

How To Handle Guilt

2-07-10

2Cor 7:9,10

trials of life – fear – anger

When you violate your conscience and do something you know is wrong

You feel guilty – right – That's a good thing

Our conscience is one of the ways God speaks to us

And we need to listen to the voice of our conscience

Now do you ever have those same guilt feelings

That bothered conscience – the feeling that you are going to be found out

When you've done nothing wrong - I would guess that most of us do

Guilt causes us to suffer and many don't even know why they feel guilty

2Cor 7:9,10

There are two different types of guilt

Paul rejoices that they were made sorrowful according to the will of God

Some guilt is good

Guilt feelings that come from the Holy Spirit leads us to repentance

The Holy Spirit's intent is to bring us to our knees in confession

And lead us back into fellowship

Some guilt is bad

The sorrow that is of the world is satanic and leads to death

A survey was taken and the question was this

When you experience guilt – what do you feel
And the number one answer was – self-punishment
There are three Greek words that can be translated guilt
And they all have the same basic meaning
These words are never used to describe a feeling of shame or anguish
They always mean that the party is liable for something they have done
Biblically guilt is a judicial term – not an emotion

So let's look at guilt and let's begin with the unsaved

If you have not received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

If you have never asked God to forgive you

Based upon the finished work of Jesus

You have a legitimate right to feel guilty

For you are guilty – you are guilty of every sin you have ever committed

You see - there is only one basis on which God will forgive sin

And that basis is through His Son

Jesus died for you took your place and paid the price for your sins

There is no other name given under heaven by which you can be saved

So if you have not received Jesus you have every right to feel guilty

But when you have received Jesus as Lord and Savior

Your sins are forgiven – your debt has been paid

I want to quickly look at a few verses that give us the foundational truths

If you are not a believer you may have trouble accepting this

Because these verses will run counter to your feelings

And it is difficult to accept that which our emotions find objectionable

1Pet 2 – He (Jesus) Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross

Jesus bore our sins and if He bore our sins then He also bore our guilt

Because it is our sin that has caused our guilt

Remember guilt's not a feeling it's being liable for something you have done

Rom 5 – Much more than, having been justified by His (Jesus) blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him

Jesus bore all of your sin – which means He took all of your guilt

He paid your entire debt to God in full

So when you are in Christ you are no longer guilty

Justified is a legal term – it means that the Judge has declared you innocent

Having been justified by faith in Jesus you are legally guilt free

1John 2 – If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He Himself is the payment for our sins

Notice that this passage is in the present tense - He is the payment

When by faith you receive Jesus all of your sins

Past present and future have been paid for

God has no outstanding judgments against you – He never will

You are completely freed from the guilt and the penalty of sin – forever

Rom 5 – There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ

Your sins are gone – extinct – past history – no longer remembered

You are now living in the unconditional love of Almighty God

And God's love never wavers and absolutely never changes

Condemnation wrath and judgment rests upon the guilty

The court of God declared you innocent – forever

There is not a single verse in the Bible

Telling those who have trusted Jesus that they should fear punishment

Be depressed or feel worthless because of sin – not one verse

We have two major problems when it comes to guilt

Satan wants you to feel guilty because guilt will make you useless

And we have a poor understanding of God and ourselves in God
God is not like us – He doesn't harbor grudges – doesn't need to get even
We are God's beloved children - we are the apple of His eye
Jesus began His ministry with a reading from Isaiah
Luke 4 – He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives; to set free those who are downtrodden
Jesus came to set us free
But untold numbers of God's children
Are bound in the captivity of guilt – not real guilt – guilty feelings
They **feel like** they don't measure up – like they don't make the grade
And everyone who has those feelings will mistake them for reality
But in Christ you have measured up – you have made the grade
You measure up to God's standard based upon the activities and merits of Jesus Christ
And that nagging feeling of guilt you have is either satanic
Or it is what Paul calls the sorrow of the world
Which means people in your life have made you feel worthless and guilty
And you cannot escape those feelings of not having measured up

Now I know the sins I have committed – I have confessed them
And I don't need to be reminded of them - for

If I focus on past sins I will become discouraged or depressed by guilt

And if I focus on past sins I will be doomed to repeat them
But the guilt of our sin is no longer charged against us
To live for God we need to realize the truth of God's Word
And begin to experience it in our lives
We have been declared not guilty
The blood of Jesus Christ is continually cleansing us of all sins
Our advocate - which is another word for attorney
Sits at the Father's right hand – talking to God on our behalf

We are the freely forgiven children of the Living God

Isa 53 tells us that the Lord gave Himself as a guilt offering

A guilt offering is a sacrifice that covers the guilt of the person making the sacrifice

