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Theological Convictions for No Shame Sharing, Part 3

The Bible has much to say about shame and the Christian; the word is used 217 times. For example...

- In 2 Timothy 1:8, 12 we are commanded not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of suffering for the Gospel.
- In Hebrews 2:11; 11:16 we are told that God is “not ashamed to be called our God” with the obvious implication that we ought not to be ashamed of Him!
- In Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26 we learn that those who are characteristically ashamed of Christ on earth, Christ will be ashamed of them before the Father.
- That is perhaps why David prayed on several occasions, “O my God, in Thee I trust, do not let me be ashamed...” (Psalm 25:2, 25; 31:1; cf. also Psalm 71:1).

Indeed, as children of God who have received so much from Christ, we do not want to be ashamed of the Lord. We love Him. Yet based on the world in which we live, shame seems to be a ready emotion when it comes to the things of the Lord. So how do we NOT be ashamed of the Lord? Does the Bible give any instruction on the subject?

Indeed it does. The passage at which we are looking contains a very important phrase...

Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel FOR...”

Now what follows are four statements as to why Paul was not ashamed of the gospel- four convictions that led Paul to being bold when it came to confronting the world with the claims of Christ. Thus far we have looked

at the first three reasons for Paul's lack of shame. Paul wasn't ashamed of the gospel on account of...

- Its Nature, v. 16a. It is the one and only means whereby God saves and so interacts with the world!
- Its Purpose, v. 16b. The purpose of the gospel is one and the same as the focus of Redemptive History: the Salvation of God's people unto the praise of the glory of God's grace!
- Its People, v. 16b. The gospel is not confined to a Race, Gender, or Social Standing. It is the possession of each and everyone who believes!

The Gospel's Provision

Now, we are going to look at the fourth and final reason for Paul's lack of shame, the gospel's provision.

Romans 1:16-17, "¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." ¹

From the perspective of Scripture, the issue of one's "righteousness" is the question of the hour. In essence, to be righteous is to be blameless with regard to a particular standard. For example we read that

Genesis 6:9, "...Noah was a righteous man..."

And then it goes on to explain what it means by this. He was, "...blameless in his time; Noah walked with God." In other words, in comparison to the people and culture around him, Noah was a pretty good person. When it came to the revelation of God and the Lord's standards, Noah was characterized by faithfulness. Hence, it is said that "Noah walked with God."

Now when it comes to our relationship with God, the standard for being righteous or acceptable to God is not the culture in which we live, but God Himself. And thus, we note the following truths:

1. For a man to be accepted by God, he must be perfect! He cannot be guilty of one sin! Christ said,

Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

1 Peter 1:15-16, "But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

2. But herein lies THE problem of time and eternity. While the standard for salvation is perfection-perfect righteousness, mankind at its best can never measure up.

Isaiah 64:6, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment..."

This text is shocking for it says that when we are at our best, we still are unacceptable to God! Why is that?

Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

¹ *The Holy Bible : English standard version*. 2001. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Let me ask you, if you made an omelet for a large gathering of people and used in that omelet 150 good eggs, but one bad one, would the omelet taste alright? Would it be acceptable, NO! Likewise when we are at our best, we nevertheless have sin. And that sin taints everything we do such that we are unacceptable to God! On the last day, God will speak these words to many who went to church and did good things:

Matthew 7:23, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Because of our sin we will always fall short! God will always reject us! Because, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

3. Now because all of mankind stands before God guilty of sin, we have but one expectation upon death: condemnation and wrath.

Romans 2:5-6: "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds."

BUT HEREIN LAYS THE PROVISION OF THE GOSPEL. In it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed. The word for "revealed" in the Bible can mean "to be seen or manifested" (Luke 12:2; Phil. 3:15). This is the way we typically use the term. However, its primary use carries the more active sense of "being worked-out in, upon, or through." For example²

Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

² Compare also Galatians 1:15-16; 3:23.

God's wrath is much more than just seen to be against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of man, someday it actually will be set against it! Do you see that "revealed" implies that something is being worked out in or upon something?

