

**DEALING WITH GUILT**  
**Developing Self Esteem in Yourself and Others**  
**Dr. George O. Wood**

We're in a series of messages on developing self-esteem. Tonight we look at the subject dealing with guilt. Guilt and how we deal with guilt says a lot about our self-esteem. In the book Guilt and Freedom is the following story. In the spring of 1959 an airforce major entered a Texas mental institution for the second time. He had tried to commit suicide twice and he had been arrested for forgery and robbery. For years he had been drinking heavily and his marriage had disintegrated. Yet only 15 years before he had been a model officer headed for a promising career. One momentous event precipitated the major's plunge. He flew the lead plane over Hiroshima when the first atom bomb was dropped. Shortly afterwards he began seeing throngs of Japanese men, women and children chasing him in his dreams. His own life began to collapse. The psychiatrist that treated him said the major was subconsciously trying to provoke punishment from society to atone for the guilt he felt over Hiroshima and other acts. Unresolved guilt was destroying his life.

Few of us have had such grievous guilt as this air force major experienced in the death of thousands through the release of a bomb. But all of us have been troubled by guilt and have had recurring feelings of guilt. Even this week and perhaps this day. Guilt, self-acceptance, and inner freedom are problems for us. We all have different reactions to guilt. The scripture gives us different reactions to guilt.

One reaction is despairing, depression which is suicidal. That's how Judas handled guilt. Judas could not stay around to face the consequences of what he has done and his guilt leads him to suicide.

I preached a sermon in this church years ago entitled "The Man Who Missed the Resurrection." I contrasted Judas' betrayal of the Lord and Peter's denial. It seems to me that among the differences between Peter and Judas this difference stands out. Peter lasted long enough with his guilt to encounter and to be around when Christ rose again from the grave. I think to myself if only Judas had waited a couple more days he would have seen a whole different dimension. Suicide wouldn't have been an alternative. To a person wrestling with guilt that is so profound that they are facing depression and suicidal depression, stay around. The risen Christ will meet you.

Another reaction to guilt is denial. We try to act as if the guilt has not occurred. Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5 are biblical examples of people who attempted to deny guilt, to not accept blame and to deal with life as though nothing wrong had ever happened. We know the consequences that happen to human life when we deny what is wrong.

Others respond to guilt by a sense of being driven. Guilt drives them. They have no release or rest from guilt. They keep on living. I've been through great parts of my life driven by guilt. This is the natural habitat of the person who lives in Romans 7. Who with all their heart wants to serve God but when you consider the righteous requirements of God compared to own human attainments you feel that you have fallen so short and your best efforts never get you far enough with God. So even your Christian activity is an activity finding you doing what you're doing because you are driven by guilt.

There is a fourth way we can react to guilt. That is resolving the guilt. Dealing with it, getting past it and living successfully without it. The prodigal is an example of a person who comes to a successful resolution of guilt because he has a loving heavenly father who unconditionally accepts him, receives him, and he knows that he is safe in his father's care. That's the kind of response to guilt that we want to initiate.

Let's ask several questions as we look at this theme dealing with guilt. It might be well to define terms as we begin. What is guilt?

I think it can be defined simply in a sentence. Guilt occurs when we fail to live up to what is expected of us or what we expect of ourselves. I love the phrase "The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story and instead writes another. His saddest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it." He knows the pain to not living up to his own expectations and that brings guilt.

Then of course there is a whole set of expectations of others. There are the expectations that God has of us. There are the expectations that our parents have toward us. There are the expectations that the church has toward us. There are the expectations that our family has toward us. We live with expectations. If we're in a group of people or in a family situation that has high expectations and perfectionist expectancy levels then we really struggle with this matter of guilt because we may on an individual basis not be living up to the high standards and requirements that are called for in us.

In reaction to this question, What is guilt? And guilt is failure to live up to other's expectations or our own expectations we need to differentiate two kinds of guilt.

The first kind of guilt I would call real guilt. Real guilt involves violating a law of God or a law of man. Real guilt is committing murder. Real guilt is committing adultery. Real guilt is lying. Real guilt is even breaking a human law, which does not necessarily have its origin in the scripture.

