

## Doctrine of Guilt

1. One of the greatest testimonies to the fact that man did not evolve from animals is a sense of guilt for the violation of a moral code of conduct. Only because man is made in the image of God can such a facet of the soul exist.
2. A main Hebrew word for guilt is '*asham* (aw-sham') and speaks of a feeling of shame.
3. The shame of guilt can be shallow or acute depending upon the moral sensibility of the individual. Some people have a tender conscience while others have a hardened conscience.
  - *Zechariah 11:5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.*
4. It is good to confess one's guilt when it is an authentic confession. The brothers of Joseph confessed they were guilty of having mistreated their brother Joseph many years earlier.
  - *Genesis 42:21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.*
5. Not only is it good to confess guilt, it is commanded.
  - *Leviticus 5:5 And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things [of violating the Law], that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing:*
  - *Numbers 5:6 Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty; 7 Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed.*
6. God has vowed to punish the guilty or those who have transgressed His Moral Code. God keeps His word. This is a moral universe. The Lord does not wait until eternity to judge individuals and punish them in time as well as in eternity.
  - *Exodus 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*
7. Under the Law, God provided a covering for guilt through the sin offering if sins of omission had been committed.

- *Leviticus 4:13 And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty; 14 When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.*
8. The sins of omission, called in *Scripture* sins of ignorance (Leviticus 4-5), are probably better understood to be sins of human frailty repented of and for which an offering could be made.
9. An example of a sin of human frailty is revealed in those who entered into a marriage outside the covenant.
- *Ezra 10:19 And they gave their hands [pledged] that they would put away [divorce] their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.*
10. Sins of ignorance or frailty are contrasted in the *Bible* with presumptuous sins or high handed sins for which there was no offering provided to cover the transgression. Notice that people of the covenant and people not under the covenant are equally held responsible for their actions.
- *Numbers 15:30 But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.*
11. Examples of presumptuous sins are provided.
- Planned murder. *Exodus 21:14 But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.*
  - Acting contrary to the known will of God. *Deuteronomy 1:43 So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill.*
  - Failure to submit to priestly authority. *Deuteronomy 17:12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.*
  - Giving out False Prophecies. *Deuteronomy 18:22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

- Becoming ceremonially unclean. *Leviticus 5:2 Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or a carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things, and if it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty.*
  - Making an oath. *Leviticus 5:4 Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these.*
  - Idolatry. *Ezekiel 22:4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries.*
10. The divine way to recover from presumptuous sinning is to hear the Word of the Lord, allow the fear of God to make tender the heart and then cease the activity that is known to be against the mind of God.
- *Deuteronomy 17:13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.*
11. Social rank in society does not alleviate the guilt of human frailties or the responsibility for offering an acceptable offering to God.
- Leaders must offer a sin offering. *Leviticus 4:22 When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty; 23 Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish:*
  - Those who are led must offer a sin offering. *Leviticus 4:27 And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; 28 Or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned.*
12. Ignorance and human frailty cannot be excuses for violating the Law of God. A soul is guilty even if society and conscience calls right what God calls wrong.
- *Leviticus 5:17 And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.*
13. When a person is found guilty, it is good to feel shame. But, whether or not shame is felt restitution is to be made when the transgression involves someone else. Every effort must be made to right whatever wrong has been done.

- *Leviticus 6:4 Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found,*

14. While God will not, indeed cannot clear the guilty, He can and will show great mercy and forgiveness based upon gospel repentance, confession, restitution and cessation of the transgression.

- *Numbers 14:18 The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.*

15. The consequences of personal guilt can have far reaching effects. God reserves the right to punish the sins of the parents as far as the third and fourth generation.

- *Exodus 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;*
- *Exodus 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*
- *Numbers 14:18 The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.*
- *Deuteronomy 5:9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,*

16. As some actions induce guilt, other actions, even violent in nature, shall produce no guilt such as punishment in the pursuit of justice. Those who avenge the death of a person murdered should not feel guilty.

- *Numbers 35:27 And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood:*

17. While there should be no pleasure in capital punishment, the guilty should be put to death.

- *Numbers 35:31 Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.*

18. Care should be taken to avoid incurring guilt such as being guilty of a false accusation.

- *Proverbs 30:10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.*

20. The Pharisees were masters at diverting a true sense of guilt by justifying the unjustifiable and finding nuances in the Law where none existed.

- *Matthew 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. 16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! 17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.*

21. Sometimes, as with Christ, there is a miscarriage of justice and the innocent are declared to be guilty of a crime against the state and worthy of death.

- *Matthew 26:66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.*
- *Mark 14:64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.*

22. Every person, apart from the person of Jesus Christ, is guilty of having violated the Moral Law of God. The plight of man becomes the opportunity for the power of God to be made manifest in saving mercy and grace.

- *Romans 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*
- *James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

23. Those who partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, with unconfessed sins, are judged in the sight of God as having part in the murder of Jesus Christ.

- *1 Corinthians 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

24. Commenting on this passage Matthew Henry notes the following.

He [Christ] lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving unworthily, of prostituting this institution as they did, and using it to the purposes of feasting and faction, with intentions opposite to its design, or a temper of mind altogether unsuitable to it; or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, while they are there professedly renewing and confirming their covenant with God.

1. It is great guilt which such contract. They shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (v. 27), of violating this sacred institution, of despising his body and blood. They act as if they counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing, Hebrews 10:29. *“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”* They profane the institution, and in a manner crucify their Saviour over again. Instead of being cleansed by his blood, they are guilty of his blood.

2. It is a great hazard which they run: They eat and drink judgment to themselves, v. 29. They provoke God, and are likely to bring down punishment on themselves. No doubt but they incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to damnation, to spiritual judgments and eternal misery. Every sin is in its own nature damning; and therefore surely so heinous a sin as profaning such a holy ordinance is so. And it is profaned in the grossest sense by such irreverence and rudeness as the Corinthians were guilty of.

But fearful believers should not be discouraged from attending at this holy ordinance by the sound of these words, as if they bound upon themselves the sentence of damnation by coming to the table of the Lord unprepared. Thus sin, as well as all others, leaves room for forgiveness upon repentance; and the Holy Spirit never intended this passage of scripture to deter serious Christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this advantage of it, and robbed good Christians of their choicest comforts.

The Corinthians came to the Lord's table as to a common feast, not discerning the Lord's body—not making a difference or distinction between that and common food, but setting both on a level: nay, they used much more indecency at this sacred feast than they would have done at a civil one. This was very sinful in them, and very displeasing to God, and brought down his judgments on them: *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* Some were punished with sickness, and some with death.

***Special Note,***

A careless and irreverent receiving of the Lord's Supper may bring temporal punishments. Yet the connection seems to imply that even those who were thus punished were in a state of favour with God, at least many of them: They were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world, v. 32. Now divine chastening is a sign of divine love: Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth (Hebrews 12:6), especially with so merciful a purpose, to prevent their final condemnation. *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”.*

In the midst of judgment, God remembers mercy: he frequently punishes those whom he tenderly loves. It is kindness to use the rod to prevent the child's ruin. He will visit such iniquity as this under consideration with stripes, and yet make those stripes the evidence of his loving-kindness. Those were in the favour of God who yet so highly offended him in this instance, and brought down judgments on themselves; at least many of them were; for they were punished by him out of fatherly good-will, punished now that they might not perish for ever.

*Special Note,*

It is better to bear trouble in this world than to be miserable for eternity. And God punishes his people now, to prevent their eternal woe.