

EPHESIANS: THE CHURCH FROM START TO FINISH
"Part III: Savoring God's Work To Conquer Our GUILT"
(Ephesians 1:7-14)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Over a week ago, a high school freshman in Springfield, Oregon took a gun and shot 52 rounds of bullets at his classmates in the school cafeteria. A number were injured and one died quickly. He committed this act only after apparently killing his parents. Now that he is in captivity, he is wearing paper clothing and is under a suicide watch lest he kill **himself**. Why? He undoubtedly feels **GUILTY!**

(2) A Christian shared with me this week of some sleepless nights he's experienced over being charged as having been **guilty** of wronging other believers! His struggle was whether or not to **believe** he was *truly* **GUILTY!**

(3) A week ago, while witnessing to a very needy party, I discovered that the unbeliever, though **wanting** to accept Christ, failed to **make** the decision right away because of feeling that the record of past sins was so **great** that Christ wouldn't **want** to save her! Thus, **GUILT** was keeping this one from believing in Christ!

(4) This problem is an ancient, universal one. The Greek Epicurean philosophers (300 B.C.) felt that the chief source of mental pain was fear of the supernatural. The Epicureans tried to eliminate that fear by focusing only on pleasure, and thereby to find serenity of soul. (Edward M. Burns, Western Civilizations, p. 196)

However, both the Epicureans and their counterparts, the fatalistic Stoics felt that the efforts of man to find salvation from hardship and evil are ultimately futile. (Ibid., Burns, p. 194)

The Bible refers to this struggle as the conflict of man's God-given **conscience** to reveal his **guilt** before a righteous God who stands ready to **judge** man's *sin*, Romans 2:14-15, 16. Paul writes: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

How do we handle the fear of accountability to a supernatural GOD for feeling GUILTY?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Whether it's me, a friend or ancient philosophers, CAN we overcome our nagging sense of guilt?! Can I EVER be sure I will MAKE it to heaven, or KNOW God holds NOTHING against me?!"

I. When man sinned, he fell under a helpless bondage to GUILT!

- A. After Adam and Even sinned, they **hid** because of **guilt**, Gen. 3:6-8.
- B. They tried to explain away their sin to God but could not escape His **insight**, so God punished them with pain and death, 3:9-13, 15-19.
- C. Since God had put man in charge of His world at creation (Gen. 1:26), man's sin led to God's thrusting that world under a curse, Gen. 3:17-18
- D. Cain, Adam's son **tried** to **impress** God by **religious ritual** without obeying God, but his ritual **failed** to Cain's **guilty** dismay, Gen. 4:3, 5.
- E. With the presence of a God-given **conscience**, man has ever since experienced a painful *sense* of **guilt** that the most respected of this world's philosophers have failed effectively to relieve, Rom. 2:14-15.

II. Yet, in great unmerited favor, God has so worked to conquer man's SIN that He ALSO can CONQUER his GUILT, Eph. 1:7-12!

- A. Paul wrote that the death of Christ provides "redemption" for us, Eph. 1:7a. This "redemption" is described in Scripture as follows:
 1. Studies of Greek words reveal "redemption" to be an intervention of an **outside person** to pay a price to release a **helpless party** from **bondage**, Morris, Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, p. 58.
 2. Thus, through His death, Christ paid a price for fallen man that man was otherwise helpless to pay in order to free man from bondage!
 3. From what Christ **released** men is bondage to what **causes** guilt:
 - a. Christ released men from the **curse** of God's **law** so that men no longer are under the law's **condemnation**, Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:19
 - b. Christ also released men from a need for futile **legalistic rituals** so that they could live by God's **grace**, 1 Peter 1:18-19.
- B. God also used the Cross to appease His wrath against sin so that He might **fully forgive** men of all their sins, Eph. 1:7b; 1 Jn. 2:2!