We have the feeling that we have to feel guilty to be guilty. You just have to be guilty to be guilty. Dealing with real guilt is a condition for entering the kingdom of God. Jesus tells us as the first word of our reaction to the announcement of the gospel the first thing that is required of us is that we should repent. Many people think that repentance has something to do with the emotion. It may, but primarily repentance does not deal with the emotions. Repentance deals with the disposition of the mind. It deals with attitudes. It is the Greek word *metanoia*. To change your mind. Therefore in entering the kingdom of God we must begin to look at God's requirements of us and if we disagree with those requirements or we've never even felt convicted by those requirements we must begin to change our mind and to repent.

There are people I've talked to who say, "I feel no guilt over the things that I have done." I believe as they become open to what the Holy Spirit is sharing through his word and become open to God eventually they will realize the guilt that is there and we must change our minds if we are to be in God's kingdom.

There is though a second kind of guilt, a very strong guilt. I would call it psychological guilt of false guilt. This is what we have allowed others to impose upon us that is not really a requirement of God. Nor is it a requirement of the government. It is simply a requirement that we live with that we either put upon ourselves or we let somebody else dump on us.

Often in family relationships we become extremely manipulative. People manipulate their children and children manipulate their parents and try to get them to take actions by dumping guilt on them.

I have faced a lot of psychologically false guilt. With my own expectations and what I want. How much guilt we bring upon ourselves that we've got to do it perfectly when others don't.

People with low self esteem are trying harder to be perfect. That's where self-esteem and guilt comes in. People with low self-esteem try to be perfect and therefore have a greater load of false guilt and a greater need for perfection. The person with a lower sense of self-esteem and a greater sense of guilt uses terms like "I should." Shoulds are a great factor in their life. I should do this, I should do that. Somebody says I should do this, somebody says I should do that. Instead of using the word "should" which means our behavior is being governed by forces outside ourselves, our unrealistic expectations or the unrealistic expectations of others when we need to do something rather than saying "I should do it," it would be better to say, "I want to do it" or "I choose to do it." It may be unpleasant but if we choose to do it or if we want to do it we move control and it no longer is the sense of being driven to do something because we should do it.

The low self-esteem person is often saying, If only I could do better people will like me. So I must do better. I should do better. The problem is that acceptance becomes based on performance.

That's a way of looking at what is guilt. Real guilt and false guilt and false guilt brings to us a sense of driven-ness – we should.

What is the purpose of guilt?

We might look at the purpose of real guilt and false guilt. Guilt is very much like emotions. We talked about emotions last week. We said that emotions always tell us the truth about ourselves. Emotions may not always be telling us about the truth in which we are to live. Bu they always tell us the truth about ourselves. When we have guilt in our life, that guilt is telling us something about how we are and what our present state is. It is therefore like the emotions, a signal function. It tips us off to the fact that something is going on inside of us and we need to come to grips with it. If it's true guilt we need to confess it, repent of it and go on. If it's false guilt we need to recognize it as false guilt, realizing that we're acting out of false guilt and in that realization begin to adopt strategies to move out of the false guilt into freedom.

Paul talks about the function of real guilt in Romans 7:7-8. "Indeed I would have not known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, Do not covet. But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire." What was happening? The law is producing its function – our sense of inadequacy before God.

True guilt, then let's us know that there is something wrong with our relationship to God. We can therefore thank God for guilt. We can thank God that the Holy Spirit in respect to true guilt is faithful enough to God's character and to our nature and our need for change that he will bear witness to us about guilt. It's an important signal function. If it were not for guilt what happens when we turn aside those feelings of guilt we can get a seared conscious. When you sear

something, scar tissue becomes impervious to pain. So guilt has an important function. It keeps us alive and sensitive to when we've done wrong. Unfortunately some people try to play games with guilt. Instead of facing guilt they dodge it and these are some of the games people play.

I give up. I'm so guilty, I'm so bad, there's nothing I can do about it. So I just go on living with it. Things will never change. I'll never be different. If that's the attitude we take toward guilt we'll be chronically depressed. As we get older we'll be more and more depressed because we have not dealt with the guilt in our life.

I'll show you! This is kind of the sense of a kid who says "Just wait until I'm 18. I'm going to kick the traces and I'm going to do whatever I want. I'll show you." Guilt stirs up rebellion and therefore the feeling of I'll show you, the people treated me like that, I'll fix them.

