

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **2Corinthians 7:8-10.**

For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it-- *for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while-- [9] I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. [10] For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

B. This is the fifth in a five part sermon series on overcoming certain personal problems:

1. Overcoming Anxiety.
2. Overcoming Loneliness.
3. Overcoming Anger.
4. Overcoming Grief.
5. Overcoming Guilt.

C. Everyone deals with guilt. All of us are guilty of sin and can think of specific wrongs in our past.

D. Only a scant few feel no remorse, however, too many have an overwhelming sense of guilt.

E. Tonight's lesson is how to effectively deal with guilt.

II. KINDS AND CAUSES OF GUILT.

A. Psychologists identify four major areas of guilt:

1. Legal Guilt.
When the laws of society are violated; and this brings fear of punishment.
2. Social Guilt.
Which is improper behavior toward others; and this brings loss of self-esteem.
3. Personal Guilt.
The failing to meet up to one's own personal standards; and brings loss of self-esteem.
4. Theological Guilt.
This is the violation of God's Law; and can bring loneliness, rejection, or isolation.

B. But not all guilt feelings are bad if they are used to change our behavior. Guilt feelings should always be in proportion to the seriousness of our actions.

C. Some causes of guilt are:

1. Past learning and unrealistic personal expectations.
This can come from parents having set standards too high to only have the children live in constant failure and criticism. The workaholic may be so, because of his/her fear of guilt.
2. Inferiority and Social Pressure.
The constant comparisons of talents, wealth, education, etc., make for peer pressure and feelings of guilt.
3. Faulty conscience development.
When moral training is punitive, critical, fear-ridden, and highly demanding by poor parental models the result is guilt and great remorse.
4. Supernatural influences.
Satan is always accusing Xians of sin, and wants us to too feel more guilty than what we really are (Rev. 12:10).

III. SOME EFFECTS OF GUILT.

A. How we react to our being guilty of wrong doing (commission or omission) is all important.

B. Some of the effects of guilt are:

1. Defense mechanisms. We blame everyone else but ourselves.
2. Self-condemnation. This tears down our self-image. (Ex.: "kick me.")
3. Social reactions. Withdrawal, depression, and/or loneliness, etc.
(Ex.: "I'm not good enough.")

- 4. Physical reactions. Some kinds of illnesses are caused by excessive guilt.
 - 5. Repentance and forgiveness. This is the best response.
- C. We should always feel remorse for our guilt, but should also learn to respond in such a way to get rid of the guilt that is causing the remorse.

IV. THE BIBLE AND GUILT.

-  A. There is little difference in the Bible between sin and guilt. Sin is what causes (theological) guilt, and we feel guilty before God because of our sin.
- B. But there is a difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. One is destructive spiritually, and the other is spiritually redeeming (see 2Cor. 7:8-10).
- C. For example, how do you react when you spill coffee? Do you say, "I'm a clumsy fool" or "Sorry, let me help you clean it up."
- D. It is also important to remember that guilt is a terrible motivator. God's motivator is love not guilt (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:9).
*(Jn 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."
 (Rom 5:9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*
- E. For Xians to live in guilt is to forget what happened at Calvary! To live with unnecessary guilt means the cross has lost its power.

V. HOW TO HANDLE GUILT.

-  A. Learn to be Understanding and Accepting.
All of us are guilty of sin and should feel some guilt, but don't allow these feelings to become greater than what they should be.
- B. Have insight into the mind of God.
God sent X into the world, not to condemn the world (Jn. 3:17), or count our sins against us (2Cor. 5:19).
*(Jn 3:17) "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him."
 (2Cor 5:19) namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*
His motivation for salvation is love; and His forgiveness can remove guilt.
- C. Education.
Find out what God really expects of you so that your standards are not too high which will cause unnecessary guilt.
- D. Seek repentance and forgiveness.
This is the only real way to get rid of guilt. One must first get rid of the sin that is causing the guilt.

VI. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

-  A. Guilt can choke and kill us spirituality. If used as a motivator it can be a terrible taskmaster.
- B. Love, repentance and forgiveness will do away with guilt.
- C. All three are offered in JC. You can overcome guilt through Him.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.