

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Overwhelmed

PART

6

TITLE

Help, I'm Ashamed

SCRIPTURE

Romans 7:15-25; Ephesians 1:7



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Well, it's so good to see you, Providence family. Hope you had a really good week, and that you've seen some just practical ways that God has been good to you. At least one of those ways that I've been really encouraged this week is to see His giftedness at work in so many of your lives as you serve this church and as you serve beyond. I just want you to know I'm so grateful for you. If you're new here, welcome. We're thrilled that you have joined us, and I hope this time will be really encouraging to you.

As you walked in, most of you if not all of you had this card, and it's called Unstrapped. What this is is our next sermon series, which will actually start next week. Most of us are totally aware that money is ... Well, it's a fascinating thing, and that it can serve us, but it can also strap us. When you think about, in our nation right now, is that the average American household spends \$1.26 for every dollar that they make, is we have a whole people that are frankly strapped with their finances, and yet God's word is so clear and gives such amazing, practical counsel.

For three weeks, what we want to do is to just look at what He says about our money. With that card, that can serve you in two ways. One is it'll help you pray this week, but two, I would ask you to be thinking about maybe a friend that you know who may need that kind of instruction, and maybe invite them with you on one of the next three weeks.

I'll just say up front, because you're wondering, this is not a fundraiser. There's no card that I'm going to hand out, okay? It's to help you by saying, "Hey, if God Almighty looked into my financial world and said, 'Here, here's some counsel,' what would He say?" I think it's going to be really pertinent and profitable for all of us.

But we are in a series. It's called Overwhelmed, and the fact is that every one of us in this room, from time to time, we have burdens. We carry burdens, and sometimes those burdens, they threaten to bury us and cause us to say, "I just feel overwhelmed with what's happening in life." In the last five weeks, we've looked at some pretty significant ones, and what we want to do right now is look at one more, and that's the idea of us feeling shame within our heart.

You don't have to even know what it means to know that you've felt it. Everyone in the room knows what it feels like to feel ashamed, and yet, God's word is also very clear to tell us what it is. Most of us though, what we think of shame is something like this guy right here. It's something to hide. There's some significant pain, and so it's natural that when we think of an image that really describes what we feel in other people, it's trying to cover up an embarrassment or a flaw.

In fact, what shame is is that humiliating feeling of having our guilt or our flaw or an embarrassment within our life made public. And every single one of us knows what that is like. Sometimes, we do something and we feel ashamed, and sometimes, something is done to us, and we can feel ashamed. But the fact is is the net result in the end is that we feel flawed. We feel like we've done something or something that has been done to us that actually leaves us feeling as though we don't belong, that we're not respectable, that we're not lovable.

And so it causes us to want to hide. It can come from a number of different ways. You can get a bad haircut, go home and go, “Oh my goodness, I don’t want anyone to see me like this.” And it’s the word “shame” that would actually be the word that we would say, “What is that feeling? There’s some flaw that I don’t want made public.” It also can be a shortcoming. My Senior year, Homecoming basketball game, I missed the game-winning shot. We lost by one point, had the opportunity to win by one point, and I missed.

The fact is, when the game was over, I went down to the locker room and I felt ashamed. I didn’t do anything wrong. I tried to make it. I made other shots in the game, but I didn’t make that one. For whatever reason, that one was the important one, and so I felt ashamed. For most of us though, in the room, it’s tied to something that we all know, and that’s sin.

If you have sinned in such a significant way, and you think, “You know, I just don’t want somebody to see that.” Maybe it’s adultery. Now, what’s interesting is, even with adultery, it can be the person who’s done the cheating and the person who’s been cheated on that can both feel the weight of shame. One says, “I committed adultery,” and the other one says, “I must not have been enough, for that person to commit adultery,” and both can feel ashamed.

There’s so many of us in this room right now that are weighted down, that are frankly just battling it. One of the most important things we can do, from the very beginning, is to understand what it is and what it’s not, because normally what we do is we confuse it with guilt. But guilt and shame are two different things. Guilt comes before shame. Guilt says to us, “I did a wretched thing,” but shame says to us, “I am a wretched thing.” Guilt says, “I broke the law of God when I lied.” Shame says, “I’m a liar.” See the difference?