Jesus died to take away our guilt

Jesus made the payment for our sins – He is the only Person who could

As He was dying He said – it is finished – not I am finished – it is finished

Now that does not mean that we will never sin

It doesn't mean that we will never turn away from God and go our own way

It does mean that when we do sin we are always welcomed back

1John 1 - If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us of all unrighteousness

He is faithful to forgive our sins

If He did not forgive them He would be unfaithful and denying Himself

He is just to forgive our sins

Just means that He is doing the right thing

His forgiveness of our sin is in perfect accord with His character

A good judge declares a man innocent – because the man is innocent

God is the just Judge of the world and He has declared you innocent

Now I am not telling you that you can sin any way you please and it's ok

Paul wrote – **Shall we who died to sin still live in it** – the answer is no

But I am telling you that when you do sin

When you go to God in repentance

You can also come to Him in boldness

Knowing that every debt you owe has been paid in full

The guilt you experience when you sin is from the Holy Spirit

And is intended by God to lead you to repentance

But having repented – having invoked the promises of 1John – that's it
The feeling of guilt should leave you and should be replaced by joy or peace
It is right between you and God
It won't get righter until you see Him in heaven

Repentance and confession restores your fellowship with God

God's purpose for your life is to lift you up – never destroy you

When you go to God in repentance forgiveness is complete

There is nothing you can do that will add to God's forgiveness

Yet sometimes those feelings of guilt remain

What are the causes of guilt feelings

First and the one we just looked at is

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and our need to be right with God

But some of us have committed sins that haunt us

Such as homosexuality abortion pornography adultery or murder

We live with the memory of these sins and we cannot escape the guilt

The same sin done over and over can cause us to feel beyond God's grace

There is no sin so big; there is no sin done so often that it will take you outside the grace of God – ever

Some guilty feelings come from our childhood

Children whose parents divorce often believe they are the cause

They can feel rejected and guilty all their lives

And as an adult they have no idea where these feelings come from

When a child is taught that they never measure up they live with guilt

If their father was harsh and unloving

They will believe God is harsh and unloving

They can read that God is love but they are unable to trust in that love

If children cannot meet their parents expectations

They will believe they can't meet God's expectations

Finally if I asked you to raise your hands

If someone in your family or school made you feel

That you would never make the grade - that you couldn't do anything right

You might be startled just how many hands would go up in the air

Feelings of inadequacy and failure that occurred in your childhood

Can often resurface as feelings of guilt and inadequacy in your adult life

This is the guilt or the sorrow of the world that leads to death

If you have it you will bring it with you and it will affect your Christian life

But the truth of who you are is this

We are the redeemed, forgiven, reconciled, justified, indwelt sons and daughters of the Living God

You live under the canopy of God's everlasting love and grace

Indwelt by the Person of Christ your Savior your Lord and your life

Him being sufficient for everything – you being complete in Him

On that basis you are not a guilty sinner – you are not incompetent

You are a redeemed saint who sins

So when feelings of guilt and incompetence come into your life

It is not the Spirit of God working in your life

It is either the sorrow the world gave you or it is satanic

And both will keep you from fulfilling your godly potential

We believe the Bible – we confess our sins and somehow we still feel guilty

We then begin to question the sincerity of our confession

I have known men and women who confess the same sin over and over

Desperately trying to rid themselves of guilt – not real guilt - guilt feelings

It reminds me of my daughter when she was young

Each night she invited Jesus into her heart - over and over again – we asked her why she was doing that

