

In the strict sense, the meaning of guilt is the implication of an action. In other words, because you did it, you are guilty; you have the guilt. And, generally, this is for negative things. We don't typically accuse someone of being **guilty of feeding the poor**. Merriam-Webster has the first definition as: "the fact of having committed a breach of conduct especially violating law and involving a penalty." In other words, a person has guilt when they have committed something bad and that action is discovered. That's when we say they are guilty. But there's another meaning of the word that we, in our modern vernacular, use frequently that is just as correct. Merriam-Webster has the 2nd definition as: "feelings of deserving blame especially for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy: self-reproach" This is the meaning that I would like to focus on today. Spoiler alert: **I am going to condemn this waste of mental resource**. If you love this type of guilt, you should stop reading... I'm kidding - that is even more reason to read on!

There is a significant overlap of this guilt with another feeling that we experience, one that is also potentially a waste of mental resources. Regret and guilt overlap when someone dwells on an unchangeable thing that happened in the past and they "beat themselves up" about it. But regret can be useful for evaluating one's actions in the past, and to guide decisions in the future. Guilt, as a "feeling of deserving blame for an imagined offense or from a sense of inadequacy," is never useful. This type of guilt sounds to me like a **psychological tool of the adversary** used to distract and deceive us.

*The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for **I am sorry that I have made them.**" (Genesis 6:7)*

Here in Genesis 6, God regretted making man, but He did not have that guilt we are talking about here. God used the results of what happened to improve the situation moving forward. God has shared with us a few instances of Him having regret, but they are always **avenues for improvement** and never sources of guilt. Definition #2 of guilt is never beneficial.

*Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And **Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night.** (1 Samuel 15:10-11)*

Here in 1 Samuel, it seems that Samuel suffered about the regret more than God did. The downfall of Saul formed King David's character! Without Saul's antics, David may not have developed into the king we know today. **Regret can lead us to make better decisions in the future**, and it can also lead us to one of the most important decisions we can make in our walk:

*I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the **sorrow of the world produces death.** (2 Corinthians 7:9-10)*

That is a powerful statement: The sorrow of the world produces death. What else produces death? Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin are death." This "sorrow of the world" is what I am calling "guilt." Yes, we screw up. We make mistakes. We sin and too often do regretful things. And this guilt that am condemning has no place in our life. **It causes death**. I dare say that it is a sin.

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying

innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)

Judas suffered horrible remorse that ended in his death. His internal guilt was evidently unbearable. His actions look sort of like repentance, but he confessed to the wrong party; God does not turn His face away from true repentance. Let's make a turn here, away from the negative and toward the positive. Above, in 2 Corinthians 7, we also saw that "sorrow according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation." Regret leads to repentance, **and then you leave the regret behind.**

Whether we recognize it or not, God blesses us with an abundance of mercy, forgiveness, love, guidance... And, while it may be difficult to see at times, His promise includes an abundance of the physical needs as well. Here is Deuteronomy 28, the blessings and the cursing... Reading the list of blessings through verse 14 is quite uplifting. But also notice the conditions for receiving them.

*"Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. "All these **blessings will come upon you and overtake you** if you obey the LORD your God: ... (Deuteronomy 28:1-2 ... read through verse 14 for some true encouragement!)*

Abundance means "more than enough." We have a surplus of these things, they will overtake us, but only if we claim them. I think that by dwelling with guilt, the sorrow of the world, we are denying ourselves those promises. We all have regrets in life. Turning those into productive reflections by being truly repentant toward God will allow us to **claim those promises of abundance.** In Ecclesiastes, Solomon seems to have written this in reverse. He seems to say, *because* God blesses us so much, we are freed from dwelling on the past and wasting time with guilt. (Keep in mind that God has already given riches and wealth to all who diligently obey, according to Deuteronomy 28 above.)

*Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. For he will not often consider the years of his life, because **God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.** (Ecclesiastes 5:19-20)*

"He will not often consider the years of his life." The King James translation has it as: "For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart." This blessed man enjoys God's abundant promises without dwelling on the past – certainly not the regretful things in the past. This idea is given to us again quite directly in Philippians.

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead**, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)*

This is an admonition to keep your eyes on the prize. Acknowledge your mistake, brush off the dirt, get back up, ask for help, ask for forgiveness, and keep marching! Leave the regret behind, and **never touch the guilt.**

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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