

Ashamed

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Good Morning

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Turn with me to Rom 6:20-23.

First ... a little background from the previous verses.

The brethren at Rome ... served Satan and sin ... before they became Christians.

But ... as we are told ... in verse 17 ... they obeyed the Gospel ... from the heart ... and were buried with Christ in baptism (verse 4).

“But thanks be to God, that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.”

Listen to the King James version. The language can make quite an impact.

“God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

Now that the Roman brethren were serving Christ ... were servants of righteousness ... they could look back on the lives they once led ... and reflect.

Now Rom 6:20-23

“When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

What benefit did you reap, at that time, from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The King James language in verse 21 has an edge to it ... Again the language provokes thought ...

“What fruit had ye then ... in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”

We don't have to guess ... what sorts of things the Roman Christians might now be ashamed of.

All we need to do is take a look at the Corinthian letter ... to see what Paul is talking about.

1 Cor 6:9-11

“Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals,

nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”

The past lives of those at Corinth were no different than the past lives of those at Rome. Fornicators, Idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunks, swindlers ... Paul asks the very pointed question ...

“How did these past traits benefit you? What good fruit did they bear? These things that you are now ashamed of?”

They were not ashamed of them when that was their way of life ... right? But NOW... now, they were.

What happened? What caused these Christians to feel shame instead of pleasure?

This is the focus of today’s lesson.

What happened?

Maybe it runs along the lines of the lesson a few weeks ago ... “No Regrets”

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The title of today’s lesson is “Ashamed”

We toss the word around lightly in our 2024 lives.

“You should be ashamed” ... we say

And we take that ... most often ... to mean ... “You ought to know better.”

Bad boy! Bad girl!

But shame is a very powerful word. Deeply powerful.

Both on the lips of the speaker ... and in the heart of the hearer.

“Shame” is a painful feeling of humiliation or distress ... and is caused by a vivid consciousness of having done wrong ... or behaving foolishly.

Look at all these words.

“Painful feeling” ... “humiliation” ... “distress” ... “vivid realization” of having done “wrong” or acted “foolishly”.

“Embarrassed” ... “Feeling awkward.”

There's a lot of directions we could go from this introduction.

Many good Bible lessons

But let me try to give you the idea of where I'd like us to go.

Being ashamed ... truly and deeply ashamed ... is a place we may often find ourselves ... when we look back on some of the things we thought and did ... in the past

We may have known better. We may have not. But we did them.

Take the Roman and Corinthian brethren. They needed to be taught the way of Christ before they knew better.

And once they became Christians ... they were ashamed for once behaving in a sinful manner.

I will submit to you ... however ... that the shame some of them felt in sinning AFTER they had been taught ... was deeper and more painful ... that the shame they first felt.

Then there are those who have been taught, from early in life, the right way to live ... yet have had to find out by experience ... find out the hard way ... the pain and shame ... that comes from taking the wrong path.

Take King David. He knew God's will. He knew it was wrong to go after someone else's wife.

He knew it was wrong to kill.

But he got so caught up in the "moment" ... as it were ... caught up in what he wanted ... in what he desired ... that he drilled in, without a thought, on committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband, Uriah.

David piled hurt upon hurt ... throwing all else to the wind.

Nathan snapped David back to reality (whip-lash) with ... "You are the man."

2 Sam 12:7-9

"Nathan then said to David, 'You are the man!' Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul.

I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!

Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight?"

David melted ... and said ... "I have sinned against God."

There was no way to erase the memories of his friends ... relatives ... Joab, the commander of the Lord's army ... the people of the nation ...

Not only did God see the whole thing (as always) ... many saw it

Secrets were exposed.

It was a total mess.

Why didn't David realize all this "going in?"

I wonder whether David ever stopped to realize how he'd feel and think ... how many would be hurt ... if the whole mess were to collapse around him and leave him flat ...

If he had ... would he have taken a step back ... before it all got out of hand? Hopefully?

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Folks are fond of saying "The heart wants what it wants"

However true that may be ... and I suppose it is ... it doesn't make it right.

God warns us so many times and in so many ways ... that reason must guide the heart
reason led by His Word.

Do you suppose David had opportunity to recall ... down the road ... when future temptations came upon him? ... the great shame he had once felt ? and stop before he lost control?

The pain, the embarrassment, the humiliation, the distress?

People who call to mind ... occasions of having crossed the line with God ... can almost feel like they are actually reliving the sin ... in full color and detail.

Only this time ... with their eyes wide open ... in what could be described as terror and humiliation.

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Let's look at the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) for a bit.

Luke 15:17-19

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

"But when he came to himself"

But when he came to his senses ... But when he returned from his foolishness and selfishness, to what his father must have taught Him ...

Notice that he resolved to say that he had sinned against God.

So he must have been taught God's will by his Father ... enough to realize ... finally realize ... in just how many ways he had done things ... that were causing his deep shame.

What once seemed right and exciting ... now brought humiliation.

We can be sure that the erring son was not faking repentance.

When his father saw him returning home from afar off ... and ran to him this would have been an ideal time to just go with the flow and forget his confession in the confusion.

But the young son did not forget. He remained embarrassed and humble.