Romans 8:18: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

The hope of everyone here is that someday God is going to transform us such that we will be able to stand in His presence in glory. It isn't that we would see God's glory, but that we would participate in it. That is what is promised here.³ It is in this way that "revealed" is used in our text this morning. Accordingly to say that "the righteousness of God is revealed" is to say that God's righteousness is given or imparted to the believer. Do you understand what this means? It is amazing! See, whether you realize it or not, mankind stands before God on a legal basis. When, we take out a loan to purchase a house, we enter into a relationship with a bank. We sign a contract to rent a house, we enter into a relationship with a landlord. We hire a contractor to fix up our home, we enter into a relationship with the worker.

Now each of these relationships are not based on

- Love- as are many marriages today.
- Common likes or dislikes- as are many friendships today.
- A common task or enemy- as in warfare.

Rather each of the afore-mentioned relationships began and continue on a legal basis- a contract! If both sides do their part, if both are righteous, the relationship continues. But, if either fails to do their part, if they prove themselves to be unrighteous, the relationship is terminated.

Well when God created the world He entered into a legal relationship with mankind.⁴

Genesis 2:16-17, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.'"

From this point on mankind enjoyed many rights and privileges on account of their relationship with God. However the relationship itself was predicated upon and maintained by our obedience or righteousness when it came to the stipulations of the relationship. If man obeyed, the relationship would continue. If man disobeyed- if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil- the relationship would be terminated.

What did man do? He violated the terms of the relationship such that all now stand before God as unrighteous!

Genesis 3:6, "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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

As such we read of man today...

³ Compare also Philippians 3:21; and Colossians 3:3-4

⁴ We tend to assume that in the beginning God loved all of mankind and that the fall changed God's disposition. That is not the case. In the beginning, God related to man on the basis of the covenant and NOT love. It is in the second covenant, the covenant of grace, in which we learn that all those whom God loves are saved.

Romans 3:10, "There is none righteous, not even one..."

Isaiah 64:6a, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean..."

The result is that mankind now stands before God condemned. Romans speaking of the first man, Adam states:

Romans 5:16, "...judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation..."

Romans 5:18a, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men..."

So what is the good-news? The gospel referenced in our text! The good news is that, not out of an obligation, but this time in love, God was not willing to allow the relationship between man and God to be forfeited. As such, God became a man, in the form of Jesus Christ, and so purposely placed Himself under the confines of the original relationship established between mankind and God. He was born under the original relationship that Adam had with God.

As the infinite God/man, Christ fulfilled the original contract which called for perfect obedience.

Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

1 Peter 2:22b, says that Christ, "...committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth."

1 John 3:5b, speaking of Jesus, "...in Him there is no sin."

Do you understand the implication here? Because Christ fulfilled the original contract, He should have never died. He should still be living on the earth. But what did Christ do?

As mankind, Christ stood before God guilty of violating their relationship. As mankind, Christ was being led to the gallows on account of their sin. Jesus Christ volunteered to die in their place and so effect a transaction of incredible proportions. The guilty would receive Christ's righteous standing before God, and Christ would receive their death!

Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Romans 5:18, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men."

Lost House

Say a family failed to make their mortgage payments for six months. Under normal circumstance one would expect that the bank would repo the house and the family would be homeless. Now imagine a wealthy benefactor stepping in, buying the house outright, and then giving it to the family with the result that now the

benefactor would be homeless.

That is what is being spoken about in our text when it says that "...the righteousness of God is revealed..." God/Christ has offered His own righteous standing which Christ earned while living on the earth that we the sinner might not die, but remain in a relationship with God- a relationship which now has woven into it love. Now it is obvious that not all receive the righteousness of God, or the right standing of God. And this begs the question: How can a man receive this incredible gift?

Romans 1:17, "for in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed/worked out from faith to faith."

Literally this reads, "out of faith into faith." Paul is emphasizing the place of faith when it comes to our salvation. It is faith through and through, from start to finish. Accordingly we see that it is through faith that the "righteousness of God" is transferred to the sinner. And thus we read this:

John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son [relies, depends upon the Son] has eternal life..."

