  
<sup>5</sup> But I will send a fire upon Judah,  
And it shall devour the palaces of  
Jerusalem."

## JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL

<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD:

"For three transgressions of Israel, and for  
four,  
I will not turn away its *punishment*,  
Because they sell the righteous for  
silver,  
And the poor for a pair of sandals.  
<sup>7</sup> They pant after<sup>a</sup> the dust of the earth  
*which is* on the head of the poor,  
And pervert the way of the humble.  
A man and his father go in to the *same*  
girl,  
To defile My holy name.  
They lie down by every altar on clothes  
taken in pledge,

And drink the wine of the condemned *in*  
the house of their god.

<sup>9</sup> "Yet *it was* I *who* destroyed the Amorite  
before them,  
Whose height *was* like the height of the  
cedars,  
And he *was as* strong as the oaks;  
Yet I destroyed his fruit above  
And his roots beneath.  
<sup>10</sup> Also *it was* I *who* brought you up from  
the land of Egypt,  
And led you forty years through the  
wilderness,  
To possess the land of the Amorite.  
<sup>11</sup> I raised up some of your sons as  
prophets,  
And some of your young men as  
Nazirites.  
*Is it not so*, O you children of Israel?"  
Says the LORD.  
<sup>12</sup> "But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink,  
And commanded the prophets saying,  
'Do not prophesy!'

<sup>13</sup> "Behold, I am weighed down by you,  
As a cart full of sheaves is weighed  
down.  
<sup>14</sup> Therefore flight shall perish from the  
swift,  
The strong shall not strengthen his  
power,  
Nor shall the mighty deliver himself;  
<sup>15</sup> He shall not stand who handles the bow.  
The swift of foot shall not escape,  
Nor shall he who rides a horse deliver  
himself.  
<sup>16</sup> The most courageous men of might  
Shall flee naked in that day,"  
Says the LORD.

2:7 <sup>a</sup>Or *trample on*

## SOUL NOTE



**Justice for All (2:6)** Amos pronounced judgment on the surrounding nations, and even on Judah, Israel's brothers and sisters to the south. Perhaps the people in Israel enjoyed hearing that these nations faced God's judgment—until Amos added Israel to his list. They, too, had sinned greatly against God, and they would be punished. There is no getting around it: God punishes sin. Just as God provided the opportunity for repentance and restoration to ancient Israel, He also offers it today through His Son, Jesus Christ. **Topic: Accountability**

## BE RECONCILED TO GOD

<sup>12</sup>For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; <sup>15</sup>and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

<sup>16</sup>Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. <sup>18</sup>Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup>Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled

to God. <sup>21</sup>For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

## MARKS OF THE MINISTRY

**6** We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For He says:

*"In an acceptable time I have heard you,  
And in the day of salvation I have  
helped you."*<sup>a</sup>

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

<sup>3</sup>We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. <sup>4</sup>But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much *patience*, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, <sup>5</sup>in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; <sup>6</sup>by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, <sup>7</sup>by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, <sup>8</sup>by honor and dishonor, by

6:2 <sup>a</sup>Isaiah 49:8

## SOUL NOTE



**Present with the Lord (5:6-8)** Exactly what happens after someone dies? The Bible doesn't go into much detail, but it does say that believers who die—that is, are “absent from the body”—will be “present with the Lord” (see also Phil. 1:23). They will experience a state of blessedness with God. When Christ returns, the believers who have died will be raised and the living believers will be changed, and all will receive glorified, eternal bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:16-18). God has promised that His people will be with Him forever. Death is a defeated enemy. Christ has bought eternal life. We can take hope in God's sure promise. **Topic: Death**

## SOUL NOTE



**A Rewarding Wait (5:10)** A future judgment will finalize the destiny of all who have not known Christ (Rev. 20:11-15). Believers will not need to fear this judgment, for they will have been guaranteed salvation and eternal life in heaven. However, the saved do have a judgment awaiting them that will determine their rewards. At this judgment, Christians will account for how they have lived and served, and how well they have used their gifts for the sake of the gospel. If you had to stand before the Lord this very day, what would you say? God holds us accountable. **Topic: Accountability**

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sand years. <sup>5</sup>But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

#### SATANIC REBELLION CRUSHED

<sup>7</sup>Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup>and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup>They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. <sup>10</sup>The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where <sup>a</sup>the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

#### THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. <sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead, small

and great, standing before God,<sup>a</sup> and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. <sup>13</sup>The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup>Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.<sup>a</sup> <sup>15</sup>And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

#### ALL THINGS MADE NEW

**21** Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup>Then I, John,<sup>a</sup> saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be

**20:10** <sup>a</sup>NU-Text and M-Text add *also*. **20:12** <sup>a</sup>NU-Text and M-Text read *the throne*. **20:14** <sup>a</sup>NU-Text and M-Text add *the lake of fire*. **21:2** <sup>a</sup>NU-Text and M-Text omit *John*.

#### SOUL NOTE



**Before the Judge (20:11–15)** In this heavenly courtroom, God Himself is the judge. Everyone—small and great, poor and rich, the notorious and the reputable—will stand without any excuse before their Maker. The only thing that will matter is whether one's name has been written in the Book of Life. That book has no misprints, no omissions, no mistakes. No person can blame anyone else if their name is missing; and they can take no credit if their name is included. Each person can be sure that their name is written in the book by trusting Christ today. **Topic: Accountability**

#### SOUL NOTE



**No More Pain (21:4)** No sorrow, no pain, no death! Such a place is hard to imagine, because this world is filled with loss and sorrow. Revelation describes a better time and a better place, however, where grief and loss will not exist: heaven. God promises to "wipe away every tear" and that "there shall be no more pain." No matter what we experience here, God promises a perfect future with Him. Through the hard times of today, we can trust this hope for the future. **Topic: Grief/Loss**