

I KNOW part 13: "Jesus Is Making The Case For Me" 03.11.12

Scripture: Romans 8:34 NIV

Intro: We call this the "I KNOW" sermon series because we want to base our Christian lives on what we know from Scripture and not on what we feel. Today we come to a very important "feeling" topic: Guilt! As Christ-followers we should be able to enjoy God's forgiveness and the light hearted feelings that go along with no condemnation. The Bible says,

"What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! ... What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record." Psalm 32:1 LB

That is the reality of our situation when we have confessed our sins to God. No guilt. No condemnation. That's why twice in our I KNOW series we have talked about condemnation - our first talk and the subject of v. 1. "There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." If you are a Christ follower you should KNOW you are not condemned.

But that doesn't mean that you won't FEEL condemned, that you won't FEEL guilty along with feelings of unworthiness, not being good enough, shame and self-condemnation. *Guilt can lead to stress, anxiety and debilitating depression.* Today I want to deal with these feelings of condemnation and what you can do to experience the happiness God intends for you to possess.

Two Kinds of Guilt

1st Kind of Guilt: TRUE GUILT. We must not ignore the reality of normal guilt as a good thing, a tool that God uses to bring us to Him. God gives us a conscience. When we have sinned and our conscience is not clear, guilt is something that is good and positive. We must not ever think that as a Christ follower we are finished with confession.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8 ESV

When we have real guilt for real sin - as a real Christ follower - we must confess it. Confession means agreement. God already knows our sin. We simply are agreeing with God and confessing it before Him. We do this with the internal desire to please Him, to turn from our sin, and to not continue to repeat our sin. In other words, there is also repentance involved - a turning away. What happens if we confess?

"If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9 ESV

2nd Kind of Guilt: FALSE GUILT. But what happens after we confess our sins and yet we still FEEL shame and guilt, when we still have a marred conscience, when we don't experience the happiness of Psalm 32:1? This is the result of false guilt. The "shoulds & shouldn'ts." False guilt comes from false accusation and from false condemnation. We can receive this false accusation from one of three sources:

- A) From other people - people are not always forgiving. Even Christians sadly can lay on the guilt and the shame. Parents to child: "You are always..." "You never..." "It's your fault..."
- B) From ourselves - we can be our own harshest critics. Especially from history - replaying a past (and forgiven) event over & over.

C) From Satan - He is known as the “accuser of our brothers” (Rev. 12:10). Be on the lookout! Not every voice in your head is yours. If you hear accusations after confession, be assured it’s not God!

“It is God who justifies. Who then is the one to condemn? No one.”
Romans 8:33b-34a NIV

“Who would dare even to point a finger?” Romans 8:34a MSG

When I experience False Guilt, I should remember this: G.U.I.L.T.
GOD USES INTERCESSION to LIBERATE so TRUST

The Rest of the Easter Story: Intercession

Usually when we think of the Easter story we think of Jesus’ death on the cross. I hope that most of YOU think of the next fact of Easter too - Jesus’ resurrection. Romans 8:34 tells us that there are actually 4 parts to the story. Do you see it?

“Christ Jesus who dies - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Romans 8:34b NIV

Part 1 - Christ Jesus died.

Part 2 - Christ Jesus was raised to life. 1&2 past tense. 3&4 present!

Part 3 - Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father. What does it mean to be at God’s right hand? The position of honor and authority. The opposite of “wrong” would be the “right” hand. The symbol in the ancient world of the one who had equivalent authority to act as R.H. To give some idea of the power this entails in God’s mind...

“That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.” Ephesians 1:19b-22 NIV

In other words, the right hand of God the Father has the power and authority over all things. And all things includes YOUR GUILT! We know this because Paul is specific about the rest of the story in Rom. 8:34...

Part 4 - Christ Jesus “is also interceding for us.” What does this “interceding” mean? We’ve seen the word twice before in v. 26 and 27. The Spirit intercedes for us in prayer and God who searches hearts knows interceding of the Spirit. Now we see this intercession reach the very throne room of God. God’s Son - Christ Jesus - at the right hand - so the one with power and authority - now also intercedes for us, makes petition for us, literally pleads for us!

Here’s what you have to ask about this “interceding:” **Will God ignore His right hand?** Can you see your way clear to thinking, “Well... God will give all authority and power over all things to His Son Jesus Christ, EXCEPT in my case. When it comes to MY CASE, I do not receive the “NOT CONDEMNED” sentence. I remain Guilty. NO! God the Father will not ignore his own WORD, his own Son. God uses intercession - the intercession of God’s Spirit and God’s Son to LIBERATE you from your sins so you can TRUST God. Let’s examine each of those so you can realize just how NOT GUILTY you are!

The Powerlessness of Sin: LIBERATION

You are neither chained to your sin nor are you chained to your guilt over your sin. There was a time when sin controlled you. But if you are a Christ-follower, that time is past. Now you have a choice.

“Because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.” Romans 8:2 NLT

Liberation means choice, not perfection. There will come a time when you and I will have a glorified body - a stronger body - a body capable of leading a perfect, sin-free life that will perfectly glorify God. But not yet. What we receive now is liberation from the “HAVE-TO-SIN.” We have the power of God to help us through temptation, to find a way of escape. When we sin, we experience TRUE GUILT. We respond with confession and we should be done with it. Our struggle often comes with repetition of sin. A sinning life-style, a never-ending cycle of sinning - confession, sinning - confession, sinning-confession leads us to not feeling liberated. A repetition of sin for the Christ-follower feels more like being chained to sin than liberation from sin. Remember 3 things: (1) *Combined with confession must be repentance* - a sorrow over my sin and a desire to leave it. A turning toward God. Repentance must be sincere. Not just sorry that I got caught. Sorrow that I have broken fellowship with God by prioritizing my sin over my relationship with Him. **Peter preaching:**

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” Acts 3:19 NIV

(2) *Liberation from sin is not the same thing as perfection from sin.* Even Paul admitted that there were times when he did what he didn't want to do and times when he didn't do what he wanted. (Romans 7)

(3) *FEELINGS of guilt doesn't equate to the REALITY of guilt.* I can feel guilty over false guilt. This is when I must elevate what I know over what I feel. **This is where trust comes in.**

The Replacement for Guilt: TRUST

It's almost impossible for us to feel guilty over confessed sin *while at the same time* trusting God to be *faithful* to His word that he has *forgiven* us of our sins and *cleansed* us (1 John 1:9) - no matter what we've done. Sometimes the accusers in our minds - either ourselves or Satan - are so loud that we just don't feel forgiven. This is where faith and trust in God come in. Either we believe Him or we don't.

“If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” 1 John 3:20 NIV

Sometimes I just have to know I'm liberated because God says he doesn't condemn. He knows everything. God is greater than my feelings. Often if we trust God's Word and depend on it, our feelings will fall into line with what we know. It rarely happens the other way around.

“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.” 1 John 3:21 NIV

Conclusion: Which is it for you tonight? You cannot experience false guilt and confidence before God both at the same time. *Use the same imagination you use for false guilt to experience trust.* When I picture in my mind the elaborate picture of Romans 8:34... God's Son Jesus making the case for me, interceding for me, at the powerful right hand of God the Father, God the Spirit interceding for me - when I really believe God in all 3 persons has utterly forgiven and cleansed me and not condemned me, I begin to trust in God. Guilt is replaced with an assurance of God working to free me from my sin and guilt.