

The Curse of Misplaced Guilt

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This summer I gave a sermon on the higher purpose of guilt. We looked at the lives of four apostles: Thomas, Peter, James and Paul. All of them had reason to feel great guilt over what they had done or not done, yet they didn't allow their guilt to destroy them. Rather, they used those feelings of guilt to propel them to serve God more fully, the point being that the purpose of guilt in our lives as Christians, is to motivate us to (a) acknowledge our sins (admit we have sins); and (b) repent of those sins and go forward and change our lives to be like Jesus Christ. So, we covered that whole process and why God gives us the gift of guilt.

However, there's another aspect of guilt that we need to look at today, and that is the subject of misplaced guilt. The first thing we want to do is define what we're talking about. What is misplaced guilt?

Point 1: Misplaced guilt is the guilt we feel for the actions of others, but not our own actions.

It's the guilt we feel because somebody else has done something. We don't have anything to do with it. We didn't do it, but yet we feel guilty.

Let me give you some examples. It can happen on a national basis. Developed nations like the United States or Canada feel guilty because of the way we've been blessed. On television, we can see the grinding poverty in the world. There are earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, war and all the suffering that goes with all of that. We watch the devastation and suffering, and because of looking at that, we can feel guilty because we are not going through that right now as a nation. Still we have some vague feelings of guilt.

Another aspect is that nations can feel guilty of what their forefathers have done. I don't know if you've heard the term "white guilt," but it has been bandied about here lately. That is referring to the guilt of white people in the United States, because of what previous generations have done to minorities. As we all know, looking back in our history, we have plenty of examples of racial discrimination that have happened over the centuries, perpetrated by a white majority on various minority groups: black slaves, American Indians, and the list goes on. This continues to this day in some cases. The fact is that the nation can have a collective guilt about what has happened in the past and that motivates us, as a nation (our legislators and law makers) to do something about it. It is manifested in welfare policies, racial quotas and the like.

Another example is that individual adults can feel guilty because of things they have that others do not. We may feel guilty when we see a homeless man or woman on the street, and somehow, we feel guilty that we have and they don't.

Soldiers feel guilty because they came back from overseas. They survived and their buddies did not, or they came back whole and some of their buddies came back missing arms and legs. That is quite common.

Children can feel guilty because their parents are arguing or their parents divorced. That is extremely common. When I counsel people who are going through a divorce, one thing you want to make sure you do is talk to your children, because they will naturally feel guilty. Somehow, they feel it's their fault that Mom and Dad are fighting or Mom and Dad are separated.

You see, all of this is misplaced guilt. That means guilt that is placed where it doesn't belong. We should feel guilty, yes, for our own sins, but not for the sins of others. We should feel other things, but not guilt. For example, we should have compassion on those that suffer because of their sins. They don't know any better. God is not calling them, but they're suffering because of their sins. We should have compassion for them, but not guilt for their situation.

When you think about it, misplaced guilt is not at all logical. Why should we feel guilty over something we have no control over? Despite all this, misplaced guilt permeates society, and in many cases, permeates the church.

Those are some examples and a rough definition of misplaced guilt.

Point 2: Misplaced guilt results in harm to those who feel that guilt.

If we have guilt over something we have not done and have no control over, that can cause us harm.

The first time we spoke on guilt, we established the fact that guilt is for our sins. That's proper, and it motivates us to repentance. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 7. Paul is talking about feeling sorry, and we feel sorry because we have guilt. Notice the end result.

2 Corinthians 7:9. *Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry [yes, you had the guilt], but that you sorrowed to repentance ... (KJV)*

The guilt, the sorrow caused you to do something, and that was to repent.

9b) ... for you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might receive damage by us in nothing. (KJV)

The guilt made them feel sorry, they sorrowed to repentance, the repentance caused them to change and to not sin again.

Now let's turn to Matthew 3:8. Christ is talking to the Pharisees. He is telling the Pharisees that they had something to do because of their sins, because of their violation of God's law and their hypocrisy.