– her response – I didn't know He would stay

Many Christians don't believe forgiveness sticks – but it does

And to live a victorious Christian life

You must rid yourself of the guilt that is a hangover from the world

What happens when we don't know how to handle feelings of guilt

First guilt divides your mind

When you experience feelings of guilt

The process is going on inside you all the time

Even when you're unaware of it

Then guilt will drain your energy

When you live with guilt – regardless of the cause or validity of that guilt

It will take away your zest for life

When you live with guilt you will find a way to punish yourself

You will do that because you feel you need to be punished

You might even do something to get caught – mess up intentionally

Not knowing that your actions really spring from a desire to release guilt

Living with guilt means living with feelings of insecurity

You will begin waiting for God to take revenge or punish you

Oh we couch it in holy terms – we use terms like discipline

But deep within us we believe it is deserved punishment

Living with guilt will take away your power to overcome sin

Having guilty feelings means that you are focused on the reason for the guilt

And you will be drawn back to the same sin as surely as a moth to the flame

Living with guilt can bring on depression

Living with guilt is living with self-condemnation

Self-condemnation will almost always result in depression

Because of these feelings you may even begin to doubt your salvation

Finally – living with a sense of guilt will affect your relationship to God

Some quick checkpoints here

Do you have a sense that you can never please God

When things are going good are you waiting for the next bad thing to happen

Do you rarely have time for a real quiet time

But always have an excuse why

Do you never seem to find the time to get on your knees before God

If your quiet time is short or nonexistent – if your prayer life is shallow

If your worried about what God thinks of you

Most likely guilt is the reason

Now listen – It doesn't make any difference what you have done

Or how awful you believe it to be

The death of Jesus Christ covered it

And you say - I know that and yet I still feel guilty

You need to get past head knowledge and

Bring faith into the warp and woof of your life

You need to rest in the truth of God's unconditional love

Your sins aren't forgiven because of what you do or don't do

Your sins are forgiven because of who you are

You are a child of the King of Kings

By the death of Christ and the grace of God you have been forgiven forever **So how do you get release from your guilt**

First if you are not a believer your release from guilt cannot come

Until you receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior

If you have not done that – you are guilty

You will answer to God for every sin you have ever committed

And you will pay for those sins – forever

The wages of sin is death – eternal death – eternal separation from God

If you have not received Christ as your Savior or you are not sure

Don't wait another moment but come to Him – even now – right now

But what about those who are in Christ

First guilt can come from unconfessed sin

One of the works of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin

And He will be faithful to that task

Or guilt can come from feelings that the world has imposed on us

How can you tell the difference between the guilt the world brings

And the guilt of God

Guilty feelings lead us to despair

The conviction of the Holy Spirit leads us to repentance

Guilty feelings will focus on condemnation and unworthiness

The Holy Spirit leads us to sorrow that we have sinned against God

Guilty feelings drive us away from God

The Holy Spirit convicts us to restore our fellowship with God

Guilty feelings lead us to fear punishment

The Holy Spirit motivates us to correct living

Guilt leads us to separation from God and eventually the body of Christ

The Holy Spirit leads us to restoration

How do we remove guilt from our lives

The remedy and the only remedy for real guilt is the blood of Jesus

We need to repent of the sin get down on our knees claim 1John 1:9

If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness

Then where you have hurt someone you need to ask for forgiveness

You may not get it but you need to ask

You may need to write letters to people you haven't seen in years

Where you have taken something you need to give it back

You need to make restitution - it's really that simple

Now to rid yourself of guilt feelings isn't quite that simple

To destroy guilty feelings you must identify the source

This may not be all that easy

It could be from a single statement made by someone you loved or admired – said long ago

On the other hand it could be caused by repeated statements about you

Made over time

But finding the source is important - so ask for the Spirit's help

Now if you just had a name come into your mind – that's a good start

For once you identify the cause of your guilt release can begin

In New Testament times when someone went to prison

They hung a certificate of the charges against him over his cell door

It showed every crime he had committed and his sentence

When he was released from prison he was given that certificate

Showing that his debt was paid in full

So after you have identified the source of your guilty feelings

Write a list of the reasons you have for this guilt

Be as specific as you possibly can

If possible write the person's name and the incident or incidents

This will be painful – but it is worth it

Take your time – be as thorough as you possible can – be honest

When you have finished your certificate of charges against you

Write underneath them

Romans 8:1 – There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Sign your name then take the paper and offer it as a sacrifice to God

Admit to God that you cannot get rid of these feelings of unworthiness

Then trust God to do it for you

It really comes down to this

We choose to believe what God has said about us and be free

Or we choose to believe what the world has said about us and live as a prisoner of guilt

Be the victor and believe God

When you come to Him in faith - He will set you free

King David committed two terrible sins – he committed adultery – Bathsheba became pregnant so he had her husband murdered to cover it up

He suffered from guilt and he wrote this describing that time in his life

When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away, from my groaning all day long; for day and night the Lord's hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away like the heat of summer

David's guilt consumed him

And he kept it to himself hoping no one would know

But he knew the woman knew others knew and significantly God knew

He could not escape his guilt – and it cost him

Then one day while holding court he was confronted by Nathan the prophet

He repented - confessed his sin and was able to write this

I acknowledged my sin to Thee; and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin.

David had committed two sins for which there was no forgiveness,

For adultery and murder no sacrifice could atone - the penalty was death

And yet God forgave David restored him and kept him as king

So David could write – Blessed is he whose transgressions are covered; blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him

Now listen – even with the gravity of David's sin

God never backed out on one promise that He had made to David

He kept them all

David committed the two worst sins against men he could have committed

Yet his guilt was taken away and he was restored

Jesus died to take away your guilt – all of your guilt

All you have to do is believe it and say - Thank You

Can you do that