A third game that people play is "I'm not that bad." It's a denial of guilt. An attempt to say we're not bad by even putting the blame on someone else. Adam, the first man, tries to deny guilt by putting the blame on the woman. Denial of guilt. "Compared to other people, God, I'm not so bad. I'm fine. I'm like 99% of the other people in the world."

Or the fourth way of dealing with guilt is the superficial acknowledgement of our faults to get rid of the pain.

Those are some responses and some dodge games to real guilt, when real guilt is trying to say to us, Do something about what's happened in your relationship to God. On the other hand, false guilt is a signal to us that we need to correct our perceptions of reality. It's not that we are in the wrong. It's that our expectations are wrong and what is being called for is not change in us; what's being called for is change in our expectations. Or change in our response to other people's expectations about us.

Some of us even may live with a guilt complex and feel that something is wrong with us if we are not living under guilt. We need to be guilty because God can't work with us unless we're guilty!

I think we need a new perspective on guilt. Instead of built being sent by God to keep us down. It is there to help us up. It helps us come to grips with reality. When it's there and we know it's there it can be used by God to help us deal with it.

What is guilt? That's the question we first asked. What is the purpose of guilt? The second question. The third question is this...

What emotional effects does guilt have upon us? When we are guilty, whether it's real guilt or false guilt what emotions begin to take place in us? There are three basic emotions that guilt has on us.

One is the fear of punishment. You better watch out! You're going to get it! People say if you only knew about me, it'd all be over. Or a parent say, If I ever catch you doing that again you're going to get the tanning of your life! The boogey man will get you! When we're guilty we fear punishment.

Second affect, it lowers our self-esteem. It brings depression and worthlessness. If a kid does something wrong... Shame, shame on you! We can produce the kind of reaction in our dog. Shame, shame. He hunkers down, tail between his legs. He may not know what it is.

A counselor tells the story of a minister's wife who found herself working hard to be accepted. Her husband was very busy in the ministry and wasn't spending sufficient time with her. One day he took a day off and took her to Disneyland. She had an almost complete mental breakdown on the way to Disneyland. In trying to identify what had happened to her, what was going on was she was saying, I don't deserve a day off! I don't deserve a day of my husband's time.

That's the kind of response of a person who has been humiliated. Why would you treat me so good? I don't deserve that. I'm in the pits. I'm not good. You shouldn't be treating me this way. I don't deserve it.

It's the kind of thing that sometimes in courtship people will pick someone who you can identify at the time as being a real loser. I don't have the gift of prophecy by the way. I've thought some situations to be losing situations and they turn out to be real winners. And some winning situations turn out to be real losers. But it has been an observation of mine over the years in watching courtship on Christian campuses that there sometimes is a mismatch between persons who appear to have everything going for them and another person for whom everything is kind of falling apart. Yet they appear to be madly in love. I have my thesis about going on there. The person who has everything together is really saying on the inside, I don't deserve any better than this. So this is what I'm going to go with and this is what I'm going to marry because I need to punish myself. Shame, shame, shame.

Much motivation of Christian service arises from a sense of guilt. You should teach Sunday school class; if you don't you're not committed. Shame. You should witness because if you don't, God's not going to be pleased with you. Shame. Shame is the reaction that is the emotional consequence of guilt.

A third consequence is a fear of isolation and rejection. This transfers when we feel God could never love me. People say to me periodically in a counseling context, "Pastor, if you really knew me, you wouldn't like me at all." We're afraid if we disclose ourselves honestly to someone else that they will reject us. And that we'll stand in isolation.

And, by the way, the devil would like to isolate us. The devil would like to say to us, If you really love God, you wouldn't have done that. If people really knew how bad you really were God would have nothing to do with you and neither would other people. The devil wants to say, You're the only one. That's why it's important to adhere to the scriptures, Confessing your sins one to another. Because if we'll be honest, then we give people hope. If we're not honest, if we're not honest with our young people and we sell them a bill of goods that if you come to Christ you never sin. And if you do you better keep it quiet because you're guilty, guilty! Shame on you. You're going to be isolated and rejected by God. We then discourage them from living the Christian life. They don't believe it's possible and they drop out. We need to be authentic and open and transparent, confessing our sins to one another not for the glorification of that sin but for the realization that but for the grace of God we could not exist.

