

# Guilt & Regret: How to Overcome

## *Part 5: Making Things Right with Others*

(preached 8/18/24)

Please turn to *Matthew 5:21-24*.

### LAST WEEK:

- Beating oneself up is our attempt to be Jesus: to pay for our own sins and silence the voice of our conscience.
- We're trying to shed our own blood—whether physically or spiritually—because we know that “blood” is the only payment our conscience will accept.
- It never works though because we aren't qualified. We're not Jesus!
- We're not the Lamb of God Who was the perfect blood sacrifice.
- We're not the Divine High Priest to present the offering either.
- All self-condemnation does is feed a vicious and ungodly cycle where we're slaves to a guilty conscience—like an abusive and dysfunctional relationship.
- Let Jesus be Jesus: He was the One Who was Wounded, Bruised, Chastised, & Beaten.
- HE carried our sorrows (for sin) and bears our griefs (at our own failures).
- He's the only One qualified to!
- When we step into His Light He's NOT another angry, finger wagging voice...but wants to take the guilt and shame we've been enduring FROM us.
- We ended with Romans 8: there no more condemnation for those in Christ Jesus!

TODAY we end the sermon series with the last piece of the puzzle to cleanse our consciences and be free of guilt, shame, and regret.

## **WE MUST RECONCILE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE ANGRY WITH US.**

*I sat down yesterday morning to begin type this sermon up* and the Holy Spirit partnered with my conscience and brought something to my attention for about the 10<sup>th</sup> time this week: someone I've known for a long time was had something against me. Early last week I said something to him I shouldn't have: something offensive that I blurted out before thinking. He got very angry and hung up on me. My conscience immediately quoted Matthew 5:

**[Mat 5:21-24 ESV]** 21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. **23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has**

something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

***I waited one day and tried calling the fellow back:*** he didn't pick up. His wife texted me and I apologized to her and asked her to extend my contrition to him...but my conscience responded "*not good enough. You must speak directly to him and apologize.*" As of yesterday morning when I sat down to type up today's sermon, I had not yet tried calling him again. The Holy Spirit said "don't you think it's a good idea for you to actually DO what you're about to preach before you share it with everyone?"

He was right...He always is. So I called the fellow, and he picked up immediately...and we reconciled. **I asked for his forgiveness and he granted it, praise God.**

**Hatred is defined when we stop the flow of the Holy Spirit inside of us off from another person.**

- The Holy Spirit wants to forgive through us and we refuse.
- The Holy Spirit is telling us to ask for forgiveness and we don't.
- The Holy Spirit wants us to be generous through us, but we won't.

Too many times here in modern America **I see more and more self-**

**isolation.** People cutting others out of their lives forever to "maintain their peace." I'm not saying there aren't times when this is necessary, but both in and out of the church people are doing this more quickly and easily than I've seen in my lifetime. I see very little effort at reconciliation.

**Let's go through the verses above** so we truly understand what Jesus is telling us.

- Being angry with and insulting another—especially another Christian—is bad.
- Jesus said so.
- When we're angry and insulting to another, our relationship with that person has gone sour like milk left in the summer heat.
- We're not talking with that person, not spending time with them, not connected.
- We've cut them off.

VERSES 23-24 is where we need to go deeper into OC teaching to properly understand what Christ is telling us.

In the OC **when the Temple was still standing**, you brought an offering—a "gift"—to the Temple and presented it to the Priests there. Depending on why you were there the "gift" could be one of several things: a pigeon, lamb, goat, bull, grain, or money.

**If you were to atone for your personal sins an animal worked best.** You would enter the temple and approach a fiery altar...like a BBQ grill. You would give your animal to the priest who would then slit its throat, sprinkle its blood on the hot altar, then throw its entire body on the same altar where it would burn up. Then the priest turned to you and said “God has forgiven your sins, go in peace and sin no more.”

**THIS WAS A REGULAR PRACTICE AMONG THE ISRAELITES** of Jesus’ day and His audience had done this many times in their lives since childhood. So here’s what he’s telling them in modern terms: *“next time you ask God to forgive you, and you realize someone else needs to forgive you, go and make things right with them FIRST. Then come back and seek the same from God.”*

**Sometimes we get this backwards.** We change the verse and the meaning to: we need to forgive someone else. NO.

We’re approaching the fiery altar in humility, knowing that we’ve sinned against God, and **pleading with Him to forgive.**

**JESUS IS SAYING WE MUST DO THE SAME TO SOMEONE OFFENDED WITH US.**

The other person represents a Temple priest that we’re bringing a “gift” to who has the power to forgive.

