

How can I experience God's love and forgiveness?

How do I obtain forgiveness? How is my problem of guilt solved?

Our questions for today:

- What causes guilt?
- Why are there feelings of guilt without any real guilt existing?
- Why is deliverance from guilt necessary for happiness?
- What is the best way to be rid of guilt?

*Dear Andrew,**

What effects does forgiveness have? Dr. Jack Winslow, head of a psychiatric hospital in England, said: "I could discharge half of my patients tomorrow, if they had the assurance of forgiveness."¹ It becomes clear during consultation that: Guilt is a disease-causing factor. Specialists assume that up to 80% of all diseases have mental causes. It is a fact: mental illness is drastically increasing.

¹ J.E. Adams, Fundamentals of Biblical Life Counseling (Brunnen-Verlag) p. 191

* This name was selected to remind us of the biblical Andrew, who led his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42).

Me? – Guilty?

'Do I even have any guilt? Everything is alright in my life.' The Bible says: *"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts."* (Proverbs 21:2 NKJV) **We can only profit from examining our personal situation.**

When we think about guilt, what feelings and sentiments do we have? Guilt can be very burdensome. We can be afraid that things will come to light, which are unpleasant for us. Yes, guilt can make us very fearful – it can destroy our health, happiness and even our life. But we can take courage. **All guilt can be taken from us.** God said: *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."* (Isaiah 1:18 NKJV)

Everyone may know: I can be free through God's grace, because Jesus has promised: *"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."* (John 8:36 NKJV) This can take place today, now in prayer. Several prayer suggestions are included. Foremost, we want to remember: Jesus is the victor. He also wants to give you victory.

God's Desire for our Lives

Many people carry burdens, for example guilt, injuries, addictions, occult exposure. This damages health, the wellbeing and often interpersonal relationships. This isn't God's will for us. Jesus said: *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10b NKJV) This requires:

1. That I don't carry any burden from the past. Jesus said: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28 NIV) In God's great love He wants to remove all our burdens. We don't have to live with any old problems.
2. That I don't worry about the future. *"Cast all your anxiety on him [God] because he cares for you."* (1 Peter 5:7 NIV) God is ready to take care of us.
3. That I live in the present, today, in friendship with Him and equipped with His power. *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* (Matthew 6:34 NIV) *"I pray that out of his [God's], glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being."* (Ephesians 3:16 NIV)

Later, we will take a look at an example of severe guilt. The person concerned suffered greatly from his guilt. Then all at once, he was free from the guilt and was certain that he had been forgiven.

Guilt is comparable to cancer. Cancer – guilt – can develop imperceptibly or can also cause severe pain. Metastases can also form. But there is a marvelous doctor. Jesus is the great doctor who can successfully deal with cancer – guilt. He said to us: *"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* (John 8:36 NIV) Jesus is victor over every adversity!

What is sin? What causes guilt?

The Bible says: *"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness."* (1 John 3:4 NIV) That means disobedience. God's law, the ten commandments, back many human regulations (state, parents, etc.). When a trespass occurs, then guilt arises. It doesn't matter if the person acknowledges God and the Bible or not. In modern terms: we are programmed accordingly. The Bible also refers to sin as "rebellion", "insurrection" or "missing a target". Further expression in the Bible for sin are: "unbelief", "distrust" or "straying from the right path". Guilt is the consequence of sin.

One problem is that a person can get used to sin just like getting used to bad air. They don't notice it anymore. Hence, many think: I am not a sinner, I am a decent person! However, the Bible says: *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* (1 John 1:8 NIV) Yes, we are without exception all sinners.²

² Taken from Kurt Hasel "Mit Gott fernsehen", *Drei Schritte zum Himmel*, (Ravensburg 1965)

What is the difference between sin and guilt?

“Sin is in the past. At some point we have behaved wrong, have committed an injustice ... and have thus made ourselves guilty of sin. **How long does a sin take?** How long does robbery, adultery or cartomancy take? It takes a few minutes, maybe an hour; at any rate, the time span of a sinful deed is a comparatively short.

How long does guilt last? Guilt is present – we suffer from the consequences and effects of our sins – often an entire lifetime. What crushes us is not so much the sin, a wrong action, which happened in a short time span – we intensively suffer from the consequences of our sins, we suffer from guilt, from the burden. The good news is: Jesus Christ not only forgives us of our sin – my sin “crushed” Him, it cost Him His life. Only Jesus has the ability to remove the guilt from my life.”³

What can cause guilt?

