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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, September 27, 2017 - Uniting Belief and Behavior

SEPTEMBER 27TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Acts 24:14-16

If we understand that we are sinners saved by grace, we may find ourselves struggling with the idea of a “blameless conscience” (Acts 24:16). After all, we know our own hearts and motivations. Yet the apostle Paul found a way to ensure that his conscience commended rather than condemned him. What was his secret? Paying attention to his beliefs and his behavior.

In today’s passage, Paul pleaded his case before the Roman governor Felix, offering the consistency of his faith and behavior as evidence of innocence. His actions were determined by his convictions—namely, that he served the God of his fathers, and God would raise the dead to judgment. Together, these two firm beliefs helped him maintain a clear conscience

As a student of Christ, Paul knew that our deeds flow from who we are on the inside. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described conditions of the heart and illustrated with practical applications. He was saying His followers would be “the light of the world” because of their work, but the work begins in the heart (Matt. 5:14-16; Luke 6:45).

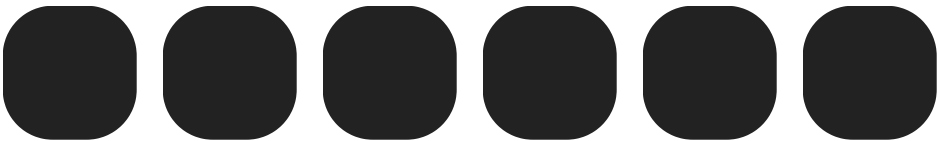
Too often, Christians focus on doing the right things, rather than on the underlying beliefs that drive such behavior. We can give, serve, or in some other way act “good,” but unless we pay attention to the convictions motivating our actions, we may end up with an unclean conscience

after all. If, however, we submit to God and allow Him to transform us from the inside out, then our consciences and our testimony will be strong and clear. We will be able to speak the truth through our deeds.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, September 26, 2017 - What Is Guilt?

SEPTEMBER 26TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Romans 5:6-11

Guilt is something with which we're all familiar. Oftentimes, Christians wear it like a badge of honor, in some misguided effort to demonstrate humility. But this is a misunderstanding that poisons the church and steals the joy of Christ from believers. It's worth taking the time to stop and ask the question, "What is guilt?"

When we see the term in English translations of the Bible, we tend to apply a worldly interpretation of the passage. In the context of the world, guilt refers to feelings of remorse, depression, or rejection over some event from the past. Scripturally speaking, however, the word is used only to denote responsibility. The word is not associated with feelings of shame or rejection; instead, it is more of a legal term, as when a court finds an offender "guilty."

What does this mean for the believer? Well, we should already know that we have been found guilty—we all have an enormous sin debt that we could never pay. However, Jesus Christ took that guilt upon Himself at the cross, and He paid our debt in full. We need to realize that if He has already paid our debt and released us from liability, then we are no longer guilty. Yes, we have been tried, but we've been declared forgiven.

The Lord doesn't want us to hide the joy of our salvation beneath a smothering blanket of guilt. Rather, we are called to rejoice in the glorious redemption that Christ's sacrifice made possible. For this reason, we can proudly proclaim, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Go, and be free today.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, September 25, 2017 - The Source of Guilt

SEPTEMBER 25TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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2 Corinthians 7:9-10

I once read a survey that asked 500 people what emotions they felt when experiencing guilt. The answers were heartbreaking. Respondents reported feeling punished, depressed, worthless, rejected, and isolated. Many were overwhelmed by a general sense of low self-esteem. There was no joy, no hope, and no vitality. In a sense, it was as though the feelings of guilt had completely blotted out everything else in their life.

This seems like such a sad way to exist, and yet it's safe to assume that we all—even those of us who are believers—have experienced these exact same emotions. In fact, you may be dealing with intense guilt right now. If so, let's consider one simple question: Where does it come from?

In 2 Corinthians 7:10, we see two forms of guilt. One is a sorrow that comes from God. This call to repentance is a tool the Lord uses to draw unbelievers to Himself through salvation in Christ. It also motivates believers to confess any wrongs causing “interference” in their fellowship with Him.