John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name..."

Acts 16:30-31, "And after he brought them out, he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.'"

What an incredible truth! Yet what does it mean? What does it mean to rely or depend upon Jesus for salvation? To answer this I want again to remind you of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Knowing that...

- Man's greatest problem is that they have violated the terms of the relationship they originally enjoyed with God...
- God would become a man, fulfill the law, and so offer Himself in the place of man.

...to instruct us as to how we can be delivered from the sentence of death, God instituted the sacrificial system.

God allowed a sinful man to remain in a relationship with Him provided he...

- Take a spotless lamb.
- Place his hands on the head of the lamb and confess his sin- the picture here is that by doing this the sinner transferred his sin to the animal.
- And then kill the lamb as a sacrifice for his sin.

By this ceremony the sinner learned the concept of substitution, sacrifice, and the transferring of one's guilt to another. In the same way, when Christ came to this earth, He came as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29b). Accordingly, if we approach God...

- With this Lamb in our hands.
- Relying upon this sacrifice for our sins.

...we shall receive His right standing- His righteousness! It is this reliance that is in mind when the Bible speaks about being “saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Now lest you think that this was a new teaching, Paul closes his treatment of the Gospel here by quoting the Old Testament, specifically Habakkuk 2:4.

Habakkuk 2:4, “as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith”

Literally this reads “the righteous by faith shall live.” The one who lives is the one who is righteous on account of faith!

From this we see that what Paul is explaining as the basis of the Gospel, righteousness attained through reliance upon the Lamb of God, has always been the case! In fact not only was this true of Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:4) but we see this same truth in the life of Abraham (Romans 4:3) and David (Romans 4:6-8).

All of this brings us to Paul’s point this morning. When you and I behold the incredible provision of the gospel, Christ’s righteousness given to the sinner, shame will be one of the furthest things from our minds!

How is it that knowledge of this will make us bold and not ashamed of the Gospel? Let me answer this with a couple of statements...

- Again, the Bible teaches that every man on account of their sin is, as it were, on death row (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 3:23; 6:23).
- Now every man, on account of their blindness and ignorance, would seek to escape this death by doing nice things (Matthew 7:22-23)!
- They say to themselves, “When the day of execution comes, and I am asked, ‘How do you plead?’ I will say...
 - “Do you realize the good I have done?”
 - “Do you realize the people I have helped?”
 - “Do you realize the devotion I have sought to obtain?”
 - “Do you see the children I have raised?”
- And yet, when the day of execution arrives, the Judge will respond...
 - “It is not on account of a good deed, a person helped, a devoted life, or the raising up of children that you are on death row! It is on account of your violating the terms of our original relationship! That is why you will die TODAY! Cast the wicked into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

If a person didn’t make their house payment, none of this would avail such that a bank would allow them to keep their house and so it is with God when it comes to us. Yet this is where we come in! As a prisoner who has been delivered from death row we know of a truth that wholly changes this scenario! We know that Christ, the living God, became man and lived a perfect life, He had no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). We know that because He had no sin, Christ should never have died, and in fact would have never died had He not laid His life down (John 10:18)!

And we know that Christ did indeed die. Yet His death was a substitutionary death, a death on behalf of another.⁵ And we know therefore on account of Romans 1:17 that the Judge will declare every person “Not guilty” who pleads the name and work of Christ!

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6

Now when we come to the point where we see reality in this fashion, that...

- The world is blind to and ignorant of the truth that God acquits sinners who rely upon Christ.
- Yet we have been called to spread this news.

...all shame will disappear.

The News that Overshadows Shame

Many of us have read of lepers in the Scriptures. Today leprosy is known as Hansen's disease. Leprosy attacks the nerve endings responsible for feeling such that over time the individual damages his limbs and so bears the disfiguring marks of the disease. Dr. Paul Brand, a world-renowned expert on the treatment of Hansen's disease wrote⁶ this:

Hansen's disease (HD) is cruel, but not at all the way other diseases are. It primarily acts as an anesthetic, numbing the pain cells of hands, feet, nose, ears, and eyes. Not so bad, really, one might think. Most diseases are feared because of their pain- what makes a painless disease so horrible?

