

Jesus not only died for every sin we committed before our conversion, but he also died for all the sins we commit after conversion. He not only forgives what we were. He keeps forgiving what we do. This is God's grace! Keep in mind that God doesn't want us to think that continual cleansing offers some kind of license to live sinful lives. After telling us of this remarkable, continual forgiveness, John pauses to say, *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin"* (1John 2:1). We must not take advantage of God's grace.

Confession or admission of wrongdoing is a vital part of living guilt-free. But not only are we to confess our sins to God, we should also confess our sins to one another. *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. Do this so that God can heal you."* (James 5:16). [NLT]. This is difficult for all of us because we do not want others to know about our sins or weaknesses.

Those who are incarcerated for their sins against society and others, bear the guilt of this, but they can be freed from mental torment when they confess to God and to those they have wronged. Some people are living with guilt because they are hiding their sin from loved ones or from their church family. They have done something that they should not have done, but instead of owning up to it and confessing it, they are hiding it. If you are hiding your sins, which is causing you extreme guilt, today you can receive healing, if you would just confess your sins and ask for forgiveness. If you do, your burdens will be lifted and you will begin to feel much better.

LASTLY - To get rid of our guilt, we must stop engaging in sin. Although we receive forgiveness of our sins, when we are saved at conversion, there are times when we still experience guilt because we do and say wrong things. We may also participate in blatant sin. We need to confess these sins to God. One of the many benefits we enjoy from the Holy Spirit is that he convicts us of sin. *Jesus said "When he comes, he [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world of guilt in regard to their sin; reveal God's righteousness and the future judgment sinners will face..."* (John 16:8) [cp. ICB]. When we sin, the Holy Spirit is gracious enough to tell us about it. He tells us about our sins by reminding our

hearts and minds what God says about sin and this causes real guilt. We need to understand that some guilt is good and is designed to help us in our walk with God.

Real guilt is healthy as it means we are sensitive to God and what is right and wrong. If we felt no guilt we would be cold and callous. But the best way to get rid of guilt is to stop sinning! There are whole chapters in the Bible, that tell us to stop sinning. Read what God says in Romans 12-15, Ephesians 4, Colossians 3, and 1Peter 2.

At this moment, you may be experiencing guilt because you know you are deliberately doing something that God does not want you to do. If this is the case, then stop it! It is amazing how guilt disappears when the sin disappears.

So to get rid of that nagging, head aching guilt, we must admit our sins and mistakes, own up to our unacceptable behaviour, then tell God we are sorry for our sins, past or present. We must accept God's complete forgiveness; and continue to confess our sins, not only to God, but also to one another.

Lastly, as Christians, we must stop engaging in any kind of sin, particularly wilful sins and start living lives like Jesus Christ (1Peter 2, Ephesians 5:1-2, 1John 2:6). If you do not know Jesus Christ and his forgiveness, then turn from your sin and ask him to be your Saviour and Lord. Jesus is waiting. He says, *"I'm standing here waiting, if you ask me to come in, I will come and live with you forever"* (Revelation 3:20 ICB). Ask Jesus into your life today and he will help you with your guilt.

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DEALING WITH GUILT

Guilt plagues everyone to some degree, for we all have to lay our heads on our pillow at night and accept the fact that we have not done as well as we could have done. One psychologist recently stated that *"Guilt is the most difficult problem in the whole realm of psychological therapy."*

We understand that there are many types of guilt that people can and do seek help for from the medical profession, and social community groups. Obviously, if we break societal laws, we must accept guilt and pay the price.

In this study, we are mostly 'Dealing With Guilt' from a Christian perspective. We believe guilt is associated with breaking God's commands (1John 3:4) in thought and spoken word; in feelings or actions; unwillingly or wilfully. The Bible says, *"The one who knows to do good and doesn't - is sinning"* (James 4:17).

Guilt has been a companion of mankind from the beginning. It plagues us with bad feelings particularly at night or at quiet times. Our minds have a way of bringing things to remembrance.