How do we deal with guilt? Let's look a real guilt. Prior to salvation – there are these aspects. I talked about the three consequences – fear of punishment, lowered self-esteem, fear of isolation

and rejection. Before we come to Christ there are barriers between us and God. There are barriers on God's side and barriers on our side. Sure enough, God demands punishment of the guilty because God must act against evil. God demands the punishment of the guilty. The response in us is we know that our guilt brings a fear of punishment. That we have to reckon to God. "It's appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment."

Secondly, God's holiness demands rejection of the unholy. God's moral worth and purity is such that sin is a contaminant. It is a contagious thing and therefore he does not allow it in his presence. Our knowledge of lack of holiness brings us to a fear of rejection. God's perfection then demands the devaluation of the imperfect. That produces a consequent reaction in us before we come to Christ that our knowledge of our own imperfection brings a loss of self-esteem.

After salvation, two things happen that may describe where we are at. One thing that may happen to us after we are saved is an incomplete awareness of salvation. There are sin barriers after salvation when we forget that God totally accepts us. But looking at God's side, there are no more barriers on God's side. God is not trying to punish us. God is not trying to shame us. And God is not trying to lower our sense of self-esteem. If he does that we become of no value to him and to his work. The barriers are totally removed by Christ's death. They're gone. We have access. Therefore since Christ our high priest has gone into the heavens we may approach the grace boldly. The barriers are gone on God's part. But our psychological and emotional state is saying things it said before conversion – when we have done wrong we expect punishment, rejection, loss of self-esteem. All of these usually relate from early punishment as a kid. So we expect God to kind of treat us like some of our parental experience has. He transfers human experience; when we fall short of God's standards we expect him to be angry or cold. We may feel that he'll suddenly withdraw his love from us or threaten us with punishment. There are even some people who believe you do something wrong and God's going to strike tragedy. People have had tragedies happen and they immediately say, I did 'this' and God's now punishing me. That's not to say God doesn't use circumstances in our life periodically to discipline us. But there is a false psychological sense in which that may be used. We can't believe that God will be as close to us when we are bad as when we are good.

Since rebellion maybe against parents or authority figures cause them to react in anger and block communication we assume the same is true with God.

There's a second thing that can happen after salvation when we become aware of what God has really done for us. In regard to dealing with sin barriers after salvation when we have fully applied the results of Christ's atonement the barriers on God's side are again totally removed. But the barriers on our side are totally removed by the knowledge of God's total acceptance and forgiveness and by realizing that God doesn't motivate us by threats of punishment, rejection and lowered self esteem. That's why John says, If we confess our sin..." notice he doesn't say he is then going to punish us, or he is going to say shame, shame, or he's going to lower our self esteem... but if we confess our sin he is faithful and just to forgive us.

There's a real contrast then in the Christian life between punishment, which is something which will occur outside of Christ or discipline which is something which occurs within Christ.

Hebrews 12:7-11 talks about that when we are disciplined it's a mark of God's loving us as sons. There's a difference between the purpose of punishment and discipline. Punishment is to inflict punishment for an offense, to pay back for wrongs. But in regard to discipline the purpose is to correct and promote positive growth. The focus on punishment is past misdeeds. You've done

wrong. But the purpose of discipline is to focus on future deeds. You've done wrong but now correct! The attitude of punishment is righteous anger. The attitude of discipline is love. The resulting emotion in the person under punishment is fear, guilt and hostility. The disciplined son becomes the secure son. That's dealing with real guilt.

In respect with dealing with psychological guilt, psychological guilt produces self inflicted misery. Whereas true repentance over real guilt produces a positive change of behavior.

How do we deal with false guilt? How do we deal with the expectations we have of ourselves that are not found in God's word, they're not found in any human law. But they're expectations somehow that orient our lives, that run and drive our lives. They're expectations that maybe others have of us that are unrealistic. If this message can do nothing else than help us recognize false guilt it will be a major accomplishment. We need as a step in dealing with false guilt to recognize false guilt and to ask ourselves, Is my behavior motivated by a fear of punishment? Is it motivated by a sense of worthlessness? And by a fear of rejection? Am I doing what I'm doing in life because I need acceptance so bad I'm so afraid if I don't do it I'm going to be punished, I'm going to be worthless, I'm going to be rejected. If we're operating that way we're operating with a great deal of false guilt.

