

Freedom from Shame (Easter)

I. Introduction

- A. Shame. We all have stories of shame. Some are lighthearted...spelling embarrass wrong... || Some are really heavy... things you've done... done to you
- B. It's not a surprise to know that shame messes you up.
- C. Neurologist Curt Thompson (The Soul of Shame) talks about the shame's impact

1. Physically:

- a) Shame triggers the body's threat response (elevated cortisol, increased heart rate), creating a physiological state similar to "fight, flight, or freeze."
- b) Persistent shame can dysregulate the nervous system, leaving you more prone to anxiety and depression.
- c) Shame literally causes veritable disintegration in the brain: It disrupts healthy neural integration and can impair the brain's ability to connect emotional, rational, and relational circuits
- d) Shame can make you feel "scattered" or overwhelmed.

e) Do any of you feel that in your own life?

2. Emotionally:

- a) Shame is different from guilt; it's not "I did something bad," but "I am bad." → a core feeling of unworthiness
 - (1) This lie just makes things worse... it fuels persistent feelings of being inherently flawed or inadequate.
- b) Because shame convinces us we're unworthy of connection, it produces a fear-driven desire to hide... cut off friends, family
 - (1) Emotions like anxiety, self-loathing, and despair flourish

c) Do any of you feel that in your own life?

3. Relationally:

- a) Shame prompts secrecy and withdrawal. We become defensive or self-protective, leading to shallow relationships vs open ones.
- b) Shame disrupts empathy. It pushes you to avoid vulnerability which hardens you towards authentic community.
- c) You hide. You blame others. We see this in Adam and Eve
- d) The more we hide, the more isolated and ashamed we feel; the more isolated we feel, the more we hide.

e) Do any of you feel that? Do you see that in your own life?

4. Spiritually:

- a) Shame twists our perception of God into that of a harsh judge.
- b) We project our self-condemnation onto God, believing we're unlovable, too flawed to be in His presence (roof would collapse).
- c) Thompson argues that shame disrupts the core biblical truth that we are beloved children of God, made in his image.

d) Instead of living out of a secure identity, we stay stuck in self-condemnation, undermining the communion we are supposed to have with God and his people.

e) Do any of you feel that? Do you struggle with shame? Shame of what you've done, or what was done to you?

5. What if I told you that God wants to free you from your shame? I mean really free you from it. He wants to start in your soul, move on to your mind, repair your relationships, and give you even physical freedom
a) Would that excite you?

D. The gospel... specifically the resurrection... frees you (in Christ) from shame.

E. The cross once symbolized ultimate shame, but the resurrection turns it into a symbol of victory and honor. In the same way, God wants to transform your shame into a glorious testimony

F. Let's first look at the cross in its original cultural context—where it was the epitome of public humiliation—and see how this sets the stage for the resurrection's great reversal: from shame into glory.

II. The Cross was all about SHAME

A. The 1st Century was a Shame/Honor Culture

1. One person's shame affected the whole family or community
2. You still see this in some parts of the world (honor killings)
3. The Bible existed in this culture. Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13 show how being hung on a tree was seen as being cursed, shamed

B. Crucifixion was invented as the most vile way to publicly humiliate and execute

1. Used to be impalement, but Alexander the Great perfected it b/c he said people were dying too quickly

C. Let's consider Jesus's crucifixion...

1. During the Last Supper, Satan entered Judas—who had already been stealing from the ministry fund.
 - a) Judas left the meal to betray Jesus to the authorities.
2. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus spent a sleepless night in agony, fully aware of His impending crucifixion.
 - a) He experienced such extreme distress that He sweated drops of blood—a rare medical phenomenon.
 - b) Meanwhile, His disciples fell asleep instead of praying with Him.
3. Judas arrived with soldiers and betrayed Jesus with a kiss.
4. Jesus faced multiple false trials with conflicting testimonies.
5. Though no proof existed against Him, He was condemned to die.
6. Blindfolded, beaten mercilessly, stripped, and scourged—an extreme form of flogging that often proved fatal.
7. Whipped with a cat-o'-nine tails (flagrum) featuring metal balls and hooks of glass, metal, or bone.
8. During these floggings, flesh, muscle, and even bone were often torn from the body; severe blood loss and trauma often induced shock.

9. Despite significant blood loss and exhaustion, Jesus was forced to carry His wooden cross, 6x6x8 weighs about 70 lbs
 - a) After collapsing, a man named Simon of Cyrene was appointed to carry the cross the rest of the way. → a public walk of shame
10. Jesus was mocked, spat on, and had His beard pulled out—an act of profound disrespect in that culture.
11. Large spikes were driven through nerve-rich spots in His hands and feet.
12. Crucifixion victims frequently died by asphyxiation, blood loss, or traumatic shock.
13. There Jesus hung. Stripped. Bloody. Shamed though innocent.
14. The cross was not just an execution; it was a spectacle to mock and demean.
15. But the Prophet Isaiah says it was for our benefit that this happened
 - a) He was our fall guy
- D. The shame would have spread to his followers → that's why they ran and hid
 1. Luke 24:19–21 → The disciples express their disappointment on the road to Emmaus: “We had hoped...”
 2. They had staked their reputations on a Messiah who was now, in the world's eyes, a public failure.
 3. The cultural expectation was a triumphant, conquering Messiah King
 4. Instead, Jesus' humiliating death seemed to confirm His failure, leading to the disciples' confusion and fear.
 5. But the story wasn't over...

