

"Dealing with Guilt"

You've probably looked at yourself in the mirror and asked "Why did you do that?" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." A guilty conscience is common to all. Today we're exploring what the Bible says about our conscience.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Whatever spiritual, moral, or social problem we face, God has the answer in His word! The problems that you face are new to you but not new to this world. The struggles you face are struggles many others have faced throughout time. The Scriptures describe these problems and God's answers to them. When people humbly and penitently come to God seeking answers, He hears their cries and helps them. By going to His word, you can find the answers to your struggles too. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

David described the pain that he felt from knowing he had sinned. After David sinned with Bathsheba and slaughtered Uriah in battle, he felt the sting of his conscience. David felt the pain of unresolved sin in Psalm 32 verses 3 and 4. He said, "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." On another occasion, David said in Psalm 40 verse 12, "For evils beyond number have surrounded me; My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see; They are more numerous than the hairs of my head, And my heart has failed me."

The chief meaning of the word "conscience" in the New Testament implies that 'consciousness,' includes more than knowing something. It includes a moral judgment of a conscious act. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira pretended to offer the whole gift of the sale of their land to God but knowingly kept back some for themselves and lied to the Holy Spirit. They consciously lied. God knew it too! You cannot fool God by pretending. God always knows.

We offer this Bible study on the way to deal with our guilt free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, and we'll read from Titus 3:3 to 7, and explore our how, how we are to deal with our guilt.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to Titus chapter 3 verses 3 through 7 talking about the grace of God and how it takes us from where we were to where God wants us to be. Let's read together.

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Oh, what a blessing to be heirs of God. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that even though we have sinned grievously that You can wash us clean and give us a clean heart and pure mind. We are grateful. This we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

We have a battle between good and evil going on inside our hearts. The Lord Jesus said to sleepy Peter, James, and John in Matthew 26:41, "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." While we would like to practice what's good, we find ourselves weak and doing what is evil. When we do what is good, we're at peace with ourselves; but when we do what is evil, we regret and even hate what we've done. Paul explained in Romans 7:14 to 15, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate."

The conscience inside us nags and accuses us. Romans 2:14 to 16 says, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus." The truth of this remark is evident, since God sees both man's conscience negatively and positively. Negatively as the instrument of judgment, and positively as the means of guidance. Few experiences in life are more miserable than a guilty conscience. Jeremiah wrote, "For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me," says the Lord GOD" (Jeremiah 2 verse 22).

We also know what we've done. People handle guilt in a variety of ways. Some would rather lie to themselves about sin than face a guilty conscience. I'm amazed at how society has changed its views of right and wrong. Society has turned things upside down. And instead of using God's word as the measure of right and wrong, people have trusted in their own hearts. Some have trusted their feelings rather than listen to God. They have made themselves their own god. The Lord God said in Jeremiah 17:9 to 10, that, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds."

When people try to change what the Scriptures say and try to excuse sin as fashionable, they deceive themselves. The prophet Isaiah said, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5 and verse 20). You may justify sin in your own mind, but that doesn't mean that God approves. Now, this approach, changing sin, isn't new. The Jews in Jeremiah's day worshiped pagan gods and practiced immorality even though they knew better. Jeremiah 6 verse 15 says, "Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD."

You can lie to yourself about moral matters, but God sees and knows the truth. The Lord God said in Jeremiah 16 verse 17, "For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes." When people live impure lives, it becomes noticeable not only to God but to everyone. The way they talk, the way they act, and the way they treat other people make it evident that God isn't in their lives. Titus 1 verses 15 to 16 says, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

We need God in our lives. We need to hear His word, to worship Him, and to pray to Him each day. We need the saving blood of Jesus Christ to transform our lives. Apart from the blood of Christ, people

can't find salvation; the unredeemed man is "without strength" to save himself (Romans 5 verses 6 to 8). We need saving, rescuing, and transforming! Paul said that Jesus "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:4). You see, God wanted something better for people than a life enslaved to sin and headed for wrath.

Romans 6 verses 20 to 22 says, "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life." You don't have to live ashamed any longer. You can leave enslavement to sin, and you can be made holy, and you can have eternal life.

