

## **Nearer Heaven in 2007**

### **Accepting Forgiveness in My Guilt**

**Intro: Since the beginning of the year the them of my lessons has been “Daily Godly Living” as seek to be “Nearer Heaven in 2007”. Now as we bring this series to a close it might be helpful to take a quick look at the subjects we’ve covered. Daily godly living means...**

Cultivating Intimacy with Our God  
Glorifying God in Our Work  
Showing Mercy to Our Neighbor  
Growing Closer to Our Brethren  
Being Content in Our Circumstances  
Modeling Excellence in Our Relationships  
Exercising Caution in Our Speech  
Remaining Faithful in Our Suffering  
Depending upon Grace in Our Efforts  
Cultivating Self-control in Our Habits  
Applying Wisdom in Our Decisions  
Making Progress in Our Holiness

**Perhaps we all have felt more than once the guilt of falling short of God’s expectations. What do we do when we’ve blown it? There is at least one more feature of godly living we should not overlook. Daily godly living means “Accepting Forgiveness in Our Guilt”.**

**In more recent times there has been a tendency on the part of psychologists and even Bible teachers influenced by them to downplay the significance of guilt or to seek to eradicate it altogether as unhelpful in improving our lives. In contrast the pain of an accusing conscience is presented in the Bible as a beneficial pain designed to motivate us to seek God’s loving forgiveness in Christ. It is important that we deal with guilt Scripturally.**

#### **How people often deal with guilt**

##### **Some bury it.**

“I’ll ignore it and it will go away.”

When asked, “Why did you do it?”, you get an indifferent, “I don’t know.” Don’t want to talk about it.

In 2 Kg. 5 when Gehazi followed Naaman and greedily took from him money and clothing, he did not want his master to know what he had done.

*But he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” And he said, “Your servant went nowhere.” (2 Kings 5:25)*

If we seek to bury guilt we will avoid any place where we will be reminded of our transgressions. We will stay away from church

because there we think the preacher will speak about our transgressions and the church will “judge us” for our bad behavior.

**Some rationalize or deny it**

Another approach to dealing with guilt is to alter God’s truth so that “guilt” is treated as unreal or irrelevant.

“I didn’t do anything wrong”.

“That was not the real me”.

“I was forced to do what I did under the circumstances.”

When the prophet Samuel confronted king Saul about his improper offering of sacrifices he gave this splendid rationalization:

*And Saul said, “Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, therefore I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the Lord.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.” (1 Samuel 13:11-12)*

Through moral relativism virtually any transgression can be converted from a felony to a misdemeanor to written off the books altogether! Consequently, moral relativism eventually leads to the abolition of all guilt before God. And of course, if you can persuade yourself that your behavior is acceptable, then guilt vanishes.

**Some minimize it**

“Everybody makes mistakes”.

“I’ve know people who have done a lot worse!”

“It’s no big deal!”

“I can’t believe God would send someone to hell over that!”

The NT clearly warns us not to accept the deceptive line that sin is not serious:

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)*

**Some redirect it and refuse to take personal responsibility for wrong actions**

When the first sinners were confronted with their transgressions they each pointed to someone else:

Adam pointed to Eve and indirectly to God:

*And the man said, “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12)*

The woman pointed to the serpent:

*And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:13)*

Instead of acknowledging guilt it is easy to offer excuses:

“It’s just the way I am...” (genetics)

“I came from a dysfunctional family...”(lack of proper nurture)

“I’ve been oppressed...” (consequences of another’s actions)

“Nobody told me...” (ignorance)

It is the underlying presumption of all Biblical statements about sin that we are each accountable for our actions and that no one has to do wrong! We are responsible no matter how we may seek to avoid responsibility.

### **Some brood over their sin and guilt**

Instead of dealing with our transgressions we simply brood over them.

“How could I have done that? “

“How could I have been so stupid?”

Or, we may simply be overwhelmed with the sorrow of failure. Paul urged the church at Corinth to forgive a sinners brother:

*Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. (2 Corinthians 2:6-7)*

Of course, none of these are the right thing to do.

### **Some accept God’s forgiveness of their sin and its guilt.**

The “good news” of the gospel is that God will forgive us of our sins so that the guilt and the shame of sin are totally removed.

A loving God seeks to restore us to our proper place with Him:

*“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord,  
“though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow;  
though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18)*

He has made an adequate sacrifice for our transgression and the removal of our guilt.

*The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him, and \*said,  
“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the  
world! (John 1:29)*

We can receive His forgiveness if we will come to Him on His terms.

Those outside his kingdom must come to Him in faith, repentance and baptism (Mk. 16:16; Ac. 2:38).

*And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)*

Those inside His kingdom must come to Him in repentance and confession (Ac. 8:22; 1 Jn. 1:9).

*“Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. (Acts 8:22)*

### **Some stay chained to guilt**

There are some who cannot seem to get free from guilt feelings though there is no longer any real grounds for guilt.

Perhaps they have been raised in an environment based on acceptance by performance and where they could never

measure up to a demanding authority figure in their lives (a parent, teacher, religious leader or group).

Maybe they carry the shame of abuse or mistreatment that makes them always think “I’m a bad person”. Consequently though they are actually doing nothing wrong, they can never find any real peace.

Accepting God’s forgiveness means that we live in assurance of our relationship with the Lord and that we refuse to continue to live with guilt feelings and faithfully accept God’s promises.

*“For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:12)*

**When we accept God’s forgiveness of our sins wonderful things happen**

**We have assurance that the ground of God’s wrath has been removed and that we will have hope at the judgment.**

**We are able to experience personal peace and joy in the Lord’s love and grace.**

**We feel free to draw near to God in worship and in association with His people without having a condemning conscience.**

**We can be excited about sharing the possibilities of forgiveness with others.**

**We show patient love and forgiveness to those who have wronged us.**

**Conclusion: There are lots of ways to deal with guilt, but there is only one right way. Identify the sin in your life, repent of it, confess it to God and others as needed, and forget it!**