

A friend of mine told me today that he had asked an acquaintance why he didn't go to church and it came out that the reason was that he felt guilty and therefore didn't like to come to church. There was every reason, in fact, for this guilty feeling: He was a great drinker and spent most of Saturday in the pub and at home he used to threaten and beat his wife. So naturally he didn't want to think about God. It is perfectly true that we will all have to give an account of our lives and

**GUILT**

behaviour to God at His judgment table either here or at the end of the world if we were to live till then. Judgment is inevitable in a well run universe. God is a God of absolute uprightness and purity and naturally this fact worried Augustine and would not feel comfortable amongst God's people in church. But his reluctance to go to church was

**D.B. KNOX**

in fact unnecessary because he forgot that God is a God of forgiveness and if we turn back to Him He will receive us, for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ came for this purpose that He might provide forgiveness for everyone by His taking the penalty of sin on Himself at His death on the cross. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Guilty feelings are true, we ought not to run away from them, but rather have them removed by accepting the complete forgiveness which our Heavenly Father is ready and anxious to extend to all who, like this man, have turned back from the far country willing to confess that they have sinned. God will put away every sin and receive them as His sons and daughters. He gives us His own presence so that we are able to turn away from the old way of sin and walk in His way with joy.

A friend of mine told me today that he had asked an acquaintance why he didn't go to church and it came out that the reason was that he felt guilty and therefore didn't like to come to church. There was every reason, in fact, for this guilty feeling: He was a great drinker and spent most of Saturday in the pub and at home he used to threaten and bash his wife. So naturally he didn't want to think about God. It is perfectly true that we will all have to give an account of our lives and behaviour to God at His judgement table after death, or at the end of the world if we were to live till then. Judgement is inevitable in a well run universe. God is a God of absolute uprightness and purity and naturally this foul mouthed Australian would not feel comfortable amongst God's people in church. But his reluctance to go to church was in fact unreasonable because what he forgot was that God is a God of forgiveness and if we turn back to Him He will receive us, for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ came for this purpose that He might provide forgiveness for everyone by His taking the penalty of sin on Himself at His death on the cross. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life". Guilty feelings are true, we ought not to run away from them, but rather have them removed by accepting the complete forgiveness which our Heavenly Father is ready and anxious to extend to all who, like the prodigal son, come back from the far country willing to confess that they have sinned. God will put away every sin and receive them as His sons and daughters. He gives us His own presence so that we are able to turn away from the old way of sin and walk in His way with joy.

Two or three days ago I met a married woman with two or three children who had had this wonderful experience. She was in the last stages of addiction, she had never been to church since early childhood and she was desperate but she called out in prayer 'God, if you exist help me'. Her prayer was genuine, she meant it and God answered. She told us that she was completely freed from her addiction and through Christian friends was taught about Jesus. She has been restored to her family and her friends, but especially she has been restored to God's friendship through forgiveness in Jesus Christ who died for her and rose again through the power of God, to open up eternity for all who repent and turn back to God in confession and faith. Guilt is real but guilt may be forgiven. We are all guilty before God. We come short of His standard. We should not be too proud to admit this. For if we confess our sins they will be forgiven for Jesus Christ's sake. This is not mere theory but those who put it to the test find it true.

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