

The Shame of Nakedness

America's Disgrace

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Bible Text: Genesis 3:7-11; John 19:16-24

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I want to talk this Lord's Day about the shame of nakedness.

In Ecclesiastes, the great philosopher king Solomon, in one of his darker moments wrote these words:

So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.¹

These verses are very appropriate as we consider the evil work in the news of the day. Pretty much any week out of the year, these verses are appropriate as we consider the news of the day.

I intended to deliver this sermon last Lord's Day before this particular matter of news became so critically prominent. Within the last week, various leading human rights organizations have chimed in on the subject, and I just want to make clear that my thoughts on this were not prompted by their belated weighing in on the subject.

If you had seen the news last week and had paid much attention – it would have taken some careful attention, I warrant you, because it was not widely reported – that is, the mistreatment of the prisoner Bradley Manning, who is being held in a Marine prison facility; but two weeks ago it was revealed that he was forced to stand naked at attention as a sort of punishment, as an act of humiliation.

He had already been mistreated and abused 10 months in prison. And now he was not even allowed to cover himself when he appeared for inspection. Amidst all the prisoners and the guards and the management of the facility, he alone was required to stand at

¹ Ecclesiastes 4:1-3.

attention naked, not even allowed to cover himself with his own hands, but ordered to remove them so that his shame and his dishonor could be seen by all men.

And in what is a particularly cruel follow-up to this, the military confirmed every particular of the facts, that they had stripped him of his clothing and forced him to appear naked. But they said they couldn't explain why, because they were concerned about his privacy rights! Only in America can such twisted and perverted justifications be presented by our government officials with a straight face, it seems.

But I am not going to speak about this man's particular situation, because what it mainly does is point to a growing use of such tactics of stripping people of their clothing and humiliating them, which our government has begun to use more and more against prisoners, against enemies, and now against common, ordinary citizens who aren't even charged with a crime.

What do the Scriptures have to say about the shame of nakedness?

You know, Christians ought to be particularly sensitive to the subject of the stripping of a man, the humiliating of a man, the making a spectacle of a man without any clothing, because our Lord Jesus was put to shame in much the same way. He was treated so shamefully by the Romans at Calvary.

The shame of nakedness, the Scriptures tell us, results directly from sin and rebellion against God and the fall. For it is written in Genesis two at verse 25 before the fall, "And they [that is, Adam and Eve] were both naked, [in the Garden of Eden, that is] the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."²

But after they had succumbed to the temptation of the serpent and disobeyed the Lord, that they might become like God to know good and evil, then what do the Scriptures say in Genesis three at verse seven?

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?³

² Genesis 2:25.

³ Genesis 2:7-11.

So, you see, the shame of nakedness and the consciousness thereof is a result of a consciousness of sin. And Adam's profession of his shame of nakedness was tantamount to a confession that he had disobeyed God.

You see, he could have maintained the cover that everything was right between him and God. If he would have brazened it out and strutted in front of the Lord naked and pretended not to feel shame. But, you see, the shame was what "ratted out" his disobedience – as if God didn't know already. Of course He knew.

But, you see, the Lord particularly focused in on his admission of his shame and nakedness as the evidence that he had sinned, that he had violated the one commandment which the Lord had laid upon Adam and Eve in the garden.

And, it is instructive that this shame of nakedness was the very first consequence of sin detectable by Adam and Eve. Now, there was a consequence to their sin that was based upon the commandment of the Lord, but they didn't feel that yet. They didn't feel like they were dying, did they? They were like the man who jumps out of the window of the skyscraper and on the way down says, "Well, nothing has happened so far."

You see, they couldn't detect the real damaging consequence of their sin. But the first thing they could detect when they had sinned was the shame of nakedness. So that is a very important fact – that shame is the very first and most obviously detectable consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve.

And so now the requirement for modesty, the desire for modesty, the craving to be covered up, you see, then transfers to the whole human race. Animals aren't ashamed. They might be angry if you cut their hair, but that has nothing to do with their shame. They are not ashamed because they are not sinners. But all of the human race obtains this shame over their nakedness, and they obtain it for the same reason that Adam and Eve did, because they are sinners.

