

Eternity Past

Eternity Future

The LandBetween

M I N I S T R I E S

The mission of the LandBetween Ministries is to equip leaders to fulfill Christ's Great Commission of heart-focused discipleship in a broken world.

Newsletter

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"For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

-- Jesus Christ (Text: Mark 8:38)

"The only remedy for true shame is the cross of Jesus Christ and His blood. The remedy for false shame is not to give credit to the lies we have believed about who we are." -- Dr. John Malone

The Masks of Guilt & Shame

After finishing my presentation on William Wilberforce, the class sat in stunned silence.

It was as if these students at a major secular university could not imagine that a Christian like Wilberforce could devote his life to something so honorable.

The context of speaking to these students was my fulfilling an assignment to give a presentation on a historical figure to an upper-level anthropology class. I chose to summarize the life of Wilberforce long before the movie, "Amazing Grace" raised awareness of his success in abolishing Britain's slave trade.

After I finished speaking about Wilberforce, the highly-educated and well-traveled professor softly said, "I'd never heard of him." The students were equally surprised at Wilberforce's unashamed devotion to Jesus.

So why would these bright, secular students act so surprised that a Christian like Wilberforce could do something so noble?

For many decades now, the prominent teaching conditioning the minds of America's youth--who grow up to be our leaders--is this: Christians are *guilty* of everything wrong with the world, including environmental problems and "overpopulation." One lie is that since Christians are "guilty" of following Genesis

1:8, where God teaches us to: "Be fruitful and multiply" then these "guilty" Christians should be "ashamed" of having kids and causing the world its pain of using its natural resources. If you think these charges against Christians are absurd--and they are--you should know that I am not exaggerating these lies many powerful world leaders believe.

Our global culture has gone to the court of public opinion and has slammed down the gavel on Christians and falsely judged us guilty of intolerance, bigotry and hate.

Many power brokers in education, the media, and beyond believe Christians block a Utopia.

"Evil forces in this world are working to guilt and shame Christians into silence."

There is a growing, misguided sentiment in the US and around the world that if Christians were exterminated, like the Jews in Nazi Germany, then the world would be better off.

The annual rise of Christians being killed around the world is growing at record levels.

Whether by killing, imprisonment, or legislation prejudiced against Christians, evil forces in this world are working to guilt and shame Christians into silence.

Guilt--followed by--Shame: It is a painful reality on earth since Adam and Eve's fall.

WHAT CURES TRUE GUILT?

What is true guilt? The New Testament Greek adjective for guilt "is used in the legal sense of of 'liable, answerable.'" (ISBE, Vol. 2, 581).

James 2:10, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."

Since we are all born in sin and we have committed sin in at least one area of life, we are "liable" (guilty) for breaking all of God's laws. There is no amount of good works or church membership that can "tip the scales" and release us from being guilty before God.

Our feelings have little to do with true guilt. In describing an Old Testament verb "to be guilty" Scholar Dr. William Mounce writes: "Note that such guilt is not primarily a feeling; in fact, guilt can be present even if an individual is not aware of having done anything against God's law (Lev. 5:2-4, 17) and such guilt must be dealt with." (Mounce's Complete Expository of Old & New Testament Words, p. 315).

There are millions of people who do not feel liable at all for sinning against God. They feel justified in rejecting Jesus Christ as the Son of God. But, just because they do not "feel" liable to God for their sin does not mean that they are free from guilt in God's heavenly court and the punishment of hell (Matthew 5:22). When it comes to guilt, feelings can mislead.

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The New Testament word for guilt (*enochos*) is used as a legal term. Thus, "guilt" can, in a forensic sense, connect someone with either their crime or punishment (Mounce's Complete Expository of Old & New Testament Words, p. 315).

Each individual will give an account to God for the sin attached to them if it is not paid for by Jesus Christ. Being in a state of guilt before God is a liability that we're born with and it must be dealt with before we die.

Another aspect on true guilt relates to the New Testament word most commonly used for sin (*hamartia*). This word sin "...is used to refer to the guilt resulting from the sin of the Pharisees (John 9:41)" (ISBE, Vol. 2, p. 581).

In John 9:41, Jesus is teaching the religious leaders that since they claimed "to see" things accurately in the spiritual world on their own, they actually had true guilt and their sin remained with them. These religious leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah and as a result they were truly blind and remained in sin. By remaining in their sin, they were guilty and attached to the liability that separated them from a future in heaven with God.

Now that we have seen a brief overview of true guilt, what is the cure for it?

Turning from our sin (repenting) and receiving forgiveness of our sin by Jesus Christ is the only cure for true guilt. What does forgiveness mean in the New Testament? "...divine forgiveness of sin, for release from guilt and punishment for sins" (Matt. 26:28; Mark 3:29) (*The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study*, pp. 114-115).

