

## Confronting Shame Part 2

Recap: Shame because of sin—too many trust God to remove their guilt, but take it upon themselves to remove their shame. God’s sin forgiving work means that they’ll go to heaven, but his shame removing work has very little effect on how they feel until they get there. We said that Jesus died not just to salvage us but to wash us and cleanse us. So that the story isn’t that God merely accepts a dirty rag, but that Christ cleanses us from every stain to present us to himself without spot or wrinkle but holy blameless. But not all shame is because of our sin. In fact much of it isn’t at all.

Examples: (1) Something was done to you (2) General association with someone (i.e. like having the last name Hitler!) or something (i.e. race, poverty) (3) Sin has so distorted things that we feel shame over righteous things—like saying you’re a virgin, or sharing the Gospel. And so today we’re going to spend our time talking about this kind of shame. General caveat about inability to address all situations especially sexual abuse and assault. **Pray.**

Illustration: Getting picked last for kickball. Not getting asked to prom.<sup>1</sup>

Now, maybe you never got picked last for kickball, and maybe you always got asked to prom. But I’m going to use these two illustrations as we talk about shame allow you to apply the core issue in these two examples to your own life. The core issue being the feeling that you aren’t valuable. That there are people who are important and who matter and who are desirable—and for whatever reason, you aren’t one of them. There’s this one areas where you just don’t measure up.

In this sense everybody has gotten picked last for kickball—everyone has experience being devalued—perhaps you weren’t smart enough (i.e. calling out grades in class), athletic enough (i.e. friend was told he was a cancer to society by the coach), popular enough (i.e. no one invites you to their birthday party) pretty enough (i.e. FB pic comparison), successful enough (i.e. can’t by same the same presents). Some in greater measure than others, no doubt. Some can call it to mind immediately some need to think about it. But when it comes to shame, no one is bullet proof.

If you watched last week’s sermon (and you need to make better sense of this) we looked at Adam and Eve and noted that the first thing they felt after they sinned was shame. Moments earlier the narrator told us that they were naked and unashamed but as soon as they sin verse 7 of chapter 3 says, “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” Adam and Eve immediately move to remedy their shame problem. But we learned last week that we’re not able to take away our own shame. We need the work of someone else to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves—which God does by making clothes for them at the end of chapter 3.

But I want to reflect on *how* exactly Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame because I think it’s how we try to cover over ours. What are they doing? Well, they made fig leaves. Yea, but does that show us? They are looking to something in the creation to take away their shame. They are using and mastering the resources in the created world to restore and protect them from shame’s sting. And it’s amazing to me how our attempts to remedy our own shame are stunningly similar thousands of years later. We have some experience or association that makes us feel devalued, and rather than looking to the Creator to take our shame away, we take things into our own hands and use the created world to make up for our lost honor.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Welch offers these as two common examples of shame in his book: Edward T. Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness & Rejection* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012).

That little boy who got picked last didn't make the varsity team either—same story, different chapter for him, now he senses his dad is little bit embarrassed about it. He moves on, but he's determined to take his shame away—I will not live a picked last kind of life. Becomes a business magnate. Builds an empire—multi-millionaire. And tells himself—despite his emotional setbacks—this is who I really am. I've made something of myself. I count. My life matters. If only they could see me now. My dad's finally proud of me. Hard work has erased my shame.

But if you looked just beneath the professional veneer—underneath the Versace suit and rolex you'd see that they're covering a fear of worthlessness and scars of shame. And you would know that he keeps such a tight watch on his money and business empire, because without it he's afraid he wouldn't be much of anything. You'd know that he's constantly fears that he's one bad business decision away from losing his fortune being stripped of the honor he's worked so hard to rebuild. One stock market crash away from being back on the third base line.

This is just one example of the thousand of approaches to being self-made; to taking away our own shame and feeling like we are worth something. We look to fig leaves—something in the creation—bigger bank account, better body, better house, to remedy our shame. We can even look to our kids—and need the to be successful—in order to take away our shame and feelings of failure. Maybe my kids will prove that my life counts. Now I want to be clear that there is nothing wrong being successful, making money, or being beautiful. The problem comes when these become the foundation for our identity and the means of erasing our shame. Why? Bc its idolatry. And bc the created order, can't take away your shame. It can paper over it with success and accolades, but it doesn't give you the equipment you need to truly address your shame. Only the Creator can do that. This leads us to Isa 54. Again, our approach is a little unique. Goal is a theological reflection—not a verse-by-verse exposition.

Now in chapter 53, Isaiah tells about a suffering servant who is going to come and rescue us from our sin...“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;<sup>[g]</sup> when his soul makes<sup>[h]</sup> an offering for guilt... make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” And I want you to see the effect his rescue has on his people in chapter 54. “Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the Lord. Pause. And he's saying that as a result of the Servant's work this woman is going to have more offspring than the married woman. Now the woman here represents God's people—who will be going into exile not to long from now—but there is coming a day where God's people will extend beyond a small ethnic group and encompass a trans-national trans-ethnic worshipping community. And the hope and the privileges spelled out are the privileges of that community in which you and I are members.

And in Gal. 4, Paul talks about the citizens of this community—not those of an earthly Jerusalem which is still enslaved to the law—but of a heavenly Jerusalem,” vs 26, “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. Then what does he do? 27 As it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” What does this mean—that Paul is explicitly linking the promises and privileges made to the barren women in Isa. 54 to us—to believers who are members of a heavenly city through repentance and faith. And because we are part of god's people—people with a heavenly citizenship—we are the heirs of and participants in his covenant promises and blessings.

