

Shame

Man dishonors God

Adam's Shame

The Scriptures teach that God made everything in six days. When God was finished:

*God saw all that he had made, **and it was very good.** And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)*

Everything was good, indicating that God was pleased with all that He had made. God was pleased with Adam as His special creation—being made in His own image:

*So God created man **in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** (Genesis 1:27)*

Being created in the image of God placed man above the other creatures—a great honor. This honor can also be seen in the fact that God walked with Adam and Eve as common friends—denoting an absence of shame:

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:24-25)

Shame comes with offense, and sin is an offense to God. For having been just created, man had not offended God through sin; hence, the Bible concludes that they did not know shame. When God made mankind, He placed them in a beautiful garden to care for it:

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. (Genesis2:8)

God placed mankind in paradise, the type of place that men only dream of. God provided for all mankind's needs as they were able to eat from the fruits of the trees—that is, all except one:

And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis.2:16-17)

As Creator of everything, God had the right to honor Himself by creating and reserving one tree for Himself—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When mankind ate of the forbidden fruit, they dishonored God bringing shame not only on themselves but on God's image as well:

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis3:6-7)

Once mankind ate of the fruit, they felt the shame of dishonoring God. Adam was held accountable for the offense toward God because it was his responsibility to protect Eve from the potential danger of the serpent's cunning. For Adam was present when the serpent deceived Eve:

*She also gave some to her husband, **who was with her, and he ate it.** (Genesis3:6)*

Adam was there with Eve and could have intervened between the serpent and Eve, but he did not. He did not take his role as head seriously, and for this he shamed all mankind—including his wife. For the Bible only speaks once of the part Eve played in the fall of man into sin:

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. (1Timothy.2:13-14)

Eve was deceived first, but the Scriptures hold Adam accountable for the fall of man. Consider Romans 5:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Romans 5:12)

Even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, (Romans 5:14)

For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, (Romans 5:15)

Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: (Romans5:16)

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, (Romans 5:17)

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners,
(Romans.5:19)

Adam was held accountable for dishonoring and shaming God's image; his offense was so great that this shame was passed down to his descendants as well. Now, for the first time, Adam and Eve experienced defilement—the personal feeling of shame through the dishonoring of God. They tried to cope with the shame and the feeling of being defiled by covering their bodies with fig leaves:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis3:7)

In their ignorance, they did not know that one cannot hide his defilement nor can one cover his shame before God. So when God came to walk with Adam and Eve in the garden, they hid from Him out of fear of revenge:

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" (Genesis3:8-11)

When mankind ate the forbidden fruit, they not only dishonored God while assuming a position of shame, but they also violated God's trust, experiencing fear for the first time. It is out of fear that mankind deals with shame in two ways: first, to attempt to cover the offense and pretend it never existed—this did not work with God—He sees everything. The second way to escape shame is to shift the offense by blaming others. Blame is an attempt to transfer our shame onto others—deflecting it away from ourselves:

*The man said, “The woman you put here with me—**she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.**” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals!” (Genesis3:12-14)*

Adam tried deflecting his shame of failing to take leadership by blaming Eve; Eve tried to deflect both Adam's and her shame on to the serpent who tempted Eve. God dealt with the serpent's shame by making him crawl on his belly in the uncleanness of the dust of the ground, but He dealt with mankind's shame by banishing them from His presence:

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis3:23-24)

Shame lowers the offender from a place of honor, invoking both separation and alienation from the one who has been offended. Mankind was created to live eternally with God and, hence, could eat of the tree of life at any given time. Once man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God could not allow man to live forever in His presence; hence He prevented man from having access to the tree of life. Since man's spirit is eternal and cannot be destroyed, God decided to send man to the place He had created for Satan and his fallen angels.

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ... ‘Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.’” (Matthew 25: 41& 46)

The real punishment for dishonoring God by their sin was not physical death; the real punishment is an eternity apart from God's presence—an eternal banishment to hell. Therefore, Adam and Eve dishonored God in that while being in the image of God, they violated the essence of His nature through sin, thereby shaming His image—this must be avenged according to the law given at creation.

