

Bite Size Bible Study

Another Side of Shame #139 By Pastor Lee

In an earlier Bite Size Bible Study (#126) I talked about Shame from the Hebrew concept of Honor/Shame. In that study I tried to show that shame could be used for good or wicked purposes.

One type was when we are about to do something that we will feel bad about doing, such as lying to someone. A second type is when someone points out something that we did that was not acceptable, and we experience shame for having done that. This is a private conversation meant to help us change a behavior. A third type is the shame another person uses to put us down and belittle us. This is the wicked use of shame.

But there is a fourth type a shame that afflicts many people. That is the negative evaluation of ones self. It can cause a person to devalue their existence, often leading to a motivation to extract themselves from others. This type of shame causes feelings of pain, distrust in their abilities, and worthlessness. For a believer in Jesus it attacks the very essence of their relationship with the one who is really their most adamant supporter.

I know of a person that felt that God was telling them to do a certain thing, but they didn't want to do it and found excuses for not doing it. Later they realized that they had missed an opportunity and felt that opportunity would never present itself again. They felt the shame of failure, and wondered if God was angry with them. They looked back on all of the times that they had failed and it began to test their resolve to follow Jesus' teaching. Were they ever going to be good enough to see Jesus?

The problem that this person was having, was seeing their actions and intentions from the point of view that they had to do everything themselves. They were leaving Jesus out of the equation. They had forgotten that Jesus' sacrifice was for our mistakes. Mistakes He knew we would make. While our actions may be admirable, they do not equate to our worth to Him. Sure He would desire that we learn to act properly and be a good example to others, but that still does not add or subtract from our worth to Him.

If we look at the disciples that followed Him during his life on earth, they were making mistakes left and right – some big, some small. What did He pray for them?

"I pray not only for these, but also for those who will trust in me because of their word, that they may all be one. Just as you, Father, are united with me and I with you, I pray that they may be united with us, so that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory which you have given to me, I have given to

them; so that they may be one, just as we are one — I united with them and you with me, so that they may be completely one, and the world thus realize that you sent me, and that you have loved them just as you have loved me. John 17:20-23 CJB

Even Judas Iscariot who committed a heinous crime against Jesus was still loved by Jesus. He showed this love when He washes the feet of Judas and when He gives him a piece of bread – a cultural symbol of kinship.

Three times Simon Peter denied that he even knew Jesus; even once with an oath and once with a curse. Yet later Jesus even set him as a leader of the apostles, showing His love for and confidence in Peter.

One thing I have learned in all of my dealings with Jesus is that He presents us with tests and trials, not to produce failure but to strengthen us and give us confidence in following His teaching. If we fail a test or trial, He doesn't give up on us – on the contrary He provides us another opportunity later, to strengthen us in that particular area that we first failed in.

James (probably Jesus' half brother) knew this and wrote:

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all **without finding fault**, and it will be given to you. James 1:2-5 NIV*

Self-assessment can work for our good or for our detriment. It is only good when we keep Jesus in that assessment and see ourselves as a loved and important person in the community of God.

Our failures only state that we need more practice in a particular area. Practice is good and those in sports know it – they spend hours and hours in honing their skills. Scientists and Engineers know that failure only tells them that there is a better way to approach the problem.

The Shame in our Worth has no place in our failures. It is most debilitating for any Christian because it suppresses our desire to continue our growth in the Family of God.

Our worth is in Jesus not our successes or failures.

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