Shame, what it does is it forms an identity around our guilt. It creates the who we are, and then it chews at our heart. It gnaws at our joy, and it fertilizes a thousand behaviors that are destructive to us, like anxiety, like self-loathing, like addiction and depression, anger and isolation.

What I want to do right now is I want to pray for us, and then we’re going to look at two different passages. The first is the second chapter of Genesis. You knew we were going to go there, so I just thought, “Well, let’s just read it.” And then second is Romans 7, to look at how a real man who is wrestling with guilt and shame in his own life teaches us to do the same. Before we read though, I want to pray for us, okay?

Father in Heaven, we love you. We need you, and I pray for those in the room right now who feel ashamed. Who pray frequently, “Oh God, so long as you forgive me, let it never be known by another person.” And for those who live in fear that, whatever has happened in their life, that it would be made known. I pray for those in the room who have formed an identity around either their guilt or something that’s embarrassing, that either they’ve done or it’s been done to them.

I pray for those who literally their joy is being chewed on by their own shame. And I pray today that you would use your Word to bring freedom and deliverance to people, to each one of us. We thank you for the good news that we find in the Bible. I pray, Father, that even as we have to look first at a little bad news, that you would help us to see just the strength of your son and what he makes available to us. Would you prepare our hearts even as we look at this idea of shame, to take the Lord's supper this morning? We pray all this in Christ's name, amen.

The second chapter of Genesis, we're going to start reading at verse 25. This is what it says. It says, "The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. The serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made, and he said to the woman, 'Did God actually say you shall not eat of any of the tree in the Garden?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the Garden, but God said 'You shall not eat the fruit of the tree that's in the midst of the Garden. Neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'

"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of it's fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. And then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the Garden. The Lord God called to the man and said, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the Garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.'"

What do we learn here that really forms a lot of perspective, but also hope when we're going through shame? First thing I want you to see here is this, is that God created us without shame. He created us without shame. The very first sentence of the Bible says, "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth." It goes on and says that "He created us in His image, and He did so, and there was no shame." In fact, the last word in chapter two, which is the summation of the creation event, the very last word is "unashamed."

There was nothing shameful in it. God did not intend shame to be experienced by us. Just like kings of old, whose image would be stamped on coins or on buildings so that they would be known, God stamped His very image upon our own lives, so that He would be known. You have to understand, we are the reflection of His honor. He is the honorable one, and yet, when David was sitting there thinking about the dignity of humanity before sin came into the world, what God did when He created man and woman without sin in His image. Psalms 8:5, he says, "You crowned him with glory and honor." Honor is the opposite of shame.

Honor says there's something honorable in this person that they should be seen, they should be looked at, they should be known, and shame says, "Let me hide. Something shouldn't be seen. Something shouldn't be known." But you have to understand, shame was utterly foreign to their experience on the earth. If it were possible for us right now to go back in time and to go into the Garden and see Adam and Eve, and say to them, "Hey Adam, you know that feeling of being humiliated when we think that our flaw is about to be known by other people?" He would say, "No, I really don't know what you're talking about."

There was no capacity within them to know anything that was shameful, and so these two individuals, not only did they live uncovered, they lived unashamed. Just imagine just for a moment, before we move on, just how startling this actually is. If you look at this piece of glass, and you see just how utterly transparent it is. Just imagine being like that piece of glass, so pure and transparent that you could grant anyone in the world unrestricted access to your entire life, which includes all of your thoughts, all of your deeds, all of your motives, everything about there, and there be absolutely no possibility to be embarrassed or to be ashamed.

This is how God created us to live. And I want you to know that, before we get to the bad news, I'm going to tell you the good news is that one day, this is what it'll be like in Heaven. There will be no shame once again. There will be no reason to hide in Heaven, from anything or anyone, because God created us without shame. Well, things fell apart. The second thing I want you to see is that shame moves into the heart of sinners.

Shame is like a squatter that finds a house and says, "This'll do, and I'm not leaving." It's like an unwanted house guest. Shame comes in, he sees sin, and says, "This'll be a house that I'm going to live in." You see, Isaiah chapter 14 says that Satan himself was an angel created by God that rebelled against God. And once he was thrown down from Heaven, he set his sights upon man.

