

*Therefore let us also, seeing we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and **the sin which so easily entangles us**, and let us **run with patience** the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who **for the joy** that was set before him endured the cross, **despising shame**, and **has sat down** at the right hand of the throne of God. For **consider him** who has endured **such contradiction of sinners against himself**, that you don't grow **weary, fainting in your souls**. (Hebrews 12:1-3)*

What is shame?

How did Jesus relate to shame? He **countermanded it with joy!**

Why did Jesus **despise** it?

What was the contradiction of sinners against Jesus?

I want to propose that **shame itself is the sin** that so easily entangles us, **hobbling us** from **running** the race, seeking to defeat us before we even get very far. **Shame is a contradiction of the gospel**, for the essence of shame contradicts everything experienced in the presence of Jesus.

Shame can be the **cause of much of our weariness**. Shame is a taproot that drains our spirit, causing us to **feel faint**, discouraged, depressed and hopeless. **Shame steals our joy**, for joy is the **strength that can energize us**. No wonder we feel faint so much of the time. **Without joy life seems pointless** and a burden. This is the **diabolical work of shame**. No wonder [Jesus despises it](#).

Shame erodes and weakens **faith**. This passage in Hebrews follows an entire chapter of examples of **what faith looks like** in the lives of real people in the past who **struggled against the lies of shame** in their lives, through **persistent contradictions** that often caused them to malfunction, yet they kept coming back **clinging to trust in God** instead of giving up. The question this passage addresses is, **where did this hope and faith come from** that we see in the lives of so many throughout history? How do I find faith to overcome shame like those people? **How can I disempower the shame** that feels so real and present in my life?

God sent His Son Jesus to confront and **expose the lie of shame** directly. But more importantly, Jesus provides and demonstrates the power of the **antidote most effective** to defeat and **disarm shame** in our lives. That antidote is found in the **same passage** we just read, the choice to **focus on joy** instead of what others are doing to us or on our own feelings. This is what we need to keep uppermost in our thinking as we look more deeply into this issue in Scripture and in our own lives.

Sinners believe and **practice shame** to manipulate and control others as they **seek to ascend** higher on **the social ladder**. Sinners sympathize with the assertions of **shame** which is **rooted in the essence of hierarchy** – who is **more important**, and **who can be blamed** for our problems.

The way **shame receives its power** is by **our belief in and participation** with the counterfeit system of **artificial value**. Authority comes from **our will** and who we choose to follow. **Authority is granted** as **we present ourselves**, our mind and our bodies to serve whoever we **choose to allow to define us**. The world relies on the system that defines each person's identity based on the **shame/pride scale**. This is called **judging** which is something Jesus instructs us to avoid. **Shame and blame lie at the center** of the kingdom of darkness, and this system of **artificial value and identity** is what Jesus came to expose, condemn and replace. [Jesus despises shame](#).

*Don't you know that **to whom you present yourselves** as servants to obedience, **his servants you are** whom you obey; whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)*

Throughout this series I believe we are going to make some surprising discoveries. I am starting to consider that the word ***sin*** itself can almost be **synonymous** with the word ***shame***. If we **substituted** the word ***shame*** in place of ***sin*** in various passages, especially in the writings of Paul, we might capture insights that would help clarify things that have long confused us. We need to also learn the **key difference** between **shame and guilt**, and **why Jesus despises shame so much**.

What is starting to emerge in my understanding are the **close connections** between **shame, guilt and fear** as well as the **antidotes needed** to heal us from these diseases. But what is also emerging is the **issue of judgment** and about **who is judging who**. Most of our lives we have **assumed that God is the judge**, so we are supposed to feel motivated to **get our lives in order** so as to be able to pass His judgment so we can **escape being punished**. Yet in reality what I am learning is that **it is we who have been doing the judging** all along. Because we are mirrors designed to **reflect whatever we believe** about God, **our judgmental picture of God** has led us to assume that God must be judgmental because we are too. In the end, this view **led humanity to treat God** in the human form of Christ the way we **imagine He intends to treat us** – with **abuse and shame and humiliation and intense pain as punishment** in order to settle the score and **balance the scales** of our false concepts of justice.