And so now there is a requirement for modesty. There is a desire for appropriate attire. There is a yearning to clothe ourselves, that we might not appear in our shame unclothed before others.

There is, therefore, a great humiliation brought upon a man by forcing that person to appear naked, by stripping him of his garments. It is an act of degradation and humiliation to do so.

You remember the incident when David sent ambassadors to comfort the son of the King of Ammon after he died. And the son's counselors said, "These people aren't come here to mourn your father's passing. They are come here to spy out the land."

And you remember that the son of the king of Ammon humiliated David's ambassadors by shaving off half their beard and hair, and cutting off their clothes at the waist, so that they were naked from the waist down, and humiliated.

And it ended up that David and the Israelites invaded and subjugated Ammon and killed their king because of that insult to those people individually, and to King David in his royal capacity.

And the Scriptures are full of exhortations to godly people. One of the most clear, unambiguous commandments of God to the people of God is at all times and all places to help cover the nakedness, to help clothe naked people, to treat them humanely.

You remember the incident of Noah becoming drunk and being covered by his sons walking in backwards to cover him with a blanket. So serious was that shame and that dishonor, that they would not even look upon their own father, but were very delicate and very careful to cover him in his shame, until he was sober and in his own mind.

And there are Scripture passages that especially command humanity and kindness to people who are captives.

In 2 Kings chapter six there is the story of Elisha and the angel of the Lord striking the Syrian army blind. And if you come to verse 21, if you remember, of 2 Kings chapter six, that Elisha led them into the center of Samaria, where they were surrounded by the forces of Israel.

And in verse 21, “And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?”⁴

So he has captured a big army and surrounded them. They are captured by the king of Israel. And the king asks Elisha, should he go ahead and kill them all now?

And what does Elisha say?

And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.⁵

Here is a text that describes a requirement, that captured soldiers should be treated humanely. And if you look in another passage, in another instance where there were captives taken, captives of the civilian population, in 2 Chronicles 28 at verse 15:

And the men that were expressed by name...⁶ [that is, certain princes of the people of Israel,] rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed

⁴ 2 Kings 6:21.

⁵ 2 Kings 6:22-23.

⁶ 2 Chronicles 28:15.

all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.⁷

In Ezekiel chapter 18 at verse five we read, “But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right...”⁸ And it goes on to list the things that a just man will do. He will not worship idols. He will not defile his neighbor’s wife. He will not oppress anyone. He will have restored the pledge of a debtor. He will have spoiled none by violence. He will have given his bread to the hungry.

And at the end of the verse seven: “and he hath clothed the naked with a garment.”

And then he has not taken usury. He has withdrawn his hand from iniquity. He has exacted true judgment between man and man. He has kept all the judgments of God. “He shall live,” saith the Lord God.

So the Scriptures in Ezekiel describe how the clothing of the naked is a duty of godly men.

And then Isaiah 58, where the prophet says, reporting the words of the Lord, “What is the fast which I have commanded? What is the acceptable date of the Lord?”

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens,”⁹ et cetera, et cetera. But then what? “When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him.”¹⁰

The Lord takes pleasure in acts of compassion and kindness to the oppressed, to the prisoner and to the captives.

Now there was a time when our nation dealt honorably and humanely with prisoners, with POWs, with captives and with its own civilian population. The human rights attorney Scott Horton wrote a very interesting piece about George Washington’s character in these matters. And I think that all of us, being fans of George Washington, known as the father of our country, we will all find it interesting what Mr. Horton says about our first president. He says this.

Before America had a constitution, a bill of rights or a congress, before the institution of the presidency, it had its first abiding institution which was the army. And its first commander-in-chief, the only one to bear that title without simultaneously being president, was the great militia veteran of the French and Indian War, a man whose experience in warfare towered

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ezekiel 18:5.

⁹ Isaiah 58:6.

