

Lecture #4: Letting Go of the Past

Do you wake up every morning with the guilt of your past hanging over you? Are you bitter because you've been wronged, or abused in the past? Are you angry with God because He allowed you to go through difficult times?

It is impossible to feel that way very long without affecting every aspect of your life: your health, attitudes, emotions, relationships, and spiritual growth.

I. Dealing with guilt

There are two types of guilt – genuine guilt as a result of committing sins, and false guilt due to misconceptions without actually committing any violations of God's commandments.

- **False guilt:**

False guilt can result from another person's immoral actions such as physical, sexual, or mental abuse in the past. It can also result from inability to meet parents' expectations, faulty teachings, assuming responsibility for parents' divorce, or ridicule by others.

Another common source of guilt is to continue to feel guilty for a sin that you have already confessed. One of Satan's most effective strategies is to convince you that God's forgiveness is not enough, so you remain overwhelmed by guilt for a sin that God has already forgiven.

False guilt is Satan's way of holding you back from achieving God's plan in your life. Can you identify the sources of false guilt in your life? This is the first step to a healing process.

- **Genuine guilt:**

God uses genuine guilt to stir up your conscience when you violate your moral beliefs and choose to follow your desires. These can include such acts as gossip and jealousy as well as other behavior that you are more likely to associate with sin such as homosexuality and stealing. Each of these sins carries the same condemnation and also carries the same forgiveness by God.

To attain the forgiveness of sins, we need to live a life of repentance and practice the sacraments of confession and communion on a regular basis.

- **Overcoming the feelings of guilt:**

Counteracting the feelings of guilt begins with trust in God. God tells you that you are:

- **Special** – Christ gave His life for you
- **Loved** – God loves you despite your sins (Romans 5:8)
- **Forgiven** – God forgives you from all unrighteousness - 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.” The process of forgiveness includes repentance, confession, and being cleansed in communion by the blood of Christ.

II. Overcoming an unforgiving spirit

Have you suffered such a deep hurt that you are unable to forgive? An unforgiving spirit leads to bitterness, anger, resentment and hostility. As for the feeling of guilt, these attitudes also affect your health, and relationships. In addition, you cannot be forgiven of your sins until you forgive others.

It is difficult to forgive those who hurt you. The following steps can help achieve emotional liberation and spiritual freedom.

- Compare the hurtful actions of that person with your own faults that God forgave you.
- Stop talking about that subject and get rid of anything that reminds you of that situation.
- Ask God to give you the capacity to forgive.
- Repent and confess of your unforgiving spirit.
- Ask God to help you view this situation as a tool in the hand of God.
- Help others in order to take your mind away from yourself.
- Count your blessings.

When you are hurt, there is a time for sorrow and mourning, but don't convert a season of sorrow to a lifetime of sorrow.

Until you forgive every person who hurt you, you will remain imprisoned in your negative emotions. Will you release your grip on animosity, vengeance and retaliation? If you cannot let go of the old, God cannot bring the new.

III. Overcoming anger with God

Are you angry that God isn't fair for allowing bad things to happen to you? Most people who think that way have experienced a personal loss in their lives such as the loss of a loved one, a job, or a serious illness.

There are several ways people use to deal with such difficult times in their lives:

- **Disconnecting:** Some people let their anger drive them away from God
- **Covering up:** Convinced that complete trust in God is the only way to approach the difficult situation, some people bury their feelings of hurt. This approach does not allow for the healing process
- **Wrestling with God:** Confessing your true feelings and sharing your anger with God can help you move through it and heal. Allow your anger to draw you toward God, not away from Him. King David cried out to the Lord, Moses expressed his disappointment, and even the Lord Jesus Christ cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46)
- **Trusting God:** Some people have such high faith in God that, when adversity strikes, they fall on their knees and cry out to God and allow Him to lead them through the healing process. Their attitude prevents mounting anger which would prolong recovery.

It is through a personal relationship with God and fellowship with the saints that you can deal with any stress that comes your way. Hebrews 12:1 – "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us," A complete trust in God gives you a great sense of peace no matter the circumstances.