- C. Then, to take care of sin's **effects on nature**, God plans to bring all things under Christ's Headship via the cross: Paul teaches it was God's once-hidden plan along with everything else to cause **nature** to be released from its curse in the coming Kingdom, Eph. 1:10; Rom. 8:21.
- D. Going even **further**, Paul revealed how God is going to **counter** the effects of man's **loss of oversight** through his fall into sin, Eph. 1:11f:
 - 1. When man sinned and nature came under the curse, man lost his lofty position of **oversight** assigned to him at creation, Gen. 1:26.
 - 2. So, in great **unmerited favor**, God will give the believer a heavenly **inheritance** to **oversee** for which he is predestined, Eph. 1:11-12.
- E. **Beyond** this, Paul describes the **salvation security** God installed for the believer so that he might **acquire** that **inheritance** (1 Pet. 1:3-4):
 - 1. When one believes in Christ, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit as an **earnest**, or God's **pledge** that his **salvation will be completed** at the "redemption of the body", the Rapture, Ep. 1:13-14; Rom. 8:23
 - 2. However, (a) some teach that the adverb "after" in the KJV (Eph. 1:13) means one must **seek a post-salvation "second blessing"** to be "sealed", "filled" and "anointed" by "receiving" the Holy Spirit (Asa Mahan, The Baptism of the Holy Ghost, p. iv). (b) Some **also** say that **post-salvation sin breaks** that seal so that a Christian can **lose** his salvation and go to hell (Walv., Major Bible Themes, p. 220).
 - 3. Yet, Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 show these ideas need correcting:
 - a. In Eph. 1:13, the word "after" does **not exist** in the Greek, & "believed" is an aorist participle, translated properly as "having believed" (UBS Greek N.T., p. 665). One is **logically** sealed **because** he **believes**, so he is sealed the **instant he believes!**
 - b. Also, Eph. 4:30 shows sin **cannot break** the Holy Spirit's seal: the order not to grieve the Spirit is in the present tense with a subjunctive negation, meaning to **stop** an act that is **currently in progress**, Ibid., UBS Grk. N.T., p. 673. These folk were sealed **while sinning**, so Paul told them to "**stop grieving** the Holy Spirit . . . whereby you **are** sealed unto the day of redemption."
 - 4. Thus, (a) the **instant** one believes in Christ's saving gospel, God (a) **permanently and unconditionally seals** him with the Spirit, **pledging** thereby to get him to heaven to gain his inheritance!

Lesson Application: *If one feels guilty due to failure to fulfill religious rituals, or to meet God's perfect righteousness, or attain to what he or others think he OUGHT to be and do, he is FREE of ALL such GUILT as GOD sees it IF (1) He believes in Christ for salvation, and at the INSTANT he does so! (2) Now, if a believer later violates Scripture, he sins (1 John 3:4), BUT he thereby loses ONLY his fellowship with God while the Spirit's seal STAYS, for his SALVATION is UNCONDITIONALLY secured (Eph. 4:30). He can be restored to fellowship with God by confession of sin, 1 Jn. 1:9! (3) Also, if a believer is tempted to feel guilty by what he or another party SAYS is sin, but if SCRIPTURE clears him of that charge, he can afford to feel guilt FREE, Isa. 8:20; Rom. 3:4a!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

I remember seeing Hal Lindsay, author of Late Great Planet Earth interviewing a former Satanist worshiper in a Christian film on the occult. The woman had once belonged to a Satanic cultic church in San Francisco, and he was talking to her with her back to the camera. She feared being identified and thus losing her life by others still in the cult, and so had chosen to talk with her back to the audience.

This lady reported how she witnessed the human sacrifice of her girlfriend's sixth month old baby! She reported how that the power of Satan was so strongly present at the time that the baby didn't even cry from pain while being killed on the altar. She had then only regretted that she also hadn't had a child to give for such a sacrifice!

However, following the ceremony, when the false, deceptive euphoria left, her conscience plagued her night and day.

When she found Christ as her Savior, she reported to Hal Lindsay on camera that she knew from Scripture that she had been forgiven. Colossians 1:13-14 says: "(God) hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins:" This woman had found peace through the news of God's Word and the indwelling Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

In a very calm voice, I recall hearing this woman tell Hal Lindsay that God had given her confidence that her sin for participating in the sacrifice of that baby had been completely forgiven. She was now a new creature in Christ, bound for heaven, and cleansed of all unrighteousness! The **calm** in that woman's voice I will never forget, and it is a sure witness of the power of God to end **GUILT!**

For a woman who had participated in a Satanic cult infant sacrifice to find such peace of mind through Christ, and that for an incredibly horrible sin is to demonstrate the power of God to forgive and give freedom from ALL GUILT!

Like this former Satanist, we need to turn to Christ, finding His cleansing and sustainment to handle GUILT of the past!