

## ***Jesus' Experience with Shame***

Hebrews 13:7-17

Today we continue our sermon series on the topic of shame. You may have found that these sermons on shame have stirred up some deep things in your soul. That's part of the point: bringing our shame out into the light robs it of some of its power. As I've mentioned the past couple of weeks, a few people at Faith have written up their experience with shame and have given me permission to share with you what they've written. Here is the experience of one woman here at Faith.

When I experience shame I feel: "I'm not worthy, good enough, lovable, I'll never get things right and I just want to hide." I don't want anyone to really see me, because if they saw me, they wouldn't like me. Even GOD. I spend a lot of energy on both hiding and trying to please others. I let common mistakes reinforce that I am deficient. I come to expect failure and I distort reality to feed the shame - as in I will accept fault for something that I have in no way contributed fault to.

I have done "shameful" things. But I am learning that I am not THOSE things only, and that I am forgiven. I am a sinner, and there is shame in my sin, but I tend to think my shame is too big for God to take. How soon I forget that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"!!!

Shame as an identity is oppressive. Like a bully! It is really more than just a low - self esteem, which is what I would have previously called it. Even when I am hurting from other people's sins against me, I would believe that I don't have the right to hurt, and my pain doesn't matter. Shame is a helpless and isolating feeling, preventing me from fully identifying as God's child.

. . . some "things" that have caused shame: sexual abuse, alcoholism in the family, pregnant and unmarried, inability to use my resources "as well as" someone else does, co-dependent relationships, divorce, lost friendships, lack of emotional intimacy with childhood family, fired from a job, saying the wrong thing when meaning to be helpful, not holding my tongue, etc.

The image of shame as a bully is powerful, isn't it? Shame tries to intimidate you and make you think that there is no way that you will ever be accepted by God or by other people. . . so you might as well give up now because the pain will never go away and you will never be accepted.

Last week we saw how Jesus made a beeline for people who were full of shame - whether innocent or culpable shame. We saw that Jesus doesn't keep His distance from us in the midst of our shame. He comes near to us (and our shame), touches us, befriends us, and heals us. But does Jesus really ***understand*** our shame? Can Jesus ***relate*** to people whose shame is like a bully? Can Jesus ***be trusted*** with the issues in our lives that cause shame?

To answer those questions, we are going to notice the things that Jesus experienced in the days leading up to and including His crucifixion. Jesus experienced things that commonly caused intense shame. We aren't told that Jesus actually experienced shame (we're not always told what was happening within Jesus internally/psychologically). In Jesus we don't really need someone who has **experienced** shame; we need someone who has **successfully negotiated** circumstances that commonly cause **us** shame. [We don't need a high priest who has sinned just like us; we need one who has been tempted like us w/o sinning (Hebrews 4:15).]

The most explicit statement about Jesus' experience of shame is found in Hebrews 12:1-2.

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Shame is one of the encumbrances that can keep us from "running with endurance the race set before us." Shame makes us incredibly self-centered; shame bullies us into thinking that we have no business even being in the race, much less running with endurance. Laying aside our shame will take a radical solution. We can't just sprinkle a little Jesus dust on our shame and hope it goes away. We need a radical reorientation of our lives.

This reorientation involves "fixing our eyes of Jesus" who so skillfully ran the race set before Him. As we do this, we will notice that He "despised the shame." When you despise something, you look down on it as unworthy of respect. That's what Jesus did in relation to the shame of the cross. He didn't respect shame as the most powerful force in the universe (as many people do); Jesus looked down on shame as something unworthy of distracting Him from His God-appointed mission.

Fixing our eyes of Jesus can do at least a couple of things. First, by definition if we fix our eyes on Jesus, we no longer fix our eyes on ourselves and our shame. In other words, we won't be so self-absorbed. Second, fixing our eyes on Jesus can convince us that Jesus really does "get it." When we experience shame we can rest assured that Jesus understands us because He endured situations that were far worse than ours. This isn't meant to trivialize our shame; but it does put it into context.

