

Plagued by a Guilty Conscience

by Chuck Smith

Jesus teaches that forgiveness is a gift from God, available to all who receive it through faith in Him.

Duration: 29:42

Scripture: Mark 2:2-7, Romans 1:28, Ephesians 4:19

Topics: "Guilty Conscience"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of recognizing and heeding the voice of God. He emphasizes that it is possible for individuals to shut their minds off to God's voice and ignore the warnings of the Holy Spirit. The speaker also highlights the consequences of turning away from God, as seen in Romans chapter one, where those who rejected God were given over to reprobate minds and engaged in vile actions. The sermon concludes with a story from the Bible about Joseph, who was mistreated by his jealous brothers but ultimately brought before Jesus for forgiveness.

Transcript

Well, we start the Gospel of Mark this week as we continue to go through the Bible. And so we would encourage you to read over the first couple chapters of Mark and join with us tonight as we continue our journey through the Bible. Excellent opportunity to jump in as we get into the Gospel of Mark.

It's sort of a new beginning, a new book, and a great time for you to get into the, through the Bible study with us. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the second chapter of Mark, beginning with verse 2, where Mark tells us, Immediately many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room in the house to receive them, not even around the door. And Jesus was preaching the word unto them.

And there came unto him, bringing one that was sick with the palsy, which was born of four. And when they could not get near to Jesus because of the press of people, they uncovered the roof where he was, and they let, when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven.

But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit what they were reasoning within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? What is easier to say to the sick of the palsy? Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, take up your bed and walk. But you might know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. He said to the

sick of the palsy, I say unto you, Arise, take up your bed and go to your own house.

And immediately he arose, took his bed, and went forth before them all, inasmuch as they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We've never seen it in this fashion. Guilt complex. It's a very interesting thing.

I believe that it is the inner voice of God's spirit that is designed by God to keep us and keep our lives in line. That inner voice that often tells you, don't do it. Or sometimes it says to you, you should go ahead and do that.

The Bible tells us that it is possible for man to shut his mind off to that voice of God, to sort of close our hearts unto the warning of the Spirit. Paul in Romans chapter 1 talks about those who did not want to retain God in their conscience. So God gave them over to reprobate minds, which allowed them to do unspeakably vile things.

As Paul was writing to the Ephesians, Paul said concerning them, they were past feeling. They had given themselves over unto wickedness. Oftentimes we read or we hear about some horrible crime, some atrocity that so shocks us, we can't imagine what kind of a person could do such a thing.

When I read of them beheading people, I wonder what kind of a person could behead another human being. I just can't grasp in my mind just how a person could do such a thing. And when we hear of these crimes and hear of these things, we realize that somehow, some way, they didn't want to retain God in their minds.

And so God gave them over to reprobate minds, which would allow them to do these unspeakably vile things. Paul wrote to Timothy, and he said, their conscience has been seared as with a hot iron, guilt complex, something that is designed by God to guide us in the right path. But yet, it is interesting how that the psychologist and sociologists feel that a guilt complex is something to be avoided.

Because they know that the guilt complex can create a subconscious desire for punishment, which will lead to a neurotic behavioral pattern that is subconsciously designed to bring punishment upon me. And because it can create a neurotic behavior, they do their best to alleviate the guilt complex that people often have. But it's interesting, the feelings of guilt are not that easy to get rid of.

They hang on for years and years to come. There's an interesting story in the Bible. It's of a man by the name of Joseph, who was the 11th son born to Jacob, 10 older brothers.

But Jacob had a real soft place in his heart for this son, Joseph, and showed favoritism to him. The older brothers were very jealous. And they just despised Joseph because of the attention that his father gave to him.

So one day when they were out in the field, and Joseph came, they said, here comes that dreamer. Let's kill him. And we'll see what will happen to his dreams.

And so as he got to them, they threw him down into a pit, and just intended to let him starve to death in the pit. He was begging for them to get him out, to not do that. And they just were mocking and laughing.

But then they saw a caravan coming. It was heading toward Egypt. And one of the brothers got the bright idea, why don't we sell him to these men heading to Egypt? We'll sell him as a slave.

And so they drew Joseph out of the pit, and they bargained with the men, sold him as a slave to be taken to Egypt, and sold there in the slave market. As he was being carried off bound, he was weeping. He was pleading with them, don't do this.

How could you do this to me? And they just mocked and laughed at his calamity. Twenty years later, there was a famine throughout the whole area. And they, living in the land of Israel, heard that there was plenty of grain down in Egypt.