› Jesus showed us that the core of sin is: *“because people do not believe in me.”* (John 16:9 NIV) That means that the core sin is to live independently from God. God wants to protect us from sin (1 John 5:18). A life without God – without complete surrender to Him and supplied with His power – is followed by sinful thoughts, attitudes and deeds. Many don't trust Jesus Christ out of ignorance or because they have a wrong perception of Him. Regarding surrender to God, I also had a problem until

I comprehended that God is love. Then, I immediately entrusted Him with my whole life. Today I am thankful for the decades of His wonderful guidance.

- › Guilt also comes from doing injustice – actively doing something wrong.
- › Guilt also comes from neglecting to do the right thing – so passively through omission.
- › Guilt is also caused by false reactions. That means: I respond to injustice I suffer or think I have suffered, with injustice – based on the motto: tit for tat.
- › Guilt also arises from not forgiving an injustice suffered. Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer: *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”* (Matthew 6:12 NKJV) *“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”* (Mark 11:25 NKJV) I will write more about this next time.⁴ Maybe someone is waiting for your forgiveness. Possibly even a close family member.

⁴ Letter to Andrew 17: Do you have something against someone? Granting forgiveness – forgiveness frees both people.

³ Kurt Hasel, *Zauber des Aberglaubens*, 17. deutsche erweiterte Auflage 2007 (New Start Center, Raich), p. 74

What are feelings of guilt?

Feelings of guilt are a warning signal. The signal is alerting you to examine the situation!

There are real and false feelings of guilt. The real ones are the result of transgressing God's laws; here guilt and feelings of guilt go hand in hand.

There are also feelings of guilt without any true guilt. For example, there was a church law, which didn't allow anyone to eat meat on Fridays. Many, who did it anyway, had feelings of guilt. But there was no true guilt, since none of God's laws were broken.

Liberation from our guilt and feelings of guilt is necessary for our health, our happiness and our relationships.

What methods do we use to take care of our guilt and feelings of guilt?

Change my viewpoint:

Some try to free themselves from guilt and feelings of guilt by changing their view of what is right and wrong. We have all certainly grown up learning that it is wrong to lie. Well, a person can persuade themselves that it might be necessary to lie under certain circumstances. Thus, it may well be that the feelings of guilt disappear. Where do they go? In our subconscious. There they continue their destructive work. If we do this more often, then we will pay a high price, because we will lose our orientation in life. This method brings no true deliverance.

An exception would be, when my behavior was in fact based on a false viewpoint. In matters of religion there are often many feelings of guilt without any real guilt because of human laws. For example, in a certain religion it is required to pray at five specific times during the day. Only a few manage this. Whoever, doesn't manage it, feels guilty, although there is no real guilt, because there is no such law from God.

We can have feelings of guilt based on our upbringing, because maybe our parents never made any difference between the laws of God and human laws. This shows us from a completely different angle, how important it is that we orientate ourselves by God's Word. Human laws only burden our lives.

Jesus said: *"And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* (Mark 7:7 NKJV)

God has never allowed anyone to add or omit anything from His laws. *"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."* (Revelation 22:18-19 NKJV) God's laws are reasonable and an expression of His love. His commandments are a good, real and right standard for our life.

Suppression:

Another method many people use to get rid of their guilt is suppression. This means that we dull or ignore our conscience. It may be that the feelings of guilt disappear with this method. But the guilt remains and continues to affect the subconscious. It can appear as fear, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, eating disorders or alcoholism. As a rule, the real cause of the problem can't be seen anymore, since it was apparently successfully suppressed and for the time being healing, the elimination of emotional and physical disorders, isn't possible.

What also takes place: The warning system, my conscience, which reports when I am guilty, is damaged. That means that my monitoring system for truth and error in my life is impaired or destroyed. Hence, my growth to a mature and responsible person is interrupted or impaired.

The warning signals can be turned off by ignoring, drowning out and numbing; it can also be turned off by fleeing in pleasure or work or even selfless service.

