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Shamed

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



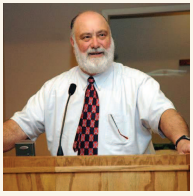
Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

PSALM 119:6

Shame can expose the distance between profession and faithful conduct. John Weaver considers accountability before God, the need for honest self-examination, and the response required when sin is brought to light. These messages call readers away from the defense of appearances and toward the repentance and obedience taught in Scripture.

"We feel ashamed when all our pretensions are wiped away and we reveal what we really are."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Shamed

Part One of Two

Introduction: The Reality of Shame

Psalm 119, verse one: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity, they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. I will keep thy statutes. Oh, forsake me not utterly."

Let me begin by asking some questions. Have you ever been ashamed of your attitude, your actions, or words? Have you ever been confronted with the words, "Shame on you"? I think probably each one of us has heard those words in times past. But have you ever had to hang your head in shame before others as you confess your words and deeds? Have you ever had to write letters of apology

and confess to someone your uncivil, unkind, and unbiblical attitudes and expressions?

Have you ever prayed and shamefully bowed your head before the thrice-holy God because of that which you know that you have done and said? Has it bothered you even after you sometimes confessed your sins and repented of those sins? Has it ever bothered you that you acted, said things, did things, and thought things in such a way that you actually knew better, and you should never have done it to begin with?

The Depravity of the Human Heart

Have you ever really seen the depth of your own deceitful and depraved heart? Oftentimes we think that we're not really too bad until all of a sudden we end up saying something or doing something. Then all of our sin, all of our wickedness, simply comes boiling out. We are confronted with the realization: Yes, we are still wicked. Yes, we are really depraved. You remember that passage in Jeremiah 17, verses nine and 10, where the Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

The question is asked, “Who can know it?” The next verse says, “I, the Lord, search the heart and try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings.” The truth of the matter is, when we are so shamed and embarrassed that we can scarcely lift our heads before our heavenly Father, we are learning exactly what Isaiah learned in Isaiah 6:5: “Woe is me! For I’m a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Woe is me, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

It is only as we truly begin to see our own vileness, corruption, and depravity that we can begin to see God’s glory, holiness, majesty, and sovereignty. When we are convicted of our sins—our attitudes, actions, words, and thoughts—God often grants us repentance and forgiveness. Yet there are scars from those sins.

Memory can be a blessed thing, but it can also be troublesome when you continue to think about things you have done, knowing better and knowing you should not have done them. Although God

has forgiven you and you have repented, they remain in your mind. David had that same problem. In Psalm 51:3 he said, “For I acknowledge my transgressions”—listen—“and my sin is ever before me.” That is one of the most horrible things about sin.

David's Prayer Against Shame

Are there some sins you simply cannot forget? Some sins you cannot eradicate or obliterate from your mind? You did them, and every now and then they return to haunt you. I was amazed to discover how many times David prayed that he would not be ashamed. In verse six he says, “Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” I will return to that passage, but first consider Psalm 25. David is praying in a number of passages that he will not be ashamed. In Psalm 25, verses one through three, he says, “Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee.” Then he prays, “Let me not be ashamed.”

David prayed in Psalm 25: “Let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed. Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.” In verse 20 he says, “O keep my soul and deliver me. Let me not be ashamed. For I put my trust in thee.”

Then, in Psalm 31:1, he says, “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. Let me never be ashamed. Deliver me in thy righteousness.” In verse 17 he continues, “Let me not be ashamed, O Lord, for I have called upon thee. Let the wicked be ashamed and let them be silent in the grave.”

Today I am going to share with you some things for which we should be ashamed; next week, Lord willing, some things for which we should never be ashamed. The truth of the matter is that there are many things for which we should be ashamed.

Psalm 119: The Acrostic Psalm on God's Law

Before we look at Psalm 119, let me tell you something about this psalm. First, Psalm 119 is an acrostic psalm. It is the longest psalm in the Psalter, containing 176 verses. The reason there are 176 verses is that it is an acrostic psalm.

There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet: Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, He, and so on. When you look at verses 1 through 8, all eight verses in Hebrew begin with Aleph, the letter A in our alphabet. Verses 9 through 16 each begin in the original with Beth, which would be equal to B, so to speak, and so on. Thus, with twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet and eight verses beginning with each Hebrew letter, the psalm contains 176 verses. Psalm 119, then, is an acrostic psalm. It is also a psalm concerning the law of God. Look, if you would please, at verse 1.

The Undefiled Walk and the Source of Shame

He says, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." So he begins this psalm by talking about walking in the law of the Lord. The undefiled are those who are perfect, mature, unstained, and who walk in the law of the Lord.

When we think of the word undefiled, we think of purity, of that which is not stained, ugly, or impure. David is saying, obviously in this passage, "Blessed are those unstained ones in the way who walk in the law of the Lord." The way to walk unstained, the way to walk undefiled, is to walk in the law of the Lord.

Now look at Psalm 119, verses 9 through 11. He enlarges upon this thought by asking, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" If you want to be clean, undefiled, unstained, and pure, here is how: "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Then he says, "With my whole heart have I sought thee, oh let me not wander from thy commandments." Verse 11 adds, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee." If we are going to walk in the law of the Lord, we have to hide His word in our heart.

Now go back to Psalm 119, verse 2: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies and that seek him with the whole heart." What does this mean? "They also do no iniquity. They walk in his ways." David says, "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies," and he carefully adds, "and that seek him with the whole heart." If we are keeping His testimonies and seeking Him with our whole heart, according to verse 3, that is why we would do no iniquity; we would walk in His ways.

The word iniquity is another word for sin. First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is a transgression of the law." This is why the psalm is about the law of God. If we want to keep His testimonies and seek Him with our whole heart, it will lead us, and we will not violate His law.