We all know when we are doing wrong and this produces guilt. If we say, *"I don't feel guilt"*, we are lying. But if we *really believe this*, then we are lying to ourselves and need professional help.

1. HOW DO SOME PEOPLE DEAL WITH GUILT?

A. SOME PEOPLE RATIONALIZE THEIR GUILT.

Do you ever listen to what people say when they are caught in the act of doing something wrong? Here are a few of the excuses we make to ourselves to others and dare I say to God as well: "He or she made me do it" or "I couldn't help it". "The Devil made me do it" or "It just happened". "I lost control when they..." or "I had too much alcohol". "I have a weakness in this area" or "I just felt angry". "I didn't get much sleep last night".

We come up with a myriad of excuses that fit our rationalisation plan of trying to deal with guilt. But it

doesn't work!! We still feel lousy and guilty.

B. SOME PEOPLE DENY THEIR GUILT

Isn't it amazing that we have the capacity to deny guilt when the evidence before us is indisputable and unquestionable? It is so easy to play the blame game. We hear this everyday on the news. It is a major problem in our Australian culture. It's always somebody else's fault, not mine. But try though we may to project our guilt to others, we still feel bad. The guilt is there and it torments us. We feel shame inside, because we have tried to pass the buck, knowing all the time it was our sin, and our wrongdoing.

C. SOME PEOPLE RUN FROM THEIR GUILT.

Bars and clubs are filled with people trying to run away from their guilt. They try to drown it in alcohol or drugs. Others run by being busy or active in other things. The problem with running from our guilt is that it follows us wherever we go. We cannot run away from our guilt. We cannot drink our guilt away. We cannot hide our guilt. It is fixed in the mind. Guilt produces a strong feeling of remorse and pain in the brain.

Until we take care of our guilt, we will be plagued by it. The three so-called guilt solutions mentioned above, have things in common. Most significantly, **they don't work!**

Some of you know firsthand that what I am saying is the truth. You have tried to **rationalise, deny** and **escape** your guilt and you have learned that no matter what you do, you still feel guilty!

Well, this is where the story gets good. There is a solution to the problem with our guilt. We don't have to keep fighting a losing battle. We can be guilt-free.

2. HOW CAN WE GET RID OF OUR GUILT?

FIRST - To get rid of our guilt, we must accept responsibility for our sin and wrongdoing and then come to God and accept his forgiveness in Jesus Christ. It is when we become

Christians, that our guilt and our sins against God, are taken care of by Jesus, who died for us on the cross! The Bible says, *"In Him we have the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace..."* (Ephesians 1:7). *God forgave all of our sins. He cancelled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross"* (Colossians 2:13-14). *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1).

I don't know a better way to say this, than in the words of King David: *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgression from us"* (Psalm 103:12). When we go to God, he assures us of his forgiveness and tells us that our guilt has been removed and we are clean.

Although people receive God's forgiveness, some people do not forgive themselves. They walk around forgiven in the eyes of God, but yet are guilt ridden. They often feel guilt for the sins that they have committed in the past. When we accept, believe and trust in the forgiveness of God, he uses our faith to defeat our personal guilt.

The way to be healed of guilt is to believe what God tells us about his forgiveness. Embrace his forgiveness not only today, but everyday so that you can begin to live guilt free. But there's more...

SECOND - To get rid of our guilt we must continue to confess or admit our sins, not only to God, but also to one another (James 5:16). According to (1John 1:9), it is vital that we confess our sins to God. When we do, we receive fresh forgiveness and our present guilt is wiped away.

Unfortunately, we at times commit sins that we fail to confess. Does this mean that our unconfessed sins are not forgiven and will result in condemnation and guilt? **NO!** The Bible says, *"But if we live in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). When a person believes in Christ as Saviour and Lord, God cleanses them completely, so that they can go to heaven. No sin will enter heaven!