

Shame Replaced with Honor

This morning we are wrapping up a four-week sermon series on shame. Shame might seem like a strange topic to address on Easter morning - a day when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. But I think that by the end of this message we'll see a powerful connection between Jesus' resurrection and getting past the shame in our lives.

Last week we took time to fix our eyes on Jesus, noticing what He experienced in the days leading up to and including His crucifixion. He endured the types of things that commonly caused extreme shame. And He endured those things **for us**. This morning we are going to continue fixing our eyes on Jesus, noticing that ***His shame was replaced with honor*** (by His resurrection and ascension). Then we're going to do something that is incredibly difficult for shame-filled people to do: we are going to notice that ***"in Christ" our shame is also replaced with honor.***

This is difficult because our shame sends the opposite message. Here are a list of words people commonly use to describe their shame: empty, naked, unclean, outcast, unworthy, flawed, undeserving. Our shame tells us that honor will feel like hypocrisy. "Others may deserve honor but not me."

Brené Brown (a "shame researcher") catalogs some of the ways people respond to shame. See if you can relate to any of these responses:

- "When I feel shame, I'm like a crazy person. I do stuff and say stuff I would normally never do or say."
- "Sometimes I just wish I could make other people feel as bad as I do. I just want to lash out and scream at everyone."
- "I get desperate when I feel shame. Like I have nowhere to turn - no one to talk to."
- "When I feel ashamed, I check out mentally and emotionally. Even with my family."
- "Shame makes you feel estranged from the world. I hide."

I mention all of this to acknowledge that everything within you may resist what we're going to talk about today. If what you hear this morning is counter-intuitive and seems "too good to be true" and even a little bit dangerous. . . you're getting really close to understanding the grace that God lavishes upon you in Christ Jesus.

The resurrection declares that Jesus is Lord; His shame has been replaced with honor. (Acts 2:29-36, Philippians 2:9-11, Romans 1:1-6, etc.) The New Testament (as we read earlier) unashamedly declares that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead. Acts 2 records Peter preaching on the Day of Pentecost, explaining the outpouring of the Spirit that the crowd had witnessed (e.g., speaking in tongues - languages they'd never learned). In order to explain the outpouring of the Spirit, Peter had to explain the identity of "Jesus the Nazarene." Let's jump into this passage at verse 32:

32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Jesus was not only raised bodily from the dead; He was exalted to the right hand of the Father. In other words, Jesus now occupies the highest place of authority and power and honor. Peter points out that after Jesus was exalted in this way, the promised Holy Spirit was poured out upon all who believe in Jesus. In verses 34-36 Peter drives home the point that through the resurrection and ascension Jesus has been declared “Lord and Christ.”

34 “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, 35 Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” ’ 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

This is what Hebrews 12:2 described: “. . . 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.” ***Jesus’ shame has been replaced with honor.***

In Philippians 2 Paul made the same basic point. Jesus had humbled Himself by taking on flesh and blood (by the incarnation).

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus has been given such an exalted status that one day every single person will bow the knee and confess that Jesus is Lord (Master). The One who was humiliated and shamed by being betrayed, denied, abandoned, mocked, tortured, and crucified is now honored above all. This is what we declare every Easter: the resurrection confirms and declares that Jesus is Lord; as Lord His shame has been replaced with honor.

The New Testament is equally insistent that if you trust in Jesus alone, you are now “in Christ” and “His autobiography becomes yours.” What happened to Jesus happens to those who are in Christ. Specifically:

“In Christ” we are united with Jesus in His resurrection. (Romans 6:1-11, Colossians 3:1-4, Philippians 3:20-21) One of the clearest expressions of this reality is found in Romans 6. There Paul argues that those who are “in Christ” experience what Jesus experienced.

8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Paul does a fascinating thing in this passage. He basically tells us to base our spiritual expectations on our union with Christ. This is instructive for all of us who struggle with shame. Our shame tells us to set our expectations low now to avoid disappointment later. We're losers and we're always going to be losers. Sooner or later we're going to crash and burn spiritually, relationally, financially, and vocationally, so we better not get our hopes up. Paul had a very different perspective. Instead of fixing our eyes on ourselves and what we think we can reasonably pull off, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus and believe that His autobiography is now ours.

Since Jesus died to sin once for all, we too have died with Him. Since Jesus was raised from the dead and now lives to God, it's unthinkable that those who are "in Christ" are cut off from God and His power and His life. No, Paul says that we are just as alive to God as Jesus is. We are united with Jesus in His resurrection. We've been raised up and seated with Christ at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1-4).

Passages like Philippians 3 tell us that our salvation will one day extend even to our bodies. Since Jesus was raised immortal (in a body that is immune to corruption and death), we too will be raised immortal.

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Since Jesus was raised bodily from the dead, we will be raised bodily at His return. Like Christ we will be raised immortal. "In Christ" we are united with Jesus in His resurrection.