Instead of a spiritual organization, God has appointed Jesus Christ as the only One worthy to grant us forgiveness from sin (Acts 5:31).

Dr. Darrell Bock points out that "...forgiveness is the product of repentance, a responsive turning to God alone to deal with sin." (Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, p. 190). Thus, repentance leads to forgiveness of sin by Jesus Christ, with the result that true guilt is taken away forever.

WHAT CURES FALSE GUILT ?

What is "false guilt"? False guilt is when one is charged with a sin they did not commit.

An example of false guilt relates to the story of when Mary came to Simon's house and she poured a jar of expensive ointment on Jesus in honor and worship of Him (Mark 14:3-9).

Mary was berated by some in the house and she was accused of not giving what the ointment was worth to the poor. Jesus quickly defended Mary, saying that she did a good deed in anointing His body before His death. Jesus related to the false guilt put on Mary because He knew He was going to be falsely

accused by the religious leaders when He went to the cross to die for all of our sins.

What is the cure for false guilt? Jesus gives us a great example of what to do about false guilt in the story about Mary: Stand up and be strong in defense of the truth. It is not of God to sit back and let false guilt destroy you.

When the enemy, either through people or his minions, harasses your thoughts about being acceptable to God, firmly believe the truth that if you have repented and are forgiven of sin by Jesus Christ, you are no longer guilty before God. Tell these harassing thoughts of false guilt to go where Jesus sends them.

WHAT CURES TRUE SHAME?

What is true shame? True shame can entail feelings, but it can go beyond emotions.

Dr. John Malone writes, "True shame is what we experience when we sin and are aware of it--that awful feeling of having missed the mark or failed, regret that we have disap-



pointed God and/or other people." Dr. Malone goes on to say that God can allow circumstances that we feel shame and it can draw us back to Him (Dr. John Malone, *Shame: Identity Thief*, p. 3).

The first emotion written in the Bible is that Adam and Eve, before sin, did *not* feel shame (Genesis 2:25). But, after they sinned they tried to hide from God, as they were humiliated because of Adam's willful, rebellious sin.

However, true shame is not only feelings of humiliation. In the OT, the concept of shame is "an objective situation of disgrace rather than a subjective feeling of humiliation" (ISBE, Vol. 4, p. 447). Shame is "a situation or condition into which a person, city, or nation is brought, which involves a loss of respect and exposure to reproach (ibid, p. 447). So, just because a person is proud of their sexually "free" life or any other type of sin, they are in true shame whether or not they feel humiliated by the sin.

An example of shame is the late Socialist dictator of Romania, Nicolae Ceausescu. By any objective account, this leader and his wife loved their sin and did not struggle with it at all. This man was the epitome of evil and hatred of God's people--and he was proud of it.

Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa, the former Head of Intelligence for Romania who defected to the United States, provides numerous examples of Ceausescu's shame-filled life. One example is how Ceausescu used a Baptist minister to try and convince President Carter that there were no rich or poor in Romania, but only people

who were free and had access to education, jobs, medical care, and retirement money that was guaranteed by the government. (Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, 151). In spite of the gullible West believing Ceausescu, the truth was that Romania had a few rich at the top in government and business rackets, while the people suffered brutal death squads and abject poverty.

Further, Ceausescu would laugh about attending church while visiting America to make a good impression on Carter even though Ceausescu hated God and persecuted Christians to their death.

Ceausescu and his wife were people of true guilt and shame but their arrogance and lies were *masks* over their wicked hearts.

Maybe you know of someone who appears to be the "life of the party" but they are hiding deep shame from a life of sin they won't give up. This "life of the party" mask they wear is a way to medicate the deep pain of true shame.

What is the cure for true shame? The cure is the cross of Jesus Christ and His blood sacrifice that has already been paid. Unlike corrupted systems that demand a bribe or special interest leverage, the cross Jesus died on means all have access to forgiveness of sin and eternal freedom from sin's humiliation.

WHAT CURES FALSE SHAME?

What is false shame? Dr. John Malone aptly contrasts "healthy shame" which says, "I have done something wrong" with toxic, false shame which says, "I *am* wrong because I have done wrong" (Dr. John Malone, *Shame: Identity Thief*, p. 19). But, are believers "wrong" too at their core as with the lost? No. If one has put their faith (trust) in Jesus Christ and has His forgiveness for sin, they are changed; the core of their identity changes from "lost sinner" to a "child of God" with an eternal inheritance in Heaven (John 1:12). Believers are new inside.

The core of Jesus' identity is that of God the Son. The name "Jesus" in Hebrew means "God saves." On the cross Jesus had false shame thrown at Him when the chief priests said, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself" (Mark 15:31). But, Jesus despised the shame of the cross (Heb. 2:2) and defeated false shame by not believing their lies. If you believe the truth about your identity in Jesus, you never have to suffer from false shame.

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