

Weights of the heart – Shame

Shame is something that is part of life, because at some time or another we all do something shameful either intentionally or unintentionally.

Contrary to popular belief shame enters our lives as soon as we do something that we know is wrong as soon as we do it, whether we're caught doing it or not. Our shame merely escalates to the public arena increasing the degree of our shame when we're caught.

How many people are caught cheating in exams and are put to shame by being expelled from the institution?

Policemen involved in criminal activities are shamed when they're caught and handcuffed; the very opposite of what they're supposed to be doing to criminals.

When we lived in India we lived in a small town where criminals were marched shackled through the town from the holding cells to the court, instead of being taken by police vehicle where no one would see them.

Shame is a weight on many of our hearts, but there is hope to have it removed.

Hebrews 12: 1 – 3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

1) Guilt and shame

- When we talk about the gospel we mostly focus on the guilt of our sin, but we only sporadically focus on dealing with the shame of our sin.
- So, what's the difference?
 - Guilt is the fact that someone has done something wrong and has to face the consequences thereof. A guilty conscience is knowing that you have done wrong.
 - Shame is the dishonour and feeling of regret after having done something wrong. It's not just knowing that you've done something wrong, as with a guilty conscience, but regretting that you had done it. It's also focused on what other people think about you after having done it.
 - Both shame and false guilt can be put on us by someone else.
- As we have already dealt with guilt, I will now be focusing on shame.
- Shame, as with guilt, also came in with the sin of Adam and Eve.
 - Genesis 2: 25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.
 - Genesis 3: 7 – 12 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me —she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."
- Before they sinned, Adam and Eve felt no shame because they had nothing to be ashamed about. Shame came in with sin.
 - They were ashamed of themselves and covered themselves with fig leaves.
 - They had an open relationship with God, but after they sinned they hid from God. Now they hid from God. They couldn't look him in the eye anymore as to say.
- Guilt and shame-oriented communities and personalities
 - All communities have a sense of guilt and shame, but some are driven more by one or the other.
 - A guilt oriented culture has the sense of guilt and takes responsibility for it.
 - I broke the glass when I knocked it off the table, it's my fault.
 - A shame oriented culture is driven by what others think about they did rather than what they did.
 - The glass fell off the table and broke.
- Even if a person is from a predominantly guilt oriented culture or has a predominantly guilt oriented personality we should not underestimate the effects of shame on them.

2) The effects of shame

- Shame affects the way we view God.
 - Adam and Eve hid from God.
 - So often we hide from God by focusing on all other things except him.
 - We avoid praying and reading our Bibles, or at least do so as a matter of duty rather than really seeking him and the truth in it. Or we use verses that would justify the way we live.
 - We overwork, spend too much time playing games, watching TV, or other trivial matters
 - We can hide our shame in doing good to others to make up for how we feel, and leave God out of the picture.
- Shame affects the way we view ourselves
 - Adam and Eve saw that they were naked and covered themselves.
 - Their sense of identity was affected. The way they saw themselves and their perception of themselves before God changed.
 - Their emotions are normally topsy turvy and they tend to suppress their emotions, or express them in wrong or unhealthy ways. They often feel worthless, depressed and / or anxious.
- Shame affects our interpersonal relationships
 - If we have wronged someone it will affect our relationship with them. We won't want to speak to them or will do everything that we can to avoid them.
 - When we do have to see them there is normally a lot of tension in the meeting. If the two people concerned have to work together it will affect their work.
 - Sometimes a person doesn't do anything wrong against someone directly, but the shame of it still affects personal relationships in general as there's always something to hide.
 - In shame-oriented communities a person may have crossed community values, such as converting to another religion, and is then ostracised by their family or even by the whole community.
- Shame affects what we do and how we do it
 - A person who is living with shame often doesn't do anything that would be perceived as a risk and would prefer to remain in their safe zone. That means they will normally make decisions to do something if they're absolutely sure it will end well for them.
 - On a personal basis they have a tendency to fall into bad habits or resume bad habits.
- As we can see shame is a weight that weighs people down that needs to be removed. However, there is good news

3) The removal of shame

- When Jesus died on the cross for our sin He didn't only die for the guilt and penalty of our sin, He also took our shame on Himself to render us free from all shame.
- Jesus was put to shame when he was hung naked on the cross for our sin.
 - Philippians 2: 5 – 8 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!
 - The God of the universe submitted himself to sinful man to be humiliated by dying on a cross in public as a common criminal. How more shameful could it have been!
 - However, our Hebrews text says that for the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame.
- That shame that he endured on the cross was our shame so that we can be free from shame and all its effects.
 - He took our shame so that we no longer need to hide from God, but can enjoy a shameless relationship with him.
 - He took our shame so that our identity can be found in him and our emotional state can be healed.
 - He took our shame so that we will be free to have wholesome relationships once again and love one another as he commanded.
 - He took our shame so that we don't have to be hindered to be and do all that he created us to be and do.
- If the reason for our shame is because of others then we need to deal with that on a personal basis.
- Release your shame today. He has lifted it on himself.