And thus we will be walking in his ways. In light of this, look at verse 4: “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.” Have you realized that the Scripture says, “Thou hast commanded us”? The precepts of God are commandments. They are not suggestions. They are not advice or counsel. They are commandments, and these commandments come from the sovereign God of heaven and earth, who happens to be our heavenly Father. Thus he says, “Thou hast commanded us that we keep his precepts diligently.”

One of the problems that we have is this: There is a tendency in us to disobey. There is a tendency in us to rebel. After David describes the man who is undefiled, who does no iniquity and walks in God’s ways, he prays this prayer in verse 5: “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.” The ways of a man happen to be his habits—his manner of life, the way he thinks, speaks, and acts. David is praying, “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep my statutes.” In other words, David is saying, “I realize that I am a sinner and that I am depraved. So, Lord, I am praying that you will direct me into obedience and submission and enable me to keep thy words.”

Now he gives us a very clear and concise point. Listen to verses 5 and 6 together: “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.” Then—only then—“shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” David says that unless our ways are directed to keep his statutes, we should be ashamed. The way not to be ashamed is to learn to keep his statutes. Now let us go back and look at verse 6. He says, “Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” One problem is that we normally read meanings into words. Instead of taking time to look up words, we put our modern-day terminology upon them. We place that terminology upon a word. Here is the word “respect.”

I could say, “Mr. Byerly,” and you would say that is respectful. “Mr. Ward,” that is respectful. That is what we normally think of

when we think of respect. But this word "respect" here is very particular. It means to regard, to pay attention to, to consider, to respect, and to look upon.

When David says, "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments," he is saying, "When I consider them, when I look upon them, when I pay attention to them." It is not just that we are saying, "This Bible is the word of God. Let us give it respect." You can say that all day long, but unless you are paying attention to God's commands, considering them, and applying them, you are not really respecting them.

The Hebrew word for ashamed is the word "bush," and it literally means to be ashamed, to be shamed, to be confounded, to be confused, to be put to shame, to act shamefully, and to feel shame. Now, look at verses five and six, and then I want to ask you a question. David prays, "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments?" So here is my question.

What is it that shames us? What makes us ashamed, confuses us, and confounds us? What shames us before others and before our heavenly Father? Here is the answer: disobedience. That is what he said: "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

Sins of Ignorance and Presumption

We can sin in different ways, and even a Christian can sin. Most of us understand, or at least we should, that there are sins of ignorance and sins of premeditation, or presumption. Let us look at Numbers chapter 15, beginning with verse 27: "And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them."

What is an ignorant sin? It is when we commit a sin that violates God's law without knowing, considering, or understanding that it is a violation of God's law. We have an old saying in this country, “Ignorance is no excuse of the law.” That saying came from the Bible—not because it is written in the Bible, but because it refers to Bible law. God's law is so clear and plain; all you have to do is read the Bible and read God's law. Therefore, ignorance is no excuse.

When we sin ignorantly, it is still sin. In this passage, atonement had to be made for an ignorant sin. It was not merely, “I slipped up. I forgot. I didn't know any better.” It did not matter whether you knew better or not. You still had to make atonement, because sin is sin. Whether it was ignorantly, foolishly, or stupidly done, it was still sin.

Then, in verse 30, he begins with the sin of presumption: “But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off.”

“His iniquity shall be upon him.” What is a presumptuous sin? It is when you know that something is wrong and that God forbids it, yet say, “I want it. I’m going to do it anyhow.” God says that if you do that, the same reproacheth the Lord. In verse 31, He says it is a despisement of His word. To despise His word is to despise Him; that is why there is a reproach upon the Lord.

Both an ignorant sin and a presumptuous sin have to be atoned for. We can act foolishly, ignorantly, or stupidly, but it is still sin if it violates God’s law, even though we did not know any better. When we sin presumptuously, in one sense that is even worse, because we should have known better and do know better, but we did it anyhow.

Certainly, a sin of ignorance, I believe, would be our own fault. Why? Because we have the Word of God. We can read it and study it. If we are ignorant, it is our own fault. We should be reading and studying the Word of God. When we sin presumptuously, that demonstrates the depravity, pride, and wickedness of our own heart. We are thumbing our nose at God and saying, “I’m going to do what

I want to do, regardless of what You say." So there is a sin of ignorance and there is a sin of presumption.

A Sound Heart in God's Statutes

In Psalm 119:80, David is still talking about being ashamed: "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed." One reason that we sin, outside of the fact that we are sinners, is that we are ignorant and foolish. To use David's terminology, we are unsound in the law of God.

The word "sound" is a very interesting word. The Hebrew word is "tamim," and it literally means without blemish. It means to be perfect, upright, without spot, whole, sincere, and genuine. David is saying, Let my heart be sincere, whole, complete, unstained, undefiled in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. The way to be ashamed and the way to be shamed is to have an unsound heart in the law of God, because an unsound heart always leads to disobedience.

He said, "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed." Someone usually will come along and object, "Brother Weaver, all of these verses are in the Old Testament." I usually tell people, we have one Bible, not two. We have one God, not two. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament, and the Scripture in the Old Testament is just as inspired as the Scripture in the New Testament.

So many people say, "This is all Old Testament. What you have in the New Testament is the apex of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ." That is true. Then they say, "Probably in Jesus Christ, we're never, ever going to be ashamed." If you think that, it proves that you never read the New Testament.

New Testament Shame: Disobedience and Lack of Study

Turn to the book of Philippians, chapter one, verse 20. I used this verse last week, I do believe, but I want to point out something this week in reference to being ashamed. The apostle Paul says in Philippians 1:20, "According to my earnest expectation and my

hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be in my life, or by death."

