

Overcoming Guilt

Introduction

1. One of the problems of the Christian life is guilt.
 - a. Christians, of all people, should be free of guilt (Eph. 1:13), but Christians are often guilt-ridden.
 - b. This guilt is often found in the most dedicated and sincere of Christians whose conscience is very sensitive to doing right.
 - c. They feel they are unworthy, and wretched and can never do enough. (1 Jn. 3:20).
- 1 Jn. 3:20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.
2. Let's take a look at the causes of guilt, the damage of guilt, and how to overcome it.

Causes of Guilt

1. Some are guilty over sin - one particular sin or all sins.
 - a. Judas (Matt. 27:3-5).

Matt. 27:3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Matt. 27:4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!"

Matt. 27:5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

- 1) Judas, like all men, was a sinner and was a thief. (Rom. 3:10,23, Jn. 12:6).
- 2) The sin, that led to him being overwhelmed by guilt, was the betrayal and condemnation of Jesus.
- 3) The other sins did not lead to the immense guilt he felt.

- b. David (Psa. 51:1-17).

Psa. 51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Psa. 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin.

Psa. 51:3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

Psa. 51:4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.

- 1) David was a sinner and had committed many sins during his life.
- 2) Most believe this psalm was motivated by his remorse over committing adultery with Bathsheba and the ordering

the death of her husband Uriah. Because of his sin his child with Bathsheba died.

c. Sinful woman (Lk. 7:36-38).

Lk. 7:36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

Lk. 7:37 And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,

Lk. 7:38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

d. Peter (Matt. 26:69-75).

e. Psalmist (Psa. 31:10).

Psa. 31:10 For my life is spent with sorrow And my years with sighing; My strength has failed because of my iniquity, And my body has wasted away.

f. Jews (Acts 2:37).

g. Publican (Lk. 18:13).

Lk. 18:13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

1) He felt very unworthy and guilty over his sinful life.

2) On the positive side he was seeking God's forgiveness.

2. Some are guilty over forgiven sins.

a. God promises to forgive. (Heb. 8:12; 1 Jn. 1:9).

Heb. 8:12 "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more."

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

b. Some will not accept God's forgiveness.

c. What they did was too bad, too awful, too unforgivable!

d. God can forgive others of their sins, but not their sins.

e. They may not intend it that way, but they are insulting God by denying what God said He would do.

3. Some are guilty because they can never do enough.

a. Some can never do enough because of guilt, and no matter they do they still feel guilty.

b. Others can never do enough because of a perfectionist attitude.

- c. Still overs can never do enough because they are overwhelmed by the great needs of the lost and suffering.
4. Some are guilty because of their children.
- a. Their children did not turn out the way they wanted them to turn out.
 - b. The children are Christians, but are weak or left the faith
 - c. The children are not Christians.
 - d. Some have misunderstood Proverbs 22:6.

Prov. 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

- 1) This is general rule, but moral free agency makes it have exceptions.
 - 2) If it did not have exceptions, those raised wickedly could not be converted.
 - 3) If it did not have exceptions, those raised righteously could not be lost regardless of conduct.
 - 4) Neither of these things are taught in God's word. People can change for the better or the worse.
5. Some are guilty because their children are handicapped.
- a. They blame themselves if a child has a birth defect.
 - b. They blame themselves if a child was crippled in accident.
 - c. They blame themselves if they harm their children.
6. Some are guilty because of their parents.
- a. Guilt is often present because we neglected parents at some point.
 - b. They feel more should be done for parents.
 - c. Being a disappointment to parents contributes to guilt.
7. Some are guilty because men are dying lost.
- a. Some have mental breakdowns because of the lost.
 - b. They feel they can or should save the whole world.
 - c. We cannot save the whole world.
 - d. We should try to save the lost, but there must be time for rest, recreation, and rejoicing or we will not survive mentally.
 - e. We can teach those around us the gospel, and it is their responsibility to accept it.
 - f. We are not accountable if men reject the gospel.

8. Some are guilty because there are hungry people in the world.

a. We cannot feed the whole world.

b. We can share what we have. (Eph. 4:28; Gal. 6:10).

Eph. 4:28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.

Gal. 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

9. Some people are guilty because what others have done - a parent, a spouse, a child, etc.

a. We should not feel guilty because of what someone else has done.

b. Each one of us is individually responsible to God. (Gal. 6:5; Rom. 14:12).

Gal. 6:5 For each one will bear his own load.

Rom. 14:12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

10. Some people are guilty because lack of achievement.

a. School

b. Sports

c. Work

d. Home

The Damage of Guilt

1. Guilt is one of the most destructive, cancerous forces in the world.

2. It can destroy our appetite, our sleep, our health, our happiness, our effectiveness, our relationship with others.

3. It can make us utterly miserable and unproductive.

How To Overcome Guilt

1. We must be in Christ.

a. Salvation is in Christ. (Jn. 3:36; 14:6; Acts 4:12).

b. All spiritual blessings are in Christ. (Eph. 1:3).

2. We must accept God's forgiveness. (1 Jn. 1:7, 9; Heb. 10:17).

3. We must accept the forgiveness of others.

- a. Jesus has taught others to forgive us. (Eph. 4:32).

Eph. 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

- b. We must help and encourage others do what God has commanded.

4. We must forgive self.

- a. God forgives us. (Isa. 1:18).

- b. We must accept God's forgiveness..

- c. Failure to forgive self manifests distrust in God's forgiveness.

5. We must recognize the past cannot be changed.

- a. Some things can be changed. Restitution can be made.

- b. Other things can never be changed and if we had a 1,000 life times we could not change them.

- c. We must learn to accept the unchangeable.

6. We must do the best we can.

- a. This is all that God asks.

- b. He does not ask the impossible.

Conclusion

1. It is vital that we fight guilt in our lives.

2. Let us trust God, accept God's forgiveness, do the best we can, but not let guilt destroy us.

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)