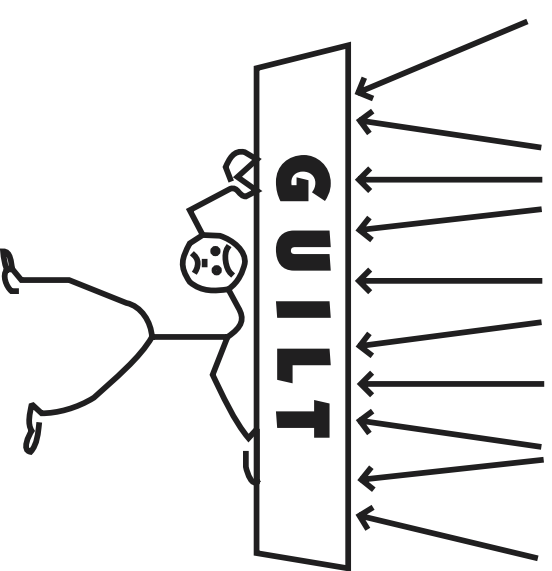


Sin, Guilt And Depression



There can be no question that guilt is one of the great destroyers of the soul. Guilt, whether imagined or real, leads individuals on a downward spiral which will destroy their relationships in life and render them worthless in the kingdom of God. An individual with a guilty conscience often becomes bitter and lashes out to those who are trying to help. Sin is at the root of the problem, for sin leads to guilt and depression, and sinful handling of sin further complicates matters leading to greater guilt and deeper depression. Proverbs 5:22 well describes this progression of sin, “His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin.” However, guilt can be a good thing when it brings one to a realization of *one’s* sins.

We live in an age when most people blame the problems of the world on “sickness” by telling us, “We live in a sick society.” When someone assassinate a national leader we hear, “Our nation is sick.” When a couple of teenagers walk into a high school with guns blazing and murder over a dozen people, we hear, “Society is to blame.” The idea of “sickness” as the cause of personal problems removes all concept of personal human responsibility, and this is the crux of the problem! People no longer consider themselves responsible for what they do wrong! The Bible never discusses the problems of the world as “sickness,” but rather, it points out that sin is the real culprit (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). By blaming the problems of the world on “sickness” we cause people to lose all hope, for there is no vaccine to cure the “sickness” of the world. However, when we point out that the problem of the world is “sin,” we give people hope, for “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Psychological Crutches

In dealing with the guilt that results from sin, the world often offers psychological crutches, but no cures. Freudian psycho-analysis turns out to be an archeological expedition back into the past in which a search is made for others on whom to pin the blame for our own behavior. Freud called himself “a completely godless Jew” and a “hopeless pagan.” Freud did not make people irresponsible, but he provided a pseudo-scientific rationale for irresponsible people to justify themselves.


and asked what to do in order to be saved (Acts 2:36–38). Stephen preached a similar lesson before the Jewish council. His audience was also “cut to the heart” (Acts 7:54), but their guilt caused them to kill the messenger (Acts 7:55–58).

A good conscience depends upon good behavior (1 Pet. 3:10–11). Good lives come from good deeds. Good consciences come from good and noble behavior.

From his guilt, David cried out, “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer” (Psa. 32:4). It was as if God’s hand was crushing him. He believed his depression was from God and he considered it the merciful punishment of God warning him and leading him to repentance. David acknowledged his sin and sought forgiveness (Psa. 32:5–7). David’s forgiveness restored to him the joy of salvation (Psa. 51:1–13).

King David demonstrated the wonderful truth of Isaiah 55:7, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Conclusion

You might be reading this tract because you are suffering from the pains of sin, guilt and depression. I do not seek to minimize your pain or your problems, for I know the pain is real. Sin is painful! Sin caused the Son of God to be nailed to a wooden cross. Sin can crush and destroy you. However, I want to let you know there is hope for your problems, for “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). 

The Removal Of Guilt

Either you can have yours sins forgiven by the blood of Christ, or you can allow the guilt of your sins to destroy you.