Matthew 3:8. Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance (NKJV)

He is saying you should bear fruit (behave in such a way) that demonstrates you have repented. The fact is, you see, our guilt leads us to repentance and then we bring forth fruits of change, and that shows God that we've actually repented.

However, misplaced guilt is guilt over something we haven't done. Therefore, since we haven't done it, how can we repent of something we haven't done? Because of that, it can cause a great deal of pain and suffering. We can never deal with the cause of this misplaced guilt because we haven't sinned. We haven't done anything wrong in that regard. How can we bring forth fruits of repentance when there's nothing to be repented of? How can we change when there's nothing to change? It puts us in a conundrum, and we're just going in circles. There's nothing to change, nothing to repent of because the guilt we feel is for what others have done, nations or individuals.

Satan can use misplaced guilt to burn up our guilt reserves. If we're feeling guilty all the time over this thing and that thing and what others have done, then there's nothing left for something that we really should feel guilty about, which is our own sins. We don't want to get into a situation where we allow Satan to fill us with misplaced guilt, and then we lose sight of the fact that we have sinned and we don't have the reserves to have the real guilt that we should.

Let me read a couple of sentences from a PhD who has written extensively about this. Her name is Leslie Becker Smith. I quote:

People sometimes relate extremely well to someone else's pain and feel guilty for not alleviating it, even when they didn't cause the pain and it's not their responsibility to fix. They get unnecessarily tied up in knots with their distress.

I think most of us in the church do that. We have compassion for someone else's pain, but we don't have any control over it. Yet sometimes we can feel guilty, it ties us up in knots and causes us problems.

So, this second point is that misplaced guilt can cause great harm if we allow it to come into our lives, if we allow it to dominate our thinking.

Point 3: Misplaced guilt often results in harm to those who are the object of our guilt.

That sounds almost counterintuitive, but it's a fact as we will demonstrate. Sometimes we have misplaced guilt and those who are the object of that guilt can be done great harm. Often the actions of misplaced guilt cause harm to others, more harm than good.

In some cases, it is catastrophic damage to the very people that were intended to be helped.

Let me give you some examples. The past suffering of certain groups of people can invoke feelings in us of guilt and the notion that because of their past sufferings, decades ago, centuries ago, they deserve to have favored treatment somehow because of what happened to them in the past. This is put forward as a loving, compassionate idea that we're going to kind of make up for the bad things that happened to them in their past.

George W. Bush referred to this as "the soft bigotry of low expectations," when we lower expectations to do a group a "favor." I say that in quotes because of what happened to them in the past, he is saying that is a soft form of bigotry. History has shown that if you lower expectations, it is very often disastrous. Appeasing our national guilt is the cause of anti-poverty giveaways. It's the cause of affirmative action. It's the cause of racial quotas in schools of higher learning in admitting people and racial quotas in hiring, to offer favored status by lowering standards. It's also responsible, in part, for the homeless problem we have today. It's on the news. Seattle has a gigantic homeless problem; Vancouver, B.C. has a homeless problem, and in Victoria on the Island of Vancouver, there was a huge homeless problem. Part of it is due to the fact that the west coast has a mild climate, and homeless people tend to gravitate from places in the Midwest or the east coast that are cold and snowy to come to the west coast where the climate is very mild. I'm going to use Victoria as an example. As a result, homeless people began migrating into the city of Victoria. They would pitch tents in parks or sleep in the entryways to businesses. In some cases, they would camp on somebody's front lawn. This created great problems, and over a period of months, the residents of the city complained to the police, and the police were hamstrung. What happened is the city passed an ordinance that you can't pitch a tent on city property.

The homeless people were, I think, maybe advised by others that you could pitch a tent on federal government property. Somebody got the wise idea that there's a beautiful lawn in front of the federal courthouse in Victoria, and word got out, and suddenly tents showed up on the lawn of the federal courthouse. It wasn't long before the tents were about one or two inches apart and covered that whole area. Soon that beautiful lawn was turned to mud mixed with feces. There was trash and needles all over the place, there were drugs in this camp, and rapes and fights. They even had a murder. Disease ran through the camp and there was a rat infestation. You can imagine the plight of the neighbors. They're walking their kids down the sidewalks or their kids are going to school and little toddlers going to daycare. Some drug addicts and drunks were interacting, and it just created a furor.