The second step is to accept the fact that it's ok to be yourself. Much guilt comes when we try to compare ourselves with other people. One of the most excellent definitions of envy I've ever heard in my life is distinguished from jealousy. Jealousy is simply wanting what somebody else has for yourself. But envy is wanting something of another person you can never attain to yourself and you try to drag them down to get it. But you can never attain it. I'm realizing that there are people in life that are more gifted than I am gifted. And they will always be more gifted than I am gifted. I can live with that or I can be driven by that and try and try to come up to their level. I need to accept the fact that it's ok to be me.

Forgive yourself, is a third step in psychological guilt. We have a rough time forgiving ourselves because we cannot imagine God forgiving us. It's a great help to my life when I finally got a hold of the message of the parable, which Jesus tells when Peter says "How many times should I forgive my brother? Seven times?" And the Lord says "Seventy times seven." It dawned on me one day that he was talking about the love of God. If he tells us to forgive one another seventy times seven, that is the standard by which he forgive us. In the Hebrew thought for seventy times seven is a way of saying perfection, infinity. It's not saying God keeps score – 490 times and that's it. But it's a way of saying God goes on forgiving and forgiving. We need to forgive ourselves.

A fourth step in dealing with false or psychological guilt is to use the word "should" rightly. If I say, "I should be a moral person," I am using the word rightly. That is something God is asking of me. If however I say, "I should keep my shoes shined," I'm in a whole other set of problems. I have this thing about being organized. I should be organized. (And I am on the surface.) I *should* get to it. Every time I set in my office, I get guilty. But I don't have time. There are more pressing things to do than go through my files and organize all this stuff. I *should* answer letters when they come to me. And I try to. But sometimes I don't get to them right away. I should do it but I don't.

I need to say I want to or I choose to rather than I should and accept some things that are not yet. An author comments on Jesus' statement about his yoke being easy and his burden light. Our lives are compared to a large cargo ship, which has a water line. A line that shows where the

ship should be riding in the water when it's loaded. When the ship is unloaded the line is way up above the water. This is compared to our lives. If we live with God's requirements we'll ride right at water line. But if dump into the cargo of our lives all the *shoulds* what happens is the boat begins to ride beneath the water line and we get in trouble and the ship starts sinking.

We need to use the right amount of shoulds so we can make good decisions. How can we arrive at a point where we no longer wrestle with guilt? Romans 7 is telling us that whenever we try to measure our relationship with God on the basis of conformity to God's law we will always struggle. The law will never give us assurance that we are in right standing with God. Some people are offended by the idea to think that Romans 7 doesn't apply to the Christian. They'll try to say this describes the non-Christian life. But in fact as you theologically think through Romans Paul was done with the non-Christian life when he finished chapter 3:20. From 3:21 on he moved into the Christian life. He's talking in the present tense, not the past tense. He's talking about real experience. He's saying every time we try to measure our relationship to God on conformity to rules and obedience to the laws we will come up short. We need the step of Romans 8 of grace. Under the law our eternal acceptance is earned by our works. Under grace it's given because of Christ's work. Our daily blessings under the law are repeatedly earned by our own works. Under grace they are given because of Christ's work. And as a natural consequence of following biblical teaching. Our motivation under the law is heavily based upon fear. If you don't do this something bad is going to happen to you. Under grace our motivation is based upon love. Under the law the source of power is our own efforts. Under grace the Holy Spirit is enlightening and strengthening our renewed selves. The result of the law is condemnation. The result of grace is salvation.

How can we then arrive at a point that we no longer wrestle with guilt? First the mature Christian has a very heightened sense of guilt. Show me somebody who's walking with God and I'll show you somebody who has a pretty deeply defined sense of guilt. Isaiah, the most righteous man in the Old Testament era in my opinion, can meet God in his temple and cry out, "Woe is me for I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips and I speak with an unclean tongue." If you look at Isaiah he was one of the most eloquent people that ever was. If that guy speaks with an unclean tongue I'm in trouble! But what had happened? He was outwardly flawless. But when he stepped into the presence of God, and when you get into God's presence all your flaws get revealed. If we measure ourselves to other people we don't look so bad. But if we get in God's holiness the flaws reveal themselves. So a person walking with God is going to have a sharply defined sense of guilt.

Paul cries out, "O wretched man that I am. I'm the chiefest of sinners!" A sharply defined sense of guilt.

