

The Pitfall of Self-Condensation and Guilt

By Daniel Orona

One of the biggest pitfalls that many young Christians run into is one of self-condemnation. When I say young, I really mean people new to the faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ. Self-condemnation is what happens as we try to overcome our flesh and our temptations, and we fail. This more than anything else can derail a new relationship with Christ. It can make the new convert to think they are not worthy, have failed Christ so badly He won't or can't forgive you and make you run away from God scared of what He will do. Of all the things mentioned here so far, the mistake you made is least concerning. Many Christians think that God's grace is only sufficient for past sins, but His grace and mercy is sufficient for us for our entire lives. When we make a mistake rather than run from Him, we should run to Him.

The apostle John said in 1 John 2:1-3, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if you anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." John explains here that Christ is there for us even when we make a mistake or else, he would not have said, "if anyone sins". When we come to Christ, we come as we are. Remember He is our High Priest, and it is His responsibility to present us faultless. Jude 24 says, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy"

While it is His responsibility to clean us up, we always have a choice of whether we will follow His will or not. When we choose to not let Him Lord over our lives, that is when the real issue comes in. He has an expectation that we will continue to foster the relationship we have committed to. He told Israel in Deuteronomy 4:23-24, "Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." Under grace when we stop trying to foster the relationship is when God will turn us over to ourselves and our own flesh. Romans 1:18-22 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."

The difference here is that the people subject to the things just mentioned forgot their relationship and left it. God's grace and mercy are more than sufficient for those of us that are committed to our relationship yet struggle with certain things. Sometimes God will deliver us instantly from the weights and sin that so easily beset us, but other times it's a gradual experience to get the victory. Regardless of the path that God has for us, we know that He is able to change us even though we are broken and make mistakes. Hebrews, 7:24-25 says, "But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." God does not expect you to be perfect and changed instantly. When you accept Christ and become a believer, your life is changed, and it is the beginning of a journey into His likeness that only He can bring to pass. Paul begs us in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." We offer our lives back to Him. Christ has made us Holy and acceptable, but we must give him our life to do what He will with it.

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I'll leave you with this. Paul said that when He was a child he spoke like a child, but when He became a man, he put away childish things. When you first come to Christ, you are a baby in Christ and a child. You haven't reached full maturity. Think of it in terms of toddler. A toddler is just learning to walk and what do they do? They fall. There are two options. They can sit there and cry or they can dust themselves off and get back up and keep walking. We are the same way when we sin or make a mistake. We can either say, well I'm not good enough, so I'll stay right here and cry about how bad I am. Or we can get back up ask God to forgive us and move on with Christ. The best thing is that even mature Christians make mistakes and the same forgiveness that was for us when were new to the faith still stands when you reach maturity.

Don't allow your own self-condemnation and self-pity to rob you of a tremendous relationship in Christ. Paul even at the end of his life said, "I am the chief of sinners." So are we. If we weren't Christ would not have died. Don't let any doctrine of devils come in and tell you that because you sinned you are shunned from God. We have a mediator in Christ that bore all our sin, past, present and future. It's about staying close to Him and building that relationship. Now, this does not give us a free pass to go and do whatever we want. Remember above about those that have given up in their relationships. But this does mean that when we trip and fall, and we will, we have an advocate to the Father who is faithful and just to forgive us. 1 John 1:8-10 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." When you fall, run to him and not away and don't fall into self-condemnation.