

# HANDLING GUILT

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## Counsel from the Scriptures

<sup>1</sup> Oh, what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! <sup>2</sup> Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! <sup>3</sup> When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. <sup>4</sup> Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. <sup>5</sup> Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. <sup>6</sup> Therefore, let all the godly confess their rebellion to you while there is time; that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment. <sup>7</sup> For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory. <sup>8</sup> The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. <sup>9</sup> Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control." <sup>10</sup> Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD. <sup>11</sup> So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure! Psalm 32:1-11

## Following the Scriptures' Wisdom

The burden of guilt is one of life's most unbearable experiences. The load is made even heavier when the guilt is accompanied by shame. King David of Israel, although a man after God's own heart, was very much acquainted with both guilt and shame. However, in the passage above, he shares with us that there is a remedy for our guilt, no matter how great our fault or shortcoming. It is extremely beneficial to discern the difference between feelings of condemnation and a sense of conviction. Condemnation comes from our adversary, the devil. He is the accuser of the saints and he sends condemnation upon us in order to keep us in a state of alienation from God and separation from His will for our lives. Conviction, on the other hand, although painful, comes from a loving God. He sends it in order to lead us to reconciliation with Himself and so that we can enjoy the benefits of His grace and mercy. Grace is God's unmerited favor; it is God giving us the good things that we do not deserve and have not earned. Mercy is God withholding from us the penalty and punishment that we do deserve. Only by learning and applying the wisdom that comes from the Scriptures can we handle guilt in a way productive and beneficial.

David reveals that **few things in life match the joy of becoming a recipient of God's grace and mercy.** (1-2)

- He speaks of the joy of having our rebellion forgiven.
- He speaks of the joy of having our sins put out of sight.
- He speaks of the joy of having our record cleared of sin.

David reveals that **complete honesty is the only way to become a recipient of God's grace and mercy.** (2-6)

- He speaks of the agony that we experience when we refuse to confess our sins to God.
  - We are *weak and miserable*.
  - We *groan all day long*.
  - We feel *God's hand of discipline heavy* on us *day and night*.
  - We see our *strength evaporated like water in the summer heat*.
- He speaks of the forgiveness that we experience when we confess our sins to God.
  - When we *confess our sins*, God *forgives us*.
  - When we *stop trying to hide our sins*, God removes our *guilt*.
  - When we *confess our rebellion in time*, God delivers us from *the floodwaters of judgment*.

David reveals that **there are many benefits of becoming a recipient of God's grace and mercy.** (7-11)

- He speaks of God being our *hiding place*.
- He speaks of God *protecting us from trouble*.
- He speaks of God *surrounding us with songs of victory*.
- He speaks of God *guiding us along the best pathway of our lives*.
- He speaks of God *advising us and watching over us*.
- He speaks of God *surrounding us with His unfailing love*.
- He speaks of God being the source and center of our *joy*.