

Coach House Church

BEACONS

GUILT

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We have all done things wrong in our lives. We have all felt the pain of feeling guilty about something. I remember that it was always when my parents were disappointed with me the feeling was worst. I can see now in the boys when they feel guilty about something. The feeling is so uncomfortable and not something we enjoy.

There is a good reason for this. Just like with all pain it's a sign that something is wrong, that there is something that we need to fix. However, sometimes it goes too far or goes on too long. We can get caught up by it and it can hold us back and imprison us. Sometimes it's not even real guilt it's false guilt.

So how do we deal with guilt in the right way? What is the point of guilt and how do we avoid feeling false guilt?

The thing is that there is a real difference between conviction from our spirit or our conscience and false guilt that we might feel. Real conviction demands an action from us. It demands a correction, either to stop doing something we have done wrong and put it right or to stop avoiding and ignoring the right things to do. Maybe we know that a certain thing is right for us to do but we are reluctant to do it. Conviction will tell us that we need to do it. Conviction is useful and we need to listen to our conscience. Once we have repented - or turned away from the wrong and acted in the right way, we will then know we are in the right place with God and the guilty feeling should seep away.

However, we also have guilt that we are holding onto from the past. Maybe we feel bad about something we did years ago, but the situation has passed and there is no way to fix it.

There is also false guilt. Maybe we feel bad about something we shouldn't feel bad about, like upsetting someone unintentionally. We might have tried to do the right thing but a situation might have gone the wrong way anyway. Maybe you had to do something in the line of duty. Armed police officers sometimes have to shoot people to save others but they do feel guilty about it.

So how do we get rid of guilt that has outlived its purpose or had no real purpose to begin with?

Psalm 32 can help us. David wrote this Psalm. We don't know the actual reason that he wrote it but it is clear that he was feeling guilty.

It says this: "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."

So firstly we need to confess our sins to God. If we bottle up all the things we have done wrong they will overcome us. So confess what you have done wrong.

Secondly, confessing to others is a really helpful tool. It can be hard to admit to another person when we believe we have done something wrong or when we feel guilty for something but it is really important that we get another perspective on our situation. This can help to relieve our feelings of guilt if they are false.

Thirdly we need to know we are forgiven. Forgiven by God and forgiven by ourselves.

So we need to remind ourselves of God's promises in the bible. 1 John 1:9 says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"

He will cleanse us of all unrighteousness, of every single thing you have thought said or done that was wrong or things you knew were right that you failed to say or do. We are clean and we are free of it because Jesus has covered it. He died to make sure that our sins are forgiven. He did all the work to make us righteous and able to approach God. We need to choose to trust in Him and believe His promises.

We can remind ourselves of the promises by reading them or even by speaking them to ourselves. It might be worth finding a few key verses to read when you feel a certain way.

We also need to forgive ourselves. This is something that is very hard to do. While we were doing alpha, when we got to the week on forgiveness we universally agreed that it is much harder to forgive yourself than it is to forgive others. We can make excuses for others and slowly forget the hurt that they've caused us. With ourselves it is much harder. We have to live with ourselves and we know our own hearts. We know when we've chosen to do wrong and there is no excuse for it.

We need to let go of the feeling of guilt. That can be hard because sometimes we think if we let go of the feeling we might go back to whatever we were doing wrong. For some of us it has become our identity to feel guilty. But we need to trust God. He has taken our punishment on Himself and He has taken all the punishment. There is none left for us. So we need to stop trying to punish ourselves because in doing that we are not living in God's freedom. God has taken every blemish from you, so stop trying to pop spots that are no longer there. Let go of the feeling of guilt and every time Satan tries to tie you down with it again, remind yourself that there is no condemnation in Christ, so you are free.

Lets finish with Romans 8 verse 1-2 that sums this up quite nicely: "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.



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