Penance:

Another method that many try, is getting rid of their guilt with penance. Many hope to be freed of their guilt by undergoing a punishment or performing a penance. Nevertheless, the guilt remains. Let's assume that someone steals €100.- from you. Now he has a guilty conscience. So, he donates some money to the Red Cross. Is the matter then settled? As the victim would you be satisfied with this solution? Is the guilt gone? No! It is necessary to return the stolen €100.-. This is part of the liberation from guilt. My guilt is only then completely eliminated when the damaged trust relationship with the victim has been restored by open conversation and proof of my trustworthiness. Guilt plays a role in destroying trust. Externally, guilt is breaking a law, but in reality, it is being guilty to other people. It is being guilty of not loving God and your neighbor.

Confession and forgiveness play a role in restoring trust. We will come back to this point later.

To Pass the Buck:

Another method is passing the buck. I was a prison chaplain on the side for a while. I looked after individual prisoners at a maximum-security prison. Only the "toughest guys" are in a facility like this. What amazed me was that almost all of them saw themselves as innocent. They put the blame on their fathers, mothers, companies or the country. The problem is that if we don't take responsibility for our actions, then we will never be free from guilt.

Many try to get rid of their guilt and feelings of guilt by trying to place it on others. This is an old method. Adam and Eve already used it. Passing the buck seems to be an easy method to shirk your responsibility. Maybe the feelings of guilt are gone, but the guilt remains and becomes even greater from the additional injustice of blaming someone else. The consequences are seen in the character, health and interpersonal relationships.

To summarize: These methods only lead to illusory solutions. Because the guilt remains and affects our character and life like cancer. Many people are half sick and half healthy. Unresolved guilt can play a role in this. I am thankful that a doctor, Dr. Winfried Müller, called our attention (a group of pastors) to these important correlations. Psychologists have clearly recognized the problem of guilt and the resulting consequences. But science has no real solution for it.

What is the true method for becoming free of guilt?

King David committed adultery with Bathsheba. She became pregnant. In order to conceal the results, David contrived the cunning murder of Uriah, her husband. The plan was successful.

David shirked acknowledging his guilt. He describes what it was like for him during this time:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” (Psalm 32:1-5 NKJV)

The true way to deliverance is described in these verses. David acknowledged his guilt. A heavy burden dropped from his shoulders. Whoever carries guilt, may know that God's loving forgiveness awaits him without any waiting time. Because God's Word tells us: *“I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”* (Isaiah 44:22 NKJV)

David could only be freed from his burden when he accepted the responsibility for his sin. We should definitely do this too. We shouldn't lose any time in putting these things in order with God's help and becoming free. If we should experience difficulties with this, we only need to ask God for help in prayer. Remember: *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”* (1 John 1:10 NKJV) We can pray:

Prayer for Accepting Responsibility

Please pray the following prayer aloud. In this way, we can concentrate much better. The Bible references in parentheses don't need to be included in the prayer. May I recommend this for all your prayers?

Great God, I now see that I only very hesitantly admit my guilt. I know that my hesitation is wrong and so I confess this as a sin. I am sorry. I believe that You can and want to forgive me. I ask You according to Your promise, "therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36 NKJV) that You forgive me for my hesitation and take it from me. I believe that You can and want to do this. Praise and thanks that You have done this. I ask You to help me now make an honest confession without any constraints. Your Word says: "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13 NKJV) So, I thank You that You have given me willingness now. I praise and thank You, Father in heaven. Amen.

Prayer

The Way to Forgiveness

We want to take a closer look at the true way to forgiveness:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Psalm 32:1 NKJV) Our happiness, health and interpersonal relationships depend in part on our receiving forgiveness for our guilt. Because of God's love we may lead a joyful, vigorous life without any guilt. I wish everyone the joy of experiencing this state.

"Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." (Psalm 32:2 NKJV) God doesn't say: "Forget it!" or "It's not that bad!" or "Once is as good as never!" No: guilt is there. But He doesn't hold us accountable for it anymore.

Not being charged for guilt? – How?

When Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized by submersion in the Jordan River, John said:

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 NKJV)

Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice on the cross in order to take our guilt upon Himself. This offer is available to every person, who trusts Jesus: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16 NKJV)

To trust Jesus means to enter into an intimate trust relationship with Him and to follow Him. "A personal relationship with Jesus Christ is a great privilege and the greatest fulfillment, which a person can ever experience."⁵

God is love. He woos us to believe and trust Jesus Christ.⁶ Jesus takes the guilt away from everyone who accepts His offer of love. That means that Jesus is imputed with our guilt and not us anymore.

