

CONFRONTING SHAME PART 1

Turn to Genesis 3. Have you ever had a dream that you went to school in your underwear? It seemed like people didn't notice, but it's the only thing you could think about and you were convinced that it was only a matter of time before ever saw and you were exposed before your friends and you become the laughingstock of the school? Dreams like this reveal one of our deepest fears and one of our most potent controlling enemies: shame. Now often times we treat shame and guilt like they're the same things. Guilt says I feel bad about what I did. But shame says I feel bad about who I am. "I forgot to take out the trash vs I am trash." It's the feeling that comes with falling short of someone else's standard of worthiness. It's when your you're unfavorably exposed before others and your honor is violated. It's powerful and crippling—and it's everywhere.

If you'll remember in Genesis 2 after God makes Adam and Eve, "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." Gen. 2:25. Why not naked and happy? Why not naked and healthy? And the reason is Moses pointing this out is because shame is about to become a crucial part of the narrative. To say that they were naked and unashamed is to say that they were completely exposed and completely at rest—no fear of rejection and condemnation. Totally vulnerable and totally accepted wanted and approved of. But it's about to come crashing down. The serpent is tempting Eve vs 6, "6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,^[a] she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked..."

Now is this not interesting? Like this is the very first thing that happens after sin enters into the world. No thunder or earthquake—they were naked and ashamed. And far from being just an interesting detail, the narrator is framing the problem that God will begin solving but won't be finished until Revelation 21. The whole Bible is about God providing a remedy for our guilt and shame.

You have an addiction, you got a divorce, you had an abortion, you've been sexually promiscuous, you're living one way in public and completely different in private, you constantly lie to those around you, you don't spend time with your children. And when you think about who God says you should be, and who you are, you feel shame. You know God forgives you and loves you—but your conscience remains stained. So, I'm going to be answering the question how does the Gospel speak to the intense shame and worthlessness that comes with my sin and guilt? How is Christ a remedy for that? That's where we're going.

Now I want to point out, often times the shame we feel isn't our fault at all. We can feel shame we're associated with someone or something—maybe a socioeconomic status or disability or even race. You can feel shame by association. It's because someone did something to us. And I'm going to address the first kind this week and the second kind next week. **Pray.**

Let's continue reading to see what happens after they realize they are naked 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." Notice what's happening here, they take immediate action to remedy their shame. They're trying to fix and their own brokenness and by their own efforts and ingenuity and creativity are asking creation to cover their shame—using creation to fix the damage. Heads up—that's not going to work for them or for you.

And after the Lord comes down and Adam throws Eve under the bus (vs 12)—more shame—and the consequences of sin are announced, right before God removes them from his presence vs 21 says, “**21 And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.**” Now, what’s significant about this is not the fact that they got upgraded underwear—from leaves to leather—what’s significant is who covered them—God. God saw and said, “Nah that ain’t going to work” you can’t fix your brokenness and sin problem. There is no amount of strength or creativity or effort or achievement that can truly take away your shame. Rescue is going to have to come from outside of you. It’s going to have to come from me. Consider these skins a preview of the sacrifice that I’m going to make not to simply paper over your shame, but truly remove it from you.

And really what we see here two models for dealing with shame. Everyone experiences shame—it’s universal—whether it’s shame caused by your own sin or shame caused by your circumstances everyone has it and everyone wants out. And there’s only two options: you can look either look to something in the created order to take away your shame or you can look to the Creator. You can seek a remedy for your shame either in yourself and in what you do or in someone else and what’s been done for you. The remedy for shame that’s comes from creation and the efforts of its creatures is hollow, and artificial, and leads to death. But the remedy that comes from the Creator is transformative, and powerful, and leads to life.

There is a sense in which you could look at Adam and Eve trying to make themselves more presentable for God as the first instance of works-based religion. What do I mean, well we all fall short of God’s glory we all know that we’re broken and sinful. And many people—even people who claim to be Christians—trust Jesus for their guilt problem and take it upon themselves to fix their shame problem. And they do it through performance. They cultivate excellent moral behavior and religious devotion to make up for and cover over their shame so when they think about God they can feel at ease and clean on the basis of self-improvement.

But you don’t have to get far in the Bible to realize that that won’t work. A brief look at Leviticus that in order to go from unclean to clean (not always moral but symbolic) you have to be declared clean by someone else. Specifically, a priest. The priest symbolically represents the fact that you’re not able to forgive yourself or pronounce yourself clean and that in order to experience cleanness and forgiveness you need the work of another to do for you what you can’t do for yourself. This was the job of a priest and specifically the high priest who would make atonement for the nation of Israel once a year on the Day of Atonement. And I want you to see how the work of the high priest addresses not just our guilt, but the stain that remains...