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When we're young ... parents tell us the things that are right to do ... and the things that are wrong not to do.

Godly parents who know the Lord's will.

They say ... "One day you will understand why" ... "but for now, trust what we say and heed our advice"

First and foremost ... our parents want us to be righteous.

Secondly ... although not usually voiced ... they want to spare us the pain and humiliation that comes from being deeply ashamed of what we've done ... let alone spare us the consequences of our behavior.

Our Heavenly Father is the ultimate parent.

He wants us to be righteous. He wants to spare us feeling the pain and humiliation that David felt.

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The Christians at Rome and Corinth ... were ashamed of their old ways.

Fortunately, the grace of God in the blood of Jesus Christ ... can unload the guilt we feel because of our old ways ... and from the sins we occasionally commit.

There is no reason to continue to live in guilt or shame.

But it's human nature to suddenly recall something we've done in the past ... and feel ashamed.

As we grow up and grow older ... we gain deeper awareness of our own condition ... we gain deeper insights ...

... and we may say (in our heads) ... "I can't believe I did that" ... "what was I thinking" ... "I wronged that person ... I hurt them" ...

So many men and women have hurt their spouses by their behavior.

So many have hurt those around them ... they may have even hurt strangers.

One day something dawns on them in a new light ... and they feel embarrassed that they said or did such a thing"

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Let me try to say ... what I've been trying to say ...

When God warns us to avoid certain lifestyles and behaviors ... we must heed His will even when we have a hard time understanding exactly why.

Why do we need to heed His will without challenge or doubt?

First ... because He is our sovereign Father and knows beyond measure what is good for us.

Second ... because we will never understand all of the "why" no matter how long we live ... we will never have all the answers within ourselves.

And third ... and the thrust of this lesson ... having a life's lesson come home through the deep pain and embarrassment of shame is the hardest and most devastating way to learn.

What will a lie hurt? You don't want to learn the hard way how much it can hurt.

What will a little sexual misconduct hurt. You REALLY don't want to learn the hard way how earthshaking that can be.

How bad can a little white-collar theft be? How can it be so bad to covet ... even in secret?

How bad ... just ask those who have felt deep shame. Maybe not at the time ... but as life taught them how it feels to be on the other end of the sin.

"What fruit have ye then ... in the things whereof ye are NOW ashamed." NOW ashamed.

Spare yourself some sleepless nights. Spare yourself some wide-eyed "just dawned on me" moments."

Above all ... spare those you may injure or tear down or hurt.

Above all ... spare God the disappointment and dishonor.

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We have a hymn called "None of Self and All of Thee"

There are four verses. The hymn starts out ... "All of self and none of Thee."

Then ... "Some of self and some of thee." Next ... "Less of self and more of Thee."

And the conclusion ... "None of self and all of Thee"

In the first verse there are some startling words. Words that describe the feeling of being ashamed.

"O the bitter pain and sorrow, that a time could ever be ... that I proudly said to Jesus, "All of self and none of Thee."

"Bitter pain and sorrow." "PROUDLY ... said to Jesus All Me and NONE of YOU."

I want it my way. The heart wants what it wants. There it goes AGAIN.

After time and growth and insight ... there is bitter pain and sorrow ... that such thoughts and actions could ever have reigned. "I'm shocked at myself." "How could I?"

I'm SO ashamed I can't look you in the eye ... one might say.

The third verse says that the passage of time ... and the tender mercies of the Savior ... bring us lower. We give up what WE want ... in favor of that the Lord wants.

We give up what WE want in the MOMENT ... in those crazy moments ... we give up what will harm another.

We give up living in the pleasures of the now ... and consider how we hurt God and hurt those around us.

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I'm reminded of another hymn that begins, "If I have wounded any soul today ... If I have caused one foot to go astray ... If I have walked in mine own willful way ... Dear Lord, forgive."

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How do we keep ourselves out of the trouble we cause ourselves down the road ... by momentary lapses of reason?

It's tough. Is it not?

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Here's what I've been pondering.

When we're ashamed of past behavior ... part of the shame comes from sorrow over how we've sinned against God

And part comes from how we've hurt others.

So why not hold our tongues and hands and feet ... until we've considered whether moving forward will harm or help another, whether nearby or far away.

A husband, a wife, a child, a father or mother, a brother or sister, a brother or sister in Christ, a neighbor, a co-worker ... or a stranger ... or even an enemy ...

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It might be as simple as this ...

You shall love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength ... and your neighbor as yourself.

You shall have no other gods before the God of Heaven.

You shall not make or worship idols.

You shall not take the name of the Lord God in vain (by oath or action).

Remember the Savior's death each and every first day of the week.

Follow these four resolves to avoid dishonoring God.

Then.

Honor your parents.

Do not murder.

Do not commit adultery or fornication.

Do not steal.

Do not lie.

Do not covet.

Follow these six resolves to avoid harming those around you.

Jesus reminded us in “The sermon on the Mount” ... that these sins do not originate with the action ... they originate in a heart that is allowed to get what it wants apart from the Word of God.

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Do no harm.

Think it through before you make a sound or make a move.

As determined by the scriptures ... DO NO HARM

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Invitation

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