And so their father Jacob sent these ten sons down to Egypt to buy grain, so that they could survive the famine. When they came to Egypt, little did they know, their younger brother Joseph, that they had so mistreated, had become second in command over all of Egypt, only under the Pharaoh himself. He was in charge, actually, of the distribution of the grain from the granaries that had been built to store the grain during the seven years of plenty.

In twenty years, he had changed so much, and of course, had the Egyptian attire, and all they didn't recognize him as their younger brother Joseph. However, he recognized them. And he took advantage of it, sort of a get-even.

He really gave them a bad time. He accused them of being spies. He said he didn't believe their story, that they were all brothers and all, that he couldn't buy that, and accused them of being spies, and just gave them a really bad time.

And as he was giving them a bad time, they said to each other, we are guilty concerning our brother Joseph, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he begged us, and we would not hear. Therefore, this distress has come upon us. Twenty years later, the guilt complex was still there.

And as they are getting into trouble, they associate it back to their dastardly deed twenty years earlier, when they ignored the pleas and the begging of their brother, who they had sold to these slave traders going to Egypt. Now, for a moment, imagine how you would feel. Say you went to a prostitute and had a sexual encounter, and as a result, you contracted the HIV virus.

And as the AIDS began to progress, and you began to lose power over certain functions of the body, and as you finally were confined to a bed, and others had to wait upon you, and you realize that you are slowly dying of this loathsome AIDS virus, imagine how you would feel about that sexual encounter where you contracted the HIV. Imagine the torment of your mind. Imagine the whys that you would be asking.

Why did I? How is it that I was so full? Imagine the torment, the mental torture, realizing that this is the result of your own sin, your own folly. You are guilty, and this is the consequence of your guilt. Imagine how that would be plaguing you, as each day you were losing strength and becoming more dependent upon your friends.

Don't you know that the question, why did I do that, would drive you almost to distraction? If you can imagine that, then you can understand perhaps the mindset of this man that we read about this morning, who was being brought to Jesus on a stretcher that was being born by his four friends. As Luke, who was a physician, describes this man's condition in medical terms, he is describing the condition of a man who is dying as the result of the final stages of syphilis. This man is no longer able to get around.

He still has these four friends who are standing by him, but he's dependent upon them. They hear that Jesus is in Capernaum, and so they decide that they would bring their friend to Jesus, because they heard

that Jesus was healing people from all types of maladies. And so, as they got the stretcher, and as they were carrying their friend to bring him to Jesus, when they got to the house, the crowd around the house was so great that it was impossible to even get near the door entering into the house.

Yet these men are desperate. They're determined to get their friend to Jesus. Now, in those days, houses all had flat roofs.

The flat roof was more or less the patio of the house. There was usually an outside stairway that led up to the roof of the house. So, these fellows scoped it out.

They saw approximately where Jesus was sitting in the house, and they went on up to the roof, and they began to remove the tiles. And then, when they got it opening big enough, they let the man down in front of Jesus. Can you picture that in your mind? Here is Jesus teaching the people, and there's a noise up on the roof, and you look up, and here are tiles being removed, and you wonder what in the world is going on, and then suddenly this guy is let down in front of Jesus.

I'm sure that Jesus smiled at this, you know, the ingenuity of these fellows, and I can just see Jesus sort of smiling and chuckling as this guy comes down in front of him. And Jesus said to him, your sin is forgiven. Now, that created a real turmoil, mixed emotions.

First of all, there were scribes that were there, the Pharisees. And when Jesus said, your sin is forgiven, they were incensed. They said, that's blasphemy.

Only God can forgive sin. And they were right. Only God can forgive sin.

Sin is against God. When David was faced with his sin with Bathsheba, and the prophet said, David, you're guilty. And he said, I have sinned.

And then he prayed, and he said, oh God, have mercy upon me. According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgression. For against you and you only have I sinned, and done this great evil in your sight.

Sin is against God, and only God can truly forgive sin. Now, you might come to me and say, Pastor Chuck, I don't know why, but I have been telling some lies about you. And I'm sorry, and I want you to forgive me.

And I could say to you, well, of course, I forgive you. However, that doesn't clean your slate. You see, though you have told lies about me, the sin really is against the commandment of God that says, you shall not bear false witness.

And so, it's really before God that you need to get the slate clean. Not just before the one that you've, you know, done evil to, but before God, you need to get things straightened. And so, Jesus said to him, your sin is forgiven.

And the scribes say, that's blasphemy. No one can forgive sin but God. To the four fellows, his friends, that went to such a great effort to get him to Jesus, because they wanted to see him healed.

They wanted him to be able to party with him again. And when Jesus said, thy sin is forgiven, don't you know that they thought, no, no, no, no, no. That's not why we went to all the trouble to remove the roof and let him down.