**Our consciences will never be cleansed until we begin seeking out the people we’ve hurt and ask them to forgive us.**

**When we pridefully refuse to do this, our consciences will remain guilty, defiled, ashamed, and will condemn us.**

*What would the church look like if, instead of walking up to someone and saying “I forgive you” we approached the same person and said “will you please forgive me?”*

With some rare exceptions, **there's usually sin going both ways in a conflict situation.**

When I was 50 years old I heard one of the most amazing sermon series I'd ever heard. I can't recall the title, but it was about **our relationships with our human fathers.** When I first started the series, my goal was to FINALLY forgive my dad once and for all!

**I was frustrated because it seemed like I'd forgiven him over and over**...but hurt, anger, and offense would rear their ugly heads every time I dwelled on the past.

**SO I TRIED TO GET MYSELF TO STOP DWELLING ON THE PAST.** I spoke to myself and said *"all that is under the blood, Scott, stop getting upset!"* But I couldn't. I kept mulling over the things dad had done and said over the years to hurt me and the affect it had on me at present.

*So I started listening to this sermon series to find the solution.* And when I found it, I was stunned. What was the magic pill that finally relieved my conscience? Made it feel as though true payment had been made?

**It was when I asked my dad to forgive me.**

The preacher in the sermon series made a statement that almost made me wreck the car I was driving. I'd been driving for hours and was listening to the CD in the car. Then the preacher said **"it's not just your parents who have sinned against you, you have sinned against your parents (and others, especially authority figures). You have done and said things to hurt them."**

**MY SELF-CONVICTION WAS SO BAD THAT I STARTED TO CRY WHILE DRIVING.** My tears were so intense my vision was blurry and I pulled over right on the highway to clear my eyes. Why? *It was the first time in my life I'd ever considered that I'd hurt dad.* Sinned against him.

**I spent decades dwelling on the sins he'd done to me and being angry.** I'd tried "forgiving" him over and over but it never worked. Why not?

**I clearly didn't value my relationship with him strongly enough to realize I had hurt him too...**and needed to do something about it.

*How deep is any relationship where we don't care enough about someone else to realize our affect on them?* How we may have offended them? Isn't it a sign of a Godly connection if we are aware of this and attempt to reconcile?

**The more we dwell on how others have hurt us, the more blind we become to having done the same to them.**

In my car and bawling, I pulled over on the side of the road under a bridge. I was reliving things **I'd done and said to dad for decades that had broke his heart**, frustrated him, and made him feel like a failure as my father. I had hurt him, over and over.

**A couple days later I was driving through the farm and saw him sitting outdoors** near his RV at the pond. I pulled in, knelt down next to him, and began to spill my guts. In the end I asked him to forgive me and he did. You wanna know what happened next? **NOT ONLY DID A BIG WEIGHT COME OFF MY SPIRITUAL SHOULDERS BUT HIS TOO.**

**I realized in that moment there was an overarching "tension" hanging over our relationship that I'd learned to "manage" from my end.** Not always so well.

And now, for the first time in years, that was...**GONE**. I could see it on him too.

**It my efforts to manage this dark cloud** above our heads, I convinced myself I'd never be close to dad. That made me sad, because when I was a kid I felt lots of love for him and sought his attention. Thus I didn't speak to him much, didn't reach out, and avoided him.

BUT GOD! In the last few years of his life, though, ***Dad and I were closer than we had been since I was a kid.*** The very last year of his life we went to see him in FL. I would sit next to him on the couch at night and hold his hand like I did when I was a kid. He didn't just "let" me, he would squeeze my hand with what little strength he had left.

## **WE HAVE TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE SOMETHING AGAINST US, SAINTS.**

- We need to go to them in humility—which is our “gift” and “offering”—and ask them to forgive us.
- If we don’t, the circle will never be complete and we’ll live with a corrupt conscience.

*Going back to what Jesus said:* did you see that when we’re in this state of anger toward someone we’re **“in danger of the council”** and “hellfire”? The “council” was the Sanhedrin: a group of the most powerful priests in the land who stood in judgment over the people. When you were guilty of a crime, you were brought before the Sanhedrin who judged you and passed sentence if you were guilty. Said council would also give all guilty parties a stern “dressing down” verbally in the attempt to make the person feel guilty and repentant.

**Our conscience is our Sanhedrin.** When we don’t make things right with someone who has something against us it accuses, renders a guilty verdict, and gives us a “dressing down.” We’ve already talked about how this torment can make us feel like were living in the fires of Hell.

**[2Co 5:16-19 ESV]** 16 From now on, therefore, **we regard no one [fellow bro or sis in Christ] according to the flesh.** Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

If your conscience is bringing someone up to you right now, then let me say: **cutting that person off hasn’t worked. It hasn’t made the payment.**

As Paul states in 2 Cor: **we have been given the MINISTRY of reconciliation which manifests in 2 ways: reconciliation with God...and with others.**

# PRAY