

Goodbye to Guilt

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of dealing with guilt by confessing sin and putting faith in the blood of Jesus, and by pleading the blood of Jesus for cleansing and forgiveness.

Duration: 31:55

Scripture: 1 John 1:9-10, Revelation 1:4-8

Topics: "Guilt"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the topic of guilt and how it relates to sin. He emphasizes that sin brings guilt and that feeling guilty about our sins is what leads people to become Christians. The main reason Jesus came was to save people from their sins through his blood. The preacher encourages listeners to resist Satan's attempts to make them look inside themselves for acceptance with God and instead focus on the blood of Jesus as their salvation. He also addresses the idea of trying to remove guilt through acts of penance, emphasizing the importance of reading the Bible as a way to deal with guilt.

Transcript

I want to talk to you from the Bible about something fundamentally basic to Christianity, but very elusive to many of us. The verses that I want to use are found in our reading this week in both 1 John and the beginning of Revelation. We're getting to the end of our New Testament read-through.

We're in the book of Revelation. That's going to be the end of it. First, we have a passage from Revelation 1. John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia, which would be Turkey for us, grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come, that's God, and from the seven spirits before his throne.

Some say that's the sevenfold spirit working of the Holy Spirit. There aren't seven Holy Spirits, but there's a lot of imagery in the book of Revelation. And then finally, when it comes to Jesus, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, he's the faithful witness to who God is, God's plan of salvation.

He's the firstborn from the dead. That means he's the first to be raised from the dead as all believers will be one day, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. He's king of kings and lord of lords to him who loves us, talking about Jesus, to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, freed us from our sins by his blood.

Now, a familiar portion of scripture from 1 John says this, if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. How many say amen, and purify us from all unrighteousness.

If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word is not in us, if we claim we've not sinned. Then going further, my dear children, chapter 2, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate, a lawyer, somebody who comes alongside to help us, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. He's the atoning sacrifice. His blood was shed to be able to put away sin.

Both of those talk about a subject that to a lot of people is very gross and very crude, and yet we sing about it, we talk about it, and it's found so much in the New Testament, and that is the fact that Jesus shed his blood, and that blood, his blood, is the only thing that can save us from our sins, from the penalty of sin, and from the guilt of sin. That's what I want to talk about to you today. Goodbye to guilt.

Guilt, unresolved guilt, overwhelming guilt, heart-breaking guilt, is a silent killer and a driving force behind a lot of behavior patterns. When World War II ended in 1945, the Nazi regime had been crushed. Russia, who had been attacked by Hitler and the German army, even though there was a treaty that they had, he broke it.

But now Russia had pushed back and come across heading west and was entering Germany, and the Allied forces that had landed on D-Day, they now were pushing through France and coming through western Germany and all heading toward Berlin. Now gone were the glory days of Hitler, the Nazi regime, the middle 1930s, late 1930s. In 1939, on September 1st, he invaded Poland to begin World War II.

My mother's ancestors are from Poland, and they had victory upon victory upon victory. They defeated France without much of a tussle, and now Hitler was marching near the Eiffel Tower. It looked like they would conquer the world.

Now lots of evil things had already started to happen in Germany. Before the war had begun, Jewish people were forced to wear a star to identify themselves, a golden star. And suddenly Jewish people were disappearing from towns and cities.

People knew something ominous was happening. Hitler precipitated a war that took more than 20 million lives, World War II. Japan entered it later on the side of Germany, and America was forced to fight not only in Europe, but fight in the Pacific.

But now in 1945, Germany was conquered, and it was savage. Everything that the German troops had done in Russia to the women and children were being done back to them in spades by the Russian troops, who had a lot of vengeance on their mind. Toward the end of this war, General Eisenhower and some of the other generals discovered something that they had heard talked about, but nobody really knew, something called concentration camps.

And what they saw made hardened, tough soldiers break down and become just like babies crying. They couldn't take what they saw. The living dead, beside the millions that had been executed, most of them put in ovens and burnt to death.

After they were gassed to death, they were burnt. They saw people who survived who were just basically skin and bones. Well, when the war ended, the world community said, someone's going to have to pay for this.

These leaders, we're going to try them. This was a new thought. So what happened was we had the Nuremberg trials, the Nuremberg gathering of judges and lawyers and prosecutors, and brought in to be examined were more than 12 of the Nazi leaders who were still alive.