Someone got the wise idea to go in there and see who these people are, and they did. They interviewed just about everybody. They found out that, as we can understand, a certain percentage of them were homeless not by choice. They lost their business or they lost their job and then they lost their house and then they lost their car. Maybe they got sick, and as a result, they were homeless. They wanted to get out of this and

be productive citizens. What was the percent of the total number of homeless people in that area that wanted to get out? It was only seventeen percent. They surveyed the majority that wanted to stay homeless and found that many of them don't want to work. Others don't want responsibilities. They don't want people telling them what to do, where to go, when to go to bed, when to get up. They want to be free to do whatever they want to do, but at the same time they want to be fed and they want medical care, and they want to be able to pitch their tent wherever they want to. Many of them wanted drugs and alcohol provided.

This was caused, you see, by a lot of misplaced guilt in the area. You could read letters to the editor that, "Oh, we've got to do something about these people. We should just let them be there." Those sentiments were because of misplaced guilt.

Let me read an essay from Dr. Thomas Sowell. He's been a professor at several ivy league universities. He is African-American. He writes about issues that affect the black community. This was written in February 1984. The title is Compassion Versus Guilt. Notice what he has to say. I quote:

Many of our attempts to share good fortune with others, at home and abroad, have undermined those very efforts, standards and values that make that good fortune possible.

Notice this:

Trying to ease our own guilt feelings is very different from trying to advance those less fortunate.

Then he gets a bit sarcastic.

Deep thinkers who look everywhere for the mysterious causes of poverty, ignorance, crime and war need look no further than their own mirrors.

That is a Godly principle.

We are all born into this world poor and ignorant and with thoroughly selfish and barbaric impulses. Those of us who turn out any other way do so largely through the efforts of others who civilized us before we got big enough to do much damage in the world ourselves.

Referring to parents, of course.

But, for those efforts, we might well be on welfare or in the penitentiary. We owe gratitude for those efforts, but not guilt for those who did not get them. We certainly cannot make it up to those without values by easing standards, or letting them become a burden and a threat to others. This is buying a good conscience or a good image with an I.O.U. to be paid by somebody else.

Those who want to share their good fortune can share the sources of that good fortune, the skills, the values, the discipline that mean productivity.

Those who want to ease their burden of guilt should seek professional help at their own expense and not make policy at everyone else's expense.

He is a smart man. Our country and Canada also has suffered from that. You see, most welfare programs give no incentive to work, no incentive to develop a skill. They just throw money at the problem and it makes the lawmakers feel less guilty. It makes the intelligentsia feel less guilty because at least they're doing something. But my point is, it does great harm.

I don't know if you remember Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He is deceased. He was a very liberal Democrat. He was a U.S. senator from 1977 – 2001. In his early days in the senate, he championed federal giveaways to the poor, but in his later years he came to see that as an error. Here are two quotes from him.

Somehow, liberals have been unable to acquire from life what conservatives seemed to be endowed with from birth, namely a healthy skepticism of the powers of government agencies to do good.

Now this is a senator! Going on.

The steady expansion of welfare programs can be taken as a measure of the steady disintegration of the Negro family structure over the past generation in the United States, because if you throw money at a problem, there is no incentive to get out of the problem.

He finally came to realize that in the last years of his life and being a senator. You know, that old adage is true; give a man a fish and he will be hungry tomorrow. Teach a man to fish and he will be full tomorrow and every day thereafter.

So, this is what we've seen so far. Misplaced guilt is guilt we feel for somebody's actions. Misplaced guilt, if we allow it to come into our mind, into our psyche, misplaced guilt can do harm to us. Also, as we've just seen, misplaced guilt can do harm to those who are the object of our misplaced guilt.

From this point on, let's see what we have to do to avoid this pitfall.

Point 4: We must realize that we cannot feel guilty over something we had nothing to do with.

