

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 5-3-15 PM NOTES  
"PUTTING GUILT IN ITS PLACE"  
VARIOUS SCRIPTURES  
# 1 in Series, "Dealing With Your Past"

**Philippians 3:13-14 (NKJV)** "13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

**Psalms 32:3-4 (ESV)** "3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah"

I. Guilt Related to the Culture

**Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV)** "1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

**Ephesians 2:12 (NKJV)** "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

"Present day religion far too often soothes the conscience instead of awakening it; and produces a sense of self-satisfaction and eternal safety rather than a sense of our unworthiness."  
—Martyn Lloyd-Jones

II. Guilt Related to the Conscience

The conscience is the innate ability to sense right and wrong.

**Romans 2:14-15 (NKJV)** "14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*."

"He was a fool who killed the watchdog because it alarmed him when thieves were breaking into his house. If conscience upbraids you, feel its upbraiding and heed its rebuke. It is your best friend."  
—Charles Spurgeon

**Acts 24:16 (NKJV)** "This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men."

**Psalms 51:4a (NKJV)** "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight..."

III. Guilt Related to the Cross

**1 John 2:2a (NKJV)** "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins..."

*There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains,  
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And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
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—William Cowper

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# 1 in Series, "Dealing With Your Past"

A common saying is, "We all have a past". That is a truism; of course we all have a past. But what is typically meant by that statement is that we all have things in our past that we regret. Those regrets in our past may be as serious as a horrible crime like murder or as common as saying something that hurt someone. In this series, we are going to learn how to biblically deal with our past. Let me give you a preview of where we are headed. We are going to spend 1 or 2 messages dealing with forgiveness. The focus will be on forgiveness for the sins we have been guilty of and also forgiving those in our past who have wronged us. We will take 1 or 2 messages to deal with the old programming from our past. The Bible calls that old programming the "flesh". We will look at how to recognize the flesh and walk victoriously over it. We will conclude this short topical series by focusing on how to move beyond your past. That last message will focus in on **Philippians 3:13-14 (NKJV)** "<sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." We are going to begin this short topical series by looking at guilt. We are going to see that all guilt is not bad; in fact biblical guilt is a gift from God to a fallen race. In this first message, we will focus on putting guilt in its place. I want us to begin by reading Psalm 32:1-5

When I think of guilt, I think of Judas hanging from a rope attached to a tree limb protruding over a large drop-off before someone cut him down and his bloated decaying body fell to the rocks below. I think of Lady Macbeth with blood on her hands she could never wash away. I think of women who were presented with abortion as an easy solution to their problem of an unwanted pregnancy. I think of people who have embezzled money and keep being haunted by it. I think of the man who in a weak moment had a "one night stand" and though no other human being but the other woman knows about it, he lives in torment because of what he has done to his wife and how he has grieved the heart of God. When I think of guilt, I think of David. He had it all. He was the leader of the greatest nation on earth; he was God's anointed and the people's choice. He was artistic and yet a great warrior. Someone described him as having the heart of an artist, the soul of a priest, the mind of a philosopher, and the body of a warrior. He was rich beyond imagination and yet there was a restlessness in him. He was at mid-life and perhaps was a little insecure as he looked to the future and thought about growing old. He was wide open to the devil's temptation in the area of having an affair. Bathsheba was the other woman's name. In the evil web of cover-up he had her husband killed and seemed to have gotten by with his deception. But David hadn't gotten by with his sin. Psalm 32 was written to explain what he went through during the time of cover-up of his sin. **Psalms 32:3-4 (ESV)** "<sup>3</sup> For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer." He experienced the heavy hand of God upon him and there was a spiritual drought in his life. God seemed a million miles away and this man known for his intimacy with God was miserable and God was nowhere near. David was experiencing guilt – true guilt, good guilt that was from God.

If you believe that all guilt is bad, you have really missed some biblical truth. Guilt is to the soul what pain is to the body. Is all pain bad? No, it is not! Pain serves a very useful purpose. There is a disease that goes by several different names with one being "Congenital Insensitivity to Pain". The name tells you what the disease is. It is very rare, but very real. Those with this disease have serious consequences because they do not know when they have been injured. They could continue walking on a sprained ankle or a broken leg. They can be seriously burned by drinking or touching something very hot. Also Hansen's disease that is sometimes called Leprosy today (probably different from the leprosy in the Bible) is a bacterial disease that causes a loss of feeling in the extremities that can result in the loss of toes and

fingers. Having no pain is not a good thing. Having no guilt when we sin is not a good thing. There is a proper place for guilt.

When I speak of Biblical guilt or beneficial guilt, I am speaking of that very uncomfortable reminder that we have broken God's laws, not kept His word, and have not done that which is pleasing in His sight. The purpose of true guilt (as we will see in this message) is to bring us to mourning over our sin and drive us to repentance and the cross.

