**Small Group Study Guide:**

Great Stories of the Old Testament:  ***(8) God’s Provision of Cleansing***

11-13-11 A.M. Zechariah 3

1) Someone has said, “Guilt is the seasoning of everyday life.” According to this

view, many of us walk around feeling like we don’t measure up, that we are dirty and this feeling seasons our every activity. Such a feeling may generate: work-a-holism, gossip, judgmentalism, withdrawl from community,etc. But the feeling is common to everyone, claim these observers. (See the quote, “*Sinful, Independent of Guilt*”)

*Do you agree? Does guilt season our activities? Explain.*

2) Read Zechariah 3:1-3. Bible scholar John Goldingay points out, “The accusation is not false. Joshua is covered in guilt. Symbolically, his clothes are filthy….this word refers to human excrement and vomit.” And yet the Lord rebukes Satan for the condemning word. Zechariah seems to suggest two things at once: Joshua is really guilty, but also really free from Satan’s condemnation.

*How can both things be true? What sort of provision does Joshua need?*

There is such a thing as false guilt. But Joshua, and the nation he represents, is really guilty. Recognizing this guilt seems to be a necessary ingredient to his cleansing.

*Can guilt serve a good purpose?* And if so, what purpose does it serve?

(see quote, *Parallel Between Pain and Guilt)*

And, *Grace Is Not Pain Avoidance)*

2) *“Put a clean turban on his head.”*

In his sermon, ***“That One Sin”,*** Martyn Lloyd Jones talks about how some

Christian’s are “haunted” by “that one sin they did the past which seems so dirty, so “unforgivable”. (See quote sheet, for story about *77 year Blasphemer)*

Lloyd Jones counsels us to apply the verdict of the gospel to that sin. The Lord’s word to Peter in Acts 10:15, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean” is the message we need to preach to our conscience.

*Can you relate to the “one haunting sin”? Do you think we need to use the gospel and argue with our heart/conscience sometimes?*

3) Read the quote: “*Luther’s Advice”.* What do you think about Luther’s advice?

Consider closing your group time writing a letter to Christ in which you confess your sins to Christ-Crucified. After each sin, write down: “Christ, you are my cleansing”.

***Quote Sheet***

***Sinful, Quite Independent of Guilt***

In his book ***The King’s Cross,*** Tim Keller meditates on a statement by the philosopher-novelist Franz Kafka. In one of his journals Kafka wrote, *“The state in which we find ourselves today is sinful, quite independent of guilt.”* In other words, we live in a world now where we don’t believe in judgment, we don’t believe in sin, and yet we still feel that there’s something wrong with us. Though our culture has abandoned the ancient categories of sin and guilt, we still have a profound, inescapable sense that if we were examined we’d be rejected.…Kafka is saying, “You don’t believe in sin, you don’t believe in judgment, you don’t believe in guilt—and yet you know somehow you’re unclean.

--Tim Keller, ***The King’s Cross: The Story of the World In the Life of Jesus, @33%***

***Parallel between Pain and Guilt***

(In a discussion about his partnership with a famous *leprosy* doctor named Paul Brand, Phillip Yancey comments that) The direct parallel between physical pain and guilt became obvious. Both force me to pay attention to parts of my life I would prefer to ignore or cover up…. Guilt reminds us of our place, as moral beings accountable to God…Like everything in our disordered world, guilt is subject to misuse. Instead of serving as a prod for us to deal with a problem, it becomes the problem. False guilt occurs when a person punishes himself or herself for not measuring up to somebody else’s standards---perhaps a parent’s or the church’s or society’s. True guilt occurs when a person does not measure up to God’s standards. Just as my physical body speaks loudly through pain so that I will attend to the injury site, my conscience speaks in the language of guilt so that I will take the steps necessary for healing. The goal in both is to restore health, not to feel bad.

--Phillip Yancey, ***Rumors of Another World,*** 146-147

***Grace Is Not Pain Avoidance***

In a discussion of the parable of the prodigal son, John Ortberg says, “*Grace always and only consists of what will help someone come home to the Father…* A man contemplated having an affair. He said to me, “I’m going to do this. It may be wrong, but God has to give me grace.” Grace is just what that man doesn’t want. He doesn’t want to come to his senses and repent. What he wants is pain-avoidance. Grace is not pain-avoidance, but many people have accepted this warped view of grace. They go on year after year in chronic disobedience, letting anger fly without regard for consequences; allowing sinful patterns to go unchecked…all in the name of grace. (Grace does not mean) having God over a barrel…

--John Ortberg, ***Love Beyond Reason, @58%***

***77 year old blasphemer***

Generally it is some one sin, some big thing. That is the thing to which they constantly hark back. They harp upon it and they cannot leave it..….I remember an old man who was converted and became a Christian at the age of 77, one of the most striking conversions I have ever known. That man had lived a very evil life; there was scarcely anything he had not done at some time or another. But his joy was indescribable at (his first communion)….But the next morning that poor old man had arrived at my house. After from going home from that communion service he had suddenly remembered something that had happened 30 years before. He was with a group of men drinking in a bar and arguing about religion (and he said that) “Jesus Christ was a bastard.” And he felt sure there was no forgiveness for that. This one thing! Ah, yes, he was quite happy to forget about the drinking and the gambling and the sleeping around. That was all right…forgiven. But this blasphemous word cast him down to utter hopelessness.

--Martyn Lloyd Jones, ***Spiritual Depression,*** Sermon: *That One Sin,* **67-68**

***Luther’s Advice***

A man distressed about his sin wrote to Martin Luther. The Reformer… replied: “Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him and say---Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; you set on me what was yours. You became what you were not that I might become what I was not.”

--Martin Luther, quoted in ***Growing in Christ,*** J.I. Packer, Chapter: “Forgiveness of Sins”