

## CHAPTER 4

# GUILTY BROTHERS

The problem of guilt is a problem that every person faces. In this chapter we will see that guilt was something that brought anguish to the hearts of the brothers of Joseph. For many years they suffered on the inside because of their guilt.

We will also learn in this chapter that God has an answer for the problem of guilt. There is something that God has done to take care of guilt and there is something that man must do also.

### What Is Guilt?

The word GUILT is used to refer to two different things. It is sometimes used to refer to a **fact** and it is sometimes used to refer to a **feeling**. Let us define the word GUILT first as a **fact** and then as a **feeling**:

#### 1) THE FACT OF GUILT.

Guilt is the fact of having committed a crime. Guilt is the fact of having done wrong. A person has guilt (is guilty) because he has sinned and broken God's law. Guilt is the fact of having performed a wrong act. And because this person has guilt (has done wrong), he deserves to be punished.

For example, it might be said of a criminal, "The evidence proved his **guilt**." This means that the evidence proved that he really did break a law and that he was guilty of some crime.

In Genesis 26:10 Abimelech made it clear that Isaac's deed of deception could have brought guilt upon Abimelech's people. One of the people could have committed the sin of adultery, even though this would have been done ignorantly.

According to Matthew 26:66, who did the Jews say was guilty of death?

\_\_\_\_\_ What was His crime (see the last word in verse 65)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ He claimed to be the Son of God (see Matthew 26:63-64)! Was  
 He really guilty? \_\_\_\_\_ If you were to claim to be the Son of God, would you be guilty? \_\_\_\_\_

See Exodus 20:7. The person who takes God's Name in vain is not G\_\_\_\_\_ and therefore he must be G\_\_\_\_\_. According to James 2:10, if a person breaks just one of the Ten Commandments and keeps all of the other commandments, he is still \_\_\_\_\_ of breaking them all. If a chain has only one broken link, is it still a broken chain? \_\_\_\_\_

Suppose you were dangling over the edge of a cliff hanging on to a rope for dear life. Would it make a difference if the rope were to break in one place or if it were to break in ten different places? \_\_\_\_ Would you still plunge to your death either way? \_\_\_\_ Those who break God's law have guilt. **It's a fact!** They are guilty!

Have you kept all of the Ten Commandments perfectly? \_\_\_\_ Are you guilty before a holy God who sees every crime and every sin we have ever done? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people in the world have a problem with guilt (Romans 3:19)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 2) THE FEELING OF GUILT.

The word GUILT is also used in another way. It is used to describe a **feeling**. It describes a feeling of shame or **remorse** (a gnawing distress) because of wrong that a person has done. There is the **fact** of guilt: I've sinned and I have done wrong. Then there is the **feeling** of guilt: I feel bad because of what I have done. Because of my sin, I feel guilty!

**Feelings of guilt** can be very strong. The person has an uncomfortable inner awareness that he has done wrong. His own conscience condemns him. It is like he has an inner voice which says, "You're guilty! You're guilty! You've sinned! You've done wrong!" On the outside the person may seem as if everything is all right, but deep down inside he is bothered by guilt feelings because he knows that he has done wrong and he can't forget it.

Why do people feel guilty? Most people **feel** guilty because they **are** guilty! The **fact** of guilt causes the **feeling** of guilt. Sometimes a person may feel guilty when he really should not. For example, a person might feel guilty for being tempted. Is temptation sin? \_\_\_\_ Was the Lord Jesus tempted (Matthew chapter 4)? Did the devil seek to rouse desire and seek to persuade, invite, induce and entice the Lord Jesus to sin (Matthew chapter 4)? \_\_\_\_ Did the Lord Jesus sin? \_\_\_\_ A person who is merely tempted is not guilty and should not feel guilty. It is one thing to be presented by a temptation; it is another thing to receive that temptation and to enter into it and to mentally pursue it. Playing with the temptation mentally makes for bad thinking which leads to bad feelings, guilt, etc. If a temptation is continued and carried on in my mind, it will cut off my relationship to God and I'm guilty of sin. The person who yields to the temptation and follows the temptation and falls into the temptation IS GUILTY (fact) and should FEEL GUILTY (feeling).

David succumbed to temptation and fell into the sin of adultery (2 Samuel chapter 11). David was guilty (**fact**) and he felt terrible (**feeling**)! In Psalm 32:3-4 we see that David was being crushed by a sense of guilt: "Thy hand (God's hand) was \_\_\_\_\_ upon me" (verse 4). In Psalm 51:3 David says, "My sin is \_\_\_\_\_ before me." As we study the brothers of Joseph we will see that their sin was ever before them, even many years after their crime. Guilt stays with a person until the person takes care of the guilt God's way.

## The Terrible Sin of Joseph's Brothers

The awful crime of Joseph's brothers is seen in Genesis chapter 37. As we have already seen in the case of Cain (Chapter 2) and Jacob (Chapter 3), sin begets sin. One sin leads to another sin. Joseph's brothers added sin upon sin until they became so deep in sin that they were actually in a worse pit than Joseph! As we trace the downward course of their sin, please put the correct verse (all from Genesis 37 except the one done for you) with the corresponding sin:

Verse _____	<b>Envy (Jealousy)</b>
Verse _____	<b>Hatred</b>
Verse _____	<b>Intense Hatred</b>
Verse _____	<b>Conspiracy</b> (compare Genesis 50:20--"thought evil against me")
Verse _____	<b>Intentional Murder</b> (Simeon and Levi were already skilled at shedding blood--Genesis 34:25-26)
Verse <u>Gen. 42:21</u>	<b>Refusal to listen to Joseph's cries for help</b> (merciless treatment of their own brother)
Verse _____	<b>Sold their own brother into slavery</b>
Verse _____	<b>Deception</b> (covering up their sin before their father)
Verse _____	<b>Lying</b>

It is obvious that these brothers **HAD GUILT (fact)**! They were **GUILTY** of all of these things! They had done wrong and they deserved punishment. Their crime against Joseph and the resultant cover up before their father forms a dark chapter in Bible history.