## I. Guilt Related to the Culture

We live in a culture that has largely left out God and His word. The biblical word for culture that leaves God and His Word out is "the world". The world seems to believe that all guilt is bad and must be eliminated. The problem is that the way the world seeks to eliminate guilt does not involve true repentance and the shed blood of Christ on an old rugged cross. One of the world's tactics to rid us of guilt is to redefine sin. When we redefine sin, we eliminate the need for a Savior and we are doomed to the eternal consequences of sin. That's serious! Let me give some examples. Sociologist James Davison Hunter says that many schoolteachers are today being taught to no longer say things like, "Stop it please! You're disturbing the class." That is being too judgmental. If little Johnny is involved in some disruptive behavior in the classroom, today's young teachers may have been taught to say, "What are you doing? Why are you doing it? How does it make you feel?" Hunter goes on to point out that the word "sin" has been relegated mostly to dessert menus. We see things like "Sinful Butterscotch Binge" or "Sinful Fudge Fandango". But when we lie or deceive we say that we "fudged on the truth". [David Jeremiah, "Slaying the Giants in your life", p 80]. The world seems to be on a crusade to eliminate the serious use of the word "sin" from our daily life because we want to eliminate that uncomfortable thing called "guilt". I don't have time to go into it, but that is where the concept that everybody is a victim comes from. Victims are not responsible for what they do and therefore can suffer no guilt. I can't resist just one example. [From "The Vanishing Conscience" by John MacArthur, p23]. Richard Berendzen was President of American University in Washington D. C. when he was caught making obscene phone calls to women. He claimed that he was a victim of childhood abuse and received a suspended sentence. He then negotiated a million dollar severance package from the university. Next, he wrote a book about his ordeal in which he explains that his obscene phone calls were his method of "data gathering". His book was given rave reviews by the *Washington Post* and *USA Today*. In addition to the "victim" approach, there is the tactic to make every sin a disease, thus eliminating guilt. It would be foolish to feel guilty for being sick. I could give lots of examples but I think you get the point. It shouldn't be surprising that these views are in our culture; what is surprising is that they have infiltrated and are often accepted in the church. Much so called "Christian counseling" has bought into the world's view of guilt. Learn this: there is a difference in counseling where the counselor is a Christian and true Christian counseling. A professing Christian who is a counselor may have been trained in the world's "removing guilt feelings apart from repentance and the cross" approach. His or her counsel is likely no different from a counselor who is an atheist or a Buddhist. We must see and deal with guilt in a Biblical way.

Our culture has concocted a substitute for the guilt we try to eliminate. It is called by several names, but the most common is "self-esteem". According to most of the self-esteem gurus, there are no bad people, only people who feel bad about themselves. According to the proponents of this devilish doctrine, if people feel good about themselves, they will behave better, have fewer emotional problems, and achieve more. The facts however just don't back that up. Several studies show that the problem with many criminals is that they have self esteem that is too high. The morals of our culture are at an all time low and yet a Gallop poll showed that 90% of the people they surveyed said their self esteem was robust and healthy [John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, P81]. Like everything else, this false belief has infiltrated the church. One popular TV preacher says openly that he never preaches about sin because people already feel bad about themselves and his goal is to help them feel better.

In contrast, one of the central doctrines of Biblical Christianity is the doctrine of "total depravity". This doctrine is not saying that mankind is as bad as they can be; it tells us that mankind is as bad off as they

can be. Ephesians 2:1 tells us that before Christ we were dead in trespasses and sins. Verse 2 says we walked according to the course of this world. Verse 3 says we conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh and were by nature children of wrath. Verse 12 says we were without hope and without God in the world. That's a description of every person apart from repentance and a saving encounter with the cross of Christ. Because of Adam's sin and the consequences of that sin that were passed on to us, every person is born with a spirit dead toward God, a nature that is bent toward sin, and in a condition of separation from God. In opposition to that biblical view, the "self-esteem cult" says mankind's problem is that while they are basically good and they need to feel better about themselves. The goal of the self-esteem "gospel" is the glory of man and not the glory of God. The London preacher, Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones said something that is still true today. He said, "Present day religion far too often soothes the conscience instead of awakening it; and produces a sense of self-satisfaction and eternal safety rather than a sense of our unworthiness." [Quoted in Chuck Swindoll's Illustration Book, P116].

## II. Guilt Related to the Conscience

To understand a Biblical view of guilt, we need to understand the relationship between guilt and the conscience. In just the New Testament books that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write, there are 23 references to the conscience that God has given to mankind. Just what is the conscience? A six year old boy was asked the meaning of a guilty conscience. He said, "I'm not sure, but I think it has something to do with feeling bad when you kick girls." When the Bible uses the word "conscience", what is it referring to? The Greek word translated conscience means "to know intuitively". Conscience then is the intuitive knowledge of what is right and wrong. Someone described it as the soul's warning system. The Puritans called the conscience "God's deputy to arrest us in sin". Someone else defined the conscience as "moral intuition". I believe the best definition is simply that the conscience is the innate ability to sense right and wrong. Everyone is born with a conscience. **Romans 2:14-15 (NKJV)** shows us this. "<sup>14</sup> for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup> who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)." I think it was a defiled, guilty conscience that David was describing in Psalm 32:3-4 when 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." Far from being our enemy, our conscience is a great gift. Listen to this quote by Charles Spurgeon: "He was a fool who killed the watchdog because it alarmed him when thieves were breaking into his house. If conscience upbraids you, feel it's upbraiding and heed it's rebuke. It is your best friend." [Spurgeon Quote Book, Page 40].