Note that he says, "in nothing I shall be ashamed." If Paul did not want to be ashamed in nothing, the implication is that there are things for which you can be shamed in the New Testament. When he says, "I do not want to be ashamed in nothing," it also indicates that there are plenty of things for which we can be ashamed.

So it is possible. The Greek word here for ashamed is a very interesting word. It is actually from the word "aischos," which refers to a disfigurement, disgrace, or dishonor. He is saying that in nothing he shall be disfigured, disgraced, or dishonored.

The Apostle Paul tells us very clearly one thing that will disgrace us, dishonor us, and disfigure us. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 14, he says, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." In other words, if you are going to disobey, dishonor, and disregard the Word of God, the apostle Paul says, note that man and have no company with him. Do not pretend that everything is hunky-dory when it is not. Have no company with him, that he might be ashamed—that he might be disgraced and dishonored. Disobedience, defiance, and disregard for the Word of God are shameful.

The person who disobeys, disregards, and defies the Word of God should be shamed. Now, there is a shamefulness in sin. None of us are going to sit around the table and say, "Well, let me tell you what I used to do." No, because we are ashamed of what we used to do. When we repent of our sins, we see the shamefulness of our sins.

So, in the book of Romans, chapter 6, verse 21, the Apostle Paul is talking about the fact of when we were lost, when we were sinners, and when we did those shameful things: "What fruit had ye then in those things? Whereof ye are now ashamed: for the end of those things is death." One of the proofs that we have been genuinely converted is that we are ashamed of what we used to do, how we used to live, and how we used to act. I never will forget.

I had a dear friend who has been dead for years and years now. He was a drunk—I mean, a hardworking drunk, but a drunk. God saved him later in life; I think he was in his fifties. He played a saxophone, and one of the songs he always played was “Wasted Years, Wasted Years, Oh How Foolish.” He told me so many times, “I just wish I had known back then what I know now.”

I said, “Well, I understand that. But God's grace came to you in his time. And if you had heard back then, you probably wouldn't have listened.” But we are ashamed of those things. Once God has converted us, we understand that what we have done was indeed exceedingly shameful.

The truth of the matter is this: I've done things in my life before I was converted that I'm ashamed of. I've even done things since I was converted that I'm ashamed of. I've been ashamed of my attitudes, my actions, and my words. Like a lot of people, I could wish that I'd never thought those things, said those things, or done those things. But the truth is, I did them. And here's the problem: the problem is not that they are unforgiven. It's not that they've not been repented of. It is, once again, that memory. The memory can be blessed or troublesome because we carry those scars with us. When those awful memories come flooding back, we have to plead the blood. We have to say, “Lord, those have been dealt with.” But the memories are still there.

You may respond, “Well, I was pretty good. I don't have that much to be ashamed of.” First of all, I really doubt that, but you can say that. May I remind you that the world's definition of good and fallen man's definition of good is not the same as God's definition? God says there's none good, no, not one. But I understand what you're saying. We're not drunkards, whoremongers, murderers, or thieves. But that doesn't mean that we have not done things and said things that we're not ashamed of.

Let me show you something. Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to 2 Timothy, chapter two. As you turn there, I want to ask you some questions before I read the Scripture. Listen very carefully. You say, “I've been a pretty good fellow. I've been a pretty good woman. I haven't done a lot of those things, and there are not too many things in my life I really need to be ashamed of.” That's all well and good. So

let me ask you this: How about your knowledge of the Scriptures? How about your study habits? Do you understand Bible doctrine? Are you able to apply Bible doctrine?

I was talking to a young man this week who is just beginning to preach. He is a studious, very fine young man, and he had recently been in several different local churches. He said to me, "Brother Weaver, I'm amazed. Most people in the churches don't even know what they believe or why they believe." I said, "I understand that." It is a fact: most people never really know what they believe or why they believe it.

Most Christians cannot explain justification by faith alone, the doctrine of imputation, or sanctification. They know nothing about God's omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, immutability, eternality, infinity, or transcendence. They cannot discuss these things. So let me show you something of which you should be ashamed. Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." If you are not a workman, I will explain that. If you are not rightly dividing the word of truth, you need to be ashamed. If you are not studying to show yourself approved unto God, you need to be ashamed. There are positives and negatives in this verse.

Our study is not even unto men. It is not even unto ourselves. It is unto God: “Study to show thyself approved unto God.” So we study for His honor, for His glory, for His divine approbation, not because we are doing it for ourselves or for anybody else. We want His approval, His divine approbation. We are encouraged to endeavor to cultivate and improve our hearts and minds by a diligent study of the word of God.

When you read your Bible this week or sat down to study, did you endeavor mightily? Did you give diligence? If you did not, you should be ashamed, because you did not study to show thyself approved unto God. The word indicates that true diligence in seeking and knowing the scriptures is for God's divine approval. If we did not study in this matter, then it does not meet God's divine approval.

The word “study” is from the Greek word “spoudazo,” which literally means to labor, to give diligence in, to exert oneself, and to endeavor mightily. Negatively speaking, the reason it would not meet God's approval is a lack of diligence, a lack of self-exerting. That lack of diligence always places a wrong interpretation and a wrong dividing of the word of God upon the scriptures.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing.” The word “dividing” is the Greek word “orthotomeo,” which literally means to cut a straight line, to hold a straight course. It means to teach the truth directly and correctly. If you cannot exert yourself and endeavor mightily to study the scriptures as unto God, a workman that needeth not to be embarrassed and ashamed and dishonored, inevitably you will not be able to cut a straight line when explaining and expounding the scriptures.

