

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-16 God's Law: Law Demands Punishment

In your last lesson you heard the story of the Maasai warrior who came to Christ. He thus brought shame to his tribe. First his tribe tried to pressure him into rejecting Christ. When that failed, they sent threats on his life, then made attempts to kill him. Everything they did was a response to the shame they felt he had brought upon his family and the tribe. This response was driven by the feeling or emotion of shame and embarrassment. That shame is different than the guilt that is incurred when laws are broken.

When governments create laws, they also define the penalty for breaking the law. When one breaks a law, they incur guilt. The only way the guilt can be removed, is by paying the penalty.

There was a young American man who was a careless driver. As a result, he was often stopped by the police and given a ticket. He was driving too fast, failing to stop at a stop sign, or making an illegal turn. Each traffic violation resulted in both a financial fine and negative points being charged against his driver's license. Eventually he broke the law one time too many and received yet another traffic citation. He knew that he now had received more than the maximum allowed negative points against his driver's license. He expected to soon receive a letter from the government requiring him to go to court. There he would have to forfeit his driver's license. Before that happened, the young man moved 1500 kilometers away to another state. There he exchanged his old license for a new one issued from that state. He believed that he had escaped punishment. But escaping punishment does not remove guilt. He learned this years later, when he returned to his home state to visit his family.

The young man was driving his motorcycle too fast through his home town, when he was stopped by a police officer. The officer saw that he had a valid driver's license from another state. He also recognized the young man's family name. Thus, he ran the young man's name through the computer data base. He discovered that the young man's driving privileges had been revoked years before and had never been reinstated! The young man had run from punishment for many years, but his guilt had remained. The penalty had yet to be satisfied.

The Bible tells the story of one of King David's generals, a man named Joab.

Now King Saul had died in a battle with the Philistines. The people of Judah asked David to become their king. The northern tribes of Israel took one of King Saul's sons, Ishbosheth, and made him their king. Now David had a nephew named Joab, who was a great warrior and general of David's army. Ishbosheth's general was Abner, a courageous man of valor.

One day the two generals and a small contingent of their armies chanced to meet at a desert spring. They decided to let a small group of each army fight in a contest. The contest quickly turned to bloodshed as Joab's men murdered Abner's. Then the rest of Joab's men attacked Abner's men, who ran for their lives. Now Joab had a younger brother named Ashael. He could run like the wind and gave chase to the fleeing Abner. Abner begged Ashael to turn

aside and not chase him. But Ashael wanted the glory of either capturing or killing the enemy general, Abner. But that was not to happen. Abner's spear was sharp on both ends. When Ashael was about to overcome him from behind, he stopped suddenly. He thrust the bottom end of his spear right through Ashael, killing him.

Joab and Abner finally called off the battle. For years Joab hated Abner for the death of his younger brother and sought the opportunity to get revenge.

Later, Abner left the service of the King of Israel and went to King David of Judah to make peace. King David accepted Abner and honored him with a feast. It was agreed that Abner would speak to the leaders of Israel and have them turn away from Saul's son, and follow David instead. After the feast, Abner and his men left David to return north to Israel. When Joab found out that David had met with Abner, he became angry. He sent messengers to get Abner and bring him back to the city of Hebron. When Abner returned, Joab was there to meet him. He pulled Abner aside as if to talk with him privately. Together they walked over to the gateway. Then suddenly, without warning, Joab drew his knife and stabbed Abner in the stomach.

David was shocked and outraged that his nephew, the general of his army, would murder a man. This man had come to David in peace. He had to go to great efforts to convince the northern tribes that he had nothing to do with Abner's murder. David was in a difficult situation. Joab was his general and the army followed him. He could not afford to punish Joab at that time. But Joab was guilty of murder. It would seem that Joab had avoided his punishment, but he was guilty nonetheless.

Many years later, David was weak and dying. He called to his son Solomon and reminded him that Joab was guilty of the death of Abner. He instructed Solomon to see to his execution. And that is exactly what happened. Joab had carried the guilt of murder with him for many years. Finally, the day came when Solomon ordered Benaiah to execute Joab. So, Joab was executed and Benaiah became general in his place.

From these two stories we learn something very important about breaking the law. When the law is broken, guilt is incurred. And this guilt is never removed, until the prescribed penalty has been paid.

In your last lesson you learned the verse from the Book of Romans, written by the apostle Paul. He wrote: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). He also wrote, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). From this we see that everyone who sins breaks God's law. Everyone incurs guilt because of their sin. Finally, our guilt demands that we receive the punishment that the law demands. Breaking God's law demands death. Joab lived his life carrying the guilt of the murder he had committed. Like Joab, we also live our lives carrying the guilt of the sins we have committed. A day will come when every person will be judged by God. If our guilt has not been removed when we stand before God, we will receive our just punishment of eternal death.

This lesson is **important** because it shows that guilt is incurred when the law is broken and that there is a predetermined punishment for breaking the law.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that everyone is guilty of breaking God's law. We call this sin. Humankind lives their lives carrying the guilt of sin, and one day every person will be judged.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Breaking the law incurs what? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that breaking the law incurs guilt, you are correct.
2. What wages or penalty did Paul say everyone who sinned earned? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that Paul wrote that the wages of sin is death, you are correct.
3. Whom did General Joab murder? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that General Joab murdered General Abner, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three more times until you can tell the story of General Joab in your own words. Tell someone Joab's story and explain the principles of the law, guilt, and punishment. Review these verses you learned in the last lesson:
Romans 3:23: "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: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

Here is the second verse.

Romans 6:23: "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: "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. Find a friend and share with them these verses, explaining the difference between shameful behavior and the guilt of breaking the law.