Today we are going to see from Mark 14 and 15 that Jesus experienced all sorts of things that commonly cause extreme shame. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus.

**Betrayal** (Mark 14:10-11, 17-21, 43-49) If you've ever been betrayed by someone close to you (a spouse or a close friend or a family member), you probably experienced shame. Betrayal sends the message, "You are worth little or nothing to me." Jesus experienced betrayal by someone in His inner circle.

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. 11 They were glad when they heard this, and promised to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

Matthew 26 tells us that the amount of money agreed upon was 30 pieces of silver - the amount of restitution that had to be paid if your ox accidentally gored/killed a slave. In other words, they gave Jesus ("God in the flesh") the value of a slave. Down in verses 17ff we read that Jesus knew that He would be betrayed.

17 When it was evening He came with the twelve. 18 As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." 19 They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" 20 And He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. 21 "For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Jesus told the disciples that He was walking into His betrayal with his eyes wide open. He understood that He would be betrayed by one of the twelve disciples that He had chosen. Verses 43-46 describe the actual betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane.

43 Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." 45 After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 46 They laid hands on Him and seized Him.

"Judas' kiss" is now synonymous with betrayal. Jesus surely understands any shame we might experience due to betrayal.

**Abandonment** (Mark 14:50) If we keep reading we see that even though the other disciples didn't betray Jesus, they did abandon Him. Being abandoned by people you care about causes shame.

47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? 49 "Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures." 50 And they all left Him and fled.

"And they **all** left Him and fled." The fact that they all fled from the mob armed with "swords and clubs" is understandable, but Jesus was abandoned. After promises to stand with Jesus "to the death" if necessary, the disciples all abandoned Him. If you've ever felt abandoned - left alone to fend for yourself - be assured that Jesus knows what you've experienced.

**Denial** (Mark 14:27-31, 66-72) Just as Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, Jesus also knew ahead of time that Peter would deny Him. At the Last Supper (the Passover meal) this exchange happened:

27 And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.’” 28 “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” 29 But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.” 30 And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.” 31 But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all were saying the same thing also.

Peter was confident that he would never “fall away.” Jesus tells Peter that his denial “is not only certain, but imminent” (Wessel, *EBC*, Vol. 8, p. 762). In response, Peter flat out told Jesus that He was wrong. “And they all were saying the same thing also.” We see down in verses 66ff what actually happened.

66 As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.” 68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” And he went out onto the porch. 69 The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, “This is one of them!” 70 But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too.” 71 But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man you are talking about!” 72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he began to weep.

Surely Peter felt shame at denying Jesus. He thought he was so strong, but he withered when the servant-girl questioned him. But it was healthy shame that humbled him to the core. And Jesus had prayed for Peter (Luke 22:31-32). Peter was eventually restored and then some! But Jesus endured the pain of being denied.

**Lies** (Mark 14:55-59) When someone tells lies about you, you feel violated. It matters what other people think about us, and so when people lie it’s painful. When you can’t - for whatever reason - defend yourself, you can feel shame. If you’ve ever been the victim of lies, know that Jesus can empathize with you.

55 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. 56 For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. 57 Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, 58 “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” 59 Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

In death penalty cases, you needed two witnesses to make the charge stick. But since the witnesses were giving “false testimony” (i.e., telling lies), they contradicted each other. As we’ll see in the next paragraph, the high priest was forced to bring a different charge against Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus experienced the indignity of being lied about.

***Accusations of Blasphemy*** (Mark 14:60-64) This is the accusation that “stuck”; blasphemy is what got Jesus the death penalty (before the Jewish court at least).

60 The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” 61 But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” 62 And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” 63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 “You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

To blaspheme meant (among other things) to slander God - to say things about God that tarnished His reputation or diminished His glory. The irony here is that high priest claimed to know more about God than the second person of the Trinity. A member of the Godhead was condemned for blaspheming God by people who didn’t actually know God! If you love God and you’ve ever been falsely accused of heresy or blasphemy or false doctrine, you’ve probably felt like an outcast/outsider. Jesus knows.