¹⁰ Isaiah 58:7.

over others, George Washington. From the outset of their confrontation with the British monarchy, the Americans were labeled as traitors and insurgents. They were denied the status of honorable soldiers in arms and were treated shamefully.

Even as Washington issued the order quoted at the outset, he knew that all 31 of the prisoners taken by the British at Bunker Hill had died in captivity, many under unsettling circumstances. Of the 2607 Americans taken prisoner at the capitulation of Fort Mifflin, all but 800 had died by 1778. The continental press was filled with accounts of the brutal and inhuman treatment of Americans taken by the British throughout this period.

Against a loud public outcry of an eye for an eye, George Washington stood fast. He made it a point of fundamental honor, and that was his word, that the Americans would not only hold dearly to the laws of war, they would define a new law of war that reflected the humanitarian principles upon which the new republic had risen.

These principles required respect for the dignity and worth of every human being engaged in the conduct of the war, whether in the American cause or that of the nation's oppressors. They also required respect for the religion and cultural values of foreign peoples. He wrote, "While we are contending for our own liberty, we should be very cautious of violating the rights of conscience in others, ever considering that God alone is the judge of the hearts of men and to him only in this case are they answerable."

Following the Battle of Trenton in 1776, Washington set firm rules for the treatment of prisoners in American custody. "Treat them with humanity and let them have no reason to complain of our copying the brutal example of the British army in their treatment of our unfortunate brethren who have fallen into their hands," he wrote.

In all respects the prisoners were to be treated no worse than American soldiers and in some respects better. Through this approach Washington sought to shame his British adversaries and to demonstrate the moral superiority of the American colonists. He also anticipated that the prisoners, treated with such attention and care, would reconsider their loyalties by the end of the war and embrace the American cause.

His expectation was fulfilled. Nearly all the surviving prisoners of Trenton, for instance, settled in America and attained citizenship, many after US military service. But Washington makes clear that he took this approach, in the end, because of his experience in the wilderness and the lesson he learned there. Soldiers who mistreated prisoners, who took up

cruel practices, were bad and unruly soldiers. The discipline and morale of the entire fighting force was undermined by such conduct.

For Washington, the issues were clear on both a moral and practical level and his guidance was given with firm conviction.

This was his order:

Should any American be so base and infamous as to injure any prisoner, I do most earnestly enjoin you to bring him to such severe and exemplary punishment as the enormity of the crime may require. Should it extend to death itself, it will not be disproportional to its guilt at such a time and in such a cause, for by such conduct they bring shame, disgrace and ruin to themselves and their country.

That was his charge to the Northern Expeditionary Force, dated September 14, 1775.

And then Horton continues:

Washington's rules on the treatment of prisoners were doctrine of the United States army for 227 years. From Washington's perspective they were not marginal matters. Rather they defined the United States in relationship to the rest of the world. As David Hagget Fisher writes in his Pulitzer prize winning account *Washington's Crossing*, "In a desperate struggle he found a way to defeat a formidable enemy. He reversed the momentum of the war. He improvised a new way of war that grew into an American tradition. And he chose a policy of humanity that aligned the conduct of the war with the values of the revolution."

You know, the origin of such careful treatment of prisoners and of civilians comes from the Christian view of the dignity of man, being created in God's image, that even in application of punishment for crimes, it must be done with humanity, not with cruelty, not with meanness. And these principles, of course, were memorialized in several places in our Bill of Rights: the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment, for example, that it is right to punish criminals convicted in a court of law, but that the punishment must not be cruel or unusual.

It is further memorialized in the 4th Amendment prohibition against the searching of an individual without probable cause, without a warrant. It is, in part, a recognition of the rights of privacy and modesty that a person ought to expect in the United States.

Of course, it was also memorialized in the Lieber Code, which was one of the first written codes of military conduct, which the United States military adopted during the American civil war. That code was largely transcribed into the Hague Conventions in the early part of the 1900s, and then into the Geneva Conventions, which were designed and urged upon the entire world, principally by the United States government.