That sounds logical, but we've all had guilt over things that we've had nothing to do with. As I said earlier, children should not feel guilty about their parents' divorce.

Soldiers should not feel guilty because they came home from war and their buddies did not.

Misplaced guilt, if it's not resolved, will ruin a person's life from that point on. There's plenty of evidence of that. Soldiers have committed suicide over misplaced guilt. It's gotten that bad.

Let's give an example. We all feel sorry for the poor. Along the Yakima River, sometimes you can see homeless people camping. Your heart goes out to them, and you wish there was something you could do about it. But the fact is, the poor exist and have always existed. It's not something we should feel guilty about. We can feel compassion. We can feel sorry for them, but we should not feel personal guilt about that. Notice what Christ says in Matthew 26. Christ understood this. He understood that this is Satan's world and it was not His world at the time He said this, and it certainly isn't His world today.

Matthew 26:11. *For you have the poor always with you ... (KJV)*

That is a fact. The poor are always with you. He was chiding His disciples, saying:

11b) ... but me you have not always. (KJV)

He was telling them, "I'm not going to be here forever."

In this life, we can't change the fact that, no matter what happens, there will always be poor. We can't change that fact. Yes, we should have love for them and compassion, but we should not feel personally guilty. That is misplaced guilt.

We need to realize today, which we do in God's church, but sometimes we lose sight of it, the evil going on in the world is a result of what happened in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve decided they wanted to chart their own way. They did not want to listen to God, and God said, "Okay, if that's what you want to do, you will receive what you want, and this is going to be your world and it's going to be dominated by the serpent that was just talking to you, and you will suffer as a result."

Let's turn to Amos 2:4. God is talking to Judah, but Judah is typical at this point of all humanity. Everything that He says to Judah applies to all humans who have lived since the days of Adam and Eve.

Amos 2:4. *Thus says the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four ... (KJV)*

That's a Hebrew idiom emphasizing, when they say three or four, or six to seven, it increases the gravity of what is about to be said.

4b) ... I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the ETERNAL, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked: (KJV)

We live in a nation and a world of lies, because they lie about the existence of God. They lie about following God. They lie about the existence of Satan. God knew the fact that their fathers walked in this, and then their children walked in this.

This is a commandment talking about idolatry, but there's a principle that God gives us here.

Exodus 20:3. You shall have no other gods before me. (KJV)

It's a plain and simple statement.

4) You shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

5) You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, [here's the principle] visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (KJV)

This principle is that if the parents are going against God as Adam and Eve did, they will teach their children, and those children will teach their children, and it passes on down. We're at the end of six thousand years of that principle being in effect. In this life, we cannot change that. We're in a world of sin. It's passed on from generation to generation, and it's getting worse with each generation. Only Christ's return will change it. We can have sorrow. We can have compassion and love about what is going on, but we should not have personal guilt over that.

The point is that love should motivate us, not guilt. That's a very important point. We can't be motivated by guilt over things we have no control over.

We should be motivated by guilt over our own sins, yes, but we cannot allow misplaced guilt to motivate us. We should have love, not the appeasement of our guilt.

Point 5: We cannot allow others to assign guilt to us.

What do I mean by assign guilt? We say today, "put a guilt trip on you." Some people get very good at that. They put a guilt trip on us, and they do so to make us do what they want us to do. They make us feel guilty so we do what they want.

Let me give you an example. This goes back several years. A church member from outside our area called and wanted some counsel, and over time, I found out that this member had been terminated from several jobs. As I further looked into it, this person

couldn't get along with this boss or with that boss, couldn't get along with the coworkers, had an argument here, threatened to sue this boss or that boss, and was terminated in all cases. So, that came out over time. Then because this person could not hold down a job, this person began to approach the church and say, "You have an obligation to support us who don't have jobs. You have an obligation to put food on my table and clothes on my back and give me money for my car and rent payments because I don't have a job," as though it's the church's responsibility to support this person for the rest of their life or at least until they can get a job, and the odds of this person getting a job were slim to none because they (a) showed no signs of acknowledging they had a problem or (b) doing nothing about the problem. There was an attempt to put a guilt trip on the church because of their deeds. That's what I mean by assigning guilt. They took the guilt that they should have over their actions and assigned it to a separate party, in this case, the church.