Wresting Scripture and Ignorance

One of the biggest problems we have today is that hardly anyone considers context. As a good friend always says, “It's the context, stupid.” You can make the scripture mean anything you want it to mean as long as you take everything out of context. I could prove that it is all right to commit suicide. If I took it out of context, I could show you a verse that says, “Judas went out and hanged himself.” I could show you another verse that says, “Go and do thou likewise.” But they are both out of context.

You take Scripture out of context, and you can make it mean whatever you want it to mean. Note that he says if we do not cut a straight line in Scripture, then confusion and destruction come even upon our own selves. The negative implied in this passage is that if we do not study as unto God, exert ourselves diligently and mightily, and endeavor mightily, the result is that we will not be able to cut a straight line.

Consider 2 Peter chapter three, beginning with verse 15, so that you can see Peter is talking about the Apostle Paul: “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these

things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

If you are unlearned and unstable in the Scriptures, inevitably you will wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction. The word "wrest" is the Greek word "strebloo." It literally means to wrest, to torture, to put on the rack, to stretch beyond the limits.

It is like during the Inquisition. One torture method was to put a man on the rack. They would lay him on his back, put his arms behind his head, and tie ropes around his wrists. They would then tie ropes around his ankles, and someone would turn the wheel, stretching the man until his arms and hips were popped out of joint. If they did not stop, everything would be ripped apart.

That is exactly the picture being presented here. Those who are unstable and unlearned put the truth on the rack and stretch it. They make it say things it was never intended to say. They make it teach things it was never intended to teach. That is wresting the Scripture; it is putting the Scripture on the rack.

John Calvin said it like this: "Some mutilate it. Others tear it. Others torture it. Others break it in pieces. Others, keeping by the outside, as we've said, never come to the soul of doctrine. To all these faults, he contrasts dividing aright, that is the manner of explaining, which is adapted to edification." In other words, if you cannot cut a straight line in Scripture, you are going to end up wresting it to your own destruction.

Here is the truth: we should be ashamed of our ignorance. We really should. I have studied for years, but I can assure you, I do not know what I need to know. Every time I see something in Scripture, I think, "How did I read this Bible all these years and still never see this?" No one has a perfect understanding or perfect knowledge of Scripture. Yet we should be ashamed that, when we do study, we do not do it as unto the Lord. Have you ever stopped to think about that?

We might study out of duty. That is what many people do: "Let me read my Scripture for today. I am duty-bound to do it, so I might as well do it and get it over with." Or sometimes we study out of

curiosity. People have asked me, “Brother Weaver, I know it is in there because my mama said so. Where is it found in Scripture that every tub has to sit on its own bottom?” It is not in Scripture; that is merely an old saying.

Let us be honest. We hear such sayings all the time: “God helps those who help themselves.” That is not in Scripture. It is true that we have a responsibility, but the saying itself is not in Scripture. Sometimes we study out of curiosity, trying to find something that cannot be found because it is not there. How many of us really study as unto God? “Heavenly Father, I want to come to Thee. I want to exert myself. I want to endeavor mightily to understand this.”

"I ask You to open my eyes. I ask You to give me understanding, Lord, that which I do not see teach Thou me and Lord, let me honor Thee in this study." If we came to the Scripture like that, I believe it would make a difference in our lives and in our understanding. I really believe that. We should be ashamed for not knowing the Scripture any better than we do, no matter how well we know it.

Shame at Christ's Coming

Have you ever considered this? What will it be like when you see Jesus Christ face to face? When He returns, what will we do? What will we say? Will we be like that slothful servant who began to make excuses for his disobedience and lack of service? Or will we be ashamed and embarrassed? You may say, "Wow, I don't think it is possible for me to be ashamed and embarrassed when our Lord returns." Really?

Consider 1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

First, note that in this passage we are commanded to be continually abiding in Him: "And now, little children, abide in him." The Greek word is "meno," M-E-N-O, and it means to abide, to remain, to dwell, to continue, to sojourn with. It is also a present active imperative, which means it is a command and something in which you are to be actively engaged continually. So he says, "Little

children, remain in him, abide in him, dwell in him, continue in him."

Secondly, one reason given for this command to abide in Him is that, when He shall appear, we will have confidence at His appearing. The word "confidence" is the Greek word "parrhesia," which literally means boldness, confidence without concealment, without ambiguity, free and fearless. He says, I want you to be free and fearless, bold, and unconcealed at our Lord's appearing.

There is another reason he tells us that we should remain in him. He says in verse 28, “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence”—now watch—“and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” The word “ashamed” means to be disfigured. It means to be dishonored, suffused with shame, covered with shame, or shamefaced. We always feel ashamed when our hopes are disappointed. We feel ashamed when our character is exposed as something other than we profess. We feel ashamed when all our pretensions are wiped away and we reveal what we really are. When we are stripped, made bare, and shamefaced, we are ashamed.

This is what he is talking about: “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, we may have boldness and not be dishonored, disfigured before him at his coming.”

While we are on the subject of shame and being ashamed at the coming of the Lord, let me ask you a question. I am not trying to be ugly, and I am not trying to embarrass anyone, but who in here would like to stand up, take all their clothes off, and be naked—totally naked—in front of this group of people? Would anybody volunteer to do that? No, you do not want to do that. You would be shameful. Would you like to be stripped naked in front of the whole world? The answer is no. I do not care how beautiful a person is. I do not care how gorgeous, how shapely, or how muscular a person is. Nobody wants to be exposed naked in front of other people.

Let me go a little further. How would you like to stand before the sovereign God of heaven and earth, absolutely naked? The truth of

the matter is, we already are. Hebrews 4:12-13 says: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” It is not just our bodies that are naked before the sovereign God, but our minds, our hearts, our motives, our desires—everything. Everything.

