

## The Guilt Trap

*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken. (Isaiah 1:18-20)*

Guilt and shame are difficult emotions, and while they both relate to an awareness of wrongdoing, they can differ in their results. Guilt is often associated with specific actions and typically linked to a desire to seek forgiveness. Shame on the other hand, is more generalized often with feelings of worthlessness and self-blame, which can lead to periods of self-imposed isolation. Understanding these distinctions, especially within a religious setting is important, as moral principle, and latent peer-pressure can deepen feelings of guilt and shame.

So, why do we feel trapped and bound when Jesus said; *for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins ... (Matthew 26:28)* and when Paul writes,

*now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:18)*

With no more offering, thanks to the perfect sacrifice of Christ, why do we continue to burden ourselves with accountability, and what is its cause?

The traditional stance on original sin sees guilt as a fundamental human condition, where mankind is naturally flawed and in continual need of redemption. Guilt, therefore, serves as a motivator for constant repentance, a predominant feature of Christian belief. However, when guilt develops into shame, it can lead to a deep and persistent sense of personal disgrace, often resulting in spiritual paralysis, and isolation from God and fellowships. And due to original sin being a cornerstone of church teaching, there will always be feelings of guilt, shame and doubt, no matter what we do.

Feelings of guilt can also create a process of bargaining; that if we give up something we want, or promise to stop this or that sin, Jesus will look kindly upon me in the end. But, Satan's insidious working in the law continues to shape our thinking; there's no escaping, and he would be thrilled if you actually believed his yarn.

The guilt trap is exactly what it implies; a snare for those who doubt the LORD'S promise granted in Christ through Redemption. So which is greater our sin or the Blood, and while it may appear very real, guilt and shame pertaining to sin, is nothing more than a free donation from the Father of Lies playing in your mind; a doctrine of devils destroying you from within.

Jesus said; *he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. (Matthew 24:13)* And Peter states; *who by His own self bore our sins in His own body on a tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you are healed. (1Peter 2:24)* Therefore, sin's debt is annulled; and the LORD has said He will remember them no more. So, it's time to believe, and it's time to rest.

Now, there's something hidden in Scripture you might not have seen; and it may help you to find your Rest in Christ. And this happened before the foundation of the world, even before the sun and the moon, or when Adam and Eve walked in the Garden of the LORD'S creation.

*And those dwelling on the earth will marvel, those whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (Rev 17:8) (MKJV)*

This speaks of those, living under the strong delusion mentioned by Paul in 2Thessalonians; and of those who have taken the mark of unbelief, found in the Book of Revelation, rejecting the Good News of Christ, preferring 'another gospel' and the things of this world.

Our key to this Scripture is the word *not*: "names 'not' already written" which means the LORD has previously justified true believers before the earth was formed and creation began. It is not about predestination, but more correctly the LORD'S foreknowledge, through which He gave these details to the Apostle John, to whom He gave His final revelation and witness.

The Apostle Paul, called by Jesus after His Resurrection, was also given insight into these matters. Near the end of his letter to the church at Philippi, he wrote: *I beg Euodia and Syntyche that they are of the same mind in the Lord. And I also entreat thee true yoke-fellow, help those women who laboured with me in the gospel, and with Clement, and with others of my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the 'Book of Life.'* Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, Rejoice. (Php 4:2-4)

So, Paul, independent of John wrote of the Book of Life, mentioning the names of several fellow-workers known to the God before they were born. Knowing this, we can now see how doubt and self-blame can only ruin our time on earth. And while Satan attacks our mind, Jesus has saved our spirit and life in Him, *as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (1Co 15:50)* And as Solomon wrote, our bones return to the earth and *the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Ecc 12:7)*

His work is finished and so has ours. There is no reason for guilt or shame as Eve's sin of unbelief no longer has hold of us. While others might have you think otherwise as a means of control over your thoughts and actions; in the Faith of Jesus, we find redemption, and peace. He knew you before the foundation, and gave you a place in His Kingdom before you drew breath. Amen.

When writing to the Church at Ephesus, Paul declared, One LORD one faith one baptism. It is a Statement of Faith, and a statement to live by. In living this truth, the LORD has known you since the beginning and written you in His Book. There is nothing more we can add to His eternal love for each and every one us, than our gratitude, praise and glory, every single day...

In love and peace as always,

James