We want more than his sin. We want you to heal him. And I'm sure that they were pretty disappointed and chagrined that Jesus would just say to him, thy sin is forgiven.

But to this fellow, who for months has been suffering the consequence of his sin, whose body is slowly being destroyed, and who has gone through the mental conflict for so long, as he was dealing with his sense of guilt for what he had done. Don't you know that the word of Jesus, thy sin is forgiven, must have been so comforting. It was like music to his ear, I'm sure.

That sin that had plagued his mind for so long, to realize, I'm forgiven. Now, Jesus begins to deal with these scribes who accused him of blasphemy. Jesus said to him, said to them, what is easier to say, your sin is forgiven, or to say, rise up, take your bed, and go home? Well, what would be easier to say? Well, of course, it'd be easier to say, your sin is forgiven.

Who knows? Who can tell? You know, you don't have a Sunday school teacher saying, look, the black heart, and now you've accepted Christ, and the red heart, the blood of Christ, now you have the white heart. You know, you can't see that change that's going on inside. And so, there's nothing visible that can show that there is true forgiveness that has taken place.

So, naturally, it would be a lot harder to say, rise, take your bed, and go home. Because if the fellow just, you know, struggles and all, and just, you know, can't do anything, you say, well, obviously, he doesn't have any power in his words. But if the man rises, takes his bed, and begins to walk out of the door, you realize there's tremendous power in his word.

And so, Jesus said, in order that you might know that I have the power here on earth to forgive sins. He said to this man, rise, take up your bed, and go home. And when the man stood up, took his bed, and went home, all that were there began to glorify God at what they had seen.

Now, in saying this, Jesus was proving two things. Number one, he was proving that he had the power to forgive sins. Secondly, he was proving that he was God.

Their assumption, no one can forgive sins but God. And proving that he could forgive sins, he was proving that he was God. There may be some of you here today who are suffering from the sense of guilt.

You've done some things in the past. You're sorry for what you did. They are still plaguing your conscience.

And as a friend, I would love to bring you to Jesus today, that you might hear his word to you. Your sin is forgiven. Oh, Jesus loved to say that, and he loves to say that.

In fact, this is why he died on the cross. The Bible tells us, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, though he despised the shame. What was the joy set before him? The joy of being able to say to the sinner, your sin is forgiven.

And for that joy, he was willing to go to the cross and die for us. It's quite possible that as the result of your folly, it's caused a real blight in your life. It's created broken relationships.

It's brought you a lot of heartache, a lot of pain. It may even be that it has brought you physical impairment. But Jesus not only can say, your sin is forgiven, but he can heal the consequences of that sin as he did with this man.

There were two groups that left that house that day. The scribes, Pharisees who were still mumbling under their breath that, you know, who is this man? And he's blasphemous. And then there were those that were going out of the house rejoicing and saying, we've never seen anything like this before.

Didn't know this could happen. Oh, God is so great and God is so good. And they were glorifying God for the privilege of seeing the power of God manifested in their presence that day.

Isn't that the way it always is? Today, as the church is emptied, there will be those who will be going out of the church, still bound in sin, still plagued with a guilty conscience, maybe thinking, oh, I wish it were so. I wish it could happen. But yet, mind closed to what God wants to do.

And then there will be those who will go out rejoicing. Rejoicing that through the love of God and the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, their sin has been forgiven. That heavy weight of sin, that guilt that they have felt gone, erased, forgiven, cleansed.

And that joy and rejoicing that God has worked. Glorifying God for what He has done in their lives today, in freeing them from the power of sin that has been destroying them. The question is, how will you go out today? Father, we're so thankful for Jesus Christ, who died in order that He might be able to grant us the forgiveness of our sins.

And Lord, we pray for those today who are being harassed and plagued by a guilty conscience. Perhaps suffering the consequences of their folly. Lord, I pray that today, they might know that comfort, that joy from knowing the sin has been forgiven.

And to see, Lord, that process of restoration begin in their lives. And so, Lord, here we are. We come before you today.

And we know, Lord, that you're able to save to the uttermost all who will come to God by you. And so, we pray, Father, for those today, blocked and bound by sin, that they might know deliverance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you, who would like to go away today with that consciousness, that my sins are forgiven. Freedom from the guilt that's been plaguing you, because of that past indiscretion. Knowing that God loves you, and that you have been made, through the Spirit of God, a child of God through your faith in Jesus Christ.

So, as soon as we're forward, these men are here to pray with you and to pray for you. That you might hear the word of Jesus speaking to your heart today, your sin is forgiven. And that you might go healed by the power of His love.

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