Our Shame

Adam and Eve's shame did not solely remain on them; their shame was passed on to their descendants. For, shame extends far beyond the individual who committed the offense to those associated with the offender. Since God was dishonored by their parents, their descendants assumed the shame along with its penalty:

*And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; **but** you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."* (Genesis 2:16-17)

The honor of God must be avenged, and yet, God did not kill Adam and Eve immediately, but allowed them to live and bare children. Since everyone was born from Adam and Eve after they dishonored God, all mankind also came under their sentence of death:

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

All who were born from Adam were considered dishonoring to God because of Adam's sin and thereby must face death. This is clearly taught by the Scriptures in Romans 5:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, (Romans 5:12)

For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, (Romans 5:15)

Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, (Romans 5:16)

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, (Romans 5:17)

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, (Romans 5:18)

It was obvious from these Scriptures that Adam's sin was so great an offense to God that his entire lineage inherited his shame as well as its penalty. This meant that the only way that God's honor could be restored was in the destruction of all mankind. However, our situation is further compounded by our continuation to dishonor Him, refusing to live according the Scriptures and following in Adam's shameful ways. The prophet Daniel wrote:

O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. (Daniel 9:8)

It is by our constant rebellion against God through our disobedience to His commands that we continue to bring shame upon ourselves. King David himself writes that his sin made him an object of shame:

*Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! **Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.*** (Psalms 119:5-6; 119:80)

Many people do not realize that it is our sin, our blatant disobedience to God, which will cause us to live totally separate from God. As Adam's dishonoring of God caused him to be banished from the garden, so our sin will ban us from the presence of God. For God's nature is holy--purity in its absolute form:

*But just as he who called you is holy, **so be holy in all you do;** for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1Peter 1:15-16)*

Since God is a holy God, those who continue to bring shame to His image cannot enter heaven:

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

We think that God will allow people who dishonor Him into heaven; it is no more possible than a honorable father keeping in his house a daughter who publicly prostitutes herself with other men. God will put the sinner to death:

For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die. (Ezekiel.18:4)

Sin brings both shame and death, and yet, many religious people live solely for the honor of men. In the eyes of the public, they live honorably; but in secret, they commit many shameful acts that they would not dare do in public for fear of the shame attached to those acts. In their hypocrisy, they think that if no one knows, there is no shame.

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” (Matthew.15:7-9)

Many think that shame must be avoided, but if incurred, it must be hidden so that if no one knows their shameful ways then they have dishonored no one. They forget that their shameful ways, their sin, always dishonors God because He knows and sees everything, even in the dark:

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely. (Psalm 139:1-4)

God is constantly aware of every sin we commit, and this constant shaming of His person through man, His image, will eventually bring about our death:

For the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23)

Others are only concerned if they shame their family or community. When they travel to distant places, they care very little about what they do. They do the very things that would shame their families back home but think little of it because no one will know. Hence the proverb: “*Where you are not known, do whatever you like.*” This may be true with their family or community, but it is not true concerning God. A person's shameful actions are never hidden from God—even in a distant land:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. (Psalm 139:7-12)

Your family and your community may not be shamed by your sinning in a distant land, but God is dishonored and will not let the shame go unpunished:

*Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” **Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.*** (1Corinthians 15:33-34)

If shame is exposed, it must be avenged. God knows our sin and is aware of our position of shame. Those who think God is not dishonored because they are in a distant land are not only shaming God's image but mocking Him as well:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; (Galatians 6:7-8)

God will punish all those who dishonor Him by sending them to the place of eternal torment- a living death:

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars— their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. (Re.21:7-8)

All our sin is dishonoring to God, and it is because of our shameful ways that His honor will be avenged in the last day. Therefore, God is constantly aware of our sin, leaving us under a constant position of shame and demanding that all who act shamefully will suffer eternal banishment to hell.

The Work of a Mediator

Since we are first under the sentence of death for Adam's dishonoring of God, we must conclude that there is no hope for mankind,. For this, we will all die physically:

*Just as man is **destined to die once, and after that to face judgment*** (Hebrews 9:27)

Then, we are all under our own sentence of death through the shame that we bring upon God by bearing His image but violating His character through sin. We have all sinned:

*There is no difference, **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*** (Romans 3:22-

Shame and honor are the only two positions we can have in God's sight, and it is because of our shameful way of life that everyone must face eternal shame. I think it strange that we refuse to show mercy to those who shame us, but we expect God to overlook the dishonor we show Him.

