

## **Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship**

### ***Lesson Th224-15 God's Law: Condemnation***

The tall Maasai warrior stood in the back of the tent with his best friend. They each wore a simple blanket wrapped around them and their dreadlocks were stained with red dye. The evangelist preached about some strange god who had the power to heal. The warrior had a severe problem with his leg. Neither the doctors in the city nor the witch doctors of his tribe had been able to cure it. His friend had heard that if they found the people who cried when they prayed, that their god could heal him. This is what had brought the young men down out of the Maasai territory into the city of Arusha.

The preacher completed his sermon and invited people forward for prayer. The tall warrior hobbled to the altar carrying his spear and war club. We can only imagine what the evangelist must have been thinking as these two Maasai men came to the altar. Neither were expecting much, but, nothing else had worked. When the evangelist placed his hands upon him, the warrior's thigh bone suddenly went ice cold and then red hot. When the heat had faded, the warrior's pain was completely gone. He was healed.

Both young men gave their hearts to God that day and came back the next to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Upon returning to their village, they were immediately confronted with the sinful lifestyle of their fellow warriors. Their hearts became convicted of this open sin and they realized that they could no longer remain Maasai warriors. Now according to Maasai tradition, a warrior completes five years of service to the tribe. After that they have their heads shaved by their mothers in a ceremony making them junior elders. But that was still a few years away. The two young men knew that they could not continue living in sin. So, they did the unthinkable. They shaved their own heads and left the warriors' village to go live on a mountain away from the tribe.

This set the entire tribe into conflict. What they had done had never been done before in tribal history. Their mothers were deeply shamed. Their villages were deeply shamed. Now the young Maasai who had been healed was the eldest son of his mother. She was the number two wife to his father. This made her shame all the greater. To try and recover some honor, his mother went to him and pled with him to return home. But the young man refused. He would not live among his family and offer sacrifices upon the rock in the center of his compound. Instead he would remain on the side of the mountain. There he could continue to worship the true God and preach to the mountain people.

His mother's anger soon turned to rage when he told her that he had married one of the mountain girls. She insisted that he take one or two Maasai girls as wives. When he told her that as a Christian, he would have only one wife, his mother's anger grew violent. She began to beat her own belly and curse her son. "I curse the day you were born!" She screamed, "You have brought great shame upon me, your father, and our tribe."

Indeed, the young warrior had broken the tribal traditions and had brought shame. Over the next few years the tribe would try to kill him in an effort to regain honor. On one occasion

hundreds of warriors descended upon his church. They dragged Pastor Joshua and the men of his church up the hill and beat them with sticks and clubs. It was at this point that the government became involved. The warriors who beat him had broken the law. Arrest warrants were put out for them. Joshua eventually went to Bible school and became the pastor of a great church in Arusha. Hundreds of people including fellow Maasai came to the Lord. Pastor Joshua would become a sectional presbyter of the Assemblies of God in Arusha, Tanzania.

This true story reveals how local culture dictates what shameful behavior is. The group tries to exert pressure for the shamed person to adhere to a society's rules and customs. By exerting shame upon the individual, society tries to correct the person's behavior. Initially, pressure is applied only to the individual. But if they do not respond, the pressure becomes more and more severe. In some cases, it can lead to their death. Shameful behavior is seen as a sin against the family, village, and tribe.

But guilt is different. Guilt is a legal term referring to a person's standing before the court. When an individual breaks a law, they become guilty of that offense. Whether they feel sudden remorse and apologize or not, they remain guilty of the offense. It is the law that demands that the individual be held accountable for their offense. It is also the law that specifies what the punishment should be for the guilty one.

God's nature defines his law. Any behavior that violates his nature is considered sin and results in guilt. This is a very high standard. You may think it is impossible to live without breaking God's law and thus incurring guilt. The apostle Paul agrees with you. He wrote a letter to the church in Rome, saying: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). He then adds what the penalty is for sin, when he writes: "For the wages of sin is death." From these two statements, we see that all humankind faces a severe penalty for their guilt. But Paul reveals God's marvelous plan of salvation in the following sentence. Here is the entire verse: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23, NASB).

This lesson is **important** because it draws a contrast between shame and guilt. There is a clear distinction between the two.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that society exerts shame to correct behavior. But guilt is a legal condition that is not based upon emotions or opinion.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. When Paul wrote to the Romans, whom did he say had sinned? [Pause 5 seconds.]
  - A. If you said that Paul wrote that all have sinned, you are correct.
2. What wages or penalty did Paul say everyone who sinned had earned? [Pause 5 seconds.]
  - A. If you answered that Paul said that the wages of sin is death, you are answered correctly.
3. What did Paul say was the free gift of God? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said that Paul wrote that the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch it at least three more times, to understand the concept of shame as compared to guilt. Memorize these two scriptures that Paul wrote to the Romans. Here is the first verse:

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Let’s repeat this verse one more time.

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Here is the second verse.

Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Let’s repeat this verse one more time.

Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Memorize these two verses. Then find a friend and share with them these verses, explaining the difference between shameful behavior and breaking the law.