

GUILT

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Guilt is the fact and state that you have done something wrong. It may result in remorse and self-reproach.

Some people go through life with regular and terrible feelings of guilt.

Others do not feel guilt but blame every misfortune on someone else.

The Bible defines guilt as being bound and, therefore, being in bondage or liable to face an action at law. Guilt is associated with sin, iniquity or transgression. These three definitions all mean a breach of God's law.

The Psalmist in Psalm 51 speaks of the misery of his guilt. For I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me, he wrote. He also wrote of the burden of guilt that played on his mind. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me (Psalm 38.4).

He was in great distress when he wrote Psalm 40 saying, For innumerable evils have compassed me about ; mine iniquities have taken hold of me so that I am not able to look up ; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth within me.

After the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, the Jews realised the awfulness of their putting the Lord Jesus to death and their consciences were smitten with grief and they called out, What shall we do?

Guilt is prompted by conviction. I have done wrong!

The children of Israel in Numbers 21.2 spoke to the Lord and said, We have sinned for we have spoken against the Lord.

In the case of David, God forgave Him for all those iniquities. David is mentioned as a man of faith in Hebrews 11.32. He repented of his sins and acknowledged them.

As for the children of Israel, God forgave them and brought them into the Promised Land. They repented. Years later they sinned again and grievously and God had to punish them.

God forgives all sin upon true repentance. The one sin that can never be forgiven is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which is the denial of the Deity of Christ and the non-acceptance of Him as Saviour.

A matter that is easily forgotten is that often another person causes you to sin. We read in the Old Testament that King Baasha caused the nation to sin and God held him responsible (1 Kings 16.13)

Parents, family and friends can cause or influence us to sin.

We had a girl at school who stole from shops because her parents told her to. Her parents were lazy people smoking, drinking and watching television all day. Their benefits went on fags and booze as someone said and so food had to be stolen.

I am aware of some awful women who train and teach young girls how to give sexual pleasure to men. The girls are paid but their parents receive the money. At least one girl was rushed into hospital with

injuries. Another girl, who was twelve, said she had been doing this for two years, twice a night and each night with at least three men.

Who is guilty in these instances?

Upon repentance, God forgives although we and others do not always accept this and, sadly, some take their guilt to the grave.

But this should not be so.

Redemption! Oh wonderful story
Glad message for you and for me!
That Jesus has purchased our pardon
And paid all my debt on the tree.

The Old Testament (Micah 7.18ff) speaks of forgiven sins where God says, Thy sins and iniquities I will remember no more. I have cast them into the depths of the sea.

Canon Guy King used to add, And God puts up a notice, No fishing!

The passage in Micah talks of God who pardons iniquity and that God does not retain His anger for ever and loves to show His mercy.

Someone once said that God loves to mend broken lives!

If God has forgiven you, you must not retain any guilt, since that, among other things, is doubting God Himself!

One denomination believes that a constant sin which is regularly repeated can be forgiven time after time after time but, if that is so, then there was not true repentance in the first place. Repentance and forgiveness is not an automatic door as such a door in a large store.

I have heard people say that they have not repented but they talk about their wrong doing with genuine tears and remorse. Is that not an act of repentance?

There are people who cannot forgive themselves but, surely, the fact that God has forgiven them is totally sufficient. We are never told to forgive ourselves.

Consider this. What purpose is served by your punishing yourself? What is in the past should stay in the past. You cannot beat yourself up daily. You are best advised to stop any self-inflicted punishment and look to the present and the future. I accept that that is not always easy and there may be moments when an unpleasant past event hits you, but don't dwell on it.

Two years ago, in 1996, I was betrayed by someone who deceived me of £17,000 and I was justifiably angry and was so upset that I developed heart trouble. I have only just recovered from this treachery but I entertained bad thoughts and wanted some sort of revenge. I even thought, What wrong have I done to deserve this?

That person needs to repent before forgiveness can be considered and they have to make restitution, but my anger served no useful purpose. I was wrong to be torturing myself.

Sadly, human nature is fickle. There may be people who know of your indiscretions and may talk

about you and even snub you and it may sometimes hurt. But we should not be in bondage because of their judgmental attitude and evil speaking.

[\(See separate article on Evil Speaking\)](#)

One of the most remarkable sayings of the Lord Jesus was when He was on the Cross and said, Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.

And what were they doing? Killing an innocent man who did nothing but good and was the Son of God. Father, forgive THEM.

That was not weakness on His part but love and mercy. The depths of those attributes are unsearchable.

It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine,
O Jesus, Saviour, yet this soul of mine
Would of Thy love, in its breadth and length,
Its height, its depth and everlasting strength,
Know more and more.

It passeth telling, that dear love of Thine,
O Jesus, Saviour, yet these lips of mine
Would fain proclaim to sinners far and near
A love which can remove all guilty fear,
And love beget.

Mary Shekelton 1827-83

A love that can remove all guilty fear.

However, as we have said, forgiveness is not an automatic door. There has to be repentance on our part and our resolve with God's help not to repeat the offence.

We cannot live in the past and be haunted by the mistakes of that time. If we have offended someone and sinned against them, we can use our best endeavours to put it right but if that is not accepted then there is nothing else we can do. We must not torment or torture ourselves with guilt. For one reason, God loves us and requires that we walk in His ways and be at peace with ourselves.

Great God of wonders, all Thy ways
Are righteous, matchless and divine;
But the blest triumphs of Thy grace
Most marvellous, unrivalled, shine;
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

Crimes of such horror to forgive,
Such guilty, daring worms to spare;
This is Thy grand prerogative,
And none can in that honour share;
Pardon, O God, is only Thine;
Mercy and grace are all divine.

In wonder lost, with trembling joy,
We hail the pardon of our God,

Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon traced in Jesus' blood.
To pardon thus is Thine alone;
Mercy and grace are both Thine own.

Soon shall this strange, this wondrous grace,
This perfect miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth, while sweeter praise
Sounds its own note in Heaven above;
Who is pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

S. Davies 1723- 61

There is nothing more that needs to be said.

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