

How to Overcome Guilt

Psalm 38

Introduction:

1. Guilt can be a crushing weight. Last week we saw from Psalm 38 what guilt did to King David. It nearly destroyed him. David allowed sin into his life, and that sin produced the mammoth weight of a guilty conscience. It had David down for the count. vs. 1-8
2. Because of guilt, we are often overcome by feelings of punishment, rejection, and isolation. Even as a believer, guilt can cause us to doubt God's forgiveness, God's grace, and God's love.
3. One of the deepest needs of human beings is to know how to deal with guilt. Many become confused, frustrated, and eventually give up in trying to deal with guilt. Thankfully, God's Word instructs us in how to handle guilt.
4. But, we must understand that there are two forms of guilt:
 - Genuine guilt – This comes as a result of violating God's Word.
 - False guilt – This is derived from misconceptions or feelings that are not based upon God's Word.
5. This psalm (Psalm 38) is the prayer of a truly guilty man. This prayer came after David had committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba.
6. In last week's message, we examined this psalm and saw how David's sin had crippled him emotionally, physically, and spiritually (vs. 10, 13-14). It always does. Because of this, sin should be avoided at all cost. God's answer is to flee temptation.
7. But, what if it is too late and we have already sinned? How do we overcome the feelings of guilt and condemnation? Let's learn from Psalm 38.

First, talk to God with confidence. vs. 15

1. After fourteen rather dark and bleak verses, notice verse 15. Praise God, there is **hope** for the guilty soul! The word "*hope*" does not mean "a wishy-washy desire." It means "a bedrock assurance." We have a firm assurance that God hears us when we pray.
2. Satan will use our guilt to convince us that God no longer hears our prayers. This is where believers must be rooted and grounded in sound doctrine, or they will be tossed around and shaken.
3. In this dispensation, God does not hear our prayers because of what we have done; He hears us because of who we are!
4. If you are saved, you are God's accepted child that has been placed in Christ. You are in Christ, and He is in you. You have been made one with Him. Because of this, you have complete access to your heavenly Father. Ephesians 2:18, 3:12; 1 Timothy 2:5
5. Your access to God has nothing to do with **you**, but it has everything to do with **Jesus**.

- We have been made close to God through the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:13), and it is by this same blood that we can have boldness to enter into God's presence. Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:19
6. We have confidence that God hears our prayers even when we cry out in guilt and shame. God hears us not based on our **attainment**, but based on Christ's blood **atonement**.
 7. Don't ever feel like, "I've sinned. I'm guilty and I can't pray. God won't hear me."
 8. As a believer who is in Christ, you have unlimited access to God in prayer.

Second, talk to God with true repentance. vs. 17

1. Repentance means that we have had a true change of mind and thinking about our sin.
2. Biblical repentance means that we now view our sin as God views it. We now think about our sin like God thinks about it.
 - Verse 17 – "...my sorrow is continually before me."
 - Verse 18 – "...I will be sorry for my sin."
3. We must reach the point where we are truly sorrowful and repentant for our sin. Until we reach this breaking point, we will never overcome guilt.
4. David said he was "*ready to halt*." This means, "I'm almost done for, on the verge of collapse. I'm at the end of my rope. I've reached the end of myself."
 - Let me be clear – I am talking about sorrow for true guilt, not false guilt. Some people feel guilty over incidents that were not their fault. They were innocent victims who became caught up in another person's immoral actions.
 - David was experiencing genuine guilt.
5. Genuine guilt is meant to be a positive motivator, to bring us to our knees before God in humility and repentance. The Holy Spirit convicts us and alerts us to wrong and destructive actions that violate God's best for our lives.
6. Because we are enjoying our sin, many times we attempt to suppress our guilt. We feel guilty, but we're not really sorrowful over our sin and disobedience.
7. Mark it down, we will never experience freedom from guilt until we truly become sorrowful and repentant for our sin. Notice what Paul taught and admonished the church in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10. Notice the progression:
 - It begins with a true sorrow for sin.
 - Our sorrow worketh repentance.
 - Our repentance leads to salvation (this means deliverance from the sin and guilt).

Third, talk to God with complete honesty. vs. 18

1. Notice David's words, "*For I will declare my iniquity...*"
 - This word "*declare*" means "to manifest; to announce; to expose."
2. David said, "I'm through with the cover-up game. I'm done trying to excuse my sin. I am finished with trying to lie my way out of this."

3. When David said, “*I will declare my iniquity,*” he was saying, “I’m ready to face my sin honestly.” David was ready to deal with his sin and guilt directly and honestly. David would no longer try to justify it or explain it away.
 - “My wife wasn’t giving me enough love. Uriah wasn’t a very good husband to Bathsheba. I just had a weak moment.”
4. Pop psychology teaches people that they are not really guilty, they are just victims. They are not evil, just ill. They are not wicked, just weak. It isn’t sin, it is just a disease. It isn’t a choice, it is simply genetic. Your psyche was warped, and that is why you have all these psychological problems. You are to be pitied, not blamed.
5. We will never receive victory over guilt until we are honest with God (and ourselves) and say like David, “It is sin. It is **my** sin. It was **my** choice. I am guilty.” Before we can overcome guilt, we have to get honest.

In Conclusion:

1. Once we have gone to the Lord with true repentance and complete honesty, then God can truly help us to overcome the guilt and get victory over the sin. vs. 22
2. David prayed, “*Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me.*” vs. 21
3. Remember, David lived under the Old Testament, before the finished work of Christ on the cross. This isn’t a prayer that a believer would pray today. Why?
4. Because, in this dispensation, once you trust Christ as your Savior, you are made one with Him, you are placed in Christ, and the Holy Spirit actually indwells you and seals you forever. We are forever objects of God’s love and grace. He said He would never leave us or forsake us.
5. When we sin and do wrong, God, in love, convicts us. God desires for us to forsake sin because He knows it is destructive in our lives. When we come to God in repentance and honesty, it isn’t to secure His love or forgiveness. We already have that in Christ.
6. We do this in order to overcome the guilt and sin that is plaguing us. Oh, the joy and freedom that comes when we face our sin honestly and truthfully.