Satan comes into the Garden, the first thing that he does is he questions God's word. This is what he does in our life. When something we don't like, we read within the scripture because it condemns us, or because it shines light into something in our life that we like very much, our first inclination is to say, "Is that really what it says? Is that really what it means? Can't we change what it means?"

And this is exactly what Satan does. He comes in and he says, "Did God actually say?" The second thing he does is he twists God's word. God had said, "You may surely eat of every tree of the Garden except this one, because this one is there to protect you." And Satan comes and he says, "Did God actually say you may not eat of any tree in the Garden?" He limits God's generosity. He highlights what God has withheld out of protection, and he uses it against God to say, "He's trying to limit your pleasure and your joy."

He twists God's word, and then what he does, after he twists God's word, is he rejects God's word. She says, "Oh, no no no, you don't understand. We can eat all of these. We just can't eat that one, because if we eat that one, we're going to die." "You shall not surely die." And then he goes on and he makes a promise, which is pretty stunning.

He says, “You know, you can have all that honor. You don’t have to have God. Oh, you’re created in the image of an honorable one. He’s the source, you’re the shadow, but you can be the source, and you don’t even need him anymore. You eat of this, you’ll know right and wrong. You’ll know good from evil. You’ll be wise. You can chart your course.” And that’s exactly what they did.

They sinned against God and broke fellowship, and suddenly, it says that their eyes were opened. Just like a little town that’s built underneath a dam that breaks, suddenly shame flooded into their hearts. For the first time, they knew insecurity. They knew what it felt like to be at risk. They felt vulnerable for the first time in their life, and so without any instruction whatsoever, they covered up by sewing together leaves to make clothes.

Proverbs 28:1 tells us something about shame within our heart, guilt. It says this. It says that, “The wicked flee when no one pursues.” What that means is that, when we have a guilty conscience, we assume every question is an accusation. Everybody who’s knocking on the door is coming for us. We just assume that someone’s pursuing us, and that’s what a guilty conscience does. It makes us feel like we have to hide.

Why do we have to hide? I think there’s two reasons. First is because our blemish feels unsafe around sinners. Think about this for a second. Before there’s any sin in the world, I could tell you something that was ... I guess there’s really no flaw, but you were perfectly safe. You could see everything about me and you wouldn’t go and shame me. You wouldn’t use it against me. You wouldn’t exploit it.

But now, the Bible tells us that every single one of us now has a sin nature, and so as a result of that, we feel like we have to hide, because we’re in the presence of people that aren’t perfectly safe, that aren’t perfectly unselfish, that may shame me with the information that I might let them know about me. And so we feel like that those dark areas of our life that we have to hide, and pray to God that no one finds out. If there’s ever a thought of it, then we have to live in perpetual fear, paranoia.

I think the second reason that we tend to hide is because our exposure feels inconsistent with guilt, literally our nakedness. That’s exposure, right? If you’re naked, you’re exposed. The fact is is that the innocence of nakedness does not feel consistent with something that’s missing within, and what’s missing is innocence. You notice today that every one of you are clothed, and so am I. What you may not know is, in doing so, every single one of us are confessing our sin before each other.

We’re saying that, were I not to be clothed right now, there would be an inconsistency with what I know, and I would feel ashamed in front of you. Clothes were meant to witness to the innocence that we’ve lost, and we’re all wearing them. And there was no going back. Their nature had be reconstructed entirely. What God created was an innocent nature, and now all of a sudden, it was a sinful nature. It was a fallen nature, and this nature has been passed to every single generation, every single individual, every single new baby.

They grow up, and you never have to teach them how to lie or to be selfish or to complain about anything. It all comes standard in every one of us, so we all have a nature, and then we all act on that nature. We all sin, and therefore we all have shame, and therefore, we all feel like we need to hide.

And this is not God's plan. And He loves us so much. He loves you so much. I want you to know, I know that some of you are embattled right now, and you just say, "It could never be known." And you're living, your entire identity as an individual is being shaped by something that has happened in your past, and you do not see a key that unlocks that prison.

