

Guilt and Grace: A Gospel Fresh Start

By Jane Reinheimer



Opening: Oh Lord, I know that You are everywhere in the universe. There are times when I feel Your presence around me in a comforting embrace. This is especially needed when feelings of guilt plague me and make me feel so unworthy of Your love and forgiveness. Like David in **Psalm 51:1–3**, I echo his thoughts: *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.* David later says in **Psalm 130:4**: *But with you there is forgiveness.* Let Your Holy Spirit guide this study of Your Word, revealing to us our guilt and Your Gospel promise of forgiveness.

Guilt and grace are tied together.

Guilt silently points a finger at our peace of mind. Some say all this finger-pointing is conviction. Some say it's our conscience that gets annoyed when we don't behave according to the rules. No matter what you call it ... no matter how you describe it ... guilt is haunting. Its origin: the breaking of God's Law. The Law convicts us in our sin.



It separates us from God. We would drown in the waters of guilt if the heavenly Father did not reach out with His grace and love-made-flesh in the birth, death, and resurrection of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. (**Galatians 4:4–7**)

Guilt is a mixture of fear and shame.

Fear and shame collide and drag us into guilt. Read **Genesis 2:25**. Prior to the fall into sin, how did Adam and Eve

respond to each other's nakedness? In **Genesis 3:7**, what happened that made them make clothing for themselves?

In **Isaiah 28:18-19**, what does God say about the covenant with death? And the agreement with the grave? What is it about this message in **verse 19** that causes fear so great that it is terrifying? What instruction did Adam and Eve break? (See **Genesis 3:3**.) The instruction they broke was only not to eat from the fruit of the tree. Eve's adding that they were not to touch was actually adding to the Word of the Lord, which is also sinful.

In **Genesis 3:10**, how does Adam describe what he is feeling? Read **Genesis 3:14-23**. What were the consequences? How did the Lord still provide care and compassion to Adam and Eve in the midst of consequences?

Read **Hebrews 10:29**. What do we learn about deserved punishment with regard to how a person treats the Son of God? What does this verse say about the blood of the covenant? And about the Spirit of grace? How does **verse 31** recall the experience of Adam and Eve?

What do we learn about God's treatment of the guilty?

Read **Jeremiah 50:20** and **Psalms 103:11-12**. How does this match your treatment of persons who have wronged you? Recall a time when you demonstrated grace to others in your life.

The fresh start begins now.

According to **John 1:10-13**, what is needed to do to become a child of God? Is there an end to the blessings of God's grace? (See **John 1:16**.) How much grace is God willing to shower upon you, a sinner? (See **Romans 5:20**.) What do you need to do to claim God's grace? [Trick question!] Do you ever fall into the trap of thinking that you need to do something?

When you confess your shameful moments of sin, do you need to fear God? According to **2 Thessalonians 3:16**, how often does the Apostle Paul say peace is available to us and in what way?

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, I thank You that because of what Jesus did for me on the cross, You wash my guilt away, lift the burden of fear and shame from me, and give me a fresh start. In grace, I receive Your forgiveness of all my sins. I rejoice in my blood-bought inheritance as Your child. I pray that You would keep me focused on Your Word and reassured that where You walk with me, I am safe. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Jane Reinheimer is president of the Effingham/Shelby Zone in Central Illinois District. She is an active member of LWML/Ladies Aid at Faith Lutheran Church, Shumway, Illinois, where her husband, Quint, is head elder.