

Overcoming Guilt, Once and For All!



**Clear, Practical Principles That Will Help You
Defeat the Pressures of Guilt and Shame In Your Life**

By Chris Simpson

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DO you struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or unworthiness? If so, I have good news for you! You can experience complete freedom once and for all from these lies: because that's what they are - lies from the enemy to keep you from becoming an overcomer in Christ! If you've been born again into God's kingdom, then let me assure you - God never intended for you to struggle day after day with heavy feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness.

Unfortunately, however, many believers remain stuck in a rut of failure and defeatism most of the time, and usually for two reasons: First, they're not walking in the truth of God's Word and, second, they're not fighting and resisting the enemy in offensive spiritual warfare. Unless you actively engage the oppressive powers of darkness in battle, it's quite likely you're being oppressed by the same. We're in a war, whether you like it or not!

However, once you choose to believe a few key truths in God's Word and begin to consistently stand against the enemy - your days of doom and gloom are over! Freedom in Christ is REALLY NOT HARD! The enemy would like you to think that it is, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Jesus said that it's EASY when He said, "*My yoke is easy and my burden is light*" (Matthew 11:30). Let's look at a couple of verses in Psalm 94 that are loaded with encouragement that'll set you free:

"Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slipped; your mercy, O Lord, held me up." (Psalm 94:16-18)

God's Amazing Mercy

Do these verse adequately describe the week you've just been through? Did you feel like the enemy's "doormat?" Just what helped you when the enemy attacked? Why, it was God's MERCY supporting you, in spite of your bad choices.

God's mercy to you means God won't condemn you when you fail! When you slip and fall into sin, or if you just dive right in, His mercy holds you up every time. Oh, the devil may whisper, "You fell again, but this time God won't come through because you deliberately chose to yield to sin." Well, I beg to differ. We have a merciful God who doesn't stop caring when we make a wrong choice. He understands your weakness and the frailty of your flesh. He knows that at times you're going to stumble and fall. He's not judging you for that. What He's looking at is your heart. When He sees a heart that's sold out to please Him above all else, then His mercies are exceedingly great when you make bad choices, for whatever reason.

This is a powerful, liberating truth. Unfortunately, because of guilt and shame, the enemy has succeeded in hiding it from most believers. God's loving mercy is hard to comprehend when you labor under guilt and shame. However, if you will but ask the Lord, He'll graciously reveal to you the depths of His mercy. Come to Him in humility and make your request, trusting that He'll quickly answer. Few requests please Him more. We're even told that God, "*Delights in mercy!*" (Micah 7:18) Let's look again at Psalm 94:

"In the midst of my anxious thoughts, your comforts delight my soul" (Psalm 94:19)

Conviction Not Condemnation

This is one of my favorite verses in the Psalms. And this is exactly what the Lord will do for you when you're tormented with thoughts of guilt. He longs to comfort you, not condemn you. Condemnation is ALWAYS from the evil one. If you think feelings of depression, discouragement or hopelessness are from the Lord, then you're seriously mistaken. God never deals with His children that way. On the other hand, the devil always does!

To stay free, you must quickly reject those feelings or emotions when they come - as God is not asking you to labor under the enemy's condemnation. Rather, He simply wants you to yield to His Holy Spirit's conviction. When He convicts, the truth may be straightforward, and it may not be something you enjoy hearing, but it always comes in a loving spirit of gentleness, encouragement, hope and expectation. The next verse reads:

"They gather themselves together against the righteous, and condemn the innocent. But the Lord is my stronghold; and my God is the rock of my refuge." (Psalm 94:21-22)

Toehold, Foothold or Stronghold?

What's the STRONGHOLD in your life? For many, it's guilt and shame. Now, no stronghold is built overnight. First, the enemy must gain a toe-hold in the life. Then, as place is given and the devil is not resisted, the toe-hold becomes a foothold. Eventually, particularly as one continues to believe the incessant lies of the enemy, the foot-hold becomes a fortified stronghold from which Satan can wreak havoc on the soul and mind. But, what the enemy does, God can do - only better!

If at this point in your life you find yourself under the enemy's control in this area - TAKE HEART! Start NOW and let the Lord get His foot-hold into your soul with His Word of Truth. As you choose to believe His mercy, love and forgiveness, and RESIST the enemy's old familiar lies, God's foot-hold will grow into a strong-hold - a rock of refuge from the enemy of your soul!

Jesus' Enemies Find Their "Bait"

Let's look at a story in Jesus' life that will show you how to be free from guilt:

"...Early in the morning Jesus came into the temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they said unto Him, 'Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.'" (John 8:1-4)

The Scribes and Pharisees were desperate. They'd been trying for some time to trap Jesus. His popularity with the people was making them quite nervous. Ever since He'd arrived on the scene, the masses weren't as interested in the temple rites and rules, as all they wanted to do was follow this carpenter around the countryside. At first, the religious leaders tried to trick Jesus through a series of hard questions. One time they asked Him about taxes, another time about marriage and the resurrection. However, Jesus bested them time and again with words of wisdom and insight. So, the Scribes and Pharisees came together to figure out a way to discredit Him. Finally, they had an idea. They went down to the "red light" district of Jerusalem, a really seedy area of town. After poking around a while, looking through windows, they found this woman committing adultery with a man. Bursting open the door, they dragged the woman into the street.