“Well, I don't know if that really means that.” Really? Look in your Bibles to the book of Revelation, chapter 3. Revelation 2 and 3 is written to the seven churches of Asia Minor. In Revelation chapter 3, beginning with verse 17, our Lord is talking to the church of Laodicea. He's not talking to the unsaved; He's talking to the church. Notice verse 17:

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

Here is a church that says, “Boy, we are clothed wonderfully.” Our Lord says, “You're naked as a jaybird.”

Revelation 16:15 says, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

Now consider again 1 John 2:28, where the contrast is between boldness, or boldness and shamefacedness, between being bold and being ashamed: “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, we may be fearless, we may be bold and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”

Boldness Through Abiding in Christ

We need to consider what will be our state when He appears. Will we be fearless and bold, or will we be ashamed? If a person is bold, he

does not care who sees him or hears him. He is not afraid to be seen or heard. But when someone is ashamed, he does not only bow his head; he tries to shrink away and not let anybody see him. He wants to withdraw from the presence of those before whom he is ashamed.

Here is the only way in which we will not be ashamed at His coming. First John 4:17 says, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.” How do we have boldness in the day of judgment? Because we live as Christ lived. We live in obedience to the Father. We do those things that are pleasing unto Him. That is the only way we can be bold. That is why he said in 1 John 2:28, “And now, little children, abide in him.”

As long as we are abiding in him, we are living as he lived. We are conforming our lives to him and to his word. When that happens, we may have boldness in the day of judgment, and we will not be ashamed at his appearing.

We're shamed in many ways. I am so thankful that the Scripture says that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. The only thing that will make us bold in the day of judgment is the person and work and righteousness of Jesus Christ. There are some things for which we should be ashamed, even as Christians. Next week, Lord willing, I'll show you some things of which we shall not be ashamed and should not be ashamed. And if we are, we should be ashamed.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your word and Your truth. We pray, Lord, that You would forgive us for our multitude of sins, our bad attitudes, and our actions, thoughts, words, and deeds. Help us, Lord, that we may appear before Thee with boldness, because as Thou art, so are we in this world. Give us, Lord, holiness, righteousness, and obedience. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Shamed

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

Psalm 119, beginning with verse one:

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity, they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. I will keep thy statutes, O forsake me not utterly."

Psalm 119 is an acrostic psalm. The reason there are 176 verses is that there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and verses 1 through 8 all begin with the Hebrew letter Aleph in the original Hebrew. Verses 9 through 16 all begin with Beth, and so on down through the Hebrew alphabet. Therefore, we have 176 verses.

Psalm 119 is also a psalm of the law. It begins by saying, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord.” The way to remain unstained and undefiled is by walking in the way of the Lord and in the law of the Lord.

Oftentimes we are shamed because of our own ignorance, our foolishness, and our disobedience. There are many times that we have been ashamed, and certainly we remember those experiences—sometimes very painfully. I quoted last week Psalm 51 and verse 3, where David said, “I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.” Psalm 119 sets forth the way that we should walk in order that we should not be ashamed and that we should not be shamed before the Lord.

Verses 9 through 11 emphasize what David says in verses 1 and 2: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

When we talk about being ashamed, there are a number of things for which we should be ashamed. If we are not ashamed in those areas, then something is vitally wrong in our lives. A real Christian cannot help but sense shame when he is disobedient to the Word of God. He cannot help but sense shame when he realizes he has failed in his duties, obligations, responsibilities, and privileges. Whenever we fail in our responsibilities, duties, and obligations, we also fail in our ministry to the Lord, for our lives are to be a ministry to the Lord.

David goes further. In Psalm 119:80, he said, “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.” The way not to be ashamed is to have a sound heart in the law of God, a sound heart in His statutes, to know, understand, and apply the truth of God.

We should be ashamed when we are disobedient. The Apostle Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 3:14, said, “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.” Anytime anyone, especially a Christian, will not hear, heed, obey, and apply the Word of God, he should indeed be ashamed.

We should also be ashamed of our lack of study. In 2 Timothy 2:15, he said, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” When he said “study,” he literally meant to exercise diligence, to exert yourself. We are to study so that we may be approved unto God. If we learn to study seeking God’s approval, it will make a difference in how we study. If we are not actually studying, and if we are not studying seeking the approval of God, we should be ashamed. “Rightly dividing the word of truth” means to cut a straight line or to cut a straight course, because we want to teach what the Word of God teaches, and we do not want to make the Word of

Things for Which We Should Never Be Ashamed

God teaches what we think, what we believe, and what our opinion is. I also quoted from 2 Peter, where Peter said, talking about the Apostle Paul, “even as our brother Paul has written, certain things are hard to be understood, which they that are unstable and unlearned wrest the scripture to their own destruction.” The word “wrest” actually means to torture—to put on the rack and stretch something out of proportion. A lot of people stretch the Scriptures. They torture them, put them on a rack, and make them say things they were never intended to say.

I ended this message by asking, would we be ashamed when we saw our Lord? Some people say, “I don't think I could ever be ashamed when I see our Lord.” If you will turn in your Bibles, holding Psalm 119, and look again at 1 John 2:28, note what the Scripture says: “And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” There is a way to have confidence before the Lord. If we do not have that boldness, that confidence, that fearlessness before Him, then we are going to be ashamed. The way not to be ashamed is found in 1 John 4:17: “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.”

The way to have boldness is to live as the Word of God commands us, in Romans 8:29, by being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and living an obedient life, as our Lord was obedient also. Whenever

you have a negative in Scripture, you must always look for a positive. Whenever you have a positive in Scripture, you must also look for a negative.