Hitler had killed himself. Himmler, the head of the SS, the head of the Gestapo, he had killed himself. Others had disappeared.

But they had people who had ruled over this empire, who made decisions. Of course, they all were saying, now Hitler made me do it. You had to just obey orders.

The main guy was Hermann Göring, who was at one time a head of the Air Force that had blitzed England and dropped bomb after bomb on London and the British Isles. Now they were sitting on trial. They had lost a lot of weight.

They had been in prison for a while. Now witness after witness came, described what it was like in the concentration camps. All the people, gypsies and a lot of Polish people were killed too.

Anybody who had any physical deformity, they just took them out quickly. But now you couldn't hide any longer. It was now known.

You were standing in dock and being looked at by the world. An interesting thing happened. One of the leading psychiatrists there, whose job was to interview these people, some of them pretended right to the end to be, we did what was right and the Jews are inferior and they deserve to be killed.

But most of them started to break down under the weight of guilt. Guilt like the world had never thought of guilt. The guilt of seeing movies of concentration camps.

And now you're sitting and you're going to defend yourself because you were part of the regime that made that possible. You gave the orders to slave labor and now it was all coming out. And many of the strongest and wickedest of them began to break down.

Goring himself cheated the hangman's noose. Someone smuggled into him a poison pill that he took and he died before they could execute him. But they all broke down because of guilt.

Now how they tried to handle that guilt is similar to the way we handle guilt. So let's talk about guilt. Sin brings guilt.

This is how a person becomes a Christian. They feel guilty about their sins. Notice the Bible says Jesus who saved us from our sins by his blood.

The main thing that Jesus does for people and the main reason he came is to be a savior from sin. His name shall be called Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins. Yes, can he heal? Yes, can he answer prayer? Yes, can he supply money when you need it? But that's not why he came.

That's not the big question. The big question that eternity hangs on is what is going to happen between you and God concerning your sins, my sins. The Bible tells us all have sinned and come short of the glory

of God.

And the way a person truly gets saved is they feel convicted and guilty about their sins and then they hear the wonderful story that Jesus died and shed his blood for our sins. He didn't die for himself. He died for us.

So when we confess our sins and we put our faith in Jesus Christ, our sins are washed away. We're forgiven. And now we can go on with a new beginning.

We can be born again. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us. We become Christians as biblically defined, not as defined by the American culture or some other culture.

But we become new creations in Jesus Christ. Now, this battle with guilt, though, it's resolved there. But then it's not totally resolved, is it? Because lo and behold, we learn that Christians sin.

Christians, after they become believers, we are apt to sin. And all the guilt that comes when we sin is sometimes double down guilt because now we're enlightened. Now we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

I want to talk to you about this. This is very important. Because if you don't learn how to deal with guilt, if we can't get biblical answers, we're going to be compromised in our life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when we sin, we say something that's wrong. We gossip. We lie.

We take something that doesn't belong to us. That can't happen. Yeah, the New Testament says to one church, Paul writes, those who steal, let them steal no more.

Why would you have to tell that to a Christian? Because sometimes even Christians can get slippery fingers. No, this is real talk now, right? Christians can make mistakes. Some of the greatest men in the Bible and women in the Bible have made mistakes.

If you look at church history, Christian leaders, Christian people have made mistakes. And when we sin, oh my goodness, sometimes the conviction comes double because we know the Lord now and it hurts us that we failed him. How many know of that which I speak in some way, shape, or form, lift your hand up high.

We don't talk about it much among ourselves, but all of us have to deal with this subject of guilt. Haven't you ever said something to somebody and you just were warned by the spirit, don't enter into that conversation, don't say it. Come on, hasn't that ever happened to anyone? And then you find your mouth is open and flapping and you're talking, right? And you say it and the minute you say it, boom, you feel it in your heart.

How many, come on, lift your hand if you know what I'm talking about. And you know, I shouldn't have said that. And there's guilt.

There's guilt because you broke God's law. So it's to love each other, not destroy each other. Sins of the flesh, temptation to pornography, all kinds of things are involved now.

And Christians have to deal with it. Satan has strategies to tempt us. The flesh wants to reassert control and not have the spirit governing our lives.