Suppose you were driving in a car and the water temperature gauge on the dashboard turned red and said your car was overheating? You could stop the car, go to the trunk and get a hammer, and then smash the gauge to pieces—and then go on your way. However, you will not get far—destroying the red warning light will not remove the problem—it simply masks it for a little while.

Your conscience is a lot like the red warning light on the dashboard—it tells you when you have a problem that needs attention. You can go to a Freudian psychologist and have your conscience smashed, seared and destroyed—but your problem remains. Your problem is sin and it will never get better on its own! It is possible for one to sear their conscience (1 Tim. 4:2).

When your conscience bothers you because you know you have done wrong, what should you do? Your friends might tell you there are no moral absolutes. A Freudian psychologist will tell you it is your mother's fault. A Skinnerian psychologist will treat you like an animal. However, there are moral absolutes, and your sins can not be blamed on your mother, and you are not an animal—you have been made in the image of God!

What is the purpose of our preaching? Paul said, “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5, NKJV).

“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5, Adams). The goal of our preaching is to bring men into a loving conformity to the law of God, and this in turn brings a clean conscience.

Instead of excuse-making or blame-shifting, the Bible advocates that you assume your responsibility and blame, confess your sins and seek the wonderful forgiveness which can only be found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of God can cut you to the heart. On the great day of Pentecost Peter told his audience they had “taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death” the Son of God (Acts 2:23). When these people realized that God had made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ, they were cut to the heart

Rogerian psychology is based on humanistic thought, namely, that the solution to man's problems lies within the man himself. Christians reject this viewpoint on the basis of its humanistic presuppositions alone—it begins with man and ends with man and asks us to accept the aberrant behavior of people without any sort of judgment. However, the Scriptures specifically command that we “judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). The main goal of Rogerian psychology is to make people feel good about themselves, regardless of their sins.

Skinnerian psychology believes in a view of behavior modification that says man is simply an animal and we must treat him as such. Skinner believed man to be nothing more than an animal and thus fails to see man as a being who was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).

There are three main causes of depression, the first two being a chemical imbalance or a brain tumor. The third cause of depression is guilt, which is the result of unforgiven sins. If you have a medical problem then you need to see a medical doctor. However, if your depression is the result of sin, then you need Christ Jesus in your life!

Guilt Is The Result Of Sin

The story of Cain illustrates the progression of sin, guilt and depression. Cain began badly by giving a sinful offering (Gen. 4:1–8). When God rejected the offering, Cain complicated the matter by responding wrongly to the rejection—he got angry and depressed—his face “fell.” God, who warned against the consequences of this improper response, noted Cain's guilt, anger and depression.

God graciously said, “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” or, as one translation says, “If you do right, you will feel right.” God also warned Cain that failure to repent and offer the right kind of sacrifice would cause him to fall deeper into sin.

The clutches of sin, like a wild animal, was crouching at the door and waiting to devour him. God offered hope by saying that Cain could reverse the downward spiral of sin by breaking out of his sinful pattern through repentance and a subsequent change of behavior.

Cain failed to heed God's words and fell deeper into the

depths of sin just as God said he would. His downward spiral led him to murder Abel. Sin leads to guilt and depression—sinful handling of sin further complicates matters leading to greater guilt and deeper depression.

We can read of how Adam suffered from the depressing shame of a guilty conscience (Gen. 3:1–13). The capacity for self-evaluation that God built into man activated painful inner sensations. Adam came to know good and evil by personal experience and his conscience accused him of sin. Adam decided to run; instead of running *to* God, he ran *from* Him.

When God called Adam out from among the trees of the Garden of Eden, he emerged covered with fig leaves. Adam further complicated the matter by attempting to handle his guilt on his own rather than turning to God for the proper solution. Adam had committed a crime, had attempted a getaway, and was now trying to cover up. God pointed the finger of accusation directly at him. God confronted him and forced him to deal with the problem. Adam tried to shift the blame to Eve. Those who suffer from a guilt often try to do the same thing.