HD's numbing quality is precisely the reason such fabled destruction and decay of tissue occurs. For thousands of years people thought HD caused the ulcers on hands and feet and face which eventually led to rotting flesh and loss of limbs. Mainly through Dr. Brand's research, it has been established that in 99 percent of the cases, HD only numbs the extremities. The destruction follows solely because the warning system of pain is gone.

Well in the Bible, leprosy was a serious threat to any society such that if someone contracted the disease they were cast out of society and shunned. In fact, it was worse than that. Because the ancient world thought that any bad thing that happened to an individual was due to their own sin, it was believed that a leper was someone with hidden wickedness and sin. So they were doubly shunned. It is no stretch to say that to be a leper meant living in constant shame!

Well in 2 Kings 7 we read of four lepers during the siege of Samaria in the days of Jehoram. The Arameans surrounded the city and planned to conquer it by starving its citizens unto their surrender. Things got quite dire such...

- A donkey's head was sold for 80 shekels of silver (2 Kings 6:25a).
- A small portion of a dove's dung was sold for 5 shekels of silver (2 Kings 6:25b).
- And the people of God had resorted to cannibalism (2 Kings 6:26-29).

During this time four lepers who used to beg for food outside of the city found themselves in a bind. If they remained where they were, they'd surely die of starvation. Accordingly, they took their chances and went to the encampment of the Arameans hoping that the soldiers would not kill them, but take pity such that they would receive some food. Unbeknownst to them, and to make a long story short during the previous night God spooked the armies such that they ran for fear of an invading army. Thus when the lepers approached the camp, they found it abandoned. The fires were still burning. The tents were still erected. Food was everywhere and free for the taking. Immediately they dug in, ate like kings, and began hiding the vast treasure which they found. But soon the grim reality of what was happening back in Samaria hit them. It is at

⁶ Quoted in Philip Yancey's, *Where Are You God When it Hurts?* Pages 32-34

this point we read...

2 Kings 7:9: "Then they said to one another, 'We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent; if we wait until morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household.'"

Family of God I want you to notice that the shame of these men's leprosy was dwarfed by the magnitude of the news that they bore. Accordingly, forgetting about the scorn they might receive if they approached the city gates, they ran to the city and shared. Well this day "we've a story to tell the nations" which is more important than the message of life that these four lepers bore so long ago. To be bereft of this message is not to remain under a temporal siege rather; it is to remain under a sentence of death for time and eternity.

And with this we close out this study of the Theological Conviction for No Shame Sharing. But as I do so, I want to end with a two-fold exhortation. To the one here this day who does not have the righteousness of Christ when it comes to their relationship with God, don't leave here without it! As in the Old Testament sacrificial system lay your hands upon the Lamb God, Jesus Christ. Confess your sins- agree with God that no amount of work on your part could save you. And so receive the life of Christ as your own.

To the one here this day who has received the righteousness of Christ as their own, let us come to grips with reality and so view the world as God sees it. See, when the world (and many times the Church) looks out over a mass of people, what does it see?

- Money.
- Opportunity.
- "Suckers."
- Entertainment.
- Good times.
- People to help them.

Yet, when God looks out over a mass of people, what does He see?

Matthew 9:36-38: "And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'"

When Christ looked at people, He didn't see...

- An opportunity to make money.
- A means by which He could be helped.
- People with whom He could have a good time.

Rather, He saw...

- Ones in need of a shepherd.
- People awaiting an eternal sentence of death and therefore the need for laborers to go out!

Oh family of God, to understand the passage before us is to see life through the eyes of God it is to see that what weighs in the balance is NOT...

- Happiness.
- Fulfillment.
- Purposeful living.

BUT life and death! Let us therefore, armed with the knowledge of God's revealed righteousness...

- Pant for our Savior!
- Boldly proclaim His message to the nations!

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Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

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