

**Fil-Am Community Church**

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**No More Fear - Part 7 of 10**

**Key Verse: 1 John 4:18**

### **“YOUR GUILT AND GOD'S LOVE”**

Good morning Fil-Am Community Church, I hope you all had a very good Fourth of July celebration, with plenty of food and fireworks.

The weather was pretty good, it has benn getting a little hotter, letting us know that Summer is here.

What are you going to do for your vacation? Camping? Water skiing? Sailing? Mountain climbing? Visit relatives? A cruise?

Are any of you going to take some kind of a trip?

I would suggest some trips to avoid. Anything involving 95 South or the Capitol Beltway altogether.

One trip I don't want you to get on is the guilt trip.

Sad to say that almost everyone here has taken that one from one time or another.

We know where it ends up, it's a dead end. It goes nowhere.

The Bible says that many of your fears are rooted in guilt. 1 John 4:18 *"Perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment."*

Pay attention to the word Punishment. "with punishment". Phillips translation says, *"Fear always contains some of the torture of feeling guilty."*

I like the way the Amplified Bible says it, lets look at the same passage below.

**1 John 4:18, Amplified Bible**

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors *and* expels every trace of terror! For fear brings with it the thought of punishment, and [so] he who is afraid has not reached the full maturity of love [is not yet grown into love's complete perfection].

Maybe we don't make this connection. There are many fears that are caused by guilt.

- The fear that I'll be found out
- The fear that I'll be rejected by others.
- The fear that someone will retaliate for what I've done.
- The fear that God is going to judge me.

This is why people don't want to die. They're not ready to meet their maker because of guilt in their life.

The good news is you don't have to go on the guilt trip this summer or any day. We're going to briefly summarize guilt by looking at these three areas.

- What we **usually do** with our guilt
- What we **should do** with our guilt
- What **God wants to do** with our guilt

## I. WHAT WE USUALLY DO WITH OUR GUILT

Three common coping devices. The Bible talks about these things we normally do with our guilt.

### 1. We bury it.

At least we try to bury it in many different ways. Have you ever heard someone advise, "You've got to bury your past." There's only one problem. It doesn't work. It keeps resurrecting itself like some horror movie.

The Night of the Living Dead. Those guilty feelings come back at the most inappropriate times. They overwhelm you all over again. When you bury

them, you bury them alive and they keep coming back. It can resurrect itself.

We all have a favorite way of burying our guilt. Some of us minimize it. We say,

- It's no big deal!
- If it's no big deal how come it still bothers you?
- If it's no big deal how come you still remember it 20 years later?

Minimizing is a way of burying your guilt and it doesn't work.

Another way is to rationalize it. We say...

- Everybody's done it.
- That doesn't make it right.
- You can always find somebody who is worse off than you are.
- I'm better than Hitler!

Rationalize means *rational lies*.

- Rationalize means telling myself in my mind what I know is not true in my heart.
- It's a battle between your mind and your heart and you're trying to convince yourself it's OK.
- The heart's saying, "Who are you kidding?"

We compromise. If we feel bad about what we've done we just lower our standards. Then you don't feel so guilty.

Fortune cookie: Commit a sin twice and it won't seem a sin. Brilliant but true. The fifteenth murder is not nearly as hard as the first.

If you do something enough you compromise your values, you compromise your integrity. It doesn't bother you any more. That's called a seared conscience.

Proverbs 28:13 *"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins."*

Why? Because it's going to catch up with you, especially in today's society. Today, it doesn't matter what you did twenty years ago, it's fair game for the media.

It's eventually going to catch up with you. More than that, trying to bury the guilt you feel over things -- and we've all had reasons to be guilty; we've all had regrets, mistakes, failures, sins, problems -- the real problem with burying the guilt is you waste emotional energy.