What did these brothers do? Did they confess their great sin and acknowledge their wicked deed before God and before their father? Did they repent of their evil act? Did they stop hiding and covering up their sin? Did they ever admit to their father what they had done? Since they never dealt with their sin, God was going to deal with them!

For about 22 years these brothers lived a lie (a terrible **COVER-UP**)! They never told their father the truth. Also they painfully carried with them the awful **GUILT (feeling)** for the crime which they had committed. Indeed, even at the death of Jacob (Genesis 50:15-17), nearly 40 years later, they were still filled with this guilt. Joseph was only in the pit for a few short hours. His brothers were in the pit of guilt for nearly 40 years!

## The Guilt Feelings Come to the Surface

We are all familiar with the Joseph story. Joseph went from the PIT to POTIPHAR, then to PRISON, and then to PHARAOH. Then the famine came as Joseph had predicted and this brought the brothers of Joseph to Egypt.

When the ten brothers arrived in Egypt everything started going wrong! They were accused (Genesis 42:9,12,14), tested (Genesis 42:15-16) and put in prison (42:17,19)! Why did all this happen to them? Were they innocent and honest men? Were they deserving of such trouble? Deep down in their hearts they knew that they deserved exactly what they were getting. Finally about 20 or 21 years after their horrible crime (Joseph was now at least 37), they admitted their guilt (at least to each other): "WE ARE VERILY \_\_\_\_\_ (fact) CONCERNING OUR BROTHER!" (Genesis 42:21).

Perhaps during those 20 years they thought that they had gotten away with it! But alas, the cries of Joseph came back to haunt them as they remembered the day when young Joseph was in the pit: "we saw the **anguish** (distress) of his soul, when he **besought us** (begged for their mercy and favor), and we would not hear; therefore is this \_\_\_\_\_ (same word as "anguish" above) COME UPON US!" (Genesis 42:21). What they were saying was this: "We caused him **distress**, now we are in **distress**! We are getting just what we gave to Joseph!"

The brothers' distress was intensified when they discovered the money in their sacks. Once again their guilty consciences made them feel as if God were repaying them for their terrible crime: "What is this that \_\_\_\_\_ has done to us?" (Genesis 42:28). These men were crushed under a heavy load of guilt.

The brothers returned to Egypt a second time and again everything seemed to go wrong. Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack (Genesis 44:11-13)! Consider Judah's passionate words in Genesis 44:16. When he said, "God hath found out the \_\_\_\_\_ of thy servants," do you think he meant the iniquity of stealing Joseph's cup? \_\_\_\_\_ He couldn't have meant this because they did not even steal the cup. He was referring to that horrible iniquity of the past which kept haunting them. For years they foolishly thought they could get away with their crime, but finally it had caught up with them and they had to face it squarely. Their sin had surely found them out (Numbers 32:23)!

## The Guilt Feelings Linger On

Joseph's brothers refused to believe that Joseph had really forgiven them (see Genesis 45:1-15). They wrongly thought that he was kind to them only because of their father Jacob. With Jacob dead they thought that Joseph would avenge their evil deed (Genesis 50:15)! How grieved Joseph was when he learned what was on their hearts (Genesis 50:17). How tragic that the weight of their sin was still heavy upon their hearts 39 years later (Joseph was sold to Egypt about 1897 B.C. and Jacob died about 1858 B.C.)!

How tragic today when people refuse to believe God's promise of forgiveness. God has promised complete forgiveness to all who believe on His Son (Acts 10:43; Micah 7:19; Hebrews 10:17; Ephesians 1:7). Likewise, God has promised complete forgiveness and cleansing to the believer who confesses his sins (1 John 1:9). Let us not accuse God of being a liar and untrue to what He has said.

## God's Solution to Guilt

God sent His beloved Son to suffer for man's guilt and to pay the full death penalty for man's crimes. Because of what Christ has done, God is able to provide man with the only solution to guilt: FORGIVENESS! The problem of guilt can be solved in no other way. Divine forgiveness is the only solution. Covering up sin and covering over sin will never work. Joseph's brothers are the perfect example of how **not** to solve the guilt problem!

Sin must be acknowledged and confessed. When a person is saved he must confess and acknowledge that he is a guilty sinner: "God be merciful to me a \_\_\_\_\_" (Luke 18:13). No one can be saved without recognizing this fact and admitting it.

Guilt can also be a serious problem in the life of a believer. Again the believer must confess and acknowledge the sin. Can you find the verse in Psalm 32 which shows that David did this? Verse: \_\_\_\_\_ What did God promise to do? \_\_\_\_\_ Can you find the verse in Psalm 51 which shows that David confessed his sin? Verse: \_\_\_\_\_ See also Proverbs 28:13. The believer is then able to say, "Yes, I was guilty and I did sin and my crime is great, but my God has forgiven me completely! Because I am forgiven I have no reason to feel guilty!"

Also, when our sin has involved other people, we need to confess to them as well. Joseph's brothers should have confessed their crime to Joseph and to their father. Our sin is always against God, but sometimes our sin is against other people as well.



The arrows stand for any unforgiven sins in your life. These sins are adding to your load of guilt. Each matter that is dealt with and confessed lightens the load and makes you stand taller. Why not get rid of all of the guilt! God is ready and willing. Are you?

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