I want to show you the key. It's the love of God that would do number three. Number three is this, is that God moves to remove shame from our hearts. He knew that we couldn't. God looked upon us, and He knew that we could not eradicate that shame by our good works or by running or by numbing ourself to it. It was always going to be there, and so God moved when we couldn't.

I just want you to remember something as we think about this. I've realized that many of you are a victim. In fact, every one of you are. You've all been sinned against, and therefore, at some level in the spectrum of severity, all of us are victims of somebody's hurt, somebody's sin. But you know, in the story of humanity that begins in the story in the Garden, there is literally only one true victim. There's only been one who's glory was not honored. There's only been one who's perfect justice was disrespected. There's only been one who's perfect word was disobeyed, and that's God Himself. Just imagine the grace of God that you see of what He does next.

The first thing that it says after all this takes place, it says that God came into the Garden. Did you know that He didn't have to? He could've never come again. The second thing we're told, it says that He calls to Adam and Eve. Did you know that He didn't have to? He could've never initiated a relationship with humanity again. There was nothing that pressed Him to do it other than His own love. The third thing that we find Him doing is actually enduring insult. He comes to the man, and He says, "What did you do? How did you know that you're naked? Why are you hiding?" And the man says to Him, "I heard the sound of you, and I was afraid."

This is the first time humanity, that was created in order to display His honor, has said, "You make me feel jeopardized. You make me feel unsafe. You came, and now I have to hide." Listen, our entire life and soul and everything about us is actually intended to be a mirror that people look at that reflects to the Honorable One, and that honor reflects through His image to other people. And we said, "You make me uncomfortable." And He endured it, but He didn't have to.

You keep going, and He says, “There’s going to be consequences for this,” and while He’s throwing out the consequences, we get to verse 15. The fourth thing we see God doing is He makes a promise, a promise to rescue us. He says, “I’m going to put enmity between you and the woman.” He’s speaking to Satan here. “In between your offspring and her offspring, and he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.”

This is a promise that Paul picks up in the book of Galatians in chapter four, and what he says there is this: God Almighty, at this point in time, He promised that He was going to send a rescuer, and that rescuer would be born of a woman. And not only that, but once this rescuer grew up, that Satan would strike at his heel, but he would crush Satan’s head. He would destroy evil one day, and he would bring those who trust him back into a relationship with God Almighty.

And then to show us the kind of rescue that he would actually undergo, in verse 21, it says that God, He looked at them clothed, and he didn’t say, “Take those off.” No, He gave them better clothes. It says that He took skins, and so something had to die in order of them to have better clothes. This was pointing to a sacrifice that would come, that in Galatians 4:4, it says, “In the fullness of time, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, in order to redeem us, to reconcile us back into a relationship with Him.” And this is precisely what God did.

Jesus Christ literally is the only person in the history of the world that, if you ask him while he was on the earth, “Have you ever had that feeling, that emotional humiliation of your flaw being put on full display,” he would say, “No, I don’t. I don’t know what that’s like.” He’s never known guilt at this point in time. There’s no shame in his life. There’s no flaw. There’s no insecurity.

But do you know what the Bible says? It says that he willingly allowed himself, after living without any sin whatsoever, to be falsely condemned and stripped of his clothes, to be scourged and spat upon, and beaten and crowned with thorns. And then Jesus was brought to Golgotha, and he fell down, probably in a heap of just exhaustion and blood, upon a cross.

There the Bible tells us something that has to do with our shame. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin.” That doesn’t mean that Jesus held our sin in his hands when he went to the cross. It says that he held our sin in his heart. He became sin. For the first time, he now knew shame. He knew what it felt like to want to hide, and he couldn’t hide.

The Bible says, at this very moment, that Jesus Christ felt the hammers crashing down upon the nails that were piercing his hands and feet, and then he was hoisted up into the air for all to see. At that very moment, there was one who said, “I cannot look upon you.” And that was God the Father. God the Father turned away as if to say, “Jesus, you are now shameful to Me.”

Think about this for a second. He's saying, "I see in you the totality of all human rebellion, all pride, all immorality, all deceit, all adultery, all taking of innocent life, all injustice, all idolatry, and I hate what I see. And so drink this cup of My wrath." Friends, this happened on this earth. Some of you are sitting here right now, embroiled in shame. I want you to know, Jesus has already felt all of that shame, all of it.

