

For I am not ashamed of the Good News of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. For in it is revealed God's righteousness from faith to faith. As it is written, "But the righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)

Not ashamed of the Gospel.

This infers that there must have been pressure to feel shame for believing the gospel.

Shame has to do with personal sense of worth, value and secure identity.

How does the good news relate to shame?

*I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and **white garments**, that you may clothe yourself, and **that the shame** of your nakedness may **not be revealed**; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. (Revelation 3:18)*

Receive white raiment that the **shame** of your **nakedness** not be seen.

*They were **both naked**, the man and his wife, and were **not ashamed**. (Genesis 2:25)*

*Yahweh God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" The man said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and **I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself**." (Genesis 3:9-10)*

Shame came into the human condition only after choosing to embrace lies about God, and it became **connected to nakedness**. Nakedness really represents **willing vulnerability**.

Willing vulnerability is an **essential ingredient** of living in the Kingdom of love and grace.

Shame is the **precursor to fear** which is the **primary fuel** that drives the **sin cycle**.

Shame is a **sense of loss of worth**, value, identity.

One reaction to attempt to deal with shame is pride. Yet **pride is not the opposite of shame** but rather a **coverup of shame**, attempting to mask inner desperate feelings emptiness, rejection and worthlessness.

Shame and pride are actually **opposite ends of the same problem**. They are both effects of **sourcing worth and identity** from sources **other than God**. Any other source will always be **devoid of inherent capacity** to provide these necessary elements for us.

Because the Gospel is implied to be reason for shame, Paul **refuses to allow shame to inhibit** him from **openly aligning** himself with this message. He boldly asserts that the good news is **nothing less than a revelation of God's righteousness**, and that is nothing to ever feel ashamed about.

So what does this say to us? Maybe that wherever we see shame the Gospel will be nearby.

It is the **father of lies** who tempts us to **associate shame with the gospel**.

Paul declares that the gospel, the good news, is **not about losing** valuable sources of identity and worth, but is just the opposite. The gospel is the **restorative lifeline** by which the **power of God** can **deal with the problem of sin**. The **gospel disarms the fears** that cause us to pull back from living in the freedom of uninhibited love and willing vulnerability.

Pride involves attempting to acquire a sense of worth, honor and identity superficially. It is no surprise then that **legalism fosters both pride and shame**.

There are **only two religions** in existence: **legalism** and selfless, **reflected love** sourced from heaven. Legalism has many forms that can be contradictory, but without the security of knowing at the heart level that **we are loved regardless** of our condition, our past or our failures and/or ‘successes,’ we feel compelled to **measure ourselves among ourselves**. But we will never find authentic peace or joy.

The true **Gospel cuts straight to the core** problem with sin. It does **not attempt to supplement our deficiencies** by providing assistance to be **good enough to offset** our ‘badness’ so God will accept and save us. Rather the true **Gospel is the power of God** resulting in salvation because that power is **inherent** in the **truth of God’s kind of righteousness**. By simply **believing and consenting** for God’s Spirit to take up residence inside our heart and allowing His Spirit to be in control of our daily lives **instead of clinging to control** over our lives, we are **restored to our original design** to live as brilliant **reflectors** of God’s character of love, righteousness, joy, peace and truth.

This is the white garment Jesus offers for us to buy from Him that dissolves all our shame. This Gospel does **not hide our nakedness** as something to be ashamed of, causing us to hide in fear. The Gospel clothing is the **original glory** highlighting our naked design to **be lovers just like God, no longer afraid** of anyone because the **lies** that made us afraid **have evaporated** in light of God’s love.

Religion dependent on external solutions to a version of sin measured by external markers, offers myriads of formulas to mitigate the symptoms of shame, but to no avail. **External religion** is riddled with **fear as its primary motivation** and thus **prevents us** from returning to our **original design** of living in **willing vulnerability** because we know our identity and **worth is secure in God**.

Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:2-3)

The **Gospel** of Christ is the **revelation of God’s goodness**, righteousness, a pure light with no darkness whatsoever in Him at all. God has nothing to do with ideas that make us afraid of Him because they all originate with the enemy of God. **God is not like what we have imagined** Him to be, but is always faithful, always better – scandalously better than we dare imagine or think unless we believe the gospel.

The **gospel is anti-shame**, and by extension is the **solution for pride** as well, given that pride is just a **different manifestation of shame**.

The **gospel directs** us to **believe in the goodness** of God from the **heart** so that His goodness, **kindness, graciousness, mercy** and compassion can once again **gain access** to flow into, through and out of us as **transparent conduits for His glory**.