When a boy breaks a window with a ball, he will certainly be forgiven and his father will pay for the new window. This contains an important lesson. The person, who takes on the guilt – the father – has to pay, that is to say he suffers. Whoever takes on the guilt, suffers for the guilty party. Jesus can and wants to forgive us. He suffered and paid for your and my guilt on the cross. Debt only has to be paid once. After that it no longer exists.

What should we do?

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, **Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" (Acts 2:36-38 NKJV)*

How is my complete guilt transferred to Jesus Christ? Through repentance and baptism. The biblical meaning of "repentance" is a "change of mindset". I change my attitude and my actions. Repentance is shown by our decision to make a fresh start. We start to trust Jesus and the Word of God more and more. We express this decision through prayer.

Prayer of Repentance

Please pray aloud!

"Father in heaven, it has become clear to me that I have governed my life and am separated from You. Please forgive me for this. Lord Jesus, please take over the mastery of my life and change me as You see fit."

Prayer

⁵ Dr. W. Bright, Transferable Concept: *How you can experience God's love and forgiveness* (Neuhausen, 1971) p. 9. Out of print. It can be read online in German, English and Russian at www.missionsbrief.de – Nachfolge – Jüngerschaft – Mittelbare Konzepte

⁶ In *Letter to Andrew No. 3* – What is the Bible's main objective? the meaning of faith according to the Bible is described in detail on p. 6

This decision can be compared to an engagement. The engagement period is a very special time. The couple gets to know each other better and their trust and love increases. They also get to know each other's families. It is the same with Jesus. We get to know Him better by reading His word, talking with Him (prayer), we spend time with Him (worship, Bible study group, church service) and we hear about Him from the experiences of others. Free Bible correspondence courses⁷ or studying the Bible in a care group are a great help. In this way we get to know Him and His word better. When our conviction has ripened and we want a permanent relationship with Jesus, meaning we always want to belong to Him, then this is shown through the outward sign and confession of a biblical baptism. We can compare this with a wedding. Don't you want to entrust yourself to Jesus' love, wisdom and power?⁸

We can all receive forgiveness through Jesus our Lord and Redeemer. The guilt doesn't just disappear. Jesus is the only one, who can assume the guilt of our sins.

What is Remorse?

We may ask God to give us remorse – divine sorrow - for our sins. *“For godly sorrow [remorse] produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”* (2 Corinthians 7:10 NKJV)

God will give us self-awareness of our sins. We face this painful awareness and let God lead us to true conversion. Remorse is pain and regret for my own incorrect actions. We are sorry that we have thereby hurt our Lord. It is also connected to the resolution of making any necessary restitution and the firm intention with God's help to never do it again.

The Best Exchange

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then we are expressing our trust in Him. As a result, the best exchange follows. He assumes the guilt from our whole life and gives us His righteousness (His upright, obedient and sinless life). This is a gift which no one can or has to pay for. That Jesus died though guiltless for all our guilt, is the greatest expression of love. Whoever lives in a close, personal relationship with Jesus, will have their guilt removed. As valuable as this is, this is only a part of what Jesus means to us. He said: *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10b NKJV) With Him I have a worthwhile life here and in addition eternal life.

⁷ There are many different Bible study courses. They are available for free. You can take part in the courses online or by mail. The courses and Bible Study Institutes can be found under “Recommendations”.

⁸ How Jesus can become your Lord and Redeemer is described in detail from different aspects in the *Letter to Andrew No. 3* “What is the Bible's main objective?” and No. 13 “Seize Life – through a personal relationship with God”.

Confession and Asking for Forgiveness

Since there are still more questions, we will return to David. He prayed: *“When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.”* (Psalm 32:3-4 NKJV)

Guilt is burdensome and can make us sick. If something is weighing on you, then don't wait any longer. Why should you continue to carry an unnecessary burden? Jesus loves you and is waiting to help you. God said:

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18 NKJV)

David made the only right decision. “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden.

I said, *“I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”* (Psalm 32:5 NKJV)

David suppressed confession. What finally led him to acknowledge his sin? The prophet Nathan visited him and showed him his guilt by telling a parable (2 Sam. 12). This led David to accept the responsibility for his actions. Complete honesty with ourselves leads to an honest confession. We call our sins by name. The more comprehensively I acknowledge and confess my sins, the greater my experience of liberation from the burden of guilt will be.