But our nation has been disgraced in recent times by its leaders and its soldiers in the mistreatment of prisoners. So it is no surprise that Bradley Manning should be mistreated, for it was official policy in our military, from the highest officials down, to humiliate and degrade prisoners with forced nakedness.

This is a very sad and a tragic turn of events – that we should go from a nation with such high standards of humane treatment, to a nation in which it is put in writing that it is the policy of the United States to use stripping and nakedness and humiliation as a tool for the handling of prisoners by our military and by other arms of our government.

We all saw the pictures on television of the atrocities at Abu Ghraib and the very worst pictures were never disclosed to the public.

But I brought with me a copy of the rules that were imposed upon our soldiers in Guantanamo in 2002. I quote: “This SOP,” which stands for standard operation procedure, “document, promulgates procedures to be followed by JTF-Gitmo personnel engaged in interrogation operations on detained persons.”

And then if you go all through here you come to the second section called, “Degradation tactics.” And we are not going to cover any of the ones in there except for this one, “Stripping.”

1. Stripping consists of forcible removal of the detainee’s clothes. In addition to degradation of the detainee, stripping can be used to demonstrate the omnipotence of the captor or to debilitate the detainee.

And this was the official written policy of the United States military! It is no wonder that the Senate Armed Services Committee should conclude that the excesses that were reported in the media were the result of written policies and procedures that were handed down by government leadership, from the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and below.

For, you see, he signed a memorandum specifically ordering that prisoners be stripped naked and humiliated. And so the Senate Armed Services Committee reported in 2008, I believe, when the *New York Times* put it this way.

A report released Thursday by leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee said top Bush administration officials including Donald H Rumsfeld, the former Secretary of Defense, bore major responsibility for the abuses committed by American troops in interrogations and other military detentions.

The report also rejected previous claims by Mr. Rumsfeld and others that defense department policies played no role in the harsh treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib in late 2003 and in other episodes of abuse.

“The abuse of the prisoners,” the report says, “was not simply the result of a few soldiers acting on their own, but grew out of interrogation policies approved by Mr. Rumsfeld and other top officials who conveyed the message that physical pressures and degradation were appropriate treatment for detainees.”

And they go on to describe the fact that forced nudity was one of the methods that Mr. Rumsfeld had ordered them to use in their treatment of the prisoners.

Now this particular tactic was used against hundreds and thousands of people that were swept up in detention camps, many of them completely innocent of any transgression, of any violence, of any act of criminality.

I have seen a log that describes how many times one of the prisoners at Gitmo was stripped of his clothing and how humiliated he was for days and weeks and months, being made to sit and to stand with no clothes on in the presence of members of the opposite sex, who touched him inappropriately, and so forth and so on.

And this was all done on orders from the highest levels of government. It was official government policy.

I also brought with me—and anybody can look at it that wants to—a long CIA memorandum describing in detail how the CIA treated detainees. And all through this document, forced nudity, the stripping of the clothing of the people, is mentioned over and over and over again.

They say here that these techniques are used to demonstrate to the detainee that he has no control over his basic human needs. “The detainee’s clothes are taken and he remains nude until the interrogators provide clothes for him.” Over and over again it mentions that his clothes have been removed and he is kept in a condition of nakedness.

And special delight was taken in humiliating Arab prisoners, because their religion and culture calls for careful modesty. And you can read memoranda by people saying, “We can really use this humiliation to break them because it violates their moral and religious tenets to be naked in front of other people.”

Now, all of this was illegal. It was all a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It was a criminal act directly ordered by the Secretary of Defense.

And it also was a violation of the Geneva Conventions, which I printed out and brought a copy of. It says in part:

Persons taking no active part in hostilities ... including those placed *hors de combat* [which means away from the combat] ... [by being] detained ... shall in all circumstances be treated humanely. To this end, the

following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and at any place whatsoever with respect to the above mentioned persons: ... outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment.

And that is the prohibition of the treaty that we wrote, that we urged upon the nations, and that our Senate approved. And that is, therefore, also the law of the land.

