

# Shame

Shame is a form of suffering. Shame is essentially the painful feeling, in one's soul, of disgrace, embarrassment, disappointment, anxiety, and confusion. And there are many causes. Although we usually associate shame only with guilt, Scripture does not. As with all suffering, shame certainly does have its ultimate source in sin—without sin there would be no shame. But, biblically, one can suffer shame for many more reasons than guilt over sin or foolish deeds.

All shame is basically due to humiliation—one's lowly state or condition, especially when compared to any honor and glory had before, expected in the future, or that others enjoy. Thus in his suffering the psalmist cried, How long will the wicked turn my glory into shame? (Ps. 4:2), and prayed, Let them be ashamed and confounded who rejoice in my hurt (Ps. 35:26). And shame is a very painful thing. Most of us would much rather endure bodily pain than the pain of reproach, ridicule, consternation, and rejection.

Poverty brings shame (I Cor. 11:22). Lacking the power, honor, and influence that riches bring, the poor are scorned, oppressed, or must secure food by the humiliation of begging or scavenging dunghills (Ps. 113:7). Public nakedness brings shame because it exposes poverty, weakness, foolishness, or lust (Gen. 2:25; Rev. 3:18). Slavery or imprisonment is shameful due to loss of freedom and subjection to others (Jer. 22:22)—one reason Paul told believers not to be ashamed of bonds, either of Caesar or Christ (II Tim. 1:8). And for all the above reasons, defeat at the hands of the enemy is especially shameful (Is. 20:4), and explains why we often feel shame when others sin against us or do violence to us or our property.

Sin is shameful because it reveals foolishness and powerlessness over our flesh. But in Scripture, idolatry brings most shame. First, because idols always allow or promote particularly shameful deeds of excess, forni-

cation, and uncleanness—as at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 32:25). Second, because idolaters suffer the shame of having all hope and expectation in their idols dashed (Is. 42:17). Third, because God always punishes idolatry with defeat, which shamefully exposes the idol as a fraud and the idolater as wicked (Jer. 6:15). Because the wages of sin is death, death is the greatest shame, and brings the greatest degree of suffering from humiliation, disappointment, disgrace, reproach, and consternation. Death is the ultimate defeat, and by the Almighty. Death impoverishes us, strips us bare of all glory, dignity and gifts, possessions, riches, and life, to go naked into the grave. Hell is the place of shame (Dan. 12:2), the smoking refuse heap where the poor find nothing, dead are burned, idols heaped, and idolaters are without hope (Ezek. 32:24).

What good news Christ came in a state of humiliation, turning His own glory into shame (Ps. 4:2)! The suffering of His impoverished birth was shame. The suffering He endured of innumerable reproaches was shame (Ps. 69:19). The bitterness of His death was its shame (L.S. Form). The inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies into which He was plunged all His life was shame (L.D. 16). And despising the shame, especially of being rejected, publicly reproached, stripped naked, imprisoned, and defeated on the cross, He endured (Heb. 12:2).

What benefits for us! First, He delivers us from suffering the shame we deserve. Wherefore, He is not ashamed to call us brothers (Heb. 2:11) or to be called our God (Heb. 11:16). Second, there is no shame for sin we need suffer. He that trusts in the Lord shall never be ashamed (Ps. 31:1). Our hope “maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5:5). Thirdly, we may expect to suffer shame for trusting a “shameful” Christ. Therefore, if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ but glorify God, for it is the power of God unto salvation (I Pet. 4:16; Rom. 1:16). And whoever is ashamed of Him, the Son of man shall be ashamed of when He comes into His glory (Luke 9:26). So, “abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (I John 2:28). ☺

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