

*The Articles of*  
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# Being Free From Guilt

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Some things in life are certain; we all face into temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13), and we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). In James we're told about the nature of temptation and sin, and how the former begets the latter: *"each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death"* (James 1:14-15).

Even for the godly person, sin brings guilt. When the wrong in one's life is rectified, that guilty feeling should cease. The sacrifice and intercession of Jesus makes this possible. He frees us from the guilt and penalty of sin.

The apostle Paul calls this to the memory of the church at Corinth in his first letter to them. In chapter 6:9-10, he records a kind of grocery list of sins, some of the vilest nature. He concludes by saying in verse 11, *"such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God..."* Those who had been homosexuals, were homosexuals no longer, and so forth. Not only was Paul warning them against relapsing into their former sins, but he was also telling them to move forward.

After all, Paul himself was no stranger to a guilt-ridden past. He was party to the stoning of Steven, watching the coats of those who killed him (Acts 22:20), and as a Jew, he heartily persecuted the early church. As a Christian, Paul did not allow guilt about his past to hinder his service to God in the present. In Philippians 3:13-14 he writes, *"forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* You can't drive forward looking in the rearview mirror, and neither can you grow fixated on the past. We must trust in God's forgiveness, and with it, forgive ourselves as well. Just think how ineffective Paul would have been if his boldness as a Christian were compromised by insecurities about his former life. Aside from attacks on his apostleship, he also faced initial hostility and distrust by the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26), and while he uses a hyperbole in calling himself the *"foremost of sinners"* (1 Timothy 1:15), he was always *"pressing on,"* not dwelling on what lay behind.

Returning once more to 1 Corinthians 6:11, we must also realize that temptations do not define us. Someone has to fornicate to be a fornicator, not simply be tempted. The Hebrew writer states in Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus can sympathize with us in our temptations because as a man He was tempted Himself, yet without sin.

Therefore, we must not let temptations discourage us or allow Satan to convince us that a temptation is our destiny. Although he brings us the seeds, we are the ones who decide whether we plant them or discard them. Remember, *"no temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it"* (1 Corinthian 10:13).

## *The Gospel Fire*

While some things in life are certain, our temptations and past sins as determinants of what we become are not. We, too, then must be found daily pressing on, waiting until that day our hope is realized and we dwell with God in glory forever.

*-April 2008*

# Whats In A Name?

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The English poet and playwright, William Shakespeare, once posed the question, “What’s in a name?” And, although the quote’s context in the play *Romeo and Juliet* is speaking to the literal naming of things, the question in and of itself is an interesting one.

Almost no survey class taught over the Old Testament is complete without at least mentioning the meaning behind the names of such men as Abraham “*father of many*”, Moses “*one who draws out*”, Joshua “*Yahweh is salvation*” and the like. The meaning of many of these names and others are found in concordances and commentaries and oftentimes there is a parallel with the person and their name such as with Abraham in reference to the promise God makes with him (Genesis 17:4-5). There are exceptions to this of course. Cain is believed to mean “*spear*” or some variation thereof, but to Bible students everywhere the name Cain is synonymous with murder. While many were named in the Bible for specific reasons, recall the account in Matthew 1:20-23 of the angel of the Lord telling Joseph to name the Messiah “Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins,” and to fulfill that which was written by the prophet Isaiah, there are today parents, whom at their own prompting, will seek to name their children things that embody strength of character, reliance on God, faithfulness and truth, and stay away from names that convey the opposite. Just think, do you know anyone named Judas? Or Jezebel? After all, who would ever want their son or daughter associated with such people?

With this in mind, what does the writer of Proverbs 22:1 mean when he says, “*A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver and gold.*” Does he mean a literal name? To what degree does the name itself speak to the character of the one bearing it? Again in Ecclesiastes 7:1 we’re told, “*A good name is better than a good ointment.*” My name is Christopher, which is of Greek origin meaning Christ-bearer. But, it’s my actions and lifestyle that determine whether such a description fits me. So, to return to the question, “What’s in a name,” the answer is very little just by itself.

In relation to the verses from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, instead of a name in the literal sense, think reputation. A good reputation is to be highly valued. It’s listed among the things an elder should have in 1 Timothy 3:7 and is proven time and again throughout the scriptures as an effective way of spreading God’s word. Where there is a truly good reputation, there is a good example. Simply consider the effects various kings had on their nations, Israel and Judah.

The power of an example should never be underrated. First Corinthians 15:33 says, “*Do not be deceived: bad company corrupts good morals.*” Also, “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough*” (Galatians 5:9). Both verses highlight the constant need for good examples in our lives. As Christians we carry His name and must always strive to be agents of positive spiritual change and growth in lives of those around us. This call for a

good reputation knows no age limit. In Luke 2:52, the twelve-year-old Jesus is said to have “*kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*”

With all of this said, how can someone go about gaining a *good name*? While such a topic could fill an entire book, let me suggest just a few major things from the scriptures. Consider Psalm 15. David starts off by asking God, “*Who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?*” The answer is one who lives with **integrity**, works **righteousness**, speaks **truth** (v. 2), and **refuses to slander** or do evil to others (v. 3). One who disapproves of those who do evil and **honors those who serve God**. He is someone who **keeps his word** even when it isn’t convenient to do so (v. 4). He is the kind of person that **doesn’t take advantage of others** and while not perfect, is **consistent** in living a godly life (v. 5).

Regardless the kind of name you’ve been making for yourself up to this point, God offers you a clean slate: the gift of forgiveness and the present of today. Change and be committed to serving Him and a good name will follow. The kind of name that people speak as one who encourages, lifts up and proclaims the truth; the kind of name that is needed as we march side by side onward to Zion.

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