

## **Theological Views on Sin and Atonement in the Guilt and Shame based Cultures**

### **Views on Sin in the Guilt-based Culture**

Even though anthropologists no longer classify cultures as exclusively guilt-based or shame-based, but the guilt-based cultures are more predominant in the Western World. Guilt arises from some internalized value system, and the guilt-based cultures rely on an internalized conviction of sin. In this culture, sin is measured against the objective, revealed will of God. Guilt generally follows the transgression of the moral law, particularly a law that has been revealed by divine revelation. Guilt is a response to a transgression against internalized societal or parental prohibitions or against boundaries that form an internal authority, the conscience. As a result, guilt leaves people with a sense of moral failure and represents a loss of innocence.

### **Views on Atonement in the Guilt-based Culture**

The emphasis on guilt in the Western world is often attributed to the presence of Christianity. The overarching authority of the Scriptures and the clear ethical guidelines set forth there, coupled with the judicial language associated with the doctrine of justification, have all helped to emphasize the legal aspect of salvation. Guilt and innocence are essentially legal concepts. As sinners, we have broken God's laws, and the good news of the gospel declares that we have been justified through Christ's atoning work on the cross. Christ paid the penalty for us so that when we stand at the bar of God's judgment seat, we who deserve his condemnation are declared righteous and not guilty.

### **Views on Sin in the Shame-based Culture**

The shame-based cultures are often contrasted with the guilt-based cultures of the West. The role of shame and honor continues to play a dominant role in many cultures outside the Western

World. The shame-based culture can be observed in a wide variety of cultures stretching from North Africa all the way to the Far East. Shame-based cultures rely on external sanctions for good behavior. Shame arises from the pressure of external sanctions formed in the court of human opinion. Shame stimulates fear of psychological and physical rejection, abandonment, expulsion, or loss of social position and relies predominantly on external pressure from an individual or group. Shame generally follows any action that is regarded as sin perceived by the larger group to reduce one's standing or status within the group. So, shame leaves people with a sense of humiliation, defeat, and ridicule and is intricately tied to the exposure and loss of honor or status before their peers and those in authority within the social network. Shame cannot be experienced apart from the larger social context. In this culture, sin is regarded as the fruit of a broken relationship.

### **Views on Atonement in the Shame-based Culture**

In the shame-based culture, public honor and status are highly valued and the avoidance of public shame is crucial. In the ancient world, if the honor of one's name or family was offended, it was accepted that such honor could be restored only through the shedding of blood because honor was tied to the physical body, which was understood as a microcosm of the larger social context. In this context, Jesus bore the cross on our behalf, and through the resurrection, he made a great redemptive reversal. At the hour of Jesus' public shame on the cross, he was in the process of shaming his enemies. The resurrection is the great vindication that he who had been treated so shamefully was, in fact, the Son of God and has been crowned with glory and honor. Through the work of Jesus, we who were the bearers of shame are now declared to be the recipients of the honor. Through the work of Christ, we are not only justified and acquitted from guilt, but also restored our honor before God