Psalm 32:3-5 David says, *"I wouldn't admit my guilt, but my dishonesty made me miserable, and filled my days with frustration. My strength evaporated until I finally admitted all my sins and stopped trying to hide them."*

He said it just made him miserable, sapped him from all his energy. He was spending so much emotional energy trying to keep it down and not think about it but it keeps popping back up.

Burying your guilt doesn't work.

## **2. We blame others.**

This one is as old as creation. Clear back in the Garden of Eden, Adam took it like a man and blamed his wife. He sinned and in Genesis 3:12 *"Yes' Adam admitted, 'but it was the woman you gave me who brought me some, and I ate it.'" He's actually blaming God, "It was the woman you gave me."* Typical. People have been doing it ever since.

You spell BLAME -- B Lame -- When you're blaming you're always being lame. You're not accepting responsibility.

Today, we're all pros at accusing and excusing. We're great at excusing ourselves and accusing other people. It's what I call the victimization of America. It's not my fault!

I may have done something horrible but it was because when I was three years something happened to me and I have never been able to get over it and ever since then I have repressed feelings and that's why I blew up that building! I can't help it!

We always blame other people. It doesn't work.

Why do we do it then? Because we use blame to balance out our guilt. In your mind there's a balance. On one side is guilt and on the other side is blame.

When people say, "I feel guilty over something," then what they do is say, "but you did ...." and name something. We try to balance out our guilt by pointing out the faults and failures of other people as if that negotiates or deletes what I have done. It doesn't work.

Sometimes we even blame God. Proverbs 19:3 *"People's own foolishness ruins their lives, but in their minds they blame the Lord."*

They say, "God, why are You allowing this?" It's not God's faults. Maybe it's just from some poor choices you made.

### **3. We beat ourselves.**

This doesn't work either. When we beat ourselves, we basically try to take it out on ourselves. We self administer punishment, subconsciously we start saying, "You did wrong. You deserve to pay for it."

Our body decides to take over and prove that we're going to pay for it. We end up beating ourselves.

Can a guilty conscious make you sick? Sure.

I read a study recently that said over 50% of the people in the two hospitals they studied could be released if they learned somehow how to get rid of their guilt, that their illness was somehow guilt related.

Can a guilty conscious make you depressed? Absolutely. Depression is often a way of atonement. I did wrong, therefore I should punish myself so I'm depressed.

Can a guilty conscience cause you to set yourself up for a failure? You bet it can. You're working hard consciously, but unconsciously you're thinking, "I

don't deserve to succeed. I don't deserve that promotion." Subconsciously you sabotage your own efforts.

Guilt has an amazing way of causing us to take payment out on ourselves. This is what happened with David in Psalm 38<sup>4-8</sup> *"My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. I am bowed down and brought low. All day long I go about mourning."*

There is a problem with beating yourself. Your conscious doesn't ever know when to quit. So it keeps on.

Saints please listen to me...

Some of you have been beating yourselves for years and years over something that happened long, long ago.

You've got a secret shame that you've held in your heart. You keep thinking every time something goes wrong in your life, "God's getting even with me." Your conscious doesn't know when to say, "Enough is enough! You paid the price. You're free." There is a better way.

## II. WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH OUR GUILT?

The Bible is very clear about this, very specific. It tells us how to **get off a guilt trip.**

There is no reason you should leave here tonight with a guilty conscious. No reason at all if you take the steps God says to take. They are very simple. They aren't easy but they are simple. They are easy to understand but they're not easy to carry out.

There is an old legend about three men and their sacks. Each man had two sacks, one tied in from his neck and the other tied on the back.

When the first man was asked what was in his sacks, he said, in the sack on my back are all the good things, friends and family have done. There hidden from view.

In the front sack are all the bad things that have happened to me. Every now and then I stop, open the front sack, take the things out, examine them, and think about them.

Because he stopped so much to concentrate on all the bad stuff, he really didn't make much progress in life.

The second man was asked about his sacks. He replied, in the front sack are all the good things I've done. I like to see them, so quiet often I take them out to show them off to people.

