

## QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

### 59.2 How Can I Get Rid of My Guilt?

#### Part II

*Scripture: John 2:1-2; 3:18-22; Romans 14:10; Hebrews 10:1-22; 12:15-16;  
I Timothy 4:1-2; Acts 17:30-31; II Corinthians 5:10*

I want to begin our study this morning by drawing your attention to something we all have in common. There is not a one of us excluded because what I have in mind are the problems we all face. The person has yet to be born who will be able to move from the cradle to the grave without a problem. Indeed, it has been pointed out that “you have a problem, you are a problem, or you will be a problem.” We are people who live in unredeemed bodies to be found in an unredeemed world among unredeemed people and these join to force innumerable problems upon us. Now, the reason I mention these things is because problems have a way of being traced to their source and that is our concern. I can illustrate by mentioning an experience I had some time ago. A very good friend of mine greeted me with the words, (a friend I hadn't seen for quite a long time) “Why Alan, it is good to see you again. Hey, you have put on some weight. What's your problem?” It is true that I had put on some weight and I was aware of that, but I was not aware that any particular problem was involved. The problem he had in mind concerned my lack of ability push myself away from the table soon enough, my inability to stop eating, and he felt this was indicative of something. What he was doing was pointing out a “**surface problem**” arising from a problem on another level, what I am calling a **secondary problem.**” There are many kinds of surface problems people have. It can be anything from being hung up on drugs to an unreasonable passion for baseball. If something has us in its grip and we have not been able to find release, we have a problem and there are secondary causes. These may include loneliness, resentment, inferiority, lust, boredom and grief among many others. Seldom are we able to banish problems on the surface level of attack. It is necessary to ask why we behave as we do. But I want to go one step further and say there are the “**source problems**” which are the real poison in the System.

Basically, there is only one source problem. It is the rejection of God. It is rejecting His love, His authority, and His -wisdom. There is a verse or passage in

Scripture which deals with these three rejections and which describe the three essential problems of all men on the source level. The passage is Hebrews 12:15-16 where the writer speaks of coming short of the grace of God. He mentions “*no root of bitterness*” which is a rejection Of God's love. I would understand this to be a description of the person who is compelled to deal with his guilt apart from God's love which he has rejected. Such a person sours on himself and others, he becomes bitter. There is immorality which is a rejection of God's authority, and a value system which leaves God out, a rejection of His wisdom. These are the root causes of all the problems in the world and it is a world of grief in which we live. The grace of God must be applied to our lives on this level, not on the secondary or surface levels, if we are to experience healing. At this point let us resume our discussion of forgiveness in being rid of guilt and we continue our thought concerning the enjoyment of Christian forgiveness.

### **III. THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS: Hebrews 10:1-22; I John 3:18-20**

We want to establish the fact that guilt does not have a place in the life of a person who is a Christian, and that it is the means by which the accuser of the brethren (Satan) torments and renders believers joyless and ineffective. First, there is an **actual** guilt. This is guilt after the fact and occurs when either human or divine law is violated. We are all guilty in this way by our sheer inability to conform at all times. This factual guilt is both **civil** and **theological**, but it leads to **emotional** or **psychological** guilt which is our main concern. It has to do with how we feel when we fail, it is our response to a particular violation and I believe that the response of a person who has bowed at the cross of Jesus ought to be somewhat different than the person who has not. One of the immediate comforts bestowed upon a believer is that of a good conscience as we shall see.

Hebrews 10 describes the kind of conscience God gave the Old Testament Jews concerning their sin. It is the record of a high priest who, on the Day of Atonement, would sprinkle the blood of a goat on the mercy seat between the ark containing the broken law while a cloud of glory signifying the presence of God hovered above. It is quite important to note that the spilt blood of the sacrifice was placed between God and the law which had not been perfectly obeyed. This was a ceaseless round. The event took place on a regular schedule every twelve months. A second animal would also be taken, hands placed upon its head, prayers of confession uttered, only to then be led into the wilderness to expire. It was a picture of sin being removed from the camp via a scapegoat. The

conscience of the guilty Israelite was cleansed because atonement had been made. But the day would come when the passing of time would exact its toll upon conscience once again. Because it is not possible for a single person to live a single day without a single sin, soon another sacrifice would be necessary. Conscience would again spark awareness of newly accumulated sin because of deeds done in the flesh. The Day of Atonement would be welcome every twelve months.