The Negative and Positive Principle

Last week I dealt with things for which we should be ashamed. This week I want to show you from Scripture things for which we should never, ever be ashamed. If you are ashamed of some of these things, then you really should be ashamed, because you should never be ashamed of what I am going to share with you today. First of all, clearly and most importantly, we should never be ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never Ashamed of the Gospel

The apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” We take this verse too lightly and never really consider its implications. When Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” we need to remember the persecution that he and the other apostles endured—the hatred, animosity, and ill will constantly heaped upon them. Paul specifically was hated by the Jews and cast out.

He was regarded as an apostate. Many of the Greeks despised him as well. He was hated, hunted, proscribed, persecuted, and attacked for his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:23, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” The Jews stumbled over the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ, while the Greeks counted it mere foolishness. In their worldly wisdom, they saw nothing wise in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” but consider what he and the other apostles endured. In 1 Corinthians 4, beginning with verse 9, he says, “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are honourable, but we're despised. Even in this present

hour, we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place and labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we suffer it. Being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

If you were to look only at the negatives in this passage, the apostle Paul says that he and the other apostles have been set forth last, as appointed unto death. They were made a spectacle. In verse 10, they were fools, weak, and despised. In verse 11, even in that present hour, they hungered and thirsted, were naked or buffeted, and had no certain dwelling place. In verse 12, they were reviled and persecuted; in verse 13, they were defamed.

Then he makes this statement: "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." The word "filth" is interesting. Perikatharma literally means refuse or filth. He says they were counted the refuse, or filth, of the world. Then he says they were the offscouring of all things unto that day. Peripsema literally means that which is wiped off or scraped off.

I am not trying to be crude, but I was raised on a farm, and I know what you wipe off and scrape off your feet. That is what the apostle Paul is talking about. Some of you ladies have cooked things too long, and they burned in the bottom of the pan. You not only have to wash it; you have to scrape the bottom because it has to be scoured. It is worthless and no good for anything. That is what the apostle is saying: We are counted as the filth of this world, that which has to be wiped off and scraped off.

With this in mind, notice that the apostle Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." It did not matter how much persecution, ridicule, or mockery had been heaped upon him. He said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Why? "For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Everyone knows that the Greek word for power is dunamis, from which we get our English word dynamite. The gospel is the dynamite of God—the power, strength, ability, and might of God—to the Jew and to the Greek, even to those who hate it. The apostle Paul himself once hated it.

After God saved Paul on the Damascus Road, he was a changed man. He understood what the gospel could do and believed that, since it had changed him, it could change anyone. Therefore, he was not ashamed of it. That is why he said in 1 Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” If God could save the chief, He can save the rest of the tribe as well. The apostle was saying, “I am not ashamed.”

In 2 Timothy 1:12, he went further: “For the which cause I suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

There are many people today who are ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our politically correct, pagan world, many ridicule the Lord Jesus.

They deny him. They denigrate him. They despise him. So let me make this exceedingly plain: Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is salvation. There is no other salvation, no other way to the Father, no other way to heaven, and no other mediator, Savior, Lord, or Redeemer. You will either be saved by Jesus Christ, or you will not be saved at all.

So many people try to say, "Well, there are exceptions. The Jews are the exception." No, they are not the exception. Every Jew will perish just like anyone else unless he repents and exercises faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace and power of God. It is just that simple. No exceptions. Jesus Christ alone is the only way to the Father. That is why he said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." That is why, in Ephesians 2 and verse 18, he said, "For through him we both have access unto the Father by one Spirit."

There are people who are ashamed to admit and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, and there are some Christians that are shamed. If you are ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ, will he be ashamed of you? In one sense, the answer is yes. Look in your Bibles to Mark, chapter 8, verse 38. Our Lord says, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him

also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." If you were ashamed of me, he said, I will be ashamed of you.

He said the same thing again in a different way in Luke 9 and verse 26: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's and that of the holy angels." So yes, if we are ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is the possibility that he is going to be ashamed of us as well.

So He is our only hope in salvation, our only hope in holiness, and our only hope in practical obedience. Many of you are familiar with the YMCA. You hear people say, “Let’s go to the Y. Let’s go work out. They’ve got a dance class or this class, or you can go swimming.” Most people have never thought that YMCA stands for the Young Men’s Christian Association.

It was founded by Sir George Williams. Listen to what he said, and see how far the YMCA has gone. Sir George Williams said, “My lifelong experience as a businessman and as a Christian worker among young men has taught me that the only power in this world that can effectually keep one from sin, in all the varied and often attractive forms, is that which comes from an intimate knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as a present Savior. And I can also heartily testify that the safe guidebook by which one may be led to Christ is the Bible, the Word of God, which is inspired by the Holy Ghost.”

Here was a man who founded the YMCA, speaking of the fact that he was not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ, and founded it to bring men to Him. We should never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. If you are ashamed of the gospel of Christ, then you genuinely should be ashamed.

Never Ashamed of Daily Provision

Secondly, we should never be ashamed of our daily provision. We should be thankful, grateful, and appreciative of what God gives us in His providence. It does not matter whether it is a steak, a salad, peas, or whatever. Psalm 37:19 says, “They shall not be ashamed in

an evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.” God is going to take care of us even in the days of famine.

We may not necessarily have a 15-course meal, but He will see that we do not starve. Acts 14:17 says of God, “Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” There are Christians who are ashamed to bow their heads in a public restaurant and thank God for their food. I have seen them. I have got news for you.

I can share with you some things that can really make you thankful. For instance, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand was kidnapped by the Romanian secret police and thrown into a communist prison for fourteen years. His wife, Sabina, was in a communist prison for three years. You can read all about his testimony and what happened to him in his book, "Tortured for Christ."