We find that to be a problem because of the scattered condition of the church. I'll give you another example. I received a call several years ago, from a lady. She had lost her job and had a bad investment and her car was going to be repossessed. She said, "I don't know if I can keep up my rent payments. Can you help me?" So, I made some phone calls to some pastors that I knew in that area and found out that this woman was doing the same thing to them. Then I called some others in different parts of the country and this woman is doing the same thing to them. In other words, she was calling around the country, thinking that because of the scattered condition of the church, nobody is talking to anybody and she could hit this group up for money and this other group for money, etc. If you do the math, somebody could make a nice living doing this. She was saying that she had so many health problems that she couldn't work, so she asked for money. She was calling brethren, ministers, church groups and making all feel guilty if they didn't send her money. That is assigned guilt.

Then, on top of that, when Pacific first started (we were young and naïve) we got emails, letters and occasionally from overseas, primarily Africa. They wanted to join hands with us in the furtherance of the gospel, and, "If you could only spare a little of your money so we can establish a church, and by the way, we have an orphanage and the children are starving and we really need money, like tomorrow. If you could wire us some money. By the way, if you'll make me the head of your operation in this particular African country, we can preach the gospel and do all of this stuff." I corroborated it by talking to other groups in the similar situation, and the attitude behind it is that, "You all in the western world are rich. We're poor. We are entitled to a little bit of your money, and if you don't send us money, we're going to make you feel guilty because of the poor and the starving" and all of that. We found out in many cases that it's just a charade. In the early days, someone asked for Bibles, so we sent a case of Bibles. We found out later that they were selling them on the street. They wanted DVDs and CDs, so okay, we sent those and found out that they were selling those. People just record over them and off they go. Again, this is assigned guilt that makes us do things that are not right for that other group.

In other words, we can't allow people to assign guilt to us. Some can keep assigning guilt to others for decades. I've seen that where adult children make their parents feel guilty. They bring up the fact that the parents made mistakes in their upbringing. "Do you remember what you did to me here? Because of the way you treated me, I had to drink just to make life sustainable. I got into drugs because of the way you treated me." The child feels entitled to mooch off the parents for the rest of their life, to move in with them and enjoy the lifestyle that their parents worked decades to get. The child feels they should have it because their parents weren't perfect. They can put an incredible guilt trip on the parents.

But that's not God's way. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 13:4. Assigning guilt to others to get what you want is not God's way. We can't allow that to happen.

We know this is the love chapter, and notice what we find.

1 Corinthians 13:4. *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5) does not behave rudely, does not seek its own ... (NKJV)*

This is important. Love isn't selfish, it isn't self-seeking.

4b) ... is not provoked ... (NKJV)

Notice these last three words.

4 continued) ... thinks no evil; (NKJV)

The Greek word for "thinks" is really interesting. It's Strong's 3049. "*Thinks no evil*" means *to take an inventory*. In the NIV and in the margin of the New King James, it says, *Love keeps no record of wrongs*.

In other words, if we have true love, we will not take an inventory of other people's wrongs. Therefore, when parents make mistakes or when children make mistakes, we can't hold it over their heads for the rest of their life, making them feel guilty for something they've probably repented of long ago. We must forgive and let go. We can't assign guilt to others. It's extremely unhealthy if we allow people to assign guilt to us. They are responsible for their own actions. We are not.

Point 6: Our motivation should be love and not appeasement of our misplaced guilt.

This is alluded to in what we just read in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. We should be motivated by love for the other person, but not motivated just to appease our misplaced guilt.

Let's turn to Matthew 22. Parallel accounts are in Mark, chapter 12 and Luke, chapter 10. This is the principle. We should be motivated by love.