And so what are those people who pride themselves for being big “rule of law” people, big “constitutional” people, people like Rush Limbaugh and a lot of the right wing bloggers and commentators, chest thumping war advocates – they belittle this law of the land! They act like it doesn’t apply, like we can be excused from following it.

And more importantly and more shockingly, they mock the Arab and Muslim value of modesty. They ridicule it. They deride it, little realizing that they merely expose the degraded morality of their own country by mocking and degrading the morality of others that is superior to theirs; that is consummate with the Scriptures, and with the tradition and facts of the fall of man and of the humiliation of sin and the need for modesty, the need for clothing, and with God’s commandment that we clothe those who are naked.

They mock it. They laugh at it. They scoff at it. They talk about how it gives us a handle over those degenerate people who hold such primitive notions of the humiliation of nakedness.

You see, the world sees all this as “Christian America” embracing immodesty and public nudity. And we *have* embraced it to a great extent, have we not, in our entertainment, in our conduct, in the television that we watch. There is less and less shame at public nakedness. There is more and more indulging in it. Most people see no problem now with humiliating and degrading prisoners, because in their own lives and in the lives of the people that they watch in a vicarious sort of way – the actors, the stars who go around degrading themselves and exposing themselves in public – the shame has been taken away.

Our media, our Republican and Democrat leaders, our military have all joined together to lead a wholesale degradation in public decency and in modesty, mocking and laughing at shameful nakedness, and now imposing that shame on others by force.

And, you see, that is why somebody like Bradley Manning can be stripped naked, and almost no American objects.

Now we hear more and more in the press about how routine the stripping and nakedness of simple arrestees is by our police forces. Why just a few days ago, I read of a lawsuit settlement in which peaceful pro-life protestors, who had gathered on public property to hold up signs to protest killing of babies, had been arrested, rounded up, taken to the detention center and stripped naked and searched twice, including even the teenage girls amongst them.

There is no shame. There is no restraint at the use of this humiliating and degrading method – not only in our military, not only by our CIA, but also amongst our police and law enforcement.

It is spreading in our society. And that is why now American travelers are photographed naked in the airports, and very few people object. Very few people object. We have sunk so deep in sin in this country, by our abusive treatment of prisoners, in our depraved entertainment, in cruel oppression, that we have lost our own shame. We have lost our own shame.

We behave shamefully. Our leaders behave shamefully. Our stars behave shamefully. Our soldiers behave shamefully. Our entertainers behave shamefully. Our law enforcement behaves shamefully. And yet almost none of us have any shame over it.

And now that shame is to be forced upon every traveler at airports, and they have announced they are going to start doing it at train stations, and even along public thoroughfares where people walk! That is where they are headed. They are headed for imposing a regime of forced nakedness on every person that travels in this country.

The pulpits of this country ought to be thundering out denunciations at this ungodly conduct, at this abuse, at this dishonor. But, you see, our preachers and our congregants are kept in sweet ignorance by the press, by their choice of who they listen to. They have been cowed into obedience to this or that political party which they can't cross, which they can't criticize, by a partisan interest; and by their idolatry of law enforcement and their idolatry of the armed forces.

And, you know, it is possible for a nation and a people or even a church to become so hardened by oppression and abuse and sin, and yet so comfortable in its own wealth and in its own power, that it loses all shame. It loses consciousness of shame.

Recall that haunting condemnation by Christ of the Laodiceans. You remember what he said:

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, [what?] and naked.¹¹

You see, it is possible to be naked and not even know it, because the shame has been stripped away by the sin, by the wealth, by the preoccupation with the things and the principles of this world.

Perhaps the greatest rebuke to every man and every institution that forces humiliation and shame upon any person by stripping them of their clothing, perhaps the greatest rebuke is this: that when God himself was confronted by his rebellious creatures, Adam and Eve, when they were ashamed of their nakedness, even though they had rebelled and

¹¹ Revelation 3:17.

disobeyed him, even though they had made themselves his enemies, even though they were subject to the penalty of death, even though their nakedness and shame was their own fault, that same God took pity upon them and provided a covering for their shame!