“6 “Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. 7 Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 8 He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. 9 Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering. 10 But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat....20And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. 21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. 22 The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.”

Now the first goat that is offered a sacrifice for sins. We get this. It’s a substitute of our sin. And it dies instead of us to remove God’s wrath. But why bother with the second goat? What does it communicate

that the first goat doesn't? And it's so crucial to get this right. The first goat represents forgiveness of sin and the second goat represents separation of that sin from God's people. Goat one says God removes our guilt. Goat two says God removes my shame. It's this separation of our sin from us. This is Psalm 103:12 is getting at. "as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

And we really struggle with this. Like we get that God absolves the guilt of our sin through a sacrifice, but when it comes to cleaning the stain and shame of our sin, we're skeptical. Like I know I can go to heaven because of Christ's sacrifice, but I'm supposed to feel terrible the whole way there right? Like God says, "I'm going to forgive you and let you into heaven—you'll make the cut—but it would show love for me if after you confess your sin if you continued to feel really bad about it for a long time. Don't skip and whistle out of here. You're forgiven of your sin but it would really honor me if you wore the stain." I've never heard anyone say that, but I've seen tons of people live it. Now it is appropriate to feel shame when you sin. Sin is shameful. But when you confess your sin to the one who is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you of all unrighteousness, what you do after that shows what you really believe about the Gospel.

Porn, addiction, hurt someone, ruined a marriage, maybe your guilty of murder—David was, Paul was. They've confessed a thousand times and still don't feel clean they know God loves them, they'll tell you God has forgiven them but they keep their shame in their back pocket and it regularly stains their conscience. God's guilt removing work has an affect on what they believe but his shame removing work has little effect on how they feel. But friends Jesus hasn't just come to remove a guilty verdict but a guilty conscience. "13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify[a] for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our[b] conscience from dead works to serve the living God." You this God isn't just forgiving us of sin—he restoring us to service and taking away our shame. Case and point—the high priest here in Leviticus 16.

Did you notice that the high priest here is named Aaron? He's going to be the high priest. He's going to go in to the Holy of Holies and represent the people to God and God to the people. Do you know what he was doing just a few chapters earlier in Exodus 32? While Moses was on Sinai, he literally made Israel's first idol, a golden calf constructed from Egyptian jewelry, and told the people to worship it. He led God's people in worshipping a statue. As a result at Moses command, the Levites execute 3000 Israelite and then God sends a plague on the people because Aaron made the calf. That's some shame. Leviticus 8 who is going to be the high priest to go into God's presence? God's answer? "Aaron" "5 And Moses said to the congregation, "This is the thing that the Lord has commanded to be done." 6 And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. 7 And he put the coat on him and tied the sash around his waist and clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him and tied the skillfully woven band of the ephod around him, binding it to him with the band.[a] 8 And he placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim. 9 And he set the turban on his head, and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown, as the Lord commanded Moses."

This is covering! Think how powerful this would be—I don't deserve it. I know but I'm a God who not only takes away your guilt, but takes away your shame. You dishonored me in front of everyone and now I'm going to clothe you in beauty in front of everyone. Don't you see this? This is how God works! God could have just said, look I'll absolve your guilt, but you're really pretty useless to me at this point because of what you did. I'll forgive you but we're going to put an asterisk next to your name in the Lamb's book of life and when you get to heaven you to sit in the back." He couldn't have said that, but he didn't. He covered Aaron in garments of honor and beauty and he does it for you Rev. 19 "7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it

was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”. Started with fig leaves, God provided skins, and finishes with fine linen, bright, and pure—not that we make, but that’s been granted to us by the work of the Lamb who gave himself up to—not just to absolve us of guilt—present us to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that we might be holy and blameless, “⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The verdict will not be forgiven. It will be not guilty! This is the only way we’re going to fight shame. It’s the only way we’re going to get rid of a stained conscience.

This is the only way that Paul—a self-professed murderer—can talk about being judged by God say in 1 Cor. “For I am not aware of anything against myself.” The tragedy isn’t that God hasn’t taken away our shame, it’s that so many of us live like He hasn’t.

And when you fight shame for sin that you confessed, you’re going to have to remind yourself that not only has Christ died to save you but to cleanse you—to take always sin’s penalty and sin’s stain. To cleanse your record and your conscience. And when your tempted to despair your going to have to listen to God more than you listen to you.

At this point, all that’s left is that you can’t forgive yourself. Two problems—that’s prideful as if your standard is higher than God’s. But second, you can’t forgive yourself—you can’t take away your own shame. Any attempt to remedy your shame based on performance and achievement is a way of looking to the Creation to give you the rest that only the Creator can. Crab story.