After he was released from prison and came to America, he went out to dinner with a number of pastors in a big restaurant. When the food came to his table, there was lots of it; the food was plentiful and hot. When Richard Wurmbrand saw all that food, he dropped from his chair to his knees on the floor of the restaurant and began publicly thanking God for the food. One of the pastors said, "Everyone in the restaurant stopped eating and looked at us." He said, "I was so embarrassed. And then I got embarrassed because I was embarrassed." He added, "If I'd eaten rats for 14 years, I think I would learn to appreciate some fine food as well."

The same thing happened, basically, in our home years ago. We had Harlan Popov. Mr. Popov wrote his book, "Tortured for His Faith." He was also thrown into a communist prison. He spoke at our church, and afterward he went home with us for dinner. My children were small at that time. After dinner, he was sitting on the couch when the twins came out with their little cage and said, "Mr. Popov, look at our gerbils." He said, "Rats, they're rats." They said, "No, Mr. Popov, they're gerbils." He said, "They're rats. I know what they are. I had to eat them just to stay alive."

I tell you what: you chow down on a plate of rat, and I'll guarantee you'll learn to be thankful for a hamburger, a hot dog, a salad,

whatever. I've got news for you. Whatever God provides for us, it could be a lot worse. Have you ever stopped to think about that? There have been times in our lives, and Alice can tell you, when she and I and our children ate nothing but peas for several weeks. It was all we could afford, and that's what we ate. I was thankful to have the peas. Most of you do not know, but it is standard practice down South on New Year's Day to eat black-eyed peas. You know why?

Because of the Battle of Corinth, Corinth, Mississippi, the Yankees destroyed all the food except the field peas. They thought there was only animal fodder and left the peas for the horses and cows. Those people in Mississippi lived on them until they could get a garden and crop going after the Yankees had left. So it became standard procedure: on the first day of the year, you eat peas. It is not merely for "good luck," as most of the world has said; it is in remembrance of how God fed those people in Mississippi during that time.

So we learn to be thankful. Psalm 37:25 says, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." God is going to feed us and take care of us. The truth is that we need to learn to be thankful for whatever God provides. It is just that simple.

I got so tickled at myself. I was feeding my horses, and as I handed them the feed and poured it into their trough, I thought, "Wow, they eat the same thing every day." Then I thought, "Well, so do I." We basically eat the same thing every day anyhow. But whether it is a fifteen-course meal, a hamburger, or a hot dog, we should be thankful that we have it.

Never Ashamed of Persecuted Prisoners

Here is the third thing we should never be ashamed of: the persecuted prisoners of the Lord Jesus Christ. Stop and think about this. Persecution has gone on ever since the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not personally understand how Christians can turn their backs on their persecuted brethren. I am not talking only about people being persecuted in China. There are persecuted Christians there, in Russia, and in all parts of the world. But there are persecuted Christians here in America as well.

We assume that anyone who has been arrested, put on trial, or imprisoned must be guilty of something. He must have done something wrong, or at least attempted to do something wrong, or he never would have been arrested or had to go through that trial. May I remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ was arrested? May I remind you that His apostles were arrested, imprisoned, and some of them murdered? Let me put something down that you need to write in your mind and settle in your heart: you do not need to do anything wicked, vile, and wrong in order to be arrested and imprisoned.

You also need to know the difference between two Latin terms, mala in se and mala prohibita. Mala in se refers to that which is evil in and of itself, the violation of God's law. When God says, "Thou shalt not kill," murder is evil in and of itself. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Adultery is evil in and of itself. "Thou shalt not steal." Theft is evil in and of itself. Mala in se refers to things that are intrinsically evil.

Mala prohibita means something is bad only because it has been prohibited by man. "Thou shalt not drive over 55." If you drive 56, does that make you inherently evil, wicked, vile, and bad? No. "Do not walk on the grass." "Do not park here." What if you park there anyhow? I once saw a cartoon in which a pastor pointed to a handicapped parking spot and said, "We call this our miracle parking spot because most people who park here are instantly healed when their feet hit the ground." Does parking there, contrary to the sign, make someone inherently evil? No. Does speeding make someone inherently evil? No.

Ignoring mala prohibita law may sometimes be costly and expensive, but that does not necessarily make a person evil in and of himself. Mala prohibita does not have to be negative; it can also be positive: "Thou shalt do this" or "Thou shalt not do that." As long as man says it, it is mala prohibita, not mala in se.

The truth of the matter is that there have been people thrown in prison for righteousness' sake. In 2 Timothy 1:8, the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” He says, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner.

If need be, be a partaker of the afflictions; you might end up in prison as well. It is amazing how many people are ashamed of Christians who have been in prison for the faith's sake or for righteousness' sake.

In 2 Timothy 1:16–18, Paul says, “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, for he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain. But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me.” He continues, “The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. And in how many things he ministered to me in Ephesus, thou knowest very well.”

Notice that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul, even when Paul was in prison. When he was in Rome, he sought Paul very diligently and found him. In other words, he kept looking for Paul until he found him so that he could minister unto him. Paul said, “May the Lord have mercy upon him in that day.” I have friends who have been in prison for conscience' sake. I have friends who have been in prison for violating mala prohibita laws.

I've stayed in contact with them. I've visited them, written them, and talked to them on the phone when possible. I know one husband and wife who were in prison for, I think, three years. They were godly people and had not done one thing wrong. They were not wicked or bank robbers. It was a mala prohibita that put them in prison.

When they got out, they told me, “You are the only pastor that corresponded with us the whole time we were in.” Alice and I know another husband and wife who were in prison together and had done nothing wrong. There have been men in prison for their bold stand against tyranny and wickedness. Men have been arrested and put in prison for failing to take a license for their ministry—Lester Roloff and Everett Sileven.

