

Responses to Guilt

Mk. 6:14-29

Introduction:

1. The passage we have just read describes the responses of Herod and Herodias to the guilt that they experienced as a result of John's condemnation.
2. People respond to guilt in different ways.
3. Those with a soft heart may repent and appeal to the graciousness of God for forgiveness. David prayed, "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness . . . blot out my transgressions. Wash me from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (Psa. 51:1-2).
4. This was not the response of Herod, nor Herodias.
5. And while neither of their responses was appropriate, they were different from one another. How do you respond to your guilt? Are you more like Herod or more like Herodias?

Discussion:

- I. Herod was guilty and felt the feelings of guilt (6:14-18).
 - A. Sometimes people feel guilty when they are not guilty; sometimes they do not feel guilty when they are.
 1. It is good to distinguish between guilt feelings and guilt.
 2. Guilt is defined as the fact of having committed a specific violation or crime.
 3. A more technical definition says, "Guilt is a cognitive or an emotional experience that occurs when a person believes or realizes—accurately or not—that he or she has compromised his or her own standards of conduct or has violated a universal moral standard and bears responsibility for that violation." This definition focuses on the feelings of guilt.
 4. Sometimes we feel guilty when we have not violated the law of God. Sometimes we do not feel guilty when we have violated the law of God.
 5. True guilt, before God, involves a real violation of His standard.
 6. We need to try to align our feelings of guilt with actual violations, but we often become confused, feeling guilty when we should not and not feeling guilty when we should.
 - B. Other people influence our guilt feelings.
 1. John the Baptist had influenced Herod's guilt feelings. He said, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." John was probably basing his assessment on Lev. 18:16; 20:21. John may have also been condemning what they had done as adultery (cf. Rom. 7:2-3; Matt. 19:3ff).
 2. Herod Antipas had good reason to feel guilty. Josephus (Antiquities XVIII.136) gives the historical information.
 - a. Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great by Mariamne I.
 - b. She had married her half-uncle (her father's half-brother) Herod Philip, son of Herod the Great by Mariamne II. To Herod Philip she had born a daughter (Salome, the daughter who danced).
 - c. Herod Antipas, on a visit to Herod Philip, became infatuated with Herodias. They agreed to separate from their present marriage partners—Herodias from Philip;

Antipas from the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabatean Arabs—and to marry each other.

3. I am certain that Herod and Herodias influenced each other's feelings of guilt.
- C. Herod's guilt feelings are evident when he interprets what he has heard about Jesus' miracles as the resurrection of John the Baptist.
 1. Note that these guilt feelings may not have been so much about his marriage as about what he had done to John.
 2. He knew John a righteous and holy man and had kept him safe for a time. He even enjoyed listening to him.
 3. But he got himself in a hard spot when he promised Salome "up to half his kingdom."
 4. She went to her mother and Herodias requested the head of John the Baptist.
 5. Herod had made his statement before his dinner guests with oaths and so he beheaded John.

II. Herodias was just as guilty as Herod.

- A. It was not lawful for her to put away her husband and married Herod.
 1. She should have felt guilty. Whether she did or not is not clear in the text, but she had a grudge against John and wanted to put him to death.
 2. Sometimes we would just like to eliminate the one who calls attention to our guilt.
- B. There is no indication in the text that she felt guilty for having John put to death. While the event haunted Herod, there is no indication that it haunted Herodias.
- C. Sometimes consciences are so hardened that we become insensitive (1 Tim. 4:2).
- D. Sometimes even though we feel wrong, we do wrong anyway. Our actions just bowl right over our conscience. Guilt and guilt feelings result.
 1. Who has committed the greater evil? One who has no conscience? One who has a seared conscience? Or the one who bowls over their conscience and does wrong anyway? All are violators.
 2. But the one who bowls over their conscience will feel guilty even though the others may not.

III. Are you guilty? Do you have guilt feelings? How are you responding?

- A. When we have guilt feelings we must ask, "Have I violated the law of God?"
 1. Perhaps I believe I have done something wrong when I have not.
 2. Perhaps I do not believe I have done anything wrong when I have.
- B. Once we have determined that we have violated the law of God we can do like Herodias and Herod and destroy the messenger or we can appeal to God for forgiveness and repent.
 1. Destroying the messenger has been a long-standing approach.
 - a. Israel killed the prophets and stoned those sent to her (Lk. 13:34).
 - b. Jesus was crucified.
 - c. John was not the first, nor the last, executed executed by those who were guilty.
 2. Sometimes we "execute" God. Cf. Rom. 1:21-23.
 3. Sometimes we just "stew" in our guilt feelings and do not change. We reject God's graciousness and choose for ourselves the pain and death of sin.

4. David wrote, "When I kept silent about my sin my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psa. 32:3-5).

Conclusion:

1. Are you guilty?
2. Are you feeling guilty?
3. Bring it to the Lord.