***Mocking, Torture, and Crucifixion*** (Mark 14:65-15:37) We now come to the account of Jesus being mocked, tortured, and crucified. Physically and psychologically Jesus endured things we can hardly fathom.

65 Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

Mark seems to be saying in the first sentence that “some” of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council) themselves did these things to Jesus. They spit on Him (Isaiah 50:6) - surely meaning to provoke shame. They next taunted Jesus in an especially cruel way. They blindfolded Him and then took turns punching Him. Matthew gives a fuller account when he tells us that they were saying, “Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?” They believed that the Christ/Messiah didn’t need to see to know things. If you’ve ever been taunted - in sports or in everyday life - you can rest assured that Jesus understands what you’ve experienced.

After the Sanhedrin were finished, “the officers” (Romans army) took their turn slapping (probably punching) Jesus in the face. This treatment continued after Pilate condemned Jesus to death. In Mark 15:15 we read:

15 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

To be “scourged” was an extreme form of torture. The Romans made a whip called a *flagellum* by braiding pieces of bone and lead into strips of leather. Jesus’ flesh would have been ripped open when they scourged with the *flagellum*. Scourging alone often killed the person.

The mocking continued:

16 The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. 17 They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; 18 and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 19 They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. 20 After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.

The gospels don’t give much of a description of how the Romans carried out crucifixion. Here we are simply told:

25 It was the third hour when they crucified Him.

We know from other Scriptures and from other first-century sources (see Hengel, *Crucifixion*) that the Romans maximized the amount of shame a person experienced during crucifixion. The person was stripped naked; since the full nakedness has been associated with shame. The person was crucified in a very public place - at crossroads, in the theatre, on a hill (Jesus’ experience), where the crime was committed. Sometimes the person languished on the cross for days. Quite often the body was left on the cross to be eaten by birds; not having a proper burial heaped more shame on the person and his family. Tens of thousands of people were crucified in the first century, but Jesus went to the cross **for us**. Because Jesus dealt with sin on the cross, He also dealt with shame on the cross. When He bore our sin He also bore our shame.

26 The inscription of the charge against Him read, “THE KING OF THE JEWS.” 27 They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. 28 [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with transgressors.”] 29 Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!”

Peter’s comment years later (in 1 Peter 2:23) was, “. . . while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.”

31 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. 32 “Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

One of the two criminals crucified alongside Jesus eventually believed, but initially at least they both hurled insults at Jesus.

33 When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.  
34 At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The "cry of dereliction" ("My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?") is probably the saddest cry ever uttered. Jesus had enjoyed the unhindered unity with His Father from eternity past. He had faithfully carried out the will of His Father on earth. But now as the sin of the world was being laid upon Him, the Father had to step back and withdraw. Jesus **felt** it. Being abandoned by His disciples was one thing; being abandoned by His Father was quite another.

37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. 38 And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

The veil of the temple is what kept people out of the holy of holies (unclean people, profane people, sinful people - everybody but the high priest once a year). The veil being torn in two (from top to bottom, no less) was God's way of confirming that Jesus' death on the cross paid for sin and therefore secured free, full access into the very presence of God to everyone who believes in Jesus.

When we fix our eyes on Jesus we see that He experienced betrayal, abandonment, denial, lies, accusations of blasphemy, mocking, torture, and crucifixion. And He accumulated all those experiences of shame for us. When we fix our eyes on Jesus, can there be any doubt about His ability to understand and help us in the midst of our shame?!?

When shame tries to bully us and to make us self-absorbed, we have another option. Instead of fixing our eyes on ourselves, we can fix our eyes on Jesus. We can starve shame (and its self-absorption) by fixing our eyes on Jesus. And we begin to see our shame differently. We see that Jesus experienced things far worse than us and yet He despised the shame - He refused to give it a place of supremacy in His life and refused to let it distract Him from His God-given mission. As we fix our eyes on Jesus we can learn from Him to do the same.