He's already taken all of our sin. God Almighty said, "I can't look at you anymore, for you are shameful to Me." And do you know why He did it? Hebrews 12:2 says, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." That word "despising" means, "to make less of." In other words, Jesus heaped up this enormous mountain of shame, and then he looked at it and he says, "This side is human shame. It's all going to come upon me. And this side is the joy that is set before me to enjoy a relationship with them forever."

It says that he despised the weight of this shame, gladly took it upon himself so that we could be with him forever. Don't you see? You don't have to hold your shame anymore, because he did. He's already died for it. He's already taken it. And do you know what he said he did? Three days later, he rose from the dead, and then he gave us a promise, and he says, "I'll tell you what, you know all that righteousness? All that righteousness that I live with, I want to give it to you if you'll believe in me."

II Corinthians, chapter five, the end of that verse is this: "For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Now friends, this is how you fight shame. You remember that God did not create us for it, and yet, we also remember that our sin rightly brings it to us, and we can't do anything to get rid of it, and so God acted on our behalf.

He was victorious, and He accomplished the taking of our shame from us. How do we live in light of this? There was a man named Paul, and Paul wrote in Romans chapter six, he says, "Look, we have a new life in Jesus Christ." But then he wants to remind us that we're still going to battle with sin, and therefore, we're still going to battle with the guilt, and therefore, we're still going to feel shame.

And so what he does is he applies what he's learned from God, and he applies these very principles to us. He says, "Now, this is how you fight shame." Notice what he says, Romans 7:12, he says, "The law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Now, did that which is good then bring death to me? By no means. It was sin producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment, might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin, for I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with a law that is good.

“So now it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me, for I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. For I have this desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now, if I do not do what I want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.” Have you ever felt that?

“For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members, another law waging war against the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Oh thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord so that I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

And so the apostle Paul teaches us at least four things, and these are the applications here. If you’re wrestling with shame, what do you do? The first thing is this, is let’s confess the accuracy of God’s word. The most natural thing to do when we feel guilty is to try to remove the light that’s shining upon our darkness. This is why so many people try to redefine the Bible when the Bible says that we’re wrong.

You see, the first temptation is to resent the light when it comes to us and it says, “You’re guilty.” This is exactly what Paul says in verse seven. He says, “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? Well, but no means. Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.” So then he says in verse 12, he goes, “Look, the law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” In verse 14, he calls the law spiritual. In verse 16, he says, “I agree with the law that it’s good,” and in verse 21, he says, “I delight in the law.”

This is the same law that’s causing him to feel guilty. Why is he doing that? This is why. Because he’s learned the secret, that when we repent of our sin, that there is such relief and joy that only God can bring, and so Paul is thanking God for the very instrument that brings him conviction, because that conviction leads him to repentance, and that repentance leads him back to healing and a right relationship with God.

My point is simply this. When you feel guilty, don’t blame the Bible. When you feel guilty, don’t stand over the Bible as the one who’s supposed to evaluate it. Sit under the Bible and let it evaluate you. Let’s confess to the accuracy of His word, even when that word tells us that we’ve done something that’s wrong.

The second thing is this, is let’s cover our shame with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We have to cover our shame. You see, when we feel ashamed, the most instinctive thing that we do is to find cover, and most of us, what we do is we find cover in things that we can achieve. We really put ourselves out there in terms of sports and athletics, or perhaps it’s work or making money, or perhaps it’s relationships, or perhaps it’s morality and church and religion.

What we do is this, is that we know we have something to hide, and so we have to find a bush. We want it to be a bush that, if we excel in, that people will see what we're excelling in instead of the area of our shame, instead of our embarrassment, instead of our insecurity and our flaw. The more we excel in these things, the less naked we feel.

The problem is this. Every bush loses its leaves. If you're propping up your insecurity over your shame on the basis of your ability to play basketball, one day, you're not going to be able to play basketball again. This is why, for some people, it's very very difficult to actually retire, when everyone in the world knows they should. It's because this is the one thing I have going that people will look at instead of my flaw.

