

# Guilt and Forgiveness

By

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The world is producing a generation of people who do not feel any guilt over such sins as stealing, lying and even murder. It is point of Satan's deception that there is no absolute rule of good and evil, and therefore no such thing as sin and punishment. The result is mass lawlessness.

But in spite of the modern Freudian idea that society, and not the individual, is responsible for one's character, modern man is still burdened down by a guilty conscience, even while denying the reality of sin. Tranquilizers have become the rule instead of the exception and suicidal tendencies demonstrate the desperation of the generation. The fact is that sin remains a problem which is not eradicated by any amount of social revolution, and no individual can find peace and purpose in life until he is assured of the forgiveness of his sin.

**WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL THAT SIN BE FORGIVEN?** Why can't God just accept man in all his weaknesses and sins and go on with His plan of things? A great many psychologists are trying to tell us today that we need to eliminate the ancient concepts of righteousness as given in the Bible. They measure all behavior by the current trend of society. Whatever society is willing to accept becomes normal behavior, and the so-called mentally healthy person is one who adjusts to society as it is. It matters not to these mistaken custodians of mental health if society has missed its way and is behaving in a way contrary to God's design. If the person is acceptable to society he is considered healthy and well adjusted. Not only does this idea do away with the fact and reality of sin against God, but if society continues to cast off its God-given morals, then criminality will become the accepted thing, and the person who behaves in an immoral way will be considered normal and mentally healthy. Then the person who holds to Christian concepts-Christian principles and beliefs- will be the person who is unacceptable to society. The time seems to be approaching when the Christian, because he believes, in certain absolute morals, will be considered abnormal and mentally-ill, a candidate for an institution.

This idea that there is no absolute good or bad is possible only when men do not accept the fact that God, the Creator, has a plan of His own. If we are to accept revealed religion, the Biblical account of things, then we must accept the fact that when God created man he had a plan and purpose in mind. This is what He said in the beginning. "Let us make man in our own image" Genesis 1:26. God created man to reflect God's own goodness, to be in harmony with God, to be like God so that there could be fellowship between man and God. This fellowship depends upon man's response to God. God is the One who creates. It is MAN who is to be made in God's image. If you do away with God, then of course there is no image, and we might as well make society around us the image. If there were no God, then an adjustment to society might be the next best thing, or the only

thing. But you cannot eliminate God. Even disbelieving in Him doesn't alter the fact that He is the Creator; and the pattern for creating man is still God Himself.

Every sin is a deviation from the image. The very word, "sin", means "missing the mark". That's why the apostle Paul writes that "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Man is still measured, not by how he fits into society; not by what men think of him, but he is measured by God; how closely he resembles the pattern, whether or not he is what God wants.

When a person sins, he may injure himself or another person" But basically, he is going against God and doing injury to the plan of God. Because before one commits the outward act of sin, there is first the inward fact of error: the missing of the mark in one's own mind. Thus every sin committed is a sin against the Creator, a marring of the plan of God, a rebellious act against the designer of the human race.

And the result of such an act is death. If the one guilty of sin does not find forgiveness in the mind of God, he must face God in judgment as a rebel, as one who has destroyed the image of God, rejected His creative purpose, and thus forfeited his right to live forever in God's fellowship. It is not merely a matter of adjustment to society. It is adjustment to the eternal purpose of God, who will judge the world "in righteousness" through Jesus (Acts 17:31). So it becomes a matter of life and death. There can be no peace of mind as long as one lives under the fear of such judgment, and there can be no hope of sharing in God's eternal Kingdom until God forgives the sin.

**HOW IS SIN FORGIVEN BY GOD?** This question will sound superfluous to those who are ignorant of scripture. It is a common error to think that God can forgive sin simply on the basis that He is God, and God is love, and all He has to do is just forgive because He wants to. This is about the same as saying that sin really isn't of much consequence to God, that He forgives it as easily as you might forgive a person who says "pardon me" when he bumps into you. But it isn't that simple. If it were it would not have been necessary for Christ to have been crucified.

