

FOR LOVERS ONLY - LOVE IS NOT CRAZY

VIII

False assumption VIII

“Guilt is good for me.”

¹⁴ *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

Hebrews 5:14

I. Is guilt the voice of God?

- A. The next time you miss the mark, search your emotional responses. If they center on how bad you are, your emotions are the “sorrow of the world.” But if your response centers on loving your neighbor as yourself, it is the “sorrow of God.”
- B. The Bible always refers to the “state” of guilt, not to our “feelings” of guilt.
- C. Guilt has two common meanings: the state of having done wrong; and a painful feeling of self-reproach resulting from the belief that we have done a wrong.
- D. Godly sorrow versus worldly sorrow.
(II Corinthians 7:9-11)

⁹ *yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. ¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow*

brings death. ¹¹ *See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.*

* Godly sorrow is empathetic, centering on the hurt we caused to someone we love. We feel bad, because we feel the pain of the person we've injured. Godly remorse seeks to heal, to make restitution to those we've hurt. Reconciliation and relationship are its goals.

** Worldly sorrow focuses on our feelings of worthlessness and our deserved punishment. It is self-absorbed, not other-centered. Judas displayed worldly sorrow; he was more concerned with his misdeeds (his attempt to give back the silver he was given to betray Christ) than with restoring his relationship with Jesus. The fruit of his worldly sorrow was suicide.

II. A biblical view of the conscience.

A. Our conscience is a product of the fall. Human beings didn't always have a conscience.

B. Adam and Eve didn't have a conscience, because they didn't need one. They had a direct, uninterrupted connection with God.

C. Adam and Eve were never intended to deal with issues of morality. Questions of good and evil weren't meant for humans, but only for God.

D. Adam and Eve were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because that would turn their

focus from relationship to rules, from love to legalism. Being good would become more important than being connected.

- E. In an act of mercy, God drove them out of the garden where they would've remained eternally hidden from God.
- F. Conscience then began. It occurred as a product of our loss of relationship with God.
- G. It was an adaption, of sorts, to learning how to sort out good and evil. The conscience became an “evaluator,” refereeing the goodness and badness of our thoughts, actions, and feelings. Our conscience isn't God.
- H. Our conscience is part of living in a fallen world, and in a judged state. This internal referee combines the law written on our hearts by God, plus our early socialization processes; but it isn't perfect.

III. Three kinds of conscience.

A. The weak (or immature) conscience.

- * This is an overly strict, punitive, internal judge that finds guilt everywhere. It takes responsibility for much more than God intended. The weak conscience prohibits, criticizes, and accuses unjustly. Paul describes the weak conscience like this. (I Corinthians 8:7)

⁷ But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled.

B. The seared conscience.

- * This is the opposite of the weak conscience. The person with a seared conscience has a sociopathic personality and cannot feel empathy for the suffering of others. Such people have little sense of remorse. Such people become controllers or manipulators of others.

(I Timothy 4:2-3)

² Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. ³ They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.

C. The mature conscience.

- * The mature conscience more closely approximates biblical values as it indicates a person using a scripturally trained internal monitor.

D. As a product of the image of God, as well as a part of the fall, our consciousnesses change and grow with us. As we grow, the conscience matures, and we can trust it more; but it is not the voice of God.

E. Godly sorrow leads to repentance that leads to life. The conviction of the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with feelings of false guilt, shame, condemnation or worthlessness. Such “oughts” and “shoulds” must be rebuked immediately. (II Corinthians 10:5)

⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

- F. The conviction of the Holy Spirit is a tender pinch that leads us into truth. As soon as we respond to the Holy Spirit, the pinch lets up. Godly sorrow always bears good fruit and leads us towards maturity.