We read of it in Genesis three and verse 21:

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins,
and clothed them.¹²

God did not exploit their shame. He didn't mock it even while meting out punishment. But he clothed them to take away their shame. And I tell you, that *a righteous nation and a good people will do no less to their enemies and to their prisoners.*

But we are no longer a righteous nation, and we are not a good people. Our deviance, our descent into dishonor and cruelty and oppression, is so complete that in our sin we have lost our shame. And now our government forces nakedness and shame upon us, upon our prisoners, upon our common, ordinary citizens with impunity. And, like Laodicea, we don't even know our own nakedness. We are oblivious to our own shame.

The shame of nakedness is a token of the dishonor of sin; and it has been, from the beginning. God was showing the human race that the dishonor of sin, like the shame of nakedness, can only be covered by garments from another.

When he clothed Adam and Eve, it was not just an act of mercy and kindness to cover their humiliation, but it was a sign, was it not? Those animal skins God gave Adam and Eve pointed to other garments that, in his good time, he would provide for us, he would provide for the sin of his people.

Isaiah the prophet foretold the provision of such garments, chapter 61 verse 10:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for
he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me
with the robe of righteousness.¹³

And these garments of salvation and this robe of righteousness are a covering, as it were, for the shame of our sin. Not only that, they are a taking away of the shame of our sin.

And in another place a prophet describes how Joshua was covered with filthy garments and God said, "Take away the filthy garments and put on the new and the clean garments."

You know, our Lord Jesus knew the shame of nakedness, for when the cruel Romans crucified him, they stripped him of all his clothes so that he suffered and died naked upon the cross.

¹² Genesis 3:21.

¹³ Isaiah 61:10.

The psalmist foretold this mistreatment. We read this morning Psalm 22 verse six:

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.¹⁴

And then at verse 16:

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.¹⁵

And surely enough, John's gospel records the fulfillment of these words:

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.¹⁶

You see, their military at the time had sunk to the degraded level of our military at this time, in that they would exact this gratuitous humiliation upon the one to be executed, so as to execute him before the world in shame and in nakedness. The shame of our dear Savior's nakedness was foretold, and it was fulfilled.

Have you ever considered what it meant for Christ to hang upon the cross, exposed and humiliated as he was? It is difficult to think of that humiliation for a person whom you have never seen. Think of a person that you have seen – a beloved son, a beloved father, a beloved mother, some other person that you respect and love. And consider the humiliation of that person, to have their clothes taken from them and to be paraded and strung up naked in front of everyone.

This is what we did to the Lord Jesus when he was crucified for our sins.

Think of it. The King of glory, the Creator, the one who made all those people that looked and stared and gaped at him, that taunted and mocked at him. And even the ones that were humiliated with him, they cried for him. They maybe turned their faces and hid their eyes, so they wouldn't see it. The Lord who made all those people, the King of

¹⁴ Psalm 22:6-8.

¹⁵ Psalm 22:16-18.

¹⁶ John 19:23-24.

glory, the Creator, treated so cruelly, so shamefully by his own creatures! And yet he cried out to his Father, did he not?

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”¹⁷

The very first tangible, knowable result of sin and the fall was Adam and Eve’s experience of the shame of nakedness. And because our Lord Jesus had to be made sin for us, and had to suffer the reproach of sin and the agony of judgment, it was necessary that he, as the second Adam, should have placed upon him that shame which was the first indicia of sin and lostness and judgment and death felt by the first Adam in the garden all those years ago.

Our Lord Jesus, gentle, meek and lowly of heart, full of kindness, never harming anybody, was stripped and beaten and nailed to a cross and mocked and laughed at. Think of what Mary his mother must have thought! Think of what his disciples must have thought, that he should be so degraded by sinners and by sin laid upon him, and should take to himself their humiliation, the humiliation of nakedness, brought about by sin!

You know, sin ushered in the shame of nakedness at the beginning, and sin was set aside and judged in the nakedness and shame of our Redeemer!

What love he displayed for us there as he submitted to this indignity!