The sack in the back, I keep all my mistakes in there and carry them around all the time. Sure there heavy, they slow me down, but you know, for some reason I can't out them down.

When the third man was asked about his sacks, he answered, the sack in the front is great, there I keep all the positive thoughts I have about people, all the blessings I have experienced, and all the great things other people have done for me. The weight inst a problem the sack it sails like a ship, it keeps me going forward.

The sack on my back is empty. There is nothing in it. I cut a hole in its bottom. In there I put all the bad things that I can think about myself or hear about others. They go in one end and out the other, so I'm not carrying around any extra weight at all.

What are you carrying in your sacks today?

**1. I admit it.**

- I don't minimize it.
- I don't bury it.
- I don't ignore it.
- I don't push it down.
- I don't deny it.

I simply own up to it. **I admit it,**

- That was wrong.
- That was sin.
- It was stupid, dumb and
- I willfully chose to do the wrong thing because it was what I wanted to do at the time."

Proverbs 20:27 (Good News) *"The Lord gave us a mind and a conscience. We cannot hide from ourselves."*

Sometimes people try to get rid of their guilt by running from it. We run from it in many different ways. Some people simply overwork. They become workaholics and they are always trying to keep busy.

If I'm busy I don't have to think about what I feel bad about the dumb choice I made. The only problem is you work all day until you're absolutely fatigued, then you flop into bed.

But the moment you slow down those feelings come crawling back in and saying, "You did it. You did it and you know you did it."

Some people try to escape through

- drugs,
- through alcohol,
- by going to Disneyland,
- Travel all over the world.

The problem with that is no matter when you go, your conscience goes with you. You don't get away from it. It just stays there. When you finally slow down, you've still got the feelings.

You can get high or numb your senses with alcohol but when you come down you've still got the problem.

1 John 1:9 *"If we say we have not sinned we're just deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."*

- We're just lying to ourselves if we don't admit the things we've done wrong.
- We deceive ourselves.
- If you want to stop defeating yourself you've got to first stop deceiving yourself.

Call it for what it is. Say, **"God, you're right. I'm wrong."**

If you're serious about clearing your conscious, if you're serious about living guilt free, then I've got a homework assignment for you.

First, get by yourself and get a pencil and pad of paper. Say, "God, I'm ready."

Ask God to bring to mind every conscious and unconscious thing you feel guilty about.

Write it down. Lamentations 3:40 *"Let us examine our ways and test them."*

Do a spiritual inventory of your life so you can clear your conscience.

- Write down all the things you feel guilty about.
- Why write them out?
- Writing forces you to be specific.
- Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips.
- If I can say it and write it, I've really thought about it. It forces you to be specific and as Lamentations says, *"Let us examine our ways."*

The next thing you do as you make that list say, "OK God, I'm admitting it to You."

## **2. Accept responsibility for it.**

This is more than just admitting it. It's saying "It really was my fault." I don't rationalize it. I don't say, "It happened so long ago". I don't blame others saying, "It was mostly their fault."

It may have been mostly their fault but in this situation, you need to focus on the 90% they did wrong but the 10% you did wrong. You're the one carrying the guilt around. They have to deal with their guilt themselves.

You don't minimize it and you don't make excuses but you accept responsibility.

When we were at the Men's conference last year, there was one preacher from Georgia that said something that stuck with me, he was describing how he was counseling a newly married young man.

Apparently his wife was a product of child abuses, and had been sexually molested for most of her life. And every time he would touch her or raise her voice she would withdraw in fear. He explained to this young husband, that it wasn't your fault, however it is your responsibility

You can't make excuses for why it is not your fault, you need to step up to the plate and be a man about it, accept the responsibility for it.

One day King David in his palace in Jerusalem looks out and sees a woman, totally nude, bathing on a rooftop. He has lustful thoughts.

He brings her to the palace. He commits adultery with her and then later he has her husband murdered because she gets pregnant and he doesn't want to admit it.

