

Doctrine of Guilt

What Do You Do With Guilt?

1. Martin Luther was a man driven by guilt. After entering the Augustinian monastery in order to become a priest, Luther would spend hours confessing his sins to his Confessor as a novice.
2. On one occasion he was asked if he loved God. Luther confessed that, rather than love God, there were times he hated God, because he viewed God as someone coming to get him and drag him to hell. God was a condemning God.
3. What do people do when they are guilty?
 - Some people deny they have done anything wrong.
 - Some people suppress their guilt. They hold the truth down.
 - Some people dismiss their guilt. Like Scarlet in *Gone with the Wind*, whenever she does something bad, she will think about it tomorrow. For now, there will be no thoughts of guilt, and no feelings of shame and remorse.
 - Some people shift responsibility to others, as Adam and Eve did.
 - Some people rationalize their transgression, as Joseph Fletcher suggested in situational ethics.
 - Some people engage in self-abuse to punish themselves by flagellation, or self-mutilation.
 - Some people become very religious. They join a convent, or enter into a monastery. They become a hermit to avoid temptation. They go on a religious pilgrimage.
 - Some people buy forgiveness for their sins by purchasing an indulgence.
 - Some people go insane, in order to escape the reality of what they have done.
 - Some people become angry, and lash out at the world. They hate anyone and everyone. They are suspicious, and hold people at a distance. They feel betrayed and destined for destruction. But the fault is not in the stars, but in ourselves, that we are humans.
4. The Fallen soul of man has normal escape mechanism to protect itself from shame.
5. The Biblical solution to guilt is found in Holy Scripture.
 - *1 Corinthians 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

- *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
6. To stand in self judgement is to embrace honestly one's shame and guilt. When the prophet said to David, "Thou art the man", David replied, "I am the man, and my guilt is ever before me."
 7. By acknowledging our shame and guilt, confession can be made, forgiveness can be received, and the grace of God experienced. Then, the past can be forgotten.