This is beautiful typology. It shadows a substance to come. That reality was to be seen in Jesus whose spilt blood would not have only a restricted effect. Hebrews 10:2 speaks of *“the remembrance of sin”* while verse 17 talks of sin being remembered *“no more.”* What happened? In between there is the account of a sacrifice being made once and with effect for all time. (10:10-12) As the infinite Son of God His sacrifice took on infinite value and scope. Here is blood to avail for all time, not a mere twelve months. Here is lasting cleansing from the evil conscience. (Hebrews 10:21-22) So by one sacrifice Christ perfected for all time those who are sanctified, (10:11-16) with the incredible result that the Sovereign God wills even to dismiss from His memory the offenses of His own. Those sins for which Jesus died God has forgotten. This has to be one of the most glorious truths of the faith. It is surely the doctrinal support for the conscience of the Christian not being ravaged by guilt. Getting rid of guilt is a matter of the Christian appropriating the work of Christ in his understanding so that he no longer dwells upon sins that God has already forgotten. I think this is what the Apostle John had in mind when he wrote, *“If our heart condemn us...”* (and it will) *“God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”* (1 John 3:20) What does God know that we fail to realize? Simply, that all of our sins have already been forgiven because the blood of Christ has already been applied to them. There isn't a single accuser who can lay them to our charge before Him. We even have a mediator to defend our guiltlessness, an advocate, to plead our cause who has taken His place at the right hand of the Father should anyone try. (Hebrews 10:11-12; I John 2:1-2)

There is a wonderful forgiveness to be enjoyed and may we be willing to accept the fact of this doctrine. We are no longer guilty of a single sin as far as God's knowledge of our lives is concerned. May this truth grip our souls and cause us to abound with joy and peace in believing.

At this point someone is going to make mention of the heaviness which comes into the life of the believer who is out of fellowship with His Lord. The reaction

of such a person to wrongdoing is loss of salvation's joy and sorrow for what has been done. I believe that this is the work of the Holy Spirit as He stabs or pricks the sensitized conscience of the Christian. He has the ability to bring about great misery, and we are told very plainly to *"grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."* (Ephesians 4:30) It is well for us to recall that conscience is a curse and came into man's experience as a result of the historic Fall of man in the Genesis record. Part of that curse was the recognition of good and evil, something which was unknown to Adam or Eve before. It was the ploy of Satan to partake of the forbidden fruit and to become just like God, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:5) Up to that time no such understanding was theirs. They had absolutely no knowledge of evil and possibly not of even the capacity to make a choice. Their mental posture was simply to love and trust God completely. God instructed them (Genesis 2:14-17) and they knew no alternative but to follow His instructions to the letter. Satan threw different light on the matter. His approach was to get the woman to believe that God was keeping something from her that was to her enjoyment and benefit. Doubtless, she lapsed in her feeling that God had only their best interests in mind when He restrained them as He did. She gave up on trusting God in the matter, disobeyed Him, and the curse of a conscience was known for the first time. It was the knowledge of good and evil with its attendant directive for good and grief for doing what is known to be wrong. Such an awareness has become the property of the entire human race ever since.

It has been mentioned in our class that not everyone has a conscience. Well, functionally that may be the case. There is a figure of speech used by Paul in writing to young Timothy which we ought to be familiar with. He speaks of *"liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron."* (I Timothy 4:1-2) The original Greek verb used here is "cauterize" which means to be burned with a branding iron with the result that only scar tissue remains. The point is there is no longer any feeling at that place. God speaks to a person repeatedly without response so that there comes a time when such a person is beyond feeling, (Ephesians 4:19) having become callous.