Our request for forgiveness and our liberation from guilt is connected to confession. As a general rule, God's forgiveness or the forgiveness from fellow humans is only granted after forgiveness has been asked for. Often, the simple words “I am sorry” are enough to restore the broken contact.

My request for forgiveness is only genuine, when I don't impose any conditions and I am willing to take responsibility for all the consequences of my actions. We also refrain from blaming others, even if they bear part of the blame. Our confession without any finger-pointing often prompts a personal confession from the other person.

When David was finally ready to confess his sins to God, he received immediate and complete forgiveness for his guilt. That's unbelievable! We have a wonderful God. God is love. He wants to give us a worthwhile life with health and happiness. He wants to accompany us as a friend. He leads me step by step on the best path for my life and gives me the necessary strength.

David obtained forgiveness after his confession. Thereby his fellowship with God – their trust relationship, which he had had before, was restored. Jesus Christ assumed David's guilt. Before this experience, David had led a wonderful life of faith and had had great experiences with God. But when things went well for a long time, he became lukewarm and this unfathomable sin happened. But God held on to David and David also held on to God. Hence, he had a God, who took away his guilt, when he confessed it. Obtaining forgiveness makes us happy and strong again.

Every sin is a sin against God

David committed adultery and murder. When he confessed his sin, he prayed: *“Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.”* (Psalm 51:4 NKJV)

How should we understand this, since he had sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah? Every sin against a person is also a sin against God, because we have transgressed His law. Why is this thought important? David could no longer ask Uriah for forgiveness. He was dead. But he could ask God for forgiveness and receive it. This thought is so important, because I can obtain forgiveness, even if the person concerned – who I have sinned against – isn't alive anymore or can't be found or if he isn't willing to forgive me. In any case, we can obtain forgiveness through God's grace, since our sins are all fundamentally against God.

Who should I confess my sins to?

Every sin should be confessed to God, because in every case one of God's laws has been broken. Sins, which were only committed against God (also sinful thoughts about other people), should only be confessed to God alone. When one or more other people were affected, then confession to them is also necessary. Sin should be rectified only among parties concerned and not outside of this circle.

Making Amends

If amends of a material nature are necessary, then we should be generous, because the other person didn't have access to their property for a period of time.

“Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.” (Ezekiel 33:14-16 NKJV)

Changing your life and Consequences

Jesus helps us to change and reform our lives. First, I always confessed my sins to God. If I still needed to confess something to another person, then I would ask God to influence their attitude. He did that in every case. No one ever reacted badly to me. In almost every case, not only was trust reestablished, it was also significantly strengthened. The painful experience of confession is actually a great help in not making the same mistake again.

We may ask God for help in changing our lives. People have had many great experiences. God often helps, but not always. If He sees that it is better for the guilty person, then He leaves the consequences. Jim Vaus had committed perjury. As a result, a policeman had gone to prison. When Jim Vaus became converted, he wholeheartedly confessed all of his sins, including the perjury. He informed the court

in writing and gave a copy to the newspaper, so that the policeman would be publicly vindicated. Even though in most countries the penalty for perjury is a prison sentence, he was acquitted during the trial despite his guilt. The judges said: This man has experienced a major turning point. If we were to put him in prison, he would probably become a criminal again. We are acquitting him despite his guilt. God can perform miracles like this. But He doesn't have to. It is vital to be prepared to accept all the possible consequences. The experiences of this man have greatly influenced my life.⁹ We can also pray about the consequences with the following promise: *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes."* (Proverbs 21:1 NKJV) We may also pray:

Prayer concerning possible consequences

Please pray aloud!

"Father in heaven, You are acquainted with my situation and what possibly lays ahead of me. I ask You to find a solution, which honors You and which helps me, because You can move hearts like rivers of water (Proverbs 21:1). Thank You. Amen."

Prayer

God's children – people, who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior – and those who will still accept Him, can find an important promise in 1 John 1:9 NKJV:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

What does God promise us here? Forgiveness of sins, which we confess and to take away all our guilt. When I confess the sins which I have discerned or which God has shown to me, then God cleanses me from all guilt. According to my observations, the Lord never shows us all our guilt. We couldn't bear it. He shows us only those, which are important for us; with the exception of when it is also important to someone else. When I realized this, it took a load off me. At the same time, cleansing involves more than our confession. An example: When a child is disobedient and gets dirty in a puddle, then he needs the forgiveness of his parents and his clothes need to be cleaned. This means: Our sin is forgiven and we are cleansed from the defilement. Not only can we pray for forgiveness, but we can also ask for cleansing and liberation.