Would you think he would feel guilty? Of course. But it takes two. But what David said in Psalm 51:3 *"I recognize my faults. I am conscious of my sins."*

He's not blaming Bathsheba. That's what it means to accept responsibility. Until you do this you're never really going to feel relief?

What is the best way to accept responsibility and insure that I'm accepting responsibility for my guilt?

Admit your fault to another person. God says it's an essential key to your recovery.

James 5:16 *"Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

God says **revealing** your feeling is the beginning of healing. **Admit** your faults to one another.

Why drag another person into it?

Because the root of all your problems are relational and that's where the fear comes from.

- We're dishonest with each other.
- We wear masks.
- We play games, play we have it all together when we don't.
- We act like we've never sinned when everybody knows we have sinned.
- We pretend we're perfect when we're not. B

Because we don't admit that we're just human beings and

- We've all fallen short,
- It isolates us from each other.
- That causes fear and that fear comes out in all kinds of different realms.
- It prevents intimacy.
- It creates insecurity.
- If they really knew me, they'd reject me.

The fact is I'm only as sick as my secrets. God says revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing. The more you hide that secret shame the more it hurts.

Everybody in the world needs at least **one person** in life that they can be totally honest with and know that they're not going to be judged, that they will be accepted. It's God's way of freeing us.

### 3. I ask God to forgive it.

*1 John 1:9 (Phillips) "If we freely admit that we have sinned, we find God utterly reliable. He forgives our sins and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil."*

## 1 John 1:9, Amplified Bible

<sup>9</sup> If we [freely] admit that we have sinned *and* confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action].

Wouldn't you like to be **thoroughly clean?** Completely forgiven? No skeletons in your closet that someone can point a finger at because it's been dealt with by God and it's been forgiven. It's wiped out. Even if there weren't such a thing as heaven it would be worth becoming a Christian just for the joy of a clear conscience, the freedom of knowing it's been dealt with.

How do you ask God for forgiveness? There's a right way and a wrong way.

Wrong ways:

You don't have to beg God to forgive you. "Please, pretty please, *please!*"

- God is merciful.
- God is gracious,
- God is Loving.
- He loves to forgive.
- He's more willing to forgive, than you are to ask for it.
- He's waiting to forgive you.

You don't have to bargain with God.

- God if you'll forgive me, I'll read my Bible every day.
- I'll tithe 12%."

You don't bargain with God.

You don't bribe God. "This is what I'll do for You. I'll never sin again if you'll forgive me."

Right way: **You just believe.**

Romans 3:23-24 *"All of us have sinned yet God declares us Not Guilty if we trust in Jesus Christ who in His mercy freely takes away our sin."*

**If we trust, if we just believe.**

The most basic truth of Christianity is this:

Jesus Christ paid for my sins on the cross. You must simply ask Him for forgiveness and accept His forgiveness. Your forgiveness is not based on what you do; it's based on His **grace**, His **mercy**, His **love**.

I **don't know** what you've done. But **I do** know what Jesus Christ has done.

What He's done is **greater** than what you've done. What He's done can take care of what you've done.

No matter what you've done, you can be forgiven. Some of you are saying, "I've asked God to forgive me, but I don't feel forgiven. I don't feel it."

Many of you are Christians and you say, "I'm a believer but I still don't feel forgiven." That's because you don't understand how God forgives. You may even be a Christian and confessed all your sins but you still feel guilty over them. If you feel guilty over a sin you've already confessed, that guilt is not from God. **It's from the devil.**

God doesn't make you feel guilty over things you've already confessed. Satan is the **accuser of the brethren.**

Four things God wants to do with your guilt. The Bible says real clearly that God does four things when you admit to Him your sins.

1. **God forgives instantly.**

Isaiah 55:7 *"God is merciful and quick to forgive."*

He doesn't say, "I'm going to make you suffer for a little while first." He never makes us wait.

