

## LifeGroup Discussion Questions

Passage: Paul & Judas

July 12, 2020

### **Overview:**

On the cross Jesus took the entire wrath of God for our sins. Romans 5:8-9 reads: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." It is by the blood of Jesus that we are saved from the wrath of God. Imagine for a moment all of God's wrath poured into a cup. It was on the cross that Jesus took that cup and drank the entire amount and then turned it upside down to show that it was completely empty. There is not a drop remaining for us to absorb. If this is the case why do some of us walk around full of guilt?

Living with guilt means there is a lack of understanding of the power of the cross. On one hand we say that Jesus paid it all, but on the other we want to continue paying for our sins ourselves. It is as if somehow we have made our standards higher than God's standards. Continuously living with guilt can make you feel as if you are earning your relationship with God. After all doesn't society teach us that nothing is free? How can just the death of Jesus pay for all the sins of all people throughout all time?

This line of thinking might lead you to some sense of self-righteousness as you continue to punish yourself for past sins. But it basically is built on the premise that the cross isn't enough. It was on the cross that God did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. There is no amount of guilt you can carry around that will give you a right relationship with God.

There are usually two types of guilt we deal with on a daily basis. For lack of better terminology I will call the first one corrective guilt. This is one you experience when you do something you know is wrong and then feel guilty afterwards. Corrective guilt involves repenting and asking for forgiveness. Once this is done then the feeling of guilt stops. A second type of guilt we deal with is continuous self-inflicted guilt. This comes from either real or imagined events. This is when we continue to hang on to guilt from past sins after repenting and seeking forgiveness. This type of guilt can be very destructive in your relationship with God.

It comes from a real event in your life. This guilt can result in a sin you committed, but don't think God's forgiveness is enough. You feel like you need to be punished beyond what Jesus took on the cross. This type of guilt can not only lead you to sadness but if carried long enough it can lead to despair. You can lose all sense of joy and hope, all the while think you are doing God a favor by further

punishing yourself for your past sin. This type of guilt can also come from imagined events. It is so twisted it doesn't even have to be something you actually did. You can conceive a scenario in your mind where you have the need to feel guilty to be right before God. If you don't feel guilty then for some reason you feel like you are not worthy to have a relationship with God. Your relationship with God isn't built on the cross, but is based on how guilty you feel.

There are two men in the Bible that took two very different approaches to their sin. On the road to Damascus the Apostle Paul was confronted by Jesus for all of his hostility to the church. In the book of Acts it states that Paul was ravaging the early church. Paul was having early Christians killed and thrown into prison just for believing in Jesus. Paul's guilt over his past led him to be one of the greatest missionaries of all times. The Apostle Paul became God's tool to bring the Gospel message to the Gentiles.

When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned to die he changed his mind (Matthew 27:3). His feeling of guilt led him to return the thirty pieces of silver and go hang himself. For Judas there was no amount of forgiveness bigger than the sin he committed. All he had was guilt and despair.

In Acts 2 when the Apostle Peter was finished preaching his first sermon it says the crowd was cut to the heart. They instantly felt guilt for their sins. This led them to ask the question, "What shall we do to be saved?" The answer to this question is the same today as it was back then. Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior there is no further payment needed!

### **Bible Study:** Various

1. Read Romans 8:1-2. If you are in Christ there is no condemnation. Why do some believers feel the need to condemn themselves when they have been forgiven by Jesus?
2. Read Galatians 5:1. Do you feel like you have been set free? In what ways does carrying guilt make you feel like you are carrying a yoke of slavery?
3. How does feeling guilty make some people think they are earning a relationship with God?
4. We obey God out of our love for Him not to receive love from Him. This is one of the biggest differences between Christianity and other religions. Other religions feel they need to earn their gods' love. How does knowing God loves you help free you from feeling guilty?
5. What does feeling guilty accomplish?
6. How would you explain the difference between guilt leading to repentance and guilt leading to self-condemnation to someone who isn't a believer?

7. Is there an area of your life where you still carry guilt? Take some time right now and pray for forgiveness and the freedom that come from knowing Jesus.

**BONUS:** Since dealing with guilt can become debilitating, I felt the need to provide another resource. The following is taken from <http://bradhambrick.com/shamesermon/>. There is more on the website than what I put below.

### **What Is the Difference Between Guilt, Shame, and Regret?**

Are these three words – guilt, shame, and regret – synonyms? Let's start by exploring *how guilt, shame, and regret are similar*. Each is unpleasant. There is a natural instinct to want to hide or cover up. Frequently we are embarrassed to admit or want to talk about any of these emotions. There is a sense of being dirty, damaged, or bad in the midst of these experiences. We have a tendency to believe that these emotions define us (at least to some degree).

Each emotion is triggered by similar types of events. There was something wrong that happened and we were part of that event(s). Socially, the triggering event is believed to carry a stigma that would make us less acceptable. Memory of the triggering event is very "sticky" in our memory and hard to let go.

I would argue that these emotions, when rightly understood and our experiences are rightly interpreted, are three distinct emotions and the gospel speaks to each in unique ways. At the risk of over-simplifying, let's explore *how guilt, shame, and regret are different*.

**Guilt** is a sense of legitimate condemnation in response to personal sin and says, "I did something wrong."

**Shame** is a sense of illegitimate condemnation in response to suffering and says, "I am marred or inherently unacceptable."

**Regret** is a form of grief for a reasonable good circumstance that was never realized and says, "I wish things had gone differently."

**We rightly feel guilt** when we lose our temper, misrepresent the truth, fail to fulfill a promise, neglect a responsibility, dishonor an authority figure, make a crude joke, take advantage of someone, or fail to represent Christ accurately in some other way. If we do not feel guilty for these things, our conscience is seared (at least to some degree).

**We feel shame** (among other emotions) when we have been abused (physically, verbally, or sexually), are limited by chronic pain, have been betrayed by a spouse or trusted friend, lose our job, are helpless after a catastrophe, or experience other hardships that are not

the result of personal sin. If we “own” these emotions in the same way we own guilt, then we feel a false sense of condemnation.

**We feel regret** when a parent died when we were young, an illness prevents us from pursuing a dream, an opportunity does not come our way, or some other reasonable and legitimate desire is unfulfilled. If we interpret these experiences as God’s rejection or a reflection of our value, then we over-personalize these events as if they carried a message about us from God; we treat regret like an insult instead of a hardship.

The **gospel answers guilt with forgiveness**. Guilt leaves a moral stain on our soul which the blood of Jesus washes clean and then replaces with His own righteousness. Sin does not become our identity because the gospel transforms us from rebels against God to ambassadors for God.

The **gospel answers shame with comfort and truth to counter lies of suffering**. Shame leaves no stain, but traps us in the confusion of suffering’s lies. The gospel patiently cuts through those lies of shame and offers us the freedom that comes with the identity of being a dearly loved child of God. As a loving Father, God is tender in removing lies of suffering knowing that we often cling to them like a dysfunctional security blanket.

The **gospel answers regret with the assurance of that we are in the providence of a good God**. The gospel reveals a God who transforms the unfortunate events of life. It does not force or rush us to call painful or unfortunate things good, but it does reveal the character of a God who redeems the darkest moments (Jesus on Calvary) for His glory and our good.