

## LAY YOUR GUILT DOWN

“I sinned with my eyes wide open, Bill; I knew better. I knew before I did it that it was wrong. How can I be forgiven for such deliberate disobedience? I feel so guilty, so ashamed. The guilt is unbearable.”

We Christians are strange creatures. We rejoice when unbelievers come to Christ to receive forgiveness and freedom from the burden of guilt. Yet when we must do the same concerning our own sin, we find it excruciatingly difficult to accept His mercy and grace. While we firmly believe that His love is able to reach a sinner regardless of what he has done, we agonize and struggle when it comes to us, His own children. And in refusing His grace, we heap a backbreaking load of guilt upon ourselves. We begin to act as if we must pay for our failure or suffer some kind of hurt before we allow ourselves to be forgiven.

Of course this is precisely what our Enemy wants us to do. He is not so much interested in making us drug and alcohol abusers, liars, thieves or adulterers as he is destroying our faith and turning us into unbelievers. His desire is that we doubt the goodness and faithfulness of God, that we think that we will always be a slave to our sin, and that the Lord Jesus no longer cares about our needs or feelings. If the Evil One can get us to the point of doubt and despair, he then can begin to flood our minds with unbelief. And when he has accomplished that, he has succeeded in his mission.

As Christians, guilt can eat away at our spiritual vitality like a raging cancer. A sense of shame and failure can lead us to quit or retire from spiritual activities and to feel that we are traitors to the Lord and that His judgement is upon us and our families. I meet Christians daily who are continually burdened down by an overwhelming load of guilt. They live in spiritual agony and grief every waking hour.

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Some relate that what is worse than the failure itself is the fear that goes along with it. When Adam sinned, he tried to hide from God. When Peter denied Christ, he was afraid to face Him. When Jonah refused to preach to Ninevah, his fear drove him into the ocean to flee the presence of the Lord. Adam, Jonah, and Peter ran from God, not because they lost their love for Him, but because they were afraid He was angry with them. Satan uses such fear to make us think that we are too sinful to come back or that we will never rise above failure.

It took forty years to get that fear out of Moses and to make him usable in God's program. Meanwhile, God's plan of deliverance for Israel had to be delayed for nearly half a century while one man learned to face his failure. In time, Moses rose up again to become one of God's greatest heroes. Jacob faced his sins, was reunited with the brother he cheated, and reached new heights of victory. David ran into the house of God, laid hold of the horns of the altar, found forgiveness, and returned to his finest hour. Jonah retraces his steps, did what he first refused to do, and brought a whole city to repentance. Peter rose up out of the ashes of denial to lead a church to Pentecost.

Dear friend,

If God's grace and mercy were extended to these saints who failed miserably, why should he not grant it to you also? It is His nature to forgive: David said, “You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call you” (Psalm 86:5). God is waiting right now to flood your heart with forgiveness. You need to open up all the doors and windows of your soul and let Him love you. Lay your guilt down, Christian. You do not need to carry that load another minute. God bless you!