Forgiveness of sins and spiritual cleansing are essential stipulations for the abundant and fruitful life, which Christ has called us to. Our happiness, health and eternal life depend on having received forgiveness and cleansing. David said after his confession: *"You forgave all my sins."* (Psalm 32:5 NKJV) We can see that he was convinced that God had forgiven him and he had accepted His forgiveness. This is important so that after our confession we

⁹ Jim Vaus, *My Father was a gangster: the Jim Vaus story*. (Brockhaus-Taschenbuch Nr. 59)

don't fall into doubt and we can continue to live without this burden. How often should we confess one and the same sin? Only once. Unless, we later discover that our confession was incomplete. If we have confessed, then our guilt is gone. God has placed it on Jesus, our Redeemer. Thank Him for this. But what if feelings of guilt are still present? Then, we should keep thanking God for the forgiveness until the feelings disappear.

Why don't many Christians experience joy, fruitfulness and victory?

The first reason could be that they haven't completely surrendered their lives to Jesus.¹⁰ Consequently, they don't have anyone to take over their sins. The second reason could be an unrepaired short. What do I mean? If a little piece of metal is laying on the track of a toy train, then it can't run, although the power generator has enough capacity. That is the effect that any sin has, which we are aware of, not aware of or that we haven't straightened out with another person. In this case, we neither have forgiveness nor can we live in God's power.

I can still remember well how it was when I was a young dispatcher in a new transportation branch office in Frankfurt am Main and I lied to a client. It was one of our first big clients. A mishap had taken place, but it was something that we could rectify afterwards. This hadn't caused any problem for the customer. The

next evening, I visited the client privately and asked him to forgive me, because I had lied to him. He said: "Everything you said sounded very logical. But I had a feeling that something wasn't right. Now, everything is ok." From that day on, this client had unlimited trust in me. No competition could ever come between us. This was a formative experience for me.

If you have guilt in your life, then go courageously forward and right away would be best. The solution, which only takes a little time, can be painful. But afterwards you have great and enduring joy and benefits. I wish you a happy and victorious life with Jesus Christ.

If you want to clear up a guilt with God's help, then you can express it something like follows.

Prayer

The first part is for someone, who isn't a believer yet. Please pray aloud.

Prayer

"Great God, I don't know if you exist. But, if you do, then answer my prayer so that I know that you exist and that you care for me. Thank You. Amen."

It doesn't have much to do with the choice of words, but rather that we really mean and want what we pray for.

¹⁰ See *Letter to Andrew No. 14* Life in God's Strength – How? See the section about "carnal people".

"Father in heaven, I thank You that I can turn to You with my problem. My transgressions and guilt are a burden. I ask You to forgive me for my failure (sin) and at the same time ask You to free me from my guilt. Please, give me the courage and strength to make an honest confession. Your Word says: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13 NKJV) So, I now confess with Your help that I _____ (please name the sin). I am sorry that I am guilty against You (and if applicable against _____). I am glad that You forgive me for this sin, because I have confessed it to You now. Your Word promises: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 NKJV) Your Word also says: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask [according to His will], we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." (1 John 5:14-15 NKJV) I thank You now that You have already forgiven me. Thank You Lord Jesus, that on the basis of this promise You have taken my guilt. Also, thank You that according to Your Word I know I have received forgiveness and cleansing. Please, take away my inclination for wrongdoing in the future. I claim Your promise: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36 NKJV) Thank You that You are also victor over my weaknesses and have given me divine power for victory. I praise You and thank You for Your gracious help. Amen."

Prayer

If restitution should also be necessary, then we can add the following to our prayer:

I ask You to help me to generously make amends for the damages I have caused. Please touch the heart of _____ (name of said person), so that they will accept my efforts. Thank You for Your help. Amen.

Prayer

We have a wonderful God. We can thank Him for all His help and trust Him to lead us.

In these prayers, we have claimed promises from the Bible. God's promises are for all people, who live with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Redeemer. However, in my experience our great God has also answered the prayers of people, who don't have this relationship with Him yet. Thereby, He certainly wants to lead people to know His love.

I hope that you have experienced God's love and forgiveness or that you soon will.

With warm greetings,

Helmut



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