

Guilt has two sides: objective and subjective. Objective guilt is liability for transgressed law. Subjective guilt is the feeling of blameworthiness for wrongdoing.

In the objective or positional or legal sense of guilt, unsaved human beings are liable for both their representative and individual sins, and continually stand under the condemnation of the Law of God.

During a lifetime of individual sinning, unsaved human beings accumulate enormous burdens of legal guilt. If in an average lifetime of (say) 74 years a person sins only once daily in thought, once in word, and once in deed from (say) age two onward, that person at death will have sinned 78,894 times! What a weight of guilt to carry before the throne of God's judgment! And if there are many days (if not all of them) in an unsaved person's life when he or she commits many more than three sins, the total of sins in one unsaved life must be enormous indeed! Even if some of these sins are smaller, some are no doubt greater, and the aggregate is crushing even to think of, let alone bear!

In the subjective or experiential sense of guilt, unsaved human beings experience feelings of guilt whenever they violate the Law of God speaking in their conscience (either the Law of God written into man's nature at Creation or the Law of God revealed in Scripture). Over a period of time, nonbelievers learn either to rationalize the speaking of that Law, or to suppress it, or to live in accordance with it outwardly while rationalizing or suppressing it inwardly.

Rationalizing the judgments of conscience enables people to feel more comfortable temporarily. However, there is a trade-off. Employing current conventional standards of right and wrong to redefine attitudes and actions so that they no longer appear wrong or blameworthy blunts a persons' moral sense and cuts him loose from moral absolutes, making him a potential victim to many temptations and their accompanying sorrows. No matter how men redefine sin, their sin will surely find them out, one way or another! In addition, when a person rationalizes the judgments of his conscience so that everything he does is O.K. and everything everyone else does is O.K., then all wrongdoing ceases and forgiveness becomes impossible (and unnecessary!). After all, why is forgiveness needed or even appropriate when no one has done anything wrong!

Suppressing the judgments of conscience allows people to feel more comfortable temporarily, but cripples their ability to acknowledge their wrongdoing to others and to receive forgiveness from them. After a time, acquaintances whom they have repeatedly wronged (and who believe they have been wronged!) turn away from them, and they don't even know why!