But, you know, the Scriptures have one last thing to say about the shame of the Lord Jesus at Calvary and that is this, in Hebrews 12. The writer reports to us that the Lord Jesus, because of the joy set before him, he despised the shame of the cross!

Now that word “despised” doesn’t mean what we use it to mean. In the old English times, to despise a thing was to consider it to be nothing. It is to consider it not anything to be accounted for.

So if you walked along the street, the gravel, the rocks, the twigs, they were to be despised. They were to be taken no notice of. They weren’t of any value. So you didn’t consider them.

And so the Scriptures report to us that our Lord Jesus considered the shame of the cross to be something not to be accounted because of the joy that he was looking to! The Scriptures tell us that he counted that shame as nothing compared to the joy set before him, even as he suffered reproach and shame.

He knew he was obtaining the eternal salvation of his people – that was the focus of his crucifixion, not the shame, not the dishonor, not the judgment, but the joy of saving his people forever, the joy of salvation accomplished for those whom he loved!

¹⁷ Luke 23:34.

The shame and nakedness which in Adam and Eve were confusion and hopelessness, and portended lives of doom and ultimately death were, in our Lord Jesus, part of the suffering he knew he would bear to save his people from eternal judgment. And his joy at that prospect caused him to be able to put aside the shame and the reproach of the cross, to bear up under it, to make it through the horrible work he had to suffer on behalf of his people.

No wonder the hymn writer put it this way:

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned he stood,
Sealed my pardon with his blood,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Let's give thanks for the Lord's Table that memorializes the death that he died and the blood that he poured out for us guilty sinners, that he might take away all our shame, all our dishonor, all our reproach, taken away by having it laid upon himself. And exhausting the divine judgment we should have faced, but he faced it for us, and he has expunged our guiltiness in his own blood.

I would like to ask Bro. Whitten if he would give thanks for the bread, that reminds us of the body broken for us on the cross....

And the Scriptures tell us on the night he was betrayed, our Lord took the bread and he blessed it and he broke it and he said, "Take and eat. This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me."

Let's give thanks for the cup, that points us to the blood shed by our Lord Jesus on the cross.

Oh God our Father, we rejoice that you have found for us a Lamb, a Lamb who would be satisfactory and take away our sin, and to be the substitute for your people. How he went to the cross with meekness and with quiet to suffer the degradation and shame and to perform that great blood shedding for the sake of his people at Calvary and how his blood was poured out to make an atonement for his people!

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin,

*but Christ the heavenly Lamb
took all our sin away,
a sacrifice of nobler name,
and richer blood than they!*

And we thank you for that offering for sin that you made our beloved Savior on the cross, and that all our sin was laid upon him, and all the curse was laid upon him, and all the

shame was laid upon him, and he discharged all those things, and all the judgment we should have received in his own body on the tree.

We thank you that he shed that precious blood and that that blood shall never lose its power to wash and cleanse those who come to trust in the Savior.

We thank you for that promise that when you see the blood of the paschal Lamb, you will pass over the judgment, for you will see it already exercised against the Lamb slain in substitution for your people.

We thank you that our Lord Jesus was filled with that joy that was set before him, that he might endure the cross and not count too highly the shame that would be laid upon him.

We thank you that the next time we see the Savior will be with eyes not defiled and not dim, but we will see him exalted in glory and majesty! But we will always know from the scars of his hands and his feet, the suffering that he bore for us.

Help us to keep in our hearts and in our minds the fragrance of the blessed Lord Jesus all though the week, that we might see the things that happen and the events that surround us, and that we might learn to think of Christ and to glory in Christ and to consider Christ; and that we will look for that day when we see him in his beauty, and all the evil that surrounds us is taken away, and his kingdom is brought in!

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Scriptures tell us that after they had supped, he took the cup and he blessed it and he said, "Drink ye all of it. This cup is the new covenant in my blood for the remission of sins. Do it as often as ye do it in remembrance of me."

And the Scriptures tell us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do preach the Lord's death till he comes.

Let's stand and sing number 124: "The Holy One who knew no sin, God made him sin for us!"