Matthew 22:35. *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him [Christ] a question, tempting [testing] him, and saying,*

36) *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

37) *Jesus said unto him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul [life], and with all your mind.*

38) *This is the first and great commandment.*

39) *And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

40) *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (KJV)*

The commonality is love; love for God first, then love for our fellow man second. Mr. Armstrong talked about it for decades. His definition was that love is outgoing concern for others. He was absolutely true, as we just read in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is not selfish. It does not seek for the self.

Let's turn to Philippians 2:3. We've quoted this many times. Let's read it from the standpoint of misplaced guilt and what our motivation should be. Paul says:

Philippians 2:3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind [humility] let each ... (KJV)*

Here's the key.

3b) *... esteem others better than themselves. (KJV)*

As we just read in 1 Corinthians 13, love is always doing what is best for the other person. It's not necessarily what they want. It's not necessarily what we want, but it is what is best for them. As a minister, sometimes I'm put in the position of doing what I believe God wants me to do, what is best for them, and sometimes it's not what they want. They don't like it. It's not exactly necessarily what I would like to do in the sense of not creating problems for myself and fallout, but you have to do what is best for the individual. That is love.

But you see, guilt appeasement is for us. That's looking inward. I'm not talking about guilt that we deserve by our actions. If my motivation is to appease my misplaced guilt, that is selfish. I'm not doing what is best for them. I'm doing what's best for me.

Let me give you a true example of two people that I am familiar with. They were born with a potentially debilitating birth defect. They were born about the same time. I won't get into specifics for privacy reasons, but they were both born with identical potentially debilitating handicaps. The parents of the first child pushed that child to be independent. They held that child to the same standards as that child's brothers and sisters and to all the other kids you would normally hold standards for. In other words, the parents didn't cut the kid any slack because he had a handicap. So, this person

learned to overcome the handicap, and learned ways of coping with the handicap. As a result, forty years down the road, they raised a strong-willed achiever, a fully functioning member of society. This person went to college, has a well-paying job, drives his/her own car and fully takes care of their needs in every way. These two didn't know each other, but they were born within a few years of each other. The parents of the second child taught that child to be helpless from the day that child was born. In other words, they did everything for the child. They told themselves that they were being loving and they were sacrificing their lives in order to serve this handicapped child. So, forty years down the road, this child now is an adult and is essentially helpless and the parents are now getting in their sixties are doing everything for the child, the same things they did ten, twenty, thirty and forty years ago. In reality, the parents destroyed this child's life. Why? To appease their own sense of guilt that somehow it was their fault that their child was born with this horrible handicap. They felt guilty. The child's disability was their fault, so the way to appease their guilt was to wait on the child hand and foot and do everything for the child.

So, you see, misplaced guilt can be very destructive. It's an insidious thing. We have to be careful that our motivation is love and not the appeasement of guilt. The appeasement of guilt can masquerade as love and compassion, as we've seen. As a result, it's difficult for us sometimes to get hold of reality and realize that I'm appeasing my guilt. I'm not being motivated by love. We must be very careful of that.

In some cases, it's like an alcoholic admitting they have a drinking problem. So, love should be our motivation, not misplaced guilt.

Point 7: Misplaced guilt can cause us to become enablers of bad behavior.

As I said earlier, we can't allow people to assign guilt to us. Narcissists are good at assigning guilt. Alcoholics and drug addicts are experts at assigning guilt to other people, making it the other person's fault that they have a drinking problem or a drug problem, not being able to admit they can make mistakes. If we take on that assigned guilt, we become enablers of their bad behavior.