And there's a battle, listen, there's untold battles going on inside of people everywhere. And when we fail, and remember John says, if anyone says they haven't sinned, they're a liar, the truth's not in them. Anyone tells you, no, I found a place in God, I never sinned.

You know, they're a liar just for saying that. So they have already violated it. But if we sin, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just all through the blood of Jesus.

Now there's a wrong way in dealing with guilt. And this is what a lot of Christians make mistakes about. So they live in guilt.

Their guilt gets harder. Their guilt gets stronger. One of the ways we deal with guilt is to not touch it and hope that time will take it away.

Because I made that mistake, I shouldn't have done that, shouldn't have looked at that, shouldn't have said that, shouldn't have been a part of that, should have never gone to that party, should have never done that, should have never went back into my old life the way I did that. Ooh, that just hurts. But you know what? Time will just, you know, if I just wait, time will take it away.

It will not. It will not. In fact, it can harden your guilt.

It can make you cynical. Another thing that we do with guilt is to make excuses because the guilt is too much to take. That's what the Nazi criminals did.

They all had a story. They all had excuses. No, I didn't know that was going on.

Yeah, but all those people disappeared and you heard reports back from the concentration camp. I didn't know that anybody would really do that. And what's strange about that is when Hitler was arrested before he became in power, he was arrested first as a protester.

He tried a military coup. He was thrown in the slammer for a while. And while he was in the slammer, he wrote a book called Mein Kampf, which is called My Story.

And in that book that he wrote before he ever got to power, he said what he would do if he ever got in power. And everything evil that he said in the book he would do, he did it. But nobody thought he would ever do it.

Things like that are happening around our world today. Nations are threatening the destruction of other nations, saying that everyone's saying, no, they would never do that. Let's pray they would never do that.

But some people do exactly what they say they would do. Hitler did it all. But when the guys were captured, they were like, no, he, she, every.

That's another thing we do. We justify by circumstances or by blaming others. We say, you don't know the pressure I'm under, man.

Yeah, I know I shouldn't have done that. But you don't know the pressure. See, that's mitigating the guilt.

I was wrong, but you don't understand. And who are you to judge? And it's my mother-in-law's fault. It's my father's fault.

It's somebody's fault. It's the government's fault. It's the president's fault.

The mayor's fault. The police's fault. Somebody said, I'm not to blame.

That'll never get rid of guilt. The more you excuse it, the more we rationalize it, the more we blame somebody else. Never will touch guilt.

Guilt doesn't go away when you excuse yourself. Another thing that we do is we think that we'll get rid of guilt by promising we won't do it again. That'll never get rid of guilt.

Oh yeah, you can cry yourself a river and promise I am done with that. I will never do that again. I will never watch that again.

I will never be a part of that again. I will never, never. No, now I mean business.

I will never. But did you say that about 50 times before? Yeah, but now, on the 51st time, whoa, now I really mean it. And you know what that does? Nothing.

I said nothing. Making excuses, rationalizing, promising you won't do it again, or letting time pass so that it'll go away like a headache. Guilt is impervious to that.

I'm speaking to Christians now. Lastly, what has happened with guilt is the idea of denying yourself or doing special acts of almost like penance to remove the guilt. You know what? I did, I messed up, but I'm going to read the Bible today.

I mean, no, not just a chapter. No. You understand what I'm saying? I am going to read the Bible today.

I'm going to read at least five, 10 chapters. I'm going to get another translation on top of that. I'm going to spend money on a new Bible.

I'm going to go to the prayer meeting. No, I'm going to get on my knees and be at that altar. You know, I'm going to fast for a day.

Well, maybe not a day, but a meal. At least I'll fast one meal. And if I fast that meal, God will see.

And that's the whole genesis of penance, purgatory, all these ideas that there's a way to work off the guilt of sin. You make all the promises you want, and you could beat your body like Martin Luther did, the reformer. You know, when he was a monk in Germany, he would just see sin, sin, sin everywhere.

He looked when he went inside. So he would make a whip and whip himself to the point of unconsciousness, and he would lay in his own blood in a cell, and they would find him in the morning. Why? Got to beat this sin out of me.

If God sees that I hit myself, won't he then forgive me? And I will get rid of this cursed guilt. This guilt is killing me. See, a lot of us have learned to deal with guilt, but we haven't resolved it, so thus it tampons our joy.

It tampons our peace. You might meet Christians who are always weak. They're never growing.

