

“Go ahead and eat as much meat as you want!”

I was led to think that guilt was the result of the Church and Christianity telling us we are all going to hell.

Guilt is bad, so Christianity must be bad.

In the last century or so, within Europe (and the “West”), thanks to an Englishman (Charles Darwin), many were led to believe in a world without a Creator.

Atheism, Secularism and Liberalism have been in vogue for a while now. So has this reduced guilt - The expected outcome, if guilt indeed came out of the Church’s teachings.

Then why do I still feel so guilty?

Speaking as a woman, I feel guilty if I eat cake. I feel guilty if I rebuke my children. I feel guilty if I go to work. I feel guilty if I stay at home and care for my children.

When I look at my husband (a self-confessed agnostic), he feels guilty if he isn’t working all the time, guilty if he hasn’t spent all his time with the children.

Other people feel guilty if they don’t recycle their waste, if they buy expensive clothes, if they enjoy themselves without their children being around, if they buy something expensive....

It seems to me, that “liberalism” has not liberated the West from guilt.

I read Deuteronomy today, and I was surprised at God, the Creator, encouraging us to “go ahead and eat as much meat as you want!” (God, don’t you know this is not politically correct? And where is the health warning?)

Deuteronomy 12:20-22 (The Message)

“When GOD, your God, expands your territory as he promised he would do, and you say, “I’m hungry for meat,” because you happen to be craving meat at the time, **go ahead and eat as much meat as you want**”

Let’s get a few things straight.

Everything God created, God created for us to enjoy (fruit, meat, clothes that come from plants/animals, sugar, beauty, sex within marriage), without guilt.

Now let’s take a look at the word “guilty” in the Bible.

The Hebrew word for guilt is `avon.

This word first appears in the Bible after Cain kills Abel, when he tells God that his “punishment” (`avon) is too great to bear.

Indeed for the majority of people, their guilt for doing wrong is more unbearable than any punishment.

The Hebrew word *`avon* is synonymous with iniquity (perversity, depravity), guilt (guilt of iniquity) and punishment for iniquity (consequence of).

Guilt therefore comes from sin, as a punishment for the sin that is in man. Guilt (like sin) is in man's DNA.

Thankfully *`avon* is the same word that Isaiah uses in Isaiah 53:11 "... By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their *iniquities* (*`avon*)".

Jesus bore our *`avon* - our iniquities, our punishment, and our guilt.

Jesus did it so that we wouldn't be punished, by feeling guilty.

So don't feel guilty for enjoying a cake, or when you are enjoying yourself, or having a day off, or if you spend money (when God has "expanded your territory" or made it affordable to you) to buy something nice. (Don't use this as an excuse to splash on credit cards – wait till God gives you the money).

The first reference to 'guilty' in the New Testament is in Matthew 5:21-22 (NASB)

"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER ' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be *liable* to the court.' "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be *guilty* before the court ; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be *guilty* before the supreme court ; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be *guilty* enough to go into the fiery hell.

The Greek word for "guilty" or "liable" is *Enochos*, which is defined "guilty, worthy of punishment, bound or under obligation".

In the above scripture Jesus reminds us of the Holiness of God - that His standards are way higher than the standards of any human court. That God sees our heart, and not just the result of a sinful heart – e.g. murder.

Jesus warns us in Mark 3:29 (NASB) "but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is *guilty* of an eternal sin" - that there is no forgiveness at all for blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul warns us to examine our hearts, when we come to the communion table, and to be in awe of God.

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 (The Message) "Anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Master irreverently is *like part of the crowd that jeered and spit on him* at his death. Is that the kind of "remembrance" you want to be part of? Examine your motives, test your heart, come to this meal in holy awe".

The word “Enochos” is used when the writer of Hebrews tells us that through the fear of death, we were once subject to slavery to the devil.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NASB) “...(Jesus) ... partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were *subject* (Enochos) to slavery all their lives”.

When we begin to feel guilty, we become *subject* to slavery (to sin), once more. (*Now don't feel guilty for feeling guilty!*)

Indeed, everyone who is not in Christ is subject to sin, guilt and fears death (because of subsequent punishment) - all their lives.

Liberalism cannot set men free of guilt; neither can atheism, nor secularism.

Indeed it is only Christ (our Redeemer, the Word of God) who sets us free from guilt.

However Jesus is reliant on His Priesthood (you and me) to instruct people on the earth correctly about guilt, and not erroneously as the Church has been guilty of doing in the past.

God says of the Levites (priests) in Malachi 2:6, "True instruction was in his mouth ...he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from *iniquity*" – *'avon or guilt*.

This was the role of the Levitical priesthood, and it is now our role as His Royal Priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), to turn many back from sin, guilt and punishment by being reliable examples of the freedom we have in Christ – liberated from sin, and guilt.

We should instruct people correctly - not to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. We should instruct Christians (as I am doing now) not to feel guilty for enjoying themselves, and to come to the communion table with reverence.