Titus 2:11 to 14 describes what grace does for you and me. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." The grace of God is simply, is not simply, just for forgiveness; it also causes transformations sinners can become saints. And God wants something better for you than languishing in guilt and shame!

The Lord God "has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13 to 14). Now, if God had not delivered us, we'd still be living miserable and hopeless lives in sin and guilt. God wants something better for us!

Paul spoke of his conversion in 1 Timothy 1:12 to 15. He said, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (and Paul said) of whom I am chief." God's forgiveness opens the door for us to forgive ourselves. If God could forgive us, we can forgive too!

The apostle Paul never forgot that he had once been Saul of Tarsus; he realized that he had been saved in order to lead others to salvation. He spoke as one delivered from the captivity of sin. He understood what it meant to be forgiven of his terrible sins, so he desperately sought for the salvation of everyone. He could say in Romans 1:14 to 16, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Ah, to the Jew, a Roman would be an enemy; but Paul was eager to take that message even to his enemies in Rome. Paul loved even his enemies.

God wants something better for you. 1 Timothy 2 verses 3 to 4 says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." God wants you to know the truth about sin and salvation. He wants you to be saved from sin.

A clean conscience, brought about by love and obedience to the gospel, brings peace of heart and mind. Romans 5 and verse 1 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 3:21 reveals how baptism not only is the time of our salvation but also brings about a good conscience. It says, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not

the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” When we’re being baptized we are calling upon God to save us and to cleanse our consciences. Remember what Ananias told the apostle Paul in Acts 22:16, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

In another psalm David cried out in Psalm 51:8 to 12, “Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”

The New Testament also provides occasions of joy, when one obeys the gospel and becomes a child of God in Christ. The bible says, “Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he (the eunuch) went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8 verse 39). The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 13:44, that “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” There is no greater joy than knowing that you are right with God, that your sins are forgiven, and that you have a home in heaven! I can’t imagine living even one day or one hour without God’s grace and without hope.

I don’t know where you are in your relationship with God. You may be living with guilt and without hope. You may be indifferent to God, and His promises, and His commandments. You may have once practiced your faith but have drifted from it. You may be one of those who rewrite the Scriptures to say what you want. Please don’t remain in doubt, outside the grace of God. While God loves everybody, He wants everyone to be saved, God makes no promise to save those who ignore or defy His will.

David understood the blessing of being forgiven and trusting in God. So, he wrote in Psalm 32:1 to 2, “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!” When we’re honest with God and honest with ourselves about sin, we’ll act. The conscience, the consequences, rather, of sin are great. And God will punish evildoers.

We must not presume that we can live any way we please, and the grace of God will still cover us. That idea didn’t come from God it came from Satan. 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Let us pray. Oh, Father help us to leave the old sinful ways and to come to Your loving pure ways. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

When you feel guilty for what you’ve thought, said, or done, repent. Knowing you’re guilty will bring you all the pain that David felt or Paul felt from having sinned. Paul spoke openly about sin to the Romans about their choices, whether to live in sin or in righteousness. He said in Romans 6:16 to 18, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

The good news of Christ is His grace that brings freedom from sin! You can choose freedom from sin! You don’t have to stay a slave to sin and all the guilt and shame that comes with it! When you

place your faith in Christ Jesus and confess Him as the Son of God, when you repent of your sins and turn to the Lord's way, and when you're baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you cease to be the slave of sin! Christ sets you free from sin, and you are free indeed (John 8 verse 36)! You are free from sin, free from guilt, and free from shame. You can begin acting like a child of God and live righteously. You can have peace with God and with your soul. Oh, I cannot think of any greater joy or privilege than to have the hope of eternal life! Are you right with God?

We hope today's study about dealing with guilt has stirred you to long for forgiveness. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now, you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." All one word. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Don't worry, if you get a hold of us, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

There's no better day than today to get your life back on track by going to church. There's probably a church of Christ in your area. Why not worship with them today? Now, you may be looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, let us know we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program, encourage them to watch. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.