When you say, "God, please forgive me" He doesn't say, "Let me think about it." It is instant. There is no delay. No waiting period. It's quickly.

It reminds me of the story of the lifeguard that sees someone drowning, they don't stand on the side of the pool and say, you know that you're doing the back stroke wrong, or you know if you had stayed in the shallow end, you wouldn't be in this situation, no they don't do that, they dive in and drag you to safety,

God does the same thing, he doesn't say I told you so, or if you had only listened to me you would be in this situation, no he does just like the lifeguard, he dives in and saves us from the situation.

Should a believer ever feel guilty? Yes. For about thirty seconds. That's about how long it takes for you to...

- Admit it,
- Accept responsibility for it,
- Ask God to forgive you and
- Accept that forgiveness.

There is a myth that says, "If I feel guilty it makes me a better person."

- No, it doesn't.
- It just makes you a miserable person.

Another myth says, "I should always feel guilty about something."

- No, you shouldn't.
- That's not living under grace.
- God forgives instantly.

**2. God forgives me completely.**

Colossians 2:13-14 *"He has forgiven all your sins. He has utterly wiped out the evidence of broken commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it to the cross!"*

When Jesus Christ died for your sins,

## **Which one did He die for?**

All of them. Not just the ones yesterday or today. He's already died for the ones you're going to commit tomorrow.

Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross so you can quit nailing yourself to the cross. He was hung up for your hang ups. He forgives completely.

That's a super stain remover. He's completely annulled it.

How long do you remember a bill that's been paid? I don't worry about bills that have been paid. You forget it.

If God forgets confessed sin, don't you think you can too? If you've admitted a sin to God and you've confessed to Him and you die and get to heaven and say "About that sin..." He'll say, "What sin?"

The Bible says He takes your sin and puts it in the deepest part of the ocean and then He puts up a no fishing sign. He doesn't want you drawing it back out again. He forgives completely.

If you don't understand this, then every time something goes wrong in your life you're going to think God's getting even with you. He doesn't do that.

### **3. God forgives me repeatedly.**

Have any of you ever committed the same sin more than once? Do you ever feel embarrassed about coming back to God and asking Him to forgive something you've already asked forgiveness for once before? God does not get bored forgiving you over and over. It's His nature. He is a merciful forgiving God. He loves to forgive.

#### 4. He forgives me freely.

Ephesians 1:7 *"For by the sacrificial death of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.*

*How great is the grace of God."* Free!

Because of God's free grace. You'll never be able to earn it, deserve it. It's just a gift of grace. That's what it is.

Because you are a human being, your greatest single need is forgiveness. Because God sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross His greatest gift to you is forgiveness.

What's the secret shame that you've been haunted with?

The moment I say it, you already think about it. It's in your mind. You're afraid somebody is going to read your brain waves right now. What is your single shame? Nobody has to tell you; it immediately comes up. That regret that you've been ashamed to even think about.

*"What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What relief for those who God has cleared their record!"* How do you spell relief?

## JESUS.

Prayer:

Father, I know without a doubt there are people here listening that are suffering under an immense load of guilt and shame and regret. For some, it's been eating at them for years. Would You let this day be their day of release? Their day of relief? Let them to experience the freedom that comes from Your forgiveness. Make this a day of freedom.

I encourage you to talk to God about your need for forgiveness. "Dear God, I know that You know everything about me. You already know the things I'm ashamed of. The regrets, the sins, the mistakes, the habits, the actions, the attitudes I feel guilty over. Today, I admit that I need Your forgiveness. I agree with You that I have done wrong. Many times I've

done what I've wanted to do rather than what I knew was the right thing to do. I ask You to forgive me. Jesus Christ, I don't understand it all, but I want to thank You for dying for my sins on the cross so I could be forgiven. I want to commit my life to You as best I know how. I want to follow You. Thank You for forgiving me instantly and completely and repeatedly and freely. Help me to feel forgiven. Help me to learn to forgive myself. Amen."