Ahab, king of Israel, was an exceedingly evil man (1 Kings 16:29–33). Ahab took Jezebel as his wife and set up an altar for Baal. Elijah was a faithful prophet of God and spoke out against Ahab. When Ahab met Elijah, he accused Elijah of sin (1 Kings 18:17–18). Sinners will often attack righteous people when their own sins are exposed.

Judas, one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:4), was a man with a terrible burden of guilt. Judas was also a thief, for he carried the “money box” for the disciples and used to steal from it (John 12:4–6). Judas went to the chief priests and offered to betray Christ (Matt. 26:14). Imagine how his conscience must have bothered him at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:21–25). Later that evening, Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss (Matt. 26:47–50). After Jesus was condemned Judas was remorseful, but his guilt caused him to take his own life (Matt. 27:1–5).

Even the apostle Peter was not immune from the guilt which accompanies sin (Matt. 26:69–75). In spite of the fact he promised to die with the Lord, he denied him. He cursed and swore that he never knew Jesus. Later, his guilt caused him to go out and weep bitterly.

Herod and Herodias conspired to kill John the Baptist (Mark 6:17–28). John had said it was not lawful for Herod and Herodias to be married. Herod and Herodias both suffered from a guilty conscience. To soothe their conscience they decided to kill the messenger.

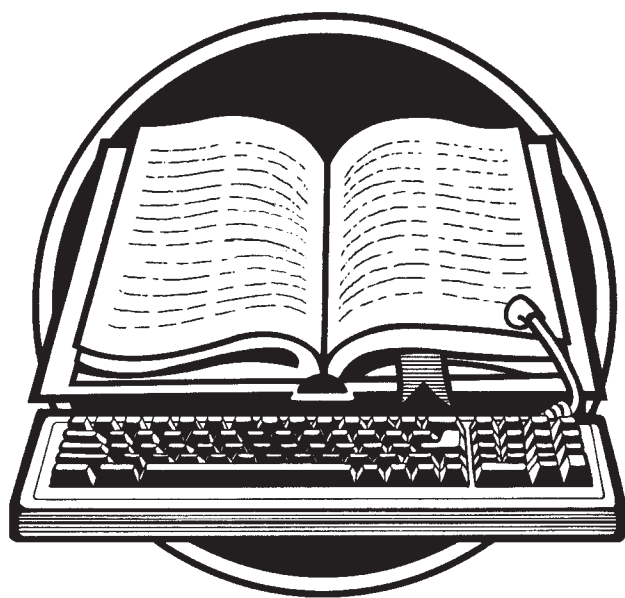
King David sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1–5). In covering up his sin, David had Uriah killed (2 Sam. 11:14–21). When David realized his sin, he humbly repented (2 Sam. 12:1–15). Prior to forgiveness, David suffered from a guilty conscience. After David found the forgiveness of sins, he wrote: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.” (Psa. 32:1–4).

What Guilt Does

Guilt can affect our physical bodies. David’s sin caused him to murder Uriah, and his guilt affected his physical body, i.e., his “virality was turned into the drought of summer.” Like Peter, some people have uncontrollable tears because of guilt. Many individuals can not get to sleep at night because of their guilt. Sadly, many Christians today lead miserable lives because guilt has a hold on them.

Guilt often leads to other sins as well. Cain’s guilt led to depression and finally murder. Judas allowed his guilt to lead him to take his own life. Herod and Herodias allowed their guilt to end in the murder of John. Guilt can cause you to hate and lash out at those who are trying to help you.

Psychologists often spend a lot of time talking about “why”—but in the Bible the stress falls upon the “what.” Psychologists will ask, “*Why* did you cheat on your wife?” or, “*Why* did you steal that car?” The question of “why” is a waste of time and leads to blame-shifting. “What” questions (i.e., “What did you do?”) lead to the solution for our problems.



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