"In Christ" our shame has been replaced with honor. (Ephesians 1:3-14, 1 Peter 2:9-10, Philippians 3:20-21, Luke 15:11-32, Acts 5:40-42, etc.) When you are identified with someone or something shameful, you take on that sense of shame. But when you are identified with someone honorable, you take on that person's honor. That's exactly what happens to those who are "in Christ." I am going to read an extended passage of Scripture from Ephesians 1 that describes what is true of those who are "in Christ." There may be things in this passage that you don't understand; there may be terms that confuse you. But don't miss the overwhelming way in which God has given honor to all who are in Christ Jesus.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made

known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

What Paul writes about us as believers is diametrically opposed to a mindset of shame. Instead of thinking that we're outcasts and unwanted and unacceptable, Paul tells us that in Christ we are: blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, chosen/predestined, made holy and blameless before God, adopted as sons, redeemed, forgiven, lavished with grace, given an inheritance, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Ultimately, the church (all believers who've ever lived anywhere) will be a testament "to the praise of the glory of God's grace." When you look at the "before" and "after" picture of the church, the only conclusion you can draw is, "God is glorious and God's grace is glorious."

The ultimate antidote to our shame is to accept the glorious identity we have in Christ. When we accept that His honor is ours we begin thinking of ourselves differently. We're **not** outcasts; we are sons and daughters of the Most High God, brothers and sisters of the Risen One. We are **not** unwanted; we are cherished and loved.

Just to be clear, this isn't merely "staying positive." There's nothing wrong with staying positive, but that's not what we're saying here. And we're not talking about pretending that we're special (when everybody knows that we're really not). God isn't like a doting parent who says, "Johnny, you could be President someday!" No, actually we're talking about a spiritual reality. We're talking about what God has done for those who are "in Christ." It's not about our goodness; it's about the greatness of the salvation that Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection. In Christ you really aren't an outcast; you are accepted and wanted and loved.

Listen to this paragraph about one man's experience with shame. You'll notice that his shame began in childhood - a rather common experience.

Due to a series of sins I committed as a child and the response I received from my mom when she caught me, I believed Satan's lie that deep down I was dirtier than just about everyone else. I spent the next 20 years of my life trying to achieve enough and look good enough to prove this was not true. No matter what I accomplished or how many human praises I received, I still believed my dirtiness would be found out. During a process of prayer counseling, the Holy Spirit alone was able to show me the lies I believed and my true source of worth... God alone. The Holy Spirit used 1 Corinthians 10:13 to show me that what I had done was common to man. To now experience unconditional love is a freedom I could have

never imagined. I no longer have to try and prove my worth. I can live out of who God says I am... His beloved son. I continue to battle the lie but now fight from a place of victory rather than defeat.

He is living out of his identity as God's "beloved son." It made all the difference believing that He really is accepted and wanted by the One who matters most: His heavenly Father.

This is what the parable of the prodigal son revealed. The younger son came home drenched in shame. He had shamed his father by taking his inheritance and squandering it in a distant land. He experienced the shame associated with poverty, hunger, and (in that culture) feeding swine (who were unclean animals). He came home with shame oozing out of his pores and dripping off his face. He had rehearsed a speech about how he was "unworthy" and about how he would work off his shame as a servant. Listen and be amazed at what happened next (Luke 15:20-24):

20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

His shame was replaced with honor: the best robe, the ring on his hand, sandals on his feet, a lavish feast/celebration. The father gave him honor he didn't deserve. The father replaced his son's culpable shame with honor.

Here's a question to ponder (and this gets at the heart of dealing with shame long-term): What would please the father more? The son humbly accepting his father's honor and joining in the celebration? Or the son stubbornly refusing the robe and ring and sandals and feast, insisting that he's not worthy, he's not enough, he's really not accepted? The second response would have made the **older brother** happy, he wanted his little brother to live in shame as a second-class member of the family. But the **father** was pleased (and honored) when his son accepted the honor he freely gave. Humbly receiving the honor from his father would have been "to the praise of the glory of his father's grace."

This is the very thing that shame-filled people are reluctant to do. Shame tells us that because we don't deserve it and aren't worthy of it we should reject it (or ignore it). The issue is, "Which voice do you believe?" Do you believe what your shame is saying about you? Or do you believe what God is saying about you?

I'm not suggesting that you can flip a switch and you automatically begin living out of your identity in Christ. But I am saying that over time your mind can be renewed to the point where you actually think about yourself the way God does. You can become

convinced (mentally and emotionally) that your shame has been replaced with honor because you are “in Christ” (who has been honored above all others). Instead of puffing you up with pride, you will find that the honor God has given you humbles you to the core.

If you’ve never put your faith in Jesus to take away your sin, I’d encourage you to consider what we’ve been talking about today. You can never earn salvation; you will never deserve salvation. God simply gives it to you as a gift; your part is to believe in Jesus alone - that when He died on the cross He died for your sins. When you believe, you are now “in Christ” and you begin to experience what we’ve been talking about today. Because His shame was replaced with honor, your shame will be replaced with honor also.

NOTE: Acts 5 gives us a glimpse of how radically different our experience of shame can be when we understand the honor God gives us in Christ. Luke records how the apostles (including Peter who experienced intense shame after denying Christ) were arrested (and re-arrested) for preaching Christ publicly. Eventually a Pharisee named Gamaliel convinced the Council to release them because “time would tell” whether the apostles were from God or not.

40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. 41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, **rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.** 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

A couple of months earlier they abandoned Jesus and denied Jesus. But now they were filled with joy because “they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Their deepest joy and security came from being identified with the risen Christ. They considered it an honor to be treated the way Jesus had been treated. Because they had no shame before God, they didn’t mind experiencing shame before other people. By the grace of God that can be our experience as well. Lesser types of shame don’t matter so much because we have no shame before the One who matters most: God Himself.