

Not Guilty!

May 2008

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Over recent months, the Lord has really been working on me in the area of letting go. Letting go of expectations, aspirations, worry and control. He has gently shown me that He is the Lord of my time, as well as my life, and that I can trust Him with each day. That when I start the day out with a plan, then commit it to the Lord and ask that His will be done, then that is exactly what happens - my day is ordered according to His plan, which sometimes looks a lot like my plan, and more often doesn't. But that's ok - because He makes sure the important things I had planned get done, and if they don't get done today, then either they weren't so important after all, or the time for them will come another day.

But just when you're starting to feel more relaxed, the old doubts try to creep back in! ☹ Recently I work early in the morning, and right away my brain started on it's old habit of reminding me of all the things that I haven't done, should have done, need to do, must do, etc etc ad nauseum, until I was weighted with a load of guilt and worry, felt like a total failure, and couldn't get back to sleep. Finally, in frustration, I decided I may as well get up and get started on that long list of things to do. Just as I was about to throw myself into it, a gentle voice suggested I start with a nice cuppa and my Bible. After all, I figured, if I was going to achieve all those myriad of things, then I was going to need His help, so I better start off right and spend some time with Him! ☺

I sat down with my Bible and grabbed a daily devotional, looking for inspiration on where to start reading the Word. As I picked it up, I noticed that the devotional had finished the day before, and I hadn't got a new one yet. Shrugging, I decided I'd just read the devotion for the previous day, as I hadn't used this devotional in a few weeks. I opened it up, turned to the right place - and the title for the devotion leapt off the page:

“Get off the guilt train!”

I didn't really need to read the devotional notes - that title said it all! I knew right away what God was telling me and as the tears came to my eyes and the weight lifted off my shoulders, I found myself profoundly grateful once again for a God who cares about every little detail of my life, who knows when I'm struggling, and is right there with the answer, if only I'll stop and listen!

You see, I'm a busy mother, and I know you are too. In our busy lives, there is always a myriad of things demanding our attention, and never enough time to do them all. It is very easy to become overwhelmed, and burdened with a sense of failure and guilt when we can't do it all. But I think the biggest stumbling block the enemy puts in our way is one of expectations - expecting to get everything done, to do it to a high standard, and to never miss a deadline, forget something important or lose a library book. When we mess up - and we all do! - we feel guilty. But there is a remedy for this guilt - the truth!

The truth is, that we all sin and we all fall short of God's standards (Rom 3:23). Even Paul, the great Apostle, admitted that while he desired to do good, he couldn't always carry it out (Rom 7:18). God knows our weaknesses, and He chooses us anyway. In 2 Cor 4, we are described as carrying the

message of God's power around in jars of clay, so that the world will know that the power comes from God, not us. Maybe you feel like a cracked jar sometimes! But if a cracked jar is filled with the love, power, and beauty of God, then guess what will be visible to the world through the cracks? Pure gold! ☺

In Romans 8:1, the Bible says "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...". The "therefore" refers to the passage before this one, which is Paul's chapter on how he is weak, and unable to do the good he knows he should in his own strength. So, really, in my own words, Romans 8:1 is saying "Because we are weak creatures who WILL stumble and fall, and God knows that, we will not be condemned for our failures because we belong to Christ." Do you get that beloved?! God KNOWS you are weak. He KNOWS you cannot "do it all". He KNOWS that you will mess up, miss the mark, fail. And that you will do it again and again. Nothing you can do will surprise him. And yet, he DOES NOT CONDEMN YOU! He does not accuse you, or pile guilt upon you. Instead, He waits with open arms for you to come to Him, so He can set you free once more.

Of course, if we do something wrong, we need to repent. We may need to work to put it right. We certainly need to ask God to help us not to repeat the same mistakes, and He is faithful. But what I want you to understand today is that when you mess up, and take it to God in repentance, then He faithfully absolves you, and lets you start fresh. His mercies are new every morning!

Also, if you are feeling guilty because you simply cannot do all that you think you should do, know that the guilt does not come from God! It comes either from your own false expectations of what you can or should do, or from the enemy, who is the "accuser of the brethren". The answer to chronic feelings of being overwhelmed and failing is not one single thing, but the place to start is in realizing that you don't have to do it all, and that you don't have to feel guilty when you can't. If you do the best you can each day, with God's help, then you can tell yourself you have nothing to be ashamed of - you're doing the best you can, and you can trust God to gently lead you and teach you how to discern what you really should do, and to help you get it done.

Guilt and regret are worthless emotions - they do nothing but hold us down and hold us back. If you feel those things, then take them to God today, and let Him declare you....

NOT GUILTY!

Love

Cynthia