So let's return to the Isaiah text, there was hardly anything more shameful in the ANE world than being a barren woman—aside from feeling personally broken you had no one to inherit your property, your name would perish, and everyone knew it. Not an insignificant choice here for Isaiah. 4 “Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. And then spends the rest of the chapter detailing why the barren woman—and by the extension of covenant promises us—do not need to fear or be ashamed. And he gives two primary reason—that we're going to unpack for the remainder of our time together. Two powerful truths that I can hide deep down in my heart as I battle shame and I can give them to you in one sentence: my story ends in beauty and the hero picks me.

Two things that are essential for battling shame that isn't your fault is correcting the story you tell yourself about your life, and understanding your relationship to its author. Both of these are crucial. And both of them are here in Isa 54. What this woman's story? Vs 11ff “O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires ... 13 All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children 14 In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you ... 16 Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy; 17 no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.”

The barren shamed woman is called to be unashamed because there is a day where, bc of the Servant's work, she will be made beautiful with precious stones and sapphires, free her from all oppression, and cause her to rise in victory over all of her enemies. And in this way, God's counsel to the barren woman and to us in our shame is this: Our hope of being free from fear and shame in the present lies in understanding how our story ends. Understanding how our story ends then, determines how we view ourselves and battle shame now. And if your perspective on your shame isn't perspective that comes from the future, you will not have the power to battle shame.

What if I said, “Beauty and the Beast is a story about how a prosperous prince makes a mistake and is turned into a Beast who's ugly, miserable, lonely and lives in darkness.” That's what B&B is about. You'd say well that's not quite right. This is how so many of you think about your life. Take a particularly painful chapter, and make it the whole story. Close the book—this is who I am.

But if you would just look forward, you would see that you're living an inaccurate narrative—you've got the whole story wrong. It's true that a Prince is turned into a Beast—but that's an event not the story. It's about an individual who changes and despite his shame, wins the heart of a beautiful girl, whose love takes away his shame and transforms him into the true prince he was all along. But friends this is our story too. Clothed in sapphire, enemies defeated, shamed removed reigning forever as the children of God that we were all along. God's not going to make us something we're not as much as he's going to make us fully and finally who we really are. But we don't tend to see our lives this way. Our hope in our story is often no better than the last couple chapters. But if you do that the story that you're living out will be so distorted it'll just be about a condemned miserable prince.

Illustration: Colored stick. You have to think about yourself, from the future. This isn't wishful thinking, and it's not minimizing. This changes your “I am” statement. (i.e. “I'm a survivor”, “I'm weak”) This was an instance—but this is who I am.

You have to re-narrate experiences of shame in light of your whole story. God gives you these details not to spoil the ending but because if you don't know the ending you'll spoil your life. More than conquerors, inheriting a kingdom! Judging angels! Rev. 3:21 "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne." This is who you are. I am not the sum of my brokenness, I am the object of the Suffering Servant's affection, inheriting the universe, reigning in perfect bliss and righteousness of Christ forever—why? Because my story ends in glory/victory/beauty—and the best part—the hero picks me.

The author comes to rescue you—writes himself into the story. This is the second part you have to get to fight shame, why should the barren woman shout for joy and not be ashamed, "5 For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. 6 For the Lord has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. 7 For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. 8 In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the Lord, your Redeemer." Lord of hosts, the Maker—that's my husband—I'm his beloved. He picked me. Called me. Gathered me. And my association with his love, commitment and approval places elevates me to a status in the universe that is breathtakingly exalted. And this changes everything about how I fight for joy when I feel devalued in someone else's eyes.

A Knight's Tale. He's not a knight but he wants to make something of himself. Because what she says vetos everyone else's opinion. In everyone else's mind he's losing but in his mind he's winning! You see he does want make something of himself and be recognized as a strong valiant knight. But he's simply found something he's willing to throw it away for. Something that gives him a strength and motivation to endure the mocking of everyone in the arena—because there's only one person who's yes matters and it's this girl.

And when it comes to Christ, we have something far better. We have the king of the universe—the suffering servant—who loved me and gave himself for me. Who despite all my shortcomings Heb. 2:11 says Jesus is not ashamed to stand before the world and call me his brother. A God who before the creation of the world picked me. Set his affection on me. And his praise and approval is all I need for everlasting joy and His picking me is what renews my soul when I get picked last for kickball. When I'm not asked to prom. His love and approval vetos all the voices in the arena and empowers me to know—despite losing circumstances—that I'm winning. And I'm gonna marry rich! Or better rich is going to marry me—and keep me and be with me forever why? Because my story end's in beauty and the hero picks me. Which means that even if no one else does—I can still have joy.

Does God promise to take away my shame in the eyes of people on this earth? He died so that you don't need the approval of people on this earth to feel value and worth. Christ didn't die so that you could have the value and worth of popular opinion. He died to demonstrate that no amount of popular opinion could equal the love he has for you and the lengths he was willing to go to rescue you to himself. And yet one day, your new creation nature will be seen for what it is. The sons of God will be revealed! Rev. 2:17 says I'll get a new name that no one else knows. God and I will have secrets.

Are you trying to take away our own shame and be self-made?

Are you selectively narrating your life story?

Are you seeking to use creation to take away your shame or are you looking to your Creator?