Let me give you a personal example about my mom and dad. Mom was a school teacher. She decided to go back to college and become a school teacher about the time my brother and I were graduating from high school. After we had left home, she continued to teach school. However, they hired a new principle at the grade school where she taught, and he was a bad guy. For whatever reason, he didn't like my mom and put incredible pressure on her. Every day was misery. My dad had grown up drinking since he was twelve. He abused alcohol. He wasn't an alcoholic, but he abused alcohol all his life. So, to get my mom to relax after she came home from school, he would fix her a highball, a mixed drink. Over time, one highball turned into two, and then two into three, and then she came home and drank until she went to sleep. My dad felt guilty because she became an alcoholic. He felt he had caused her to become an alcoholic in part because of the way he treated her earlier in their marriage. He was pretty rough on her and he was selfish. He later changed after she

became an alcoholic, but the fact is that he felt guilt. This is the illogical part. He would go out and buy her jugs of vodka because he felt guilty. He enabled her and her alcoholism. He provided her with alcohol until the day she died. We tried interventions, we tried talking and all that kind of stuff. We had the doctor talk to her, but it just never changed. She continued to drink and my dad provided the alcohol until she died. He became an enabler of her alcoholism. He became an enabler of her dysfunctional behavior because of his misplaced guilt. We have to be very careful about that. We can't become enablers.

Let me give you the most horrific example of being an enabler that I can think of where misplaced guilt lead to someone being an enabler. That is the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, CT. If you recall, it happened on December 14, 2012. Adam Lanza, age 20, on that day shot his mother, Nancy, in the head. He killed her and then marched over to the Sandy Hook Elementary School and he massacred twenty first graders and six educators before taking his own life. We need to look at the back story. How did it get to this point? How did this twenty-year-old guy get to this point? Adam Lanza was six feet tall and he weighed 112 pounds. He didn't eat much because he was obsessed with other things. He almost never left his bedroom and he never allowed his mother to come into the bedroom. After all this happened and the authorities went into that house, they found her dead, and then they began investigating. When they went into his bedroom, they found out that all the windows were blacked out with black sheet plastic, the ceiling and the walls were painted black. In that bedroom were stockpiled news articles about school shootings. The Columbine shooting occurred before that and there were others. He had grizzly photos of dead people covered in blood and wrapped in plastic. He had video games that allowed the user to role play as the shooter in a mass shooting. Those are out there and he had them. Before the shooting, he had well-diagnosed mental problems. Medical experts at Yale University, which was nearby, said that Lanza showed signs of, and I quote: "severe and deteriorating internalized mental health problems." This was before anything bad happened. Notice his mother's reaction to this diagnosis. She sought to appease her son. She was inclined to accommodate his mental illness rather than have him treated. So, what she allowed him to do, and this is quoting from the report after the shooting, she allowed him to "retain access to numerous firearms and high-capacity magazines in the home." On top of that, she took him to the firing range and watched him shoot and helped him learn how to shoot. In this, she became a gross enabler. Let me quote from Dr. Ford of Yale University. He said:

The Yale team offered a comprehensive approach to the Lanzas, but the family pulled away from that and did not work with the team (before the shooting) in part because Mrs. Lanza wanted to keep Adam sheltered. She didn't want to deal with the problem, and she felt misplaced guilt because of his mental problems.

Somehow, it's her problem. She caused it and he's this way. She felt that his problems were her fault, and she felt guilty as a result. He wanted to shoot guns, and she would take him to shoot guns. He wanted guns and she would buy guns. She became the ultimate enabler and look at the result, and it's all due to misplaced guilt.

We can't allow ourselves to become enablers of other's sins due to guilt that they heap on us, or we allow guilt to come our way.

Point 8: We need to accept responsibility for what we've done, but we cannot accept responsibility for what other people do.

That is not logical. We have grown a generation of narcissists in this country.

2 Timothy 3:1. *This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. 2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... (KJV)*

Narcissists, if you look at that situation, and I've had to deal with several, and one recently; they are experts for putting the blame for their failure on other people. They become experts at it. They don't accept responsibility for their actions. It is always somebody else's fault for their failures.

God says something totally opposite. Satan has turned this into a narcissistic world. It's all about me. It's all about my wants, my needs, and by the way, I'm perfect. I make no mistakes. It's this person's fault or that person's fault.

God's way is entirely different. Let's turn to Galatians 6. God doesn't cut us any slack when we screw up.

Galatians 6:7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. (KJV)*

We are responsible for our own actions, and we should have guilt because of our sins that should propel us to repent and to change.