God will give to each person according to what he has done (Romans 2:6; Ro.14:12)

Those who live without knowing that they shamed God will be avenged for the dishonor they caused Him. If you live knowing what God requires of you yet disregard it, you will also be judge according to the law:

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. (Romans 2:12)

Whether we know what God desires or not, we have all dishonored God by the way we live; hence, we will suffer eternal shame. The prophet Daniel writes clearly on this:

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)

We will all suffer shame and eternal contempt for our dishonoring of God. The only way that we will ever receive everlasting life is if we find a mediator who can reconcile us to God. The Gospel, or good news, is that God has provided a mediator: His name is Jesus.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1Timothy 2:5)

If a person is to mediate, he must be an equal or greater personage than the offender and the offended. For this reason, Jesus could mediate between God and man; because being God, He was equal to God:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! (Philippians.2:5-8)

Jesus was not just a man but was God made in human likeness. Being God enabled Jesus to live a holy life, a life free from sin with its shame:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

Only God is holy, hence, only He could mediate between Himself and man. For, no one who has dishonored God could mediate the reconciliation between God and man. God honored Jesus when He spoke from heaven:

For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (2 Peter 1:17)

God was pleased with Jesus indicating the absence of offense and shame. For Jesus not only lived a perfect life but was willing to reconcile man to God:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

The penalty of our sin was death; so in becoming our mediator, Jesus was willing to die on our behalf, paying the ultimate price to reconcile us to God:

We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

Our sin was the offense that caused our shame and resulted in our being alienated from God; hence, when Christ died for our sin, our offense was removed, allowing us to regain honor in God's sight:

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation... (Co.1:21-22)

Christ's work as mediator was so complete that now we are considered holy—regaining our position of honor with God:

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1Peter 3:18)

It is important to realize that it was our sin that caused our shame. By dying, Jesus took our sins upon Himself:

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Once Jesus took our sins upon Himself, He also assumed the consequences of our sin, bearing our shame as well:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame (Hebrews 12:2)

It was on the cross that God's dishonor was avenged, as Christ carried our sin and our shame. Christ experienced the full consequences of our shame, experiencing both separation and alienation from God. This is clearly seen on the cross, for throughout Jesus' ministry, He spoke of "my Father." But it was when He bore our shame on the cross that He was rejected by His Father, thereby formally addressing His Father by His title of "God":

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

Jesus was forsaken by His Father so that we could be reconciled to God. Christ's death was sufficient to reconcile the whole world to God, yet we must personally believe that He mediated our peace and ask Him to apply His work on our behalf—thereby personally receiving it as individuals. Our shame is then transferred to Him:

As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:11-13; 1Peter 2:6)

All Jesus asks is that we humble ourselves, admitting our sin with its shame, and call on Him to reconcile us to God— so that God can elevate us from our position of shame to a position of great honor. For the work of Christ as mediator was so effective that not only have we been elevated from a position of shame but we have been elevated to the honor of being adopted as a son:

So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (Galatians 4:3-5)

There was a great honor that was bestowed on me when a friend took me—a foreigner and unbeliever of his religion— and elevated me to the place of a member in his family. I was no longer considered shameful but was now welcomed in his house, being considered a part of his family. This is what the gospel is all about:

So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:7; Romans .8:16-17)

Rather than be faced with the wrath of God for our shame caused by our sin, we can experience the fullness of an experience as a son of God based on the death of Christ. If we reject this provision of Jesus, to be reconciled to God, we will suffer as Daniel said—shame and eternal contempt:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. (John.3:36)

We all have dishonored God by our sin.

Christ has the place — being at the right hand of God;
He has the position — being holy and without shame;
He has the power — to restore you to the highest honor.

However, you must accept Him as He claimed to be, and receive His work on your behalf:

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.
(1 John.5:12)

The choice is yours: you can remain in your position of shame while you wait for God to avenge your dishonoring of Him; or you can seek Christ and His work as mediator, being elevated to the position of the greatest honor as a child of God—even an heir with Christ. You have a choice, and the choice is yours!

Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*”
(John.11:25-26)