But friends, there is a better covering. One of the things you know is, not only does every bush lose its leaves, but all the rest of us look at that bush, and it's see-through. That's why when you see a kid, he's 13 or 14 years old and he's really insecure, and yet he puts on this front like he knows everything. He's just self-confident, and everyone else goes, "Wow, look how insecure he must be." Everyone else can see through your bush.

There's only one garment, there's only one bush that you can hide behind, and it's the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Revelation, chapter three, says it this way. He says, "I counsel you to buy white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen." This is a metaphor. He's talking about trusting in Jesus Christ.

Friends, if you have never trusted in Jesus Christ, I want you to know that you can trust him today by admitting that you're a sinner, by believing in him and confessing him as the Lord of your life. And the Bible says that he'll take away all your sin. He will give you his righteousness as a garment to cover your shame. This is what's available, and it's available for you today.

The third thing I want you to see that he tells us to do is to confess our sin to one another. This seems counter-intuitive, right? We're like, "Wait a minute, I thought we were supposed to be hiding all this? Now you want me to tell somebody." This is the mystery ultimately of the Bible is that Satan himself is the one who wants you to keep things to yourself. He's the one who wants you to hold on to it and assume that everyone is going to run over you if they find out.

But have you noticed what Romans 7 is? It's the confession of sin to other believers. He's telling us, "Look, you know what? I keep doing things that I've said I'm never going to do again, that I don't want to do again, and then there's some things I said I need to start doing that, and I haven't done it yet." He knows guilt, and therefore, he knows shame, which is why he says, "Wretched man ..." Not that, "I've done wretched things." He says, "I am a wretched thing."

And yet, in the end of all of this, what does he do? He confesses all of it to people. He knows that he cannot outrun his shame, because he can't outrun his heart, so he attacks his shame by confessing it to other Christians. Why? One reason, James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed." I encourage to you find one trusted, mature Christian, if you're battling shame, tell them what you're ashamed about.

Let them remind you of God's forgiveness over your life. Let them pray for you. It's like an ax. It cuts down that tree. It's so important for us to live in community, and the last thing I this, is let's believe who God says we are. The Bible says that God says you're not guilty, and yet we still feel guilty, and so we need more good news, don't we?

Fortunately, God, He just loves to give us more good news. He tells us of a prodigal son, who went away from his father and he squandered all his wealth, and he lived in sin, and then he ran out of everything. He became bankrupt. He had no hope, and so he went home. His dad runs out, hugs his neck, and this was supposed to be symbolic of what God does for you and I. He goes and he says, "Give me a robe and give me a ring and give me sandals." He takes off all of that, all the rags and all the shame, and he says, "I want you to wear these as you come home."

God loves to minimize our shame. God loves to clothe us with honor, and the way He does is He declares a new identity over us that's not built on our previous guilt, but it's built on His present honor. That's why He says to us, "In Christ, you are holy. In Christ, you are ... There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. In Christ, you are forgiven. In Christ, you're more than a conqueror." In Christ, He says you are holy and blameless before Him.

He's telling us a new identity, and the question is this: Are we going to believe it? Before we take the Lord's supper, let me say one more thing for those embattled in shame. Let me urge you this morning to stop looking at yourself, and begin looking at Jesus Christ, who for the joy set before him, endured all of that, all the pain. He despised the shame in order to bring you to Him.

One way that he tells us to remember all this is the Lord's supper, so for those who'll be serving us, if you want to go ahead and head to the back as you prepare those elements. The Bible tells us that these two elements, the bread and the cup is that when we take them, what we're doing is we're confessing our need of them, but we're also proclaiming to one another that we believe, and that this is the hope of our life.

That without Jesus Christ, we should be ashamed, and so for those of you in the room who've never trusted Christ, God's word actually tells you to let it pass. Because to take it is to confess to other people that you believe it and you treasure it. And so we would just say let it pass, but for those of you who have trusted in Jesus Christ, we welcome you to this table.

Let me pray for us. Father in Heaven, we thank you for your love for us. I pray that you would search our hearts now, and the guilt that is there that we have not confessed, would you help us to see it by the truthfulness and the accuracy of your word, so that we can confess our sin and we can find healing and forgiveness in your son. We thank you for what you've made available, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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