

Jesus Bore Our Guilt AND Our Shame

We're going to be looking at Hebrews 12:1-2 in a few minutes if you'd like to turn there.

Introduction

A couple weeks ago, on a Saturday afternoon...(talk about my experience with the ambulance and me crossing the street when it was coming). As a result of my bad choice, I felt a real sense of shame.

Guilt and shame

Shame...that awful feeling when you believe you have done something wrong. You feel this tremendous regret and, sometimes, even self-loathing. It's miserable, but it can be beneficial even though it doesn't feel like it when you are under its weight.

Now, it's possible for a person to experience shame when, in actuality, they have done nothing wrong. Like a teenager feeling shame because of a bad case of acne, or a graduate feeling shame for tripping when walking across the stage to receive his diploma.

But, most often, shame accompanies guilt when a law or rule has been transgressed.

Guilt is the judicial result of breaking a law. A person has committed a transgression and he or she is guilty. Guilt is an objective fact. On the other hand shame is a subjective feeling. It's the emotional side of guilt that a healthy person should experience because his conscience is actively accusing him of wrongdoing.

Our God, as part of His creative work, determined what is objectively true, right, and good. He has revealed His standard of truth to us in His word. The moral code as summed up in the Ten Commandments and clarified in numerous places in the Old and New Testaments was stated concisely, by Jesus, when He said:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27, ESV)

Through the pages of scripture, both in the Old Testament and in the New, God has revealed the details of the moral code that He expects us to follow. Even in cases where no black and white rule is stated, He has revealed principles by which we can discern what is good and true and how we should walk.

However, the Apostle Paul states that God has put His law into the hearts of every person:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them...(Romans 2:14-15, ESV)

This consciousness is a gift, part of the common grace God gives to all humans. Otherwise, life on this earth would be intolerable. Even so, through repeated infraction, people's consciences can be seared. Wrong can be seen as right, right is called wrong, and our sensibilities are a mess. In the midst of all this moral confusion shame is running rampant.

Jesus bore our guilt...and our shame

Christians who have been redeemed, who have accepted Christ's substitutionary death on the cross have seen, with the Holy Spirit's enlightening, the righteousness of God's law. We know we are lawbreakers. We understand that Christ took our guilt upon Himself.

For our sake he (God the Father) made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV)

Jesus Christ bore our guilt as He suffered on that cross. He became sin so that we could gain His righteousness. This truth is central to our Christianity.

But, even as as He carried our guilt ***he was also experiencing the shame that came with it.*** The shame Jesus experienced is something we don't talk about much. It's hard to depict shame in movies or dramatizations about Jesus Christ and the crucifixion.

Now let's look at Hebrews Chapter 12, verses 1 and 2.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2, ESV)

Yes, Jesus endured the cross on my behalf. He endured the cross to bear my guilt and yours.

But have you ever considered what it means when it says that Jesus, while on the cross, was "despising the shame?"

The word "despise" means to feel intense disgust, to regard something with utter contempt, considering its object as repugnant.

So, not only did Jesus carry our guilt to the cross, *but He also took our shame upon Himself.* He carried the horrible, oppressive burden of our shame with Him when He was nailed to that tree.

He felt it. The awful, sickening, self-loathing emotion of the world's shame was placed on Him. His suffering was not only physical in nature. He experienced, fully, the shame, our shame, that made a separation between Him and the Father while He suffered there, rejected. That's why He cried out,

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34, ESV)

Let's consider some of the aspects of this shame that he bore.

- **Jesus felt despised and scorned**

One thousand years before the birth of Christ, God gave to King David amazing, prophetic foresight into what the coming Messiah would experience as part of His earthly mission. Psalm 22 is one place where David recorded what Jesus would be thinking and experiencing emotionally as He hung there on the cross:

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads... (Psalm 22:6–7, ESV)

When righteous men of old were in the presence of the Holy, Almighty God, they always had an intense sense of their own relative filth. For example, when confronted by God in the midst of whirlwind Job said:

I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:6, ESV)

The prophet Isaiah said:

“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5, ESV)

Jesus’ mission was to empty Himself of His rightful claim to divinity, taking on the form of a servant, especially during the crucifixion. Jesus felt this same sense of filth and self-loathing as did Job and Isaiah when bearing the guilt and shame of the world. During that awful time He knew He represented everything that was opposite of holy.

- **Jesus experienced the shame of nakedness**

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they suddenly knew the shame of their nakedness. When Jesus was crucified, He most likely was stripped of all His clothing. Roman authorities did to the people they crucified in order to inflict as much humiliation as possible. So our Savior hung there, naked.

John records in his gospel that:

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

“They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” (John 19:23-24, ESV)

When Adam and Eve sinned they hid from God. They sewed leaves together to try to cover their naked shame. Jesus was powerless, on the cross, to cover His nakedness. The shame He bore was fully exposed to the world.

God forsook Him, figuratively turning His eyes because, in His Holiness, God could not look on His guilt-ridden, naked, shame-filled Son.

- **Jesus was treated like dung**

The refuse, the “leftovers” from the blood sacrifices offered in the Old Covenant sacrificial system included “the flesh of the bull, its skin, and its dung.” The priests were instructed to dispose of this “garbage” far away from the temple, to the outskirts of the settlement, because of its unclean nature. (Exodus 29:14)

These were taken outside the camp and burned as a sin offering. The author of Hebrews makes a comparison between this refuse and Jesus, saying:

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. (Hebrews 13:12, ESV)

He was treated like shameful refuse because of our sin. Like dung, He was disposed of outside the city gates.

Our Savior, deeply, fully, in every sense bore the full weight of the cumulative shame induced by all the sins of those who would be redeemed.

No wonder He despised it. No wonder He hated it.

The shame was completely foreign to His nature, and it made a separation between Him and His Holy Father.

For the joy that was set before him

Jesus endured the excruciating torture because of His great love for the Father, and because of His great love for His bride, the Church. He could see the joy that awaited Him even under the weight of all the guilt, all the shame, and all the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain as He anticipated the victorious reunion with His Father and His redeemed bride.

The writer of Hebrews says:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16, ESV)

The next time you experience shame because of a transgression you have committed, let it remind you of what Jesus Christ did for you. Feel the shame, confess your sin, then thank your wonderful Savior for taking that sin and shame upon Himself as you let it go for His sake. Consider the joy that is set before you as you anticipate the day when all our sin, our shame, our pain, and our tears will be a thing of the past!

Other Resources

What Does It Mean for Jesus to Despise Shame? By John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-it-mean-for-jesus-to-despise-shame>

Despising the Shame by Keith Fortenberry

<https://calvarychapel.com/posts/despising-the-shame>

Quote by Keith Fortenberry:

“When we picture Jesus hanging naked on the cross, there we seen Him in His true and raw humanity. As one of us, He died for us. There He experienced our shame and beyond that the agony of bearing our sin for us. He was gathering up our humanity in Himself and presenting it to God. His pain was real. His blood was real. His wounds were real. His thirst was real. There was nothing easy about what He endured. And as Paul said, it was His humility (Philippians 2:8) that caused Him to endure the cross. Rome wanted to humiliate Him in His nakedness, but it was His own humility there to be seen in the most raw and vulnerable conditions humans know... nakedness.”

Anonymous lyrics:

And the reason you came
Was to endure the pain
On the tree. On the tree.

Bore my sin and my shame,
Erased my guilt and my blame.
Now I'm free. Now I'm free.

Perfect liberty,
Perfect freedom
For all those found in Christ.

Perfect grace,
Perfect love,
God's perfect sacrifice.