III. The Resurrection: The Great Reversal

- A. *Luke 24:1–12, [1] But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. [2] And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, [3] but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. [4] While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. [5] And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? [6] He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, [7] that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” [8] And they remembered his words, [9] and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. [10] Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, [11] but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. [12] But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.*
- B. What happened next? Jesus rose from the dead, conquering death
 1. He rose as the first fruit of all who would believe and join a new humanity
- C. But something else... Jesus died in humiliation but he was raised in exaltation
 1. *Philippians 2:8–11 explains, [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death*

on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. Descent: Jesus “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.”
3. Exaltation: “Therefore God has highly exalted Him...” The word “therefore” indicates divine reversal: ultimate shame answered by ultimate honor.
4. NOW at the very mention of his name, every knee will bow (EVERY)

D. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 explains a similar concept

1. *[42] So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.*
2. *[43] It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.*
3. *It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.*
4. *[44] It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.*

E. On the cross, Jesus paid the penalty of sin... took our shame... took our punishment... took our death

F. With the empty tomb, Jesus brought about the Great Reversal.

1. That which was my shame is my shame no longer
2. That which was my weakness is now his power
3. That which was my death is now my life

IV. On the cross and in the empty tomb, God turned our shame into glory...

A. Consider the testimony of Scripture...

1. Rahab the Prostitute becomes the Great-grandmother of King David
2. Joseph, the insufferable dreamer, becomes the savior of his family
3. Moses, the murderer, becomes the deliverer of Israel
4. Peter, the one who cowered before a teenager, becomes the Rock
5. Saul, the arrogant Christian-killer, becomes God's chosen vessel
6. God repeatedly turns shame into honor... it's what he does, and the resurrection simply solidifies that for all of us as a promise in Christ

B. Where in your life do you feel shame or disgrace? Consider how Christ's resurrection can transform that story.

1. Even after rising, Jesus kept His scars (John 20:27), turning wounds into proof of victory. He bears them still to this day
2. *Revelation 12:10–11, [10] And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser [Satan] of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. [11] And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”*
3. How do we conquer? By the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony?
4. In other words, our past, surrendered to God, showcases His power

- a) Jesus' blood removes guilt and shame.
- 5. Sharing out loud, with others, how God set you free from shame can break its lingering hold over you and encourage others.
- C. Jesus died and rose to free you from shame and to make you into something new
 - 1. The Bible calls it being born again and says that you've been given a new identity
 - 2. *2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
 - 3. *Romans 8:1, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
 - a) Our past does not define us—Jesus' resurrection power does.
 - 4. The same God who reversed the cross into glory will reverse your shame into honor.
- D. Share Jeff VanderStelt's story: w/ each time he shared, the shame diminished and the gospel's power to forgive grew
 - 1. Shame wants you to hide, to cover, to run, to isolate, to fear, to push people away
 - 2. The resurrection says, "Your shame was already put on display on the cross. Now, it's a testimony of the greatness of God to redeem beauty from what is broken."
- E. Recap
 - 1. The cross was designed for shame but became a platform for God's glory.
 - 2. The resurrection reveals how God can reverse even the deepest disgrace.
 - 3. In Christ, our personal stories of shame can become testimonies of redemptive power.
- F. Invitation:
 - 1. Are you struggling with shame? Bring it to Jesus. He can transform it into a sign of His grace.
 - 2. Did you have an affair? Let the Lord use the testimony of forgiveness so you can help young couples avoid the same pitfalls
 - 3. Were you the victim of abuse? Share with one another how God brings beauty into brokenness and experience even DEEPER life change.
 - 4. Are you struggling today? So am I. So is your neighbor.
 - 5. You're in good company, because Jesus didn't come for the righteous, but for sinners. Cut the charades. Cut the plastic smile. Let's get real.
 - 6. And simultaneously, live confidently as new creations.
 - a) Your sin no longer defines you. It's not your identity.
 - b) Your abuses no longer define you. It's not your identity.
 - c) Your failures no longer define you. It's not your identity.
 - d) Your insecurities are not who you are. It's not your identity.
 - 7. Instead, ask the Lord to free you from that darkness as you transparently walk in the light.

8. And freedom has just begun. We are not a people without hope... The best is yet to come.
 9. *Isaiah 25:8–9 [8] He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. [9] It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*
- G. *Lord, Jesus took all my shame on the cross. He removed it as far as the east is from the west. That's not who I am anymore, Father! Remind me of this reality when the enemy points his bony finger and accuses me. Remind me of WHO I AM IN CHRIST. I am unashamed. I am a child of the King. You hide me in the shadow of your wing and you promised that on the cross you would swallow up death and take away my reproach. Thank you that my SHAME is gone. I am done with it. In the name of Jesus, free us from our shame and empower us to walk in VICTORY.*