Now, you need to understand, this lady was just their “bait.” They weren’t really concerned about this woman’s sin. No, they were just setting a trap for Jesus. So, after a humiliating march through the streets of town, they came to Jesus and threw her down before Him. “Master,” they said, “we caught this woman in adultery, in the very act.” They were so proud of themselves.

Listen carefully - this story is really an allegory of how the devil seeks to drag you before God to accuse you. In fact, the Word tells us that Satan accuses God’s people day and night. (see Rev. 12:10) Actually, when you think about it, you’re just his “bait” as well, for the devil is really after God. When you sin, you give him an opportunity to come before God with accusation and pride, while you’re just a pawn in his unending war against his Creator. The devil’s REAL enemy is God. Now, let’s look at what the religious leaders said next:

“Now Moses in the law commanded us that she should be stoned; but, what do you say?” (John 8:5)

Satan - The Enforcer Of The Law

This verse gives us amazing insight into the very misunderstood relationship between Satan and the Law. The Old Testament Law plainly said that one caught in adultery should be stoned. Not many people realize this, but the enemy works in a believer's life through the enforcement of the law. He does this by continually seeking to tell you that you have to ‘be good,’ else you’ll be condemned. The problem is, though, that even when you’re supposedly ‘good,’ you’re never ‘good enough!’

In spite of that, the enemy continues to press you to strive and struggle to attain ‘righteousness’ on the basis of your own good works. Isn't that right? Did you know that when you’re ‘under the law,’ you’re living under the devil’s jurisdiction?

When you're 'trying to be good' (or are operating under the 'law of sin and death,' (Romans 8:2), then you're under the authority of Satan's power. This is what Paul meant when he said, "*Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.*" (Roman 6:14)

The good news of the Gospel is that you've been LIBERATED once and for all from the demands and curses of the old Law. As long as you're trying to 'please God' with good works, you'll find yourself continually struggling with guilt and shame. Why? Because you'll ALWAYS fall short, no matter how hard you try! In fact, all of your attempts at trying to be acceptable or good enough simply make you 'demon bait,' and expose you to the accusing voices of the evil one.

Quit Trying To Please God!

Have you been trying to please God lately? If you have, then you've failed miserably! "Why?" you might say. It's simple. You can never please God from your own efforts. If you think you have, then you also have a problem with pride. Please understand: the only thing pleasing to the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus came out of the water at His baptism, the Father gave this testimony, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Nothing else in the world is pleasing to God but Jesus. Everything else falls miserably short. That's the curse of the Fall of man.

You may be thinking now, "Well, how in the world can I please Him?" There's really only one way. You must continually be going to the Lord and asking Him to live His life THROUGH you by His Spirit. That's really all there is to it. It's when you're weak that you're strong. When you finally realize that ALL of your striving, struggling and attempts to please Him have been as 'filthy rags,' then you'll give up trying 'to be good' once and for all. Then, and only then, will He be able to live His life IN you and THROUGH you! That's when you've escaped the 'Law of sin

and death,' where the enemy ever seeks to accuse and condemn, and you've entered that blessed state called GRACE!

How did we ever end up under this trap of the Law, anyway? Well, you can thank your first parents, Adam and Eve. If you recall, God forbade them to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (or, another way of putting it - the tree of right and wrong). Do you remember what was hanging out of that forbidden tree the day Eve walked by? It was a snake! The same is true today. Whenever you get under the law, trying to 'be good,' there's a snake there ready to bite you. Now don't misunderstand. The Law is good. But it was given to expose your exceeding sinfulness and show you your desperate need for the Savior. Now, let's look at verse 6:

"This they said tempting that they might accuse Him. For Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground as though he heard them not." (John 8:6)

Ignore the Accusing Voices of Guilt

Let's consider this scene a moment. Just what is Jesus doing here? When His enemies started accusing Him, He just ignored them. In fact, He then started doing something else, perhaps to distract Himself further from having to listen to their accusing voices. Do you see the real message of this passage? You and I don't have to listen to the accusations of the enemy! One of the quickest ways to end up mired in guilt and shame is to give heed, even for a second, to the voice of the Accuser. Paul tells us in Ephesians *"Do not give the devil a foothold."* (Eph. 4:27)

The word "foothold" in the Greek is "topos" which means speck. Don't give him a speck! Once you start listening to the seductive voice of the enemy, it's hard to stop! Let's read on:

“So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.’” (John 8:7)

So, Who Could Throw Stones?

