

NO PARKING PLACES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: OVERCOMING GUILT

“A Cleaned Out Grave and a Cleared Up Conscience”

Reminds me of a sign I saw from Needham, Massachusetts: “Don’t even *think* of parking here!”

*When Noah sailed the oceans blue, he had his troubles same as you.
For 40 days he drove the ark before he found a place to park!*

Over the next few weeks, we will be talking about places believers inevitably pass through, but should be careful not to get stuck in...**WORRY, DEPRESSION, GRIEF, FAILURE**, and on this Easter Sunday...**GUILT**.

I’ve subtitled today’s message, “*A Cleaned Out Grave And A Cleared Up Conscience.*”

An old African American pastor said that Jesus went into the grave and cleaned it out to make it a suitable place to wait for the resurrection!

As we begin to think about dealing with guilt, let us pray...

About 15 years ago one of the sweetest ladies in my church came to see me. She had recently been saved but was dealing with a tremendous guilt...*“Fifteen years ago, while in college...I got pregnant...then had an abortion...Every day for the past 15 years I’ve wondered what my little girl would have looked like... The most painful day of the year for me is the day she would have been born...”*

What would you have told her? How would you advise someone to get out from under a load she had carried for 15 years?

Experts tell us there are 4 possible remedies to guilt.

1. Punishment—legal and moral justice.
2. Sincere Remorse—restorative justice (Catholic Confession).
3. Cognition—*the understanding that the source of the guilty feelings was illogical or irrelevant.*
4. Forgiveness—transformative justice.

It’s the latter I want us to think about this morning...please turn to John 21:1-18...

Now, without losing your place, turn to John 13:36-38. . .then, 18:17, 25-27.

Matthew and Luke tell us that *Peter went out and wept bitterly.*

American writer, Katherine Fullerton Gerould “*You can bear anything—if it isn’t your own fault.*”
English dramatist John Webster (d. 1634): “*How tedious is a guilty conscience!*”

Now look with me at John 21...

Let me give you three suggestions for dealing with guilt.

1. Get honest about the sin.

Simon Peter was nothing, if not honest...

The Bible says, "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God...*"

Guilt is both a condition and an emotion.

It's possible to *be* guilty and not *feel* it (psychopath).

And it's possible to *feel* guilty and in fact not *be* guilty.

Until we get honest enough to bring the emotion in line with the condition, we will never have a clear conscience.

Legitimate guilt is good; false guilt is bad.

In a healthy heart, if you *are* guilty, you should *feel* guilty—this is legitimate or true guilt.

This is the function of the conscience

Acts 23:1 *good conscience*^{1 Tim 1:5; 19; Heb 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21}

1 Timothy 3:9 *pure conscience*^{2 Tim 1:3}

Acts 24:16 *a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

1 Corinthians 8:7 *weak conscience*

1 Corinthians 8:7 *defiled conscience*^{Titus 1:15}

1 Corinthians 8:10 *emboldened conscience*

Hebrews 10:22 *evil conscience*

1 Timothy 4:2 *seared conscience*

John 8:9 *...convicted by their conscience*

Romans 9:1 *my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit*^{Romans 2:15}

Romans 13:5 *be subject, ... for conscience' sake*

2 Cor 1:12 *testimony of our conscience*

Ever since 1811 (when someone who had defrauded the government anonymously sent \$5 to Washington D.C.) the U.S. Treasury has operated a Conscience Fund? Since that time almost \$3.5 million has been received from guilt-ridden citizens.

"She won't listen to her conscience. She doesn't want to take advice from a total stranger."

If you *feel* guilty, but in fact are *not* guilty, this is illegitimate or false guilt—the Bible calls this *condemnation* (Rom 8:1).

If you feel guilty after you have been forgiven, this is false guilt.

2. Get connected to the Saviour.

John 21:15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of

Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."He said to him, "Feed My lambs." NKJV

The only solution to legitimate guilt is forgiveness.

The only path to forgiveness is the cross.

*"Thus far I did come laden with my sin;
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in
Till I came hither: What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?
Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!"*

The only path to the cross is confession.

The only solution to illegitimate guilt is truth.

3. Get committed to the Saints.

The church is a building where in we find our foundation.

The church is a body in which we find purpose.

The church is a bride where in we find fulfillment.

Conclusion: Perhaps you remember reading Edgar Allen Poe's story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*. It follows an unnamed narrator who insists on his sanity despite his [HYPERLINK "http://www.answers.com/topic/murder"](http://www.answers.com/topic/murder) [_top](#) murder of an old man with a vulture eye.