They're never strong, because lying underneath everything is this whole guilt thing, because all we like sheep have gone astray. And if you don't learn how to deal with guilt, that guilt will just pull you down like weights. So then what is the way to deal with guilt? Oh, there's only one way, only one way.

It's the same way before you got saved, and then you got saved. You only have one plea, which is the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for me. The blood washes away all my sin.

As I confess it and put my faith in the blood of Christ, this is why Revelation says they overcame him, Satan, by the blood of the Lamb. The blood is not something that we should be afraid to talk about. It should be our daily theme, because what keeps us clean and refreshes us and keeps us cleansed and right before God? Only the blood of Jesus, faith in the blood of Jesus, pleading the blood of Jesus.

Pastor Burgos was praying this morning. He so encouraged me in my office, because as he was praying, he said, Lord, we plead the blood of Jesus over this meeting today, that you would guard it from distractions and people trying to thwart your purpose for the service. The blood of Jesus has never lost its power.

I don't know how it works. I can't explain it. But when you look up to God and say, God, I confess my sin.

Now I plead the blood of Jesus. Cleanse me with that precious blood. It cleanses your conscience.

It cleanses your heart. You have new strength. You have new joy.

Come on. Can we put our hands together and say amen? It's a mystery. Sometimes the Bible calls it the blood of the cross.

Other times the Bible calls it the blood of the Lamb. In one place and acts, it says it's God's own blood, Jesus being God. This blood that was shed for the remission of our sins is God's own blood.

Even if you and I don't understand it, God understands its value. Remember back in the Passover time, which is a prefigurement, a type, a symbol of what Jesus did on Calvary. Remember what God said on Passover night when the Hebrews were in Egypt? He said, not when you see the blood.

When I see the blood, I will pass over you. You put that blood on your doorpost. Yeah, but we don't understand it.

Just do it. Just get it up there. When I see the blood, I will pass over you.

Oh, thank God for the blood. Can we thank God for the blood of Jesus? You want to get rid of guilt? You got to just learn to live using, pleading, believing, celebrating the blood of Jesus, the blood of the cross. I saw a horrible title by some former minister who's turned agnostic atheist.

I don't know what he is now, an apostate. He's ridiculing Christians' preoccupation with blood. You got blood on your mind all the time.

Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I plead guilty to that.

How many are with me? The blood of Jesus is our salvation. Notice, we're not accepted by God by making promises. Listen, I did that for a long time.

Listen to someone who knows about these things, okay? Make all the promises you want. Cry a river and promise. Tears don't wash away sins.

Blood washes away sins. Don't excuse yourself. Don't rationalize.

Don't justify. You're just going to aggravate the guilt. The guilt will just fester.

It'll get worse and not get better. There's only one thing, but oh, it's so powerful, the blood of Jesus. That's why Romans chapter 3, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All are justified. In other words, accepted, made acceptable to God freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, someone to cover our sins through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith.

How are we washed? How are we cleansed? By the shedding of his blood. How is it received? By faith. There's a lot of things the Bible asks us to believe about God and about Jesus, but only one deals with guilt.

You can believe that God created the heavens and the earth, and the guilt will just fester and get stronger. You can believe that Jesus was born of a virgin. It'll still keep the guilt right there.

You can believe that Jesus is coming back again, and it won't even touch that guilt. It won't even touch that guilt. There's only one thing you have to have faith in.

You got to have faith in everything the Bible says about our Lord, but you got to put your faith that when he shed his blood, that blood cleanses from all sin. Come on, can we say amen to that? Faith in his blood. Faith in his blood.

I have found that Satan, just because he's the accuser, he's the condemner, he hates what I'm saying right now, and he hates these songs that we're going to sing in a second, because how great thou art, it has its place, has its place, but oh, when you sing and you celebrate and you think about the blood of Jesus, Satan is totally disarmed. He can't accuse. His weapons are taken away, because when you say, I stand under the blood of Jesus Christ, he died for my sins.

There's no sin on my account, not because I didn't do it, but because God forgives for Christ's sake. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. So I've learned things.

I've learned how many want to just stay free from guilt? Lift your hand. Just stay free from guilt, because we're talking about something that's a silent killer, guilt. We don't talk about it much, because it's like not fit for polite conversation, but it is.