A second form of guilt is the dark emotion that plagues people with remorse and the reactions mentioned on the survey. Such sorrow isn't from God at all, but from the world.

If you've received Jesus' free gift of salvation but still struggle under the assault of guilt, let Scripture assure you: These feelings didn't come from God. He is not attacking you. Rather, He holds the keys to your freedom. Don't fall victim to the enemy's lies. In Christ, you are forgiven and free. Lay down your chains today.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, September 22, 2017 - God's Response to Sinful Behavior

SEPTEMBER 22ND 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Friday, September 22, 2017 - God's Response to Sinful Behavior

Genesis 20:1-16

Despite appearances, evil men are not in control of our world; God is. How does our sovereign Lord respond to sin?

At times He allows sin to run its full course. After the exodus, He promised Israel abundant blessings if they were obedient (Psalm 81:10). When they persistently disobeyed, He “gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart” (Psalm 81:12). God remained in control but chose to let the nation experience the consequences of continued rebellion. He deals with individuals

the same way (Rom. 1:24, Rom. 1:28). Apart from Jesus Christ, the end result of sin is eternal death (Rom. 3:23).

At other times, God stops the sinful behavior completely. When Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife, the king of Gerar brought her into his household for himself. Abraham’s lie—“she is my sister”—put the king at risk. God intervened and prevented any further sinful action from taking place. For believers, God limits the intensity, scope, and time we have to deal with a particular temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). For those who have rejected Jesus Christ, there is no such promise.

To believe the heavenly Father is sovereign, we must embrace certain truths: His thoughts and ways are superior to ours (Isa. 55:8-9); He always keeps His promises (2 Corinthians 1:20); His perfect character is unchanging (James 1:17); and He has control over everything, including times of blessing and disaster (Isa. 45:7).

The next time you are confronted with the effects of sin, remember these important truths, and look to God with trusting faith.

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Daily Devotional, Thursday, September 21, 2017 - When Faith Gives Way to Fear

SEPTEMBER 21ST 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Thursday, September 21, 2017 - When Faith Gives Way to Fear

Genesis 2:7-25, Genesis 3

Throughout the Bible, we see evidence of God's authority over both humanity and nature. However, many of us have trouble reconciling God's sovereign control with the existence of evil. Let's look at what Scripture tells us.

In the beginning, God created a perfect world, after which He declared that all He had made was good (Gen. 1:31). Wickedness was not part of what He'd fashioned. In the heavens, however, an angel known as Satan sought to elevate himself above God and was cast down to earth (Isa. 14:12-14).

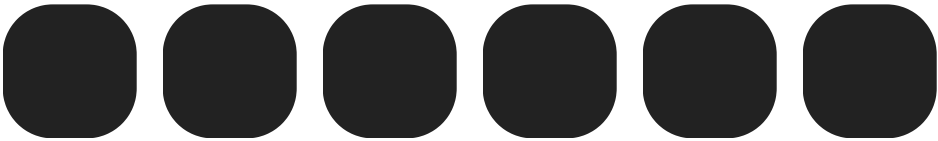
God created Adam and Eve in His image. They were made with the capacity to love their Creator and the ability to choose to obey or disobey Him. God had no desire for Adam and Eve to sin (James 1:13), but He allowed their will to be tested. We know the rest of the story. When they disobeyed God, sin entered our world and corrupted mankind. As Adam and Eve's descendants, we inherited a sinful nature (Rom. 5:12).

The Lord's permissive will allowed events to unfold as they have. God did not create evil, but He has permitted it to exist and uses it to accomplish His good purposes (Isa. 45:6-7).

When you have questions or doubts about the Lord's sovereignty, start with what you do understand, study what God has revealed about Himself and His ways, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you believe. A few answers to your questions will come quickly, while some will require diligent study and spiritual maturity. As for the answers to other questions, which God has chosen to keep hidden, we are to walk by faith (Deut. 29:29).

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