In other words, He said whoever among them had never sinned had the right to stone her. But who among them had never sinned? Ironically, there was someone there who fell in that category. It was the very man who’d spoken those words! Jesus is the only man on this earth who’s lived without sin. Therefore, Jesus had the right to stone her. At this point, let’s ask the obvious question. Why didn’t Jesus do what the law plainly said - to stone someone found in adultery? She was guilty and deserved it. God wrote the law. Isn’t Jesus God?

Now, as you read this, you may be thinking to yourself, “I just can’t imagine Jesus throwing a stone at that poor woman.” Well, if you’re so sure He wouldn’t throw stones in the Gospel stories, why would you ever doubt the same thing in your own life? The truth is, many believers spend most of their time expecting a stone to land on their head because of their failings and faults. And, they think God’s the one that’ll throw it! That’s really what guilt is: fearing God’s punishment for your actions. However, He’s already inflicted punishment for those sins - on the cross!

A Picture of God’s Heart

This passage reveals God’s heart. We must understand why Jesus didn’t stone the woman. If you don’t understand this, then you’ll probably expect that in your case He will throw stones. We need this truth planted deep within our minds and hearts. In fact, this revelation (why Jesus didn’t stone the woman) is a key spiritual warfare weapon against guilt and shame. To understand this vital truth, let’s look at the epistle of James:

“Judgment without mercy is shown to one who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!” (James 2:13)

The principle here is simple. If you’re not merciful to others, no mercy will be shown to you. Jesus said in the Beatitudes, *“Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy.”* (Matthew 5:7) Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Let this sink in - this is the best news you and I have ever heard! We have an eternal God who prefers mercy over judgment. Millions today live under the gods of the Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist religions. They believe they must earn the acceptance of their gods through good deeds and ascetic practices, or come under judgment. Not so with the followers of Jesus! So, while nearly half of the world's population are spiritual slaves, ever seeking acceptance through their actions and deeds, our God (the only God) prefers to give His people mercy. Let’s read on in our story:

“And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing in the midst.” (John 8:8-9)

Kindness Released Conviction!

Notice the amazing thing that occurred when Jesus showed mercy on the woman, rather than judgment. The Holy Spirit’s conviction actually fell on those Scribes and Pharisees. In the presence of such kindness, they became painfully aware of their own failings, faults and shortcomings and started dropping their stones! They left fast, before Jesus said or did anything else that might expose them! Finally, there was no one left but Jesus and the woman.

It works the same way in your case. As you begin to comprehend Jesus' mercy and loving kindness toward you, even in the midst of your sin, then sin begins to lose its power over you. You'll begin to be convicted, not condemned. Remember, as long as you're anticipating judgment for your sin, you'll stay emotionally focused on that sin. Freedom comes when you finally shift the focus off of your weaknesses and failings and onto the kindness of the Lord. Let's read on:

“When Jesus saw none but the woman, he said to her, ‘Woman, where are your accusers? Has no man condemned you?’ And she said, ‘No one, Lord.’” (John 8:10)

Can you picture that poor woman, cowering down, crying, expecting any moment to be pelted with stones? After a while she looks up, blinks, turns around and can't believe what she sees. What an amazing thing! She says, “No one is judging me anymore! All the guilt and shame I was feeling is gone!” The air around her is clear, there's no buzzing around her head, no more voices of accusation. The only thing she saw in the courtyard was Jesus. He then gently asked her if anyone was still accusing her? The really great news is that today we can say right along with the woman, “No one, Lord.” Then Jesus says:

“Neither do I condemn you. Now go and sin no more.” (John 8:11)

The Non-Judgmental Love of Jesus

I believe that woman then went her way and never really had a problem in that area again. Why? Because she'd encountered the incredible, non-judgmental love of Jesus! The exciting thing is, you can experience the same thing. How? Stand in the truth of His merciful love and RESIST the lying voices of guilt and shame. Then, you can look around and you'll find that your “stone throwing enemy” has

fled the scene. The only one standing there is Jesus! Sin always loses its punch when you know the intimate mercy of Jesus.

Then, when the old accusing voices come back, and they WILL come back, you simply need to recall Jesus' voice as He says, "I don't condemn you; and I'm the only one that matters." If God be for us, who can be against us? Even if all the foes of hell were to come against you, He'll be standing right next to you saying, "Trust me, I'm the best friend you'll ever know!"

Warfare Scriptures to Use Against Guilt

Scripture is the single most effective weapon for fighting the lies of the devil. We need to have scripture hidden in our hearts so that we can fight the fiery darts of guilt and shame thrown at us by the enemy. The following is a list of scriptures that are very beneficial for every believer to learn and memorize in order to combat the enemy's lies with God's truth.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah." (Psalm 32:1-5)

"You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5)

"Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had

almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slipped; your mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the midst of my anxious thoughts, your comforts delight my soul” (Psalm 94:16-19)

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:1-14)

“A Song of Ascents. Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications. If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning-- Yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities.” (Psalm 130)

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,” Says the Lord.” (Isaiah 54:17)

“Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18-19)

“Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.” (Roman 6:14)

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” (Hebrew 8:10-12)

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw

near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19-22)

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

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