The conscience is directed in two directions. We see this in **Acts 24:16 (NKJV)** "I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." First, the conscience is directed toward God. All sin first of all is toward or against God. Referencing once again David's great sin, he tells us in the other Psalm that comes out of that sin, **Psalms 51:4a (NKJV)** "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight..." David recognized that sin is first and foremost against God. All sin is first against God and to clear our conscience, we must first clear it first with God.

All sin is against God and some sin is against man (Acts 24:16b). Not all sin is against man. Sins of thought and some sins of pride are not directly against another person and should only be dealt with before God. Several times I have had people come to me confessing bad thoughts about me. Tell the Lord but not me. I have bad thoughts about me also! However, when a sin is against another person (such as slander, stealing, lying, backbiting, etc) that sin needs to be confessed to God, but our conscience will not be "without offense" until we confess and ask forgiveness from the person we wronged. A conscience without offense toward man doesn't mean we have never wronged another person; it means that we have never wronged another person without asking their forgiveness. Again, guilt manifested through an accusing conscience is our ally, not our enemy. I am convinced that one of the main hindrances to revival in a church and even in a community is the breaking of relationships because someone wrongs another and has never dealt with their guilt by asking forgiveness of a person wronged and making restitution

when appropriate. I remember reading about the Canadian revival in West-central Canada in the early 1970's. It started when two brothers reconciled. There had been a wrong done and for 20 years these men had not spoken to each other. They continued to attend the same church but entered and exited through separate doors and sat on opposite sides of the sanctuary. Finally, one of the brothers approached the other to clear his conscience and ask for forgiveness. It was a difficult ordeal but after praying with the Pastor and deacons there was reconciliation. The two sang a duet together the next Sunday and shared their testimony with the church and revival broke out and spread to other churches and eventually had a broad effect throughout west-central Canada. Let me ask you a question. Is there anyone who can look you in the eye and say, "You wronged me and have never asked my forgiveness"?

The conscience and guilt are all tied up together. Guilt seems to use our conscience as a tool, to motivate us to deal with sin God's way.

I can't leave this subject without a serious warning. Have you ever heard someone say, "Let your conscience be your guide"? That's partially a good statement. Here's why. The conscience can be defiled. When the conscience is ignored it can lose its sensitivity. 1 Timothy 4:2 talks about those whose conscience has been seared with a hot iron. That's like a branding iron that makes the skin it has seared without feeling. When we ignore the conscience long enough it is seared and no longer warns us. That is one of the worst things imaginable that could happen to us.

Another way the conscience is defiled is when it continually is programmed with lies. It is really the same principle; when we are continually told that something is wrong that is not wrong, we develop a weak conscience that is over-sensitive in some areas. By the same token, when we are continually told that something is not wrong that really is wrong, our conscience becomes an unreliable guide. The conscience must be affirmed and programmed by the Word of God. To better state a common saying, "Let your conscience as it is affirmed and programmed by the Word of God be your guide".

### III. Guilt Related to the Cross

God only saves desperate people who mourn over their sin and affirm their guilt before Him. Proud, self-righteous people cannot be saved. The more convinced we are of our guilt and our lack of merit or solution for our guilt, the closer we are to salvation. When we recognize our guilt (which is the conviction of the Holy Spirit) and helplessness we then see the cross of Jesus Christ as our only solution. The death of Jesus Christ on an old rugged cross was not to save us from poor self-esteem; it was to save us from sin and the resulting guilt and condemnation brought about by that sin. The more we recognize our guilt, the more we magnify the cross. On the cross, Jesus paid a debt; He provided a satisfactory payment for the sins of all who would repent and savingly believe on Him. **1 John 2:2a (NKJV)** "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins..." That word, "propitiation" basically means "satisfaction". Who had to be satisfied? Who is our guilt against? It is against a holy God who demands the death penalty for those guilty of sin. On the cross Jesus satisfied that demand for death as He died (shed His blood) in our place and the Father looked at the cross and said, "I am satisfied". HALLELUJAH! No amount of guilt over sin outweighs the value of the blood of Jesus Christ!

One of the enemy's tactics is to cause false guilt (guilt over what has already been forgiven). When that false guilt comes, we are to reckon on the cross. To reckon means to count something as true because God said it is true whether we feel like it is true or not. I'm going to deal with this more in depth next week, but suffice it to say, when we sin after salvation, God simply asks us to acknowledge it, say about it what He says about it, grieve over it (not treat it flippantly), forsake it (repent), and to apply the cross by faith and walk in the forgiveness that was purchased for us on the cross. The cross is the continuing basis of God accepting and forgiving us.

### CONCLUSION

Have you ever thanked and praised God for Biblical guilt? True guilt is a gift of God designed to lead us to the cross. At the cross, the guilt is relieved. Humanistic psychology that leaves God out focuses on alleviating feelings of guilt, but it cannot remove the guilt. The blood of Jesus Christ removes the guilt!

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Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains,  
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