If you do not know what a license is, look up the word “license” in Black's Law Dictionary or Bouvier's Law Dictionary. You will find this definition: “Permission from a competent authority to do that which otherwise would be illegal.” Really? In other words, I have to have someone's permission to preach and teach God's Word, and if I do not take their license, they arrest me and put me in prison. That is

what they did to Roloff and Sileven, and to a number of people. That is what they did to John Bunyan. John Bunyan stayed in prison fourteen years for failing to take a license.

I am simply saying that there are individuals who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake. Let me show you how far this has gone in our modern time. I read this years ago, and while preparing this message, it came back to me. I looked it up, found it again, and wanted to share it with you.

A certain church was looking for a pastor. The search committee, or pulpit committee, was reviewing resumes when they came across one particular resume. The chairman of the pulpit committee read it, and here is what the resume said: “I have many qualifications.”

I've been a preacher with much success and also had some success as a writer. Some say I'm a good organizer. I've been a leader most places I've been. I'm over 50 years of age. I've never preached in one place more than three years. In some places, I've left town after my work has caused riots and disturbances. I must admit, I've been in jail three or four times, but not because of any wrongdoing. My health is not too good, though I still get a great deal done. The churches I've preached in have been small, though located in several large cities. I've not got along too well with the religious leaders in towns where I've preached. In fact, some have threatened me and even attacked me physically. I'm not too good at keeping records. I've been known to forget those whom I've baptized. However, if you can use me, I shall do my best for you.

The chairman asked the committee, "What do you think? Shall we consider him?" The others were aghast. Said, "Hire an unhealthy, troublemaking, absent-minded ex-jailbird? Are you crazy? Who was this applicant anyway? Who has such colossal nerve?" The chairman glanced down to the bottom of the page and said, "It's signed by the Apostle Paul."

That's where we are. The Apostle Paul would have a difficult time finding a pastorate in today's politically correct world. So we should never, ever be ashamed of our persecuted brethren.

Fourthly, we should never be ashamed of our own persecution as long as it is for righteousness' sake. The apostle says, "Yea, and all

that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." So if you live godly in Christ Jesus, mark it down: in one way or the other, at one time or the other, you will be persecuted. First Peter 4:16 makes this exceedingly clear: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."

Never Ashamed of Personal Persecution

Now we should be ashamed if we're suffering from our own stupidity, wickedness, disobedience, and foolishness. But if we're suffering because of our stand for biblical truth and for the Lord Jesus Christ, he says we should never, ever be ashamed. If you go back in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, notice what our Lord says. We'll begin reading there with verse 10.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Look back at verse 10: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake,” not because of your own stupidity or foolishness. Verse 11 says, “Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely.” It is not that you earned it or deserved it. They were cursing and slandering you because of your stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is our reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before us.

Turn to 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 16. Peter tells us exactly what we are to do when we are wrongly persecuted, falsely slandered, and accused: “Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evildoers,” in other words, slandering and lying, “they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” Keep living a holy, godly, obedient life, and prove them to be liars.

We are not to go looking for persecution, hoping for it, or endeavoring to bring it upon ourselves. But when it comes for

righteousness' sake and obedience, we are not to be ashamed; we are to glorify God on that behalf.

Fifthly, we should never be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ—not merely of His gospel, but of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It does not matter how many people deny Him, denigrate Him, or despise Him. We should never be ashamed that He is our Lord, Savior, and Redeemer. We must confess Him, acknowledge Him, and proclaim Him. He is God incarnate.

Never Ashamed of Jesus Christ

He is the only mediator, the only go-between, and the only Savior. The Bible says in Romans 9:33, "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and a rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Christ is a stumbling stone, or a stumbling block. To some He is an offense, but He said that whosoever believes shall not be ashamed. Romans 10:11 says, "For the scripture says, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." If you are ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ, you should be ashamed. You should be shamed.

Hebrews 2:9 says, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." We are talking about Jesus Christ. Verse 11 says, "For both he that sanctifieth," that is Jesus Christ, "for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified," that is us, "are all of one." "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

To me, it is almost unbelievable that Jesus Christ is unashamed to call us brethren. I can assure you that I have done things, said things, and thought things that should cause me to blush and hang my head in shame, just like every other Christian. Yet the Scriptures say that, in light of our sins, our disobediences, our failures, and our helplessness, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Wow. He is not ashamed.

If He condescends in such grace and mercy, shall we, who are the recipients of that grace and mercy, to whom we are indebted for everything, be ashamed to confess Him as Lord? We should never, ever be ashamed of Jesus Christ. He is not only our Lord, Redeemer, Savior, mediator, and friend; He is our hope—our only hope.

Romans 5:5 says, "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Since we have hope in Jesus Christ, we should not be ashamed. So many today are ashamed of Jesus Christ. Isaac Watts, the great hymn writer, wrote:

"Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb, shall I fear to own his cause or blush to speak his name? Must I be carried through the skies on flowery beds of ease while others fought for the prize and sailed through bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend of grace to help me unto God? Sure, I must fight if I would reign. Increase my courage, Lord. I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by thy word."

If He is not ashamed to call us brethren, we should never be ashamed to call Him Lord.

Another thought that grasped my mind was this: before the foundation of the world, before anything was ever created, God sovereignly chose us to be His own. He knew every sin we would commit and everything we would ever do. Yet He set His love upon us, called us, redeemed us, and gave us to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ accepted us from the Father. Therefore, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. We should never, ever be ashamed to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Closing Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and that Jesus Christ is Lord. May we never be ashamed of Your gospel, Your provision, Your persecuted brethren, or our own persecution. May we certainly never be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us grace, holy boldness,

and confidence, we pray. In Thy blessed name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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