

The pastor woke up Sunday morning and realizing it was a beautiful and sunny early spring day, decided he just had to play golf. So he told the associate pastor that he was feeling sick and convinced him to preach for him that day. As soon as the associate pastor left the room, the pastor headed out of town to a golf course about forty miles away. He knew he wouldn't accidentally meet anyone he knew from his church.

Setting up on the first tee, he was alone. After all, it was Sunday morning, and everyone else was in church! At about this time, Saint Peter leaned over to the Lord while looking down from heaven and exclaimed,

"You're not going to let him get away with this, are you?" The Lord sighed, and said, "No, I guess not." Just then the pastor hit the ball, and it shot straight towards the pin, dropping just short of it, rolled up and fell into the hole. IT WAS A 435 YARD HOLE IN ONE! Saint Peter was astonished. He looked at the Lord and asked,

"Why did you let him do that?" The Lord smiled and replied,

"Who's he going to tell?"

Why couldn't the pastor share this good news? Because he knew he did something wrong. He must feel guilty.

Guilt is that terrible, horrible feeling we get when we have done something wrong. When guilt left unchecked, it can lead to the development of a negative self-image. Many people in our world carry around a heavy load of guilt and shame everywhere they go. Sins and failures from the past consistently accuse and condemn them, dragging them down and mercilessly stealing their joy and peace. Could that be true of you? Do you struggle with guilt?

In our New Testament reading, we saw Saul who felt guilty. As you read, Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest any who belonged to “the Way,” meaning those who followed Christ. All of a sudden, a brilliant light flashed all around him. Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

Saul thought he knew who God was and what God wanted, but he realized he did something wrong at this moment. It is sure that he felt guilty. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 Paul said, “For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

How did Paul feel about what he did against God doing? How did Paul deal with his guilt? He continued to say in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am.” Because God was so gracious, so very generous, I am forgiven. He reminded himself that Christ had forgiven him, totally and completely. Then he reached out to those he had hurt and sought their forgiveness.

To be sure, many people who struggle with guilt have asked God to forgive them repeatedly. The problem is they can’t seem to break free of the guilty feelings. In a word, they seem to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. If you can relate to feeling like this, I have good news! God doesn’t want you to live another day consumed with guilt! You might say, “But pastor, you have no idea what I’ve done!” You’re right. I don’t know what you did. However, it doesn’t matter what you and I have done. All that matters is what Jesus has done to deal with those haunting sins.

If you are a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, there is not even a speck of condemnation on your ledger. The moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus, God declares you not guilty! When God looks at you, He doesn’t look at a long list

of sins. Instead, His attitude is, “I have already ruled on this person. Because they are in Christ, their sins have been paid in full.”

Roman 8:1 says: “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” God doesn’t want you to bury your shame-filled head in the sand and give up on seeking Him because you messed up so badly. Jesus knew that you and I would sin and fall short of His standard of perfection, but He died for us! He has risen for us! He lives among us! So when we turn away from our sins and ask for His forgiveness, He forgives entirely and forgets for eternity.

In Act 9:10 Jesus said to Paul, “But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” By God’s grace Paul began the guilt free living. He made it his goal to live for Christ every day, and not be controlled by his past.

If you truly know Jesus Christ, there is no longer any judgment against you. That is amazing and wonderful! So don’t be burdened by your guilt any longer. Give thanks to the Lord for taking away your sins, and believe God when He says there is no condemnation for you. Step forward into the wonderful world of the guilt-free living, live in the way Jesus taught you, and experience all the joy and peace God has planned for you.