

Discipline of Facing Our Guilt

Our culture has declared war on guilt whereas we need the discipline of deep conviction!

The very concept of guilt is considered obsolete, unnecessary, and unproductive. People who trouble themselves with feeling of personal guilt are usually referred to therapists, whose task is to boost their self-image. No one, after all, is supposed to feel guilty. Guilt is not conducive to dignity, feeling good about oneself, or having good self-esteem. Society encourages sin, but it will not tolerate the guilt sin produces.

What a great contrast this is to Psalm 32:1-5. In this text David speaks of the result of guilt in his life with very pungent words -- *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* (vv. 3, 4) David experienced guilt so severed, so sharp that he considered it to be like his bones breaking, his spirit drying up, and the sense of God's hand of conviction upon his person in no uncertain terms. How can we sin and not have guilt unless we have so sinned against our conscience that it can't any longer bring conviction to our hearts?

Dr. Wayne Dyer, author of 1976 mega-bestseller, *Your Erroneous Zones*, seems to have been one of the first influential voices to decry guilt altogether. He named guilt as the *most useless of all erroneous zone behaviors*. According to Dr Dyer, guilt is nothing but a neurosis. *Guilt Zones*, he wrote, *must be exterminated, sprayed-clean, and sterilized forever*.

How do we spray clean and sterilize our guilt zones? By renouncing the sinful behavior that makes us feel guilty? By repenting and seeking forgiveness? **The world says** -- *Stop blaming yourself. Your compulsive behavior is not your fault; refuse to accept blame -- and above all, do not blame yourself -- for what you cannot control. Heaping guilt upon yourself only adds to your stress, low self-esteem, worry, depression, feeling of inadequacy, and dependence upon others. Let go of your guilt feelings.*

No Guilt -- No Sin:

That kind of thinking has all but driven words like *sin, repentance, contrition, atonement, restitution and redemption* out of public conversation. If no one is to feel guilty, how can anyone be a sinner? Modern culture has the answer: people are victims! Victims are not accountable, not responsible for what they do; they are but casualties of what happens to them. So every human failing must be described in terms of how the perpetrator has been victimized. We are all supposed to be *sensitive* and *compassionate* enough to see that the very behaviors we used to label *sin* are actually evidence of victimization.

Today anyone can escape responsibility for his or her wrongdoing simply by claiming the status of a victim.

Sin-as-Disease Model:

Perhaps the most prevalent means of escaping blame is by classifying every human failing as some form of disease. Drunkards and drug addicts can check into clinics for treatment of their *chemical dependencies*. Children who habitually defy authority can

escape condemnation by being label *hyperactive or having ADD*. Gluttons are not longer blameworthy, they suffer from an *eating disorder*. Even the man who throws away his family's livelihood to pay for prostitutes is supposed to be an object of compassionate understanding, because he is *addicted to sex*. Multitudes of parents, influenced by such diagnoses, refuse to punish their children for misbehavior. Instead they seek therapy for ODD, ADD, or HDP, or whatever new diagnosis fits the unruly child's behavior.

What is the new addiction industry meant to accomplish? More and more addictions are being discovered, and new addicts are being identified, until all of us will be locked into our own little addictive worlds with other addicts like ourselves, defined by the special interests of our neuroses. When a repugnant world to imagine, as well as a hopeless one. *Meanwhile, all the addictions we define are increasing.*

Worse yet, the number of people who suffer from such new identified sicknesses is increasing even faster. The therapy industry is clearly not solving the problem of what Scripture calls SIN. Instead it merely convinces multitudes that they are desperately sick and therefore not really responsible for their wrong behavior. It gives them permission to think of themselves as patients, not malefactors. And it encouraged them to undergo extensive -- and expensive -- treatment that lasts for years, or better yet, for a lifetime. These new diseases, it seems, are ailments from which no one is ever expected to recover completely.

But assume for the moment that the problem is SIN rather than sickness.

The only remedy involves humble repentance, confession, and the recognition that you deserve the chastening hand of God because you alone are responsible for your sin. Then restitution, and growth can take place through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, communion with God, fellowship with other believers and dependence on Christ. In other words, if the problem is in fact spiritual, labeling it a clinical issue will only exacerbate the problem and will offer no real deliverance from the sin. That is precisely what we see happening everywhere. Someone ought to remind people there is a name for people who lack guilt and shame: they are called sociopaths.

If we study Psalm 51 we will be brought face to face with the importance of guilt which causes us to --

- cry out to God for mercy and cleansing,
- greatly desire the blotting out of our sin,
- want complete washing away of our guilt and shame and a renewed of walk with God,
- hear joy and gladness: that the bones which God had broken may rejoice.
- He cried out the third and fourth time for washing and a clean heart and then a right spirit within.

We ought to be grateful if guilt makes us aware of our sin and bring us to confession and forsaking the sin that guilt has laid before us! *We need the DISCIPLINE of God's hand of guilt upon our person!*