The word "conscience" is from the Latin and brings together "con" and "science" which literally means "with knowledge." The word is found in the New Testament 32 times. It is the word *"suneidesis"* and signifies the discernment of right and wrong. The Bible speaks of a *"good"* conscience (Acts 23:1; I Timothy 1:5; 19), of a weak conscience, of a pure conscience (Acts 24:16)

and of a seared conscience. Sin has its effect upon the influence of conscience so that it is no longer a reliable guide and must be awakened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit of God. When the Lord is loved and trusted, the Holy Spirit will do His work to convict, reprove and exhort in any matter which has saddened the heart of God.

However, the Holy Spirit does not lay a burden of guilt upon the believer. He will do that for the unbeliever. There will be no real easing of the conscience for that person apart from the blood of Christ. Guilt can only be assuaged “by a personal reception of Jesus as Savior. For the Christian, it is a positive and constructive awareness which the Holy Spirit brings to the Christian conscience, which will produce Scriptural remorse and change.

I suppose that it would be impossible to determine how many Christians there are who feel that it is God who make them feel guilty. For someone to come along and suggest otherwise is almost too much. But that is precisely what I am saying. Emotional and psychological guilt has to be one of the most crippling problems known, we simply cannot live with guilt, it will destroy us. The true Christian is able to enjoy the ultimate in release from this bondage, an emotionally constructive Godly sorrow conceived by the Holy Spirit to assure continued fellowship with the Heavenly Father and to direct us in the ways He knows are best for us. I believe this is what it means to enjoy Christian forgiveness.

#### **IV. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS: Romans 14:10**

I can almost hear someone say, “This sounds like easy forgiveness or cheap grace to me,” The thought is that we can now live to do our own thing and be forgiven regardless of what that might be. But the doctrine of forgiveness I expound here is not that at all. The forgiveness we enjoy cost God His only Son, surely it was not an easy or cheap arrangement for Him. Nor shall it be for us. His forgiveness is very much akin to our doing every thing He asks us to do in order that we keep from disobeying Him again. I am not saying we are forgiven if we do not fail again, I am saying that every single act of the Christian has eternal significance. Paul wrote in Romans 6:1 “*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!*” There is no effort here to teach that the cleansing power of Christ's blood will ever cause God to overlook everything a believer does. The theological word for this is antinomianism and is a dreadful distortion of forgiveness by faith apart from works. Justification cannot be stretched that far from Scripture. Now the

eternal signification of the believers every act is this: As a sin it is forgiven by virtue of the fact that it has already been judged sufficiently by a Holy God at Calvary and any debt of guilt incurred has been nailed to Jesus Cross as we have already explained. God held court at the place called Calvary nineteen hundred years ago and moved his wrath against our sin. The verdict was given and the penalty was paid. The case has been closed, our deeds as sins are now forgotten by the judge. But God will hold court again one day. An error of medieval days was to lump all people of all time into a general judgment to await the Almighty's verdict upon them, it does not square with the New Testament. Let me go on to say that every deed of the believer, everything we do, say, think, even what we are, has some relationship with God, it relates to Him as a work. At best we are all unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10), nevertheless He will not be unmindful of our efforts. (Hebrews 6:10) It is apparent that Christ Himself will render an evaluation of our conduct. (Acts 10:42; 17:30-31; II Corinthians 5:10; I Corinthians 4:3-4) A misspent life, speaking of believers, will find no treasure in Heaven (Luke 12:33), suffer the loss of crown and reward (Revelation 3:11), be ashamed at His coming (1 John 2:28), and be saved only as by fire. If you are thinking that it makes little difference if we only manage to get to Heaven, beware of the folly of your ways. Scripture makes it plain that the person who interprets grace as irresponsibility will suffer loss. (I Corinthians 3:11-15) The exact meaning of those words are locked in the mind of God but a day of discovery will come, *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"* and *"every one of us shall give account of himself to God."* (Romans 14:12) What will it mean to stand before the man who died for us to try and alibi our way out of our continued disobedience because we thought that's what forgiveness meant? What will it be like to try that? May we never find out. Let us enjoy to its broadest degree the forgiveness of God, but let us never take it for granted. Lord help us. Amen.

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