The second thing about the mature Christian is the mature Christian has a very heightened sense of God's grace. If he didn't he couldn't deal with the guilt. God knows I'm going to fail the rest of my life. I'm going to make mistakes the rest of my life. Yes, I'm going to be improving. I believe that. I believe in the progressive work of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. But yes here is a sense I'm never complete in myself until God makes me complete and sinless forever in his presence. God knows that I'm going to fail him and yet he goes on accepting me.

Is that an excuse for failure? You say I leave the door wide open for sin if I say a thing like that. Great! If you think that when I'm finished with that I know I've preached the doctrine of justification by faith. When the doctrine of justification by faith is preached biblically it leaves the door wide open for misunderstanding and saying, If you really believe that and accept that

everybody's going to go out and sin like crazy. But that's not the case. Because when we've truly been accepted it's like a love relationship. When we've spilled everything and been totally honest with somebody else and they say I love you anyway. I accept you anyway. We are changed. We're saying with love warming us like that, God help us to be grateful and to live rightly.

We need to make certain affirmations about ourselves in regard to dealing with guilt. I'm very special. God's created me in his own image. I'm a unique person. He has me in his thoughts. I'm very special to God, you're very special to God. We need to make another affirmation – I am deeply fallen. We as Christians, if anything can be said about us, if we're living truly with God are honest. We realize what sin has done to us. We've been concerned about sin. That's why we come to the cross of Jesus Christ. We're no longer trying to fake it. We're no longer trying to be good. We're no longer trying to put on an appearance. We have come under the cross. We have identified ourselves as sinners. When I came to Christ I identified myself as a sinner. I recognized the supreme fallen nature of my humanity and the need of the re-constructive work of God almighty. I am deeply fallen. Although I am very special, I am deeply fallen.

But the third affirmation is true – I am deeply loved. Because I know I am deeply loved I know God accepts me. I know God cares for me. I know God will see me through. I know that when I am guilty all I need to do is to come to a loving father and he will not say, Shame, shame. He will not lower my self-esteem. He may discipline me. He may treat me like a son. But he will do it from a context of acceptance and love. I and you are loved of God.

Our heavenly Father, we bring these moments of consideration of truth to a conclusion. We think of the scripture, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are part of that all. Lord, many people have struggled for many years with guilt. There are even people perhaps in this congregation that might assume that I as a minister of yours live in an isolated world where I am protected in stainless steel, free from sin. Yet Lord, you do this marvelous thing. You choose to have your strength manifested in our weakness. We choose to understand that when I am weak then I am strong. You unconditionally accept and love us. Sure you disciplines us but you do something special in us. You don't discipline us and make us feel rejected, ridden with shame, or fearing awesome punishment. Punishment is past. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Help us know that, Lord. Help us in relationship with our children. I especially pray for parents here. Lord, all of our kids need to be corrected. There's not a kid we have that's perfect. But help us in respect to administering discipline to not do it in a way, which attacks that child's self esteem. That causes them to live in mortal terror, causes them to feel dirty and no good, causes them to withdraw from our presence so that the communication lines are cut off. Help us to apply the firm hand of discipline in the loving warmth of embrace so that when our kids need to be corrected we can do it rightly and in a right spirit know in that a wrathful father or mother produces wrathful children. But a father or mother who corrects in the disciplinary way of the Lord produces children who can be rich in self-esteem and regard for themselves and others. Help us to catch a new pattern of behavior if old patterns need to die. Help young people here Lord who struggle who have very idealistic ideas of what is ahead for them. We thank you for all the idealisms of youth. We thank you for the realisms of old age and we pray that there can be a merger in young people between idealism and reality so that when we commit our lives to you in a service such as this and then go away and discover during the week that we have some flaw, we don't think you've abandoned us. We're failing again. God, you must get tired of us coming again, you're going to abandon

us. Lord, your word says that as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth those who love him. You're not withdrawing from us when we have done wrong. You're loving us, you're making us accepted because of Jesus Christ. We thank you for that. We know too that as we understand the deep meaning of acceptance and love it doesn't become a license for wrong behavior. It becomes an encouragement to good behavior. Guilt then performs its real function in our life. Rather than the false function of putting us down and making us feel unworthy. You have made us worthy because of Christ and we thank you. In our Lord's name we pray. Amen.