When we choose to disesteem or **think less of God than how Jesus reveals** His heart to be towards every one of us, we **increase a resistance to love** in our heart that acts as a **hardening agent** inhibiting our capacity to repent and embrace truth that sets us free.

don’t harden your hearts, as in the provocation, like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness,

(Hebrews 3:8)

*Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you **an evil heart of unbelief**, in **falling away from the living God**; but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called "today;" lest any one of you be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**. For we have **become partakers of Christ**, if we **hold fast** the beginning of our **confidence** firm to the end: while it is said, "Today if you will hear his voice, **don't harden your hearts**, as in the rebellion." (Hebrews 3:12-15)*

*To whom did he swear that **they wouldn't enter into his rest**, but to those who were **disobedient**? We see that they were **not able to enter in because of unbelief**. (Hebrews 3:18-19)*

We enter His rest by choosing to believe God is love, that we are unconditionally loved by God directly, that nothing can separate us from His relentless love that emanating from His throne.

Pride is the external **sourcing of identity** from sources other than the God we are meant to image.

*Woe to the **crown of pride** of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fertile valley of those who are overcome with wine! (Isaiah 28:1)*

*Woe to **that wreath, the pride** of Ephraim's drunkards, to **the fading flower**, his glorious **beauty**, set on the head of a fertile valley-- to that city, the pride of those **laid low by wine**! (Isaiah 28:1 NIV)*

This fading **flowery wreath of pride** is identified in this chapter as a **dependence on being right** forged by **proof-text religion**. This **obsession with being right**, proving truth with organizing quotations **to arrive at conclusions we believe** will get us into **good standing** with God, is in **opposition** to the message of the **true Gospel** sent to us through God's only true Son.

God contrasts this to the **true gospel**, a **reliance on Yahweh** of heaven's armies **as our crown of glory**, our diadem of beauty.

*In that day, **Yahweh** of Armies will **become a crown of glory**, and a diadem of beauty, **to the residue of his people**; and a **spirit of justice** to him who sits in judgment, and **strength** to those who turn back the battle at the gate. (Isaiah 28:5-6)*

In this compelling chapter the **gospel is identified** in ways that **counter the intoxicating opinions and traditions** handed down from our forebears. An **external religion** is like a **wilting victory wreath of flowers**, as its source is an **intoxicating system of head knowledge**.

At the **center** of this revealing **chapter** we find the sharp **contrast between a proof-text religion** and the **invitation of the Gospel** of Jesus Christ to come to Him and **find real rest and refreshing**. This refreshing can only be experienced through **humble willingness to be vulnerable**, honest, transparent and teachable, **laying aside** our strong opinions, prejudices and **doctrinal arrogance** so we may **grow up into the maturity** that Christ completed while living as a fellow human among us.

*Whom will he teach knowledge? To whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? For **it is precept on precept, precept on precept; line on line,***

*line on line; **here a little, there a little.***

*But he will speak to this nation with **stammering lips and in another language**; to whom he said, "**This is the resting place.** Give rest to weary;" and "**This is the refreshing;**" yet **they would not hear.***

*Therefore **the word of Yahweh will be to them precept on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, **fall backward, be broken, be snared, and be taken.*****

*Therefore **hear the word of Yahweh, you scoffers, that rule this people in Jerusalem:** (Isaiah 28:9-14)*

The gospel is indeed **good news**, but it can also **feel foreign** and even **sound uncertain like it is stammering** and **not solid enough** to depend on when all hell breaks loose. But the truth is that the **gospel** of Jesus Christ is a **restoration to the original intimacy** with God that was lost after our first parents **chose to distrust what God said** rather than rest in simple trust in His words.

We are **invited to live as reflectors of His glory** instead of **imagining we have to be right**, be good enough, achieve merits to **prove we are right**. He invites us to **turn away** from our dependence on knowledge-based, **information-heavy religion** that we **imagine can insulate us** against coming catastrophe, and to instead **embrace the restful, refreshing heart intimacy** that **might feel foreign or even suspicious** to our familiar way of thinking and living.

*Or do you **despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and patience**, not knowing that the **goodness of God leads you to repentance?** But according to your **hardness and unrepentant heart** you are **treasuring up for yourself wrath** in the day of wrath, **revelation**, and of the **righteous judgment of God**; (Romans 2:4-5)*

*For we who have believed do enter into that rest, even as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, they will not enter into my rest;" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has said this somewhere about the seventh day, "**God rested on the seventh day from all his works;**" and in this place again, "They will not enter into my rest."*

*Seeing therefore it remains that some should enter therein, and they to whom the good news was before preached **failed to enter in because of disobedience**, he again defines a certain day, today, saying through David so long a time afterward (just as has been said), "Today if you will hear **his voice, don't harden your hearts.**" For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day.*

*There remains therefore a **Sabbath rest for the people of God**. For he who has entered into his rest has himself also **rested from his works, as God did from his**. Let us therefore **give diligence to enter into that rest**, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:3-11)*