So I've learned to do things like this. It just happened the other day, and it blessed me so much. So I heard this song.

Give me a flat there, would you please, Freddie? So I learned this song. Listen, this is a song I was a kid. My mother's here today.

She'll remember the song. You probably won't know it. Yeah, let's listen to it.

I'm a terrible singer, but the words are good, okay? He was nailed to the cross for me. He was nailed to the cross for me. Listen now.

On the cross, crucified for me. He was nailed to the cross. Satan can't stand that song.

That'll get the devil running. How many say amen? Amen. You see, promises.

I don't care. Promises. Vows.

I'll try never to do it again. Now you're right in his head zone. He'll just pulverize you.

But when you sing, he was nailed to the cross. He beat you, Satan. He beat you.

He shed his blood for me. He rose again from the dead. Can we say amen to that? Listen, the guilt is gone.

How can Satan accuse when you're singing that? When we make excuses, when we hold on, maybe time will cure this thing. No, he'll just come in and just be punching away. But oh, a good way to resist him is to just celebrate the blood of Jesus.

No, Satan, don't. You're never going to get me to look inside myself to try to gain acceptance with God. I'm going to make you look at the blood of Jesus.

That's what I'm going to make you do, because that's my salvation. I'm not going to heaven because I've been good. I'm going to heaven because my sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ.

How many are with me? Lift up your hand high. There's a song I heard out in Seattle. I can't remember it.

I once taught it because it meant so much to me, but it has the most unique words. Whoever wrote it, they understand about guilt and cleansing. The words are something like precious blood of Jesus, precious flood that cleanses me.

And it has this line, the only view God has of me is through the blood of Jesus. Listen, the only view God has of me is through the blood of Jesus, covered, cleansed, washed, perfect, free, clean, holy. Can we say amen to that? Can I give you one other tip? Not only celebrate and sing all day long about the blood of Jesus, but remember this, the moment you feel convicted that you did something wrong, immediately run to be cleansed by Jesus.

Do not wait. Well, wait a minute. That was so ugly.

I should have never said that. I'm going to wait until I read a few verses. Church on Sunday, I got to go.

Or the whole system, I got to go to a priest to confess my sin. No, no, no. No time for that.

The moment you did it, said it, thought it, got involved in it, you run that moment right to God and say, God, that was wrong. I plead the blood of Jesus. Forgive me, God.

For if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. Notice who the we is. The we is the Christians.

For if we confess our sin, you're not talking to the guy in the street who doesn't know the Lord, the woman in the street. He's talking about us. If we confess our sin, and if anyone says he has no sins, he's a liar.

The truth is not in him. Now, I write you these things that you don't sin. Celebrating the blood, singing about it, putting our trust in it, running quickly, keep short accounts with God.

I read a lot of years ago, someone said, before I go to sleep every night, I sit back. Before I go to bed, I get in a chair with my Bible and I think back during the day and I think, ooh, yeah, 11 this morning before I

went to lunch, I said that to my wife. That was not nice.

That was a hurtful thing to say. God's just convicted me of it. So before you go to bed, the thought was, keep a close account with God.

I'm a different opinion. I can't wait till night. I got to run there every five minutes if I have to.

How many are with me? Every hour, every hour, every time there's something in our mind that after we get convicted, we feel unworthy to even ask God for forgiveness. Listen to me. Listen, this will help you.

You don't wait till you feel worthy to go into God's presence. You go with the gook, with the mud. You go with everything because he's the only one that can cleanse you and he wants to cleanse you.

You're his son. You're his daughter. Why would he want you to stay away? Oh, I've been so bad.

No, come with your badness and I'll get you right again and I'll cleanse you and then learn to live near me. Someone once said it this way. You got to learn to pitch your tent right near the cross of Jesus Christ.

Satan, we defeat you through the blood of Jesus Christ. You accuse her. You condemn her.

We overcome you, not by our promises, not by waiting for anything. We overcome you by the blood of the lamb and it has never lost its power. Jesus, thank you for loving us.

Thank you for shedding your blood. We love you today. Help us to love one another more every single day, even now as we greet one another.

Be with us today. Remove all guilt as we confess our sins. No excuses.

We did it. We're wrong. We're guilty, but thank you for the blood that cleanses us and makes us whiter than snow.

We ask all of this in Jesus' name and everyone said amen. Turn around and hug a bunch of people.

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