Others may say that God simply forgives sin when we do enough good works to sort of outbalance the bad things. If true Christ's death would not have been necessary, and the new creation would be made up of the same kind of folk as the present one. Still others think that if you are terribly sorry for your sin, and if you grieve over it and ask forgiveness, He will forgive on the basis of your sorrow. And again, this would eliminate the purpose and necessity of Christ's death on the cross. No wonder the Bible says that the cross of Christ is a stumbling block to people. Each person has his own idea of how his sin is forgiven, and these ideas don't always include the necessity of Christ's death. But when we remember that this whole scheme of man's being created in God's image was not man's doing in the first place, but God's idea, then we are reminded that forgiveness of sin must also come from God, and it doesn't depend at all upon what Man thinks should be done about it, but upon what God is going to do about it. And God has

made it crystal clear that there is only one basis upon which He will forgive sins — through the death of Jesus, His only begotten son.

This was demonstrated in the death of the animals whose skins covered Adam and Eve because they had sinned and lost the quality of deathlessness which they previously had. It was pictured in the case of God supplying an animal to be slain on the altar in the place of Isaac. It was portrayed in the killing of the lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were commanded to kill a lamb or else suffer the death of the firstborn male in the household. It was continually portrayed in the sacrifice, especially in the yearly Day of Atonement, when the animal was slain for the sins of the people. It was predicted throughout the Old Testament, in such prophecies as that of Isaiah 53, where in prophesying about Christ he said, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all”.

In describing the crucifixion of Christ the prophet said that he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and that his death was for the transgression of sins of the people to whom the stroke was due. Jesus said that He intended to give his flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51). He explained in no uncertain terms that he would lay down His life and die for the sins of the world. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). On the cross, Jesus was not only assuming man’s guilt and sin, but He was assuming God’s judgment.’ There on the cross, in Jesus’ death, God was executing His judgment upon sin, and “condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3).

This shows that forgiveness of sin, as far as God is concerned, is not a simple and easy thing as many people imagine. The committing of sin is direct rebellion and rejection of the purpose of God, and He does not take it lightly. It required the extreme penalty which God exacted from Himself, as He entered the stream of humanity through the Son, Jesus, and then died the death of a sinner. It is no wonder that the Bible teaches that those who have believed in and accepted the forgiveness through Jesus are extremely conscious of the price paid for their ransom, and terribly sensitive to the evil which made it necessary.

**HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE FORGIVEN?** Can you be sure that your sins are forgiven by God? Here as in other things relative to sin, men have a tendency to depend upon their own ideas. But since it is God Who does the forgiving, it is only God who can say we are forgiven. God’s forgiveness is conditioned upon two things, the death of Jesus, and man’s acceptance of that death.

Now, the death of Jesus is past history, so there’s no question there. The only thing left in question is: have you received the benefit of that death? Here, let the Scripture speak for itself. Jesus said, “Except you believe in me, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). To believe in Jesus, of course, is to believe in everything about Him, including the fact that He died for men’s sins. Such belief is essential to one’s forgiveness. But this is not the end of belief. Jesus said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). The apostle Paul explained, “We who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death” (Romans 6:3). Then he wrote that “he that has died, is justified from sin” (Romans 6:7). It is in the death of Jesus that the penalty for sin is met. But it is in your

own individual and personal receiving of this death that the forgiveness takes place for YOU. This is a matter of faith. It is to believe that God will do what He said He would do. He promised that when you believe in the death of Jesus as your own sin-offering and would be baptized into that death, then you would be justified from sin. If you believe God, then you can rest assured that He forgives. You can know you are forgiven because you know God is honest and keeps His word. Refusal to be baptized is a refusal to believe God's word, and a rejection of the personal connection with the death of Jesus.

The account of sin must be met, either in the death of Jesus for you, or your own death in the Day of Judgment when sinners have "their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

The joy of the Christian is NOT that he has at last adjusted to faltering society, but that he has adjusted to God. His hope is not in the emerging of a "great society" in this world, but that he has been accepted in the society of God, and will have a place in the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). He is neither burdened by guilt, nor frustrated by anxiety and the confusion of the age. This, after all, is God's purpose, that we should believe now and forever.

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