

**Gospel Enemy Number Two - Persistent Guilt**  
**Hebrews 9:11-14**  
**Ben Wikner**  
**Sunday, November 22, 2009**

**Key Points:**

1. **The divine truth: All our sin and guilt has been removed.**
  - a. Jesus has appeared as our perfect High Priest. He entered a heavenly tabernacle as our High Priest and as the sacrifice for our sins. He left nothing undone. His high priestly sacrifice was radically perfect and perfectly satisfying.
  - b. Jesus has secured for us an eternal redemption. He has paid in full the debt and guilt of our sin. (see also Col. 2:13-14).
  - c. His redemption cleanses us from sin and purifies our consciences. We can know that we are spiritually, effectively clean. We are forgiven. We are legally justified, eternally adopted as sons and daughters of the King. Our guilt has been removed. Therefore, our consciences can be freed from guilt and condemnation.
  
2. **The human reality: Our consciences continue to struggle with persistent guilt.**
  - a. Persistent guilt is an enemy of the gospel:
    - i. It denies the gospel, saying that what Jesus did on the cross wasn't enough—that we need to atone for our sins by carrying around this weight of guilt.
    - ii. It competes with the gospel in as much as it becomes the motivating factor in our lives. Instead of God and the gospel leading us, we are led by our lust to overcome our sense of guilt and shame—our craving to feel better about ourselves.
  - b. Therefore, we should practice the wisdom of puritan pastor John Owen: *"You must take your sin to the cross and leave it there with Christ. And you must come away with his righteousness. And you must do this every day."*
  
3. **The practical impact: Guilt leads to dead works; the gospel liberates to living service to God.**
  - a. The first byproduct of persistent guilt is that we suffer. *"For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."* (Ps. 32: 3-4)
  - b. The second byproduct of persistent guilt is dead works. We hide, deflect, we may lie, seek to diminish or do other works in order to balance or overcome guilt. We end up living by duty as compensation for guilt. What we are trying to do is

to make things right with God and others. We are leaning upon our performance instead of Christ's performance.

**4. The radical change: The gospel empowers us to live a life of joyful glory to God.**

- a. If you are in Christ, you are justified, made perfectly righteous in Christ. Your foundation is set and secure. There is no condemnation.
- b. With a clear, guilt-free conscience resting on Christ's righteousness, we are empowered to do the works God has called us to do.
  - i. Because we have been forgiven much, we can love God and others much.
  - ii. Because Jesus already paid it all, we are freed up to invest in others and take self-sacrificing risks for God's glory.

**Fellowship Starters:**

1. Reread Hebrews 9:11-14. What are the three things that Christ has done for us as our High Priest? What is the divine truth that emerges from this passage?
2. In what ways does your conscience struggle with persistent guilt?
3. In what ways is persistent guilt an enemy of the gospel?
4. How can you shift your focus off of your sin, take it to the cross, and leave it there?
5. How is persistent guilt transformed into joyful gratitude and loving service by the gospel?