8) For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (KJV)

We have to have the humility to look at ourselves and admit our own sins. We have to admit our sins and we have to confess them before God, because God knows. We can't hide anything from God. When we sin or screw things up really badly, we get down on our knees and repent. We acknowledge our sin, admit, get on our knees, repent of it, and then ask God for help in changing that.

But you see, other people can make us feel guilty for things they have done. They're not accepting responsibility for what they've done. We can't accept responsibility for what they've done. We have to accept responsibility for what we have done.

Maybe we raise a child that gets into trouble, perhaps drugs, alcohol, just a miserable life or whatever. We raised them as best we could, let's say. The fact that they got into trouble and they're making a mess of their life is their choice. Those are the choices

they made. We didn't make the choice. Were we perfect parents? Of course, not. But the fact is, at some point, we are all responsible for our actions, and we should not feel guilty or responsible for the actions of other people.

Frankly, in my life I've got so much I feel responsible for. The last thing I need is to take on responsibility for somebody else's actions. That is true for all of us.

So, this final point is that we have to take responsibility for what we've done. We are not responsible for what other people do.

Let's summarize. What have we seen so far? Looking back to the first sermon, we've seen that guilt is a gift from God. Guilt is not a pleasant feeling, but it's a gift from God because it leads us to repentance, it leads us to feel sorry for what we have done and the only way to absolve our guilt and wash our guilt away is to get down on our knees and repent and ask for the blood of Jesus Christ to wash away our sins, and hence, our guilt is washed away, and then we can begin the process of not repeating that sin again. Then we move on to changing our lives to become like Jesus Christ. That was the first sermon basically in a nutshell.

However, this sermon is about misplaced guilt, guilt that doesn't belong to us. Misplaced guilt, as I've said, is the guilt we feel for what other people have done, and that is totally illogical. It's guilt we feel over something we have not done, and it's guilt we feel for the actions of other people. Misplaced guilt can do horrible harm to us. Misplaced guilt can do horrible harm to those who are the objects of our misplaced guilt as we've talked about with government policies and plans, etc. We have to understand that with misplaced guilt, we have to be very careful that our actions are not motivated by appeasing our misplaced guilt. Our actions should be motivated by love for the other person, concern for the other person, compassion for the other person, but not guilt for what the other person has done.

Maureen Johnson is an author and she made this statement: "Guilt isn't always a rational thing." That's true. When we feel guilt for something we had no control over, that is not rational. Guilt isn't always a rational thing. Guilt is a weight that will crush you whether you deserve it or not.

So, how do we get rid of the guilt? If it's our sins we feel guilty about, we go through the process that I just described. We acknowledge our sin, we admit it before God, we repent, we ask for God's forgiveness, the blood of Jesus Christ to wash it away. Then we figure out how can we not repeat it again, and we ask for God's help in doing that.

But, you see, with misplaced guilt, you can't get out of that. It's guilt for what other people have done. So how do you deal with misplaced guilt when you haven't done anything? We haven't sinned. We have nothing to repent of, yet the guilt is there. For instance, that's what haunts soldiers coming back from war. They can't do anything about it, because it's nothing they have done. We can't get out of misplaced guilt, and it can cause great harm.

If you're like me, I have all the guilt I can handle over my own sins. The last thing I want is to take on somebody else's guilt for what they've done. My guilt jar is full because of what I have done and my sins and trying to deal with those and repent before God and not repeat them.

Therefore, we've got to be on guard against allowing misplaced guilt to come into our lives, because Satan is always there. Satan cannot only put thoughts in our head, he can put emotions inside us. In part, guilt is a thought, but it's also an emotion. We feel guilt, it is an emotion, and sometimes that will come in because of Satan broadcasting the way he does. He attempts to make us feel guilty over something we had no control over and we can't get out of, and we're in a constant state of guilt that will destroy us if we allow it.

What we need to do is to use our well-deserved guilt, the guilt we bring on ourselves because of our sins. We need to use that well-deserved guilt to motivate us to repent and change over our own sins. We need, going forward, to rid ourselves of misplaced guilt.