*You give your mouth to evil. Your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother. You slander your own mother's son. You have done these things, and I kept silent. **You thought that the 'I AM' was just like you.** I will rebuke you, and accuse you in front of your eyes. (Psalms 50:19-21)*

When did this symptom first appear, our **assuming that God treats us** the way we imagine He does, with **shame, blame and threatening punishment**? Where did this **shame first show up**?

*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.**" God said, "**Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?**" The man said, "**The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.**" (Genesis 3:9-12)*

*Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will **join with his wife**, and they will **be one flesh**. They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were **not ashamed**. (Genesis 2:24-25)*

*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)*

What is the core problem that must be addressed here? Is it the **nakedness** or is it the **shame**?

According to our **original design and condition**, **nakedness was never a problem** at all but was rather **part of the at-one-ment** experience of our first parents before they became infected with the **big Lie** about **who they were** and **how God felt** about them. Now is it starting to become more clear as to **why Jesus despises the shame** and why His focus was entirely on the joy set before Him?

Jesus defines **true judgment** as what happens when the **light of truth comes** and **exposes** whatever is being covered up by darkness. What this tells us is that **true judgment involves our salvation, rescue from our mental prison** of darkness, despair, depression and foreboding. God's **judgment is part of the antidote** to counteract and **neutralize the power of shame** that **inhibits us from returning** to the light, for the light of God's love and **truth is not the enemy to fear** but rather the **true enemy** is the **one who insinuated** that our **nakedness is shameful** and something we **should avoid** at all cost. The **real enemy** is the one who **instilled into our psyche** that **nakedness is shameful**, causing us to live with **perpetual fear of being vulnerable** because it invites exploitation. It is the enemy who **exploited our vulnerability**, something that God gifted us with as **our entry point** through which we are designed to experience deep **joy** and **ecstasy** and enjoy **pleasure** in God's presence and with each other.

Who told you that you were naked?

When God came to the Garden for His daily visit with His beloved children, **His presence of light**, love and truth **always brought heavenly judgment**, for judgment means **discerning what is true, lovely, useful, helpful, life-giving and life-enriching**. Does this sound familiar? This is natural when **living in God's presence**, for it is the fruit of His Spirit which is all about truth, love and freedom.

*But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23)

*For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for **the fruit of the Spirit** is in all **goodness and righteousness and truth**, proving what is **well pleasing** to the Lord.* (Ephesians 5:8-10)

*I will **come near to you to judgment**...* (Malachi 3:5)

*He who does the truth **comes to the light**, that his **works may be revealed**, that they have been **done in God**.* (John 3:21)

We may not be used to thinking about judgment in these terms, yet the truth is that the **judgment that God brings** is always out of a sincere and **intense desire** for **only our good**, never anything less.

*For I know **the thoughts that I think toward you**, says Yahweh, thoughts of **peace**, and **not of evil**, to **give you hope** in your latter end. You shall call on me, and you shall go and pray to me, and **I will listen** to you. You shall **seek me, and find me**, when you shall search for me **with all your heart**.* (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

As we **choose to embrace this truth** about God's disposition towards us, **our fears** about God and His judgment, along with our **shame rooted in lies** we have assumed about Him can be **dissipated and replaced** with **boldness** to come into His presence to find **liberty from all the lies** that have made us afraid and **terrified of being exposed**. As we **believe that God is for us and not against us**, the power of **shame** and its **tenacious grip on our psyche** is **disarmed** so that we may **enter into the joy** of freedom from sin and all its debilitating effects.

What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)

...Enter into the joy of your lord. (Matthew 25:21,23)

It is the presence and **power of joy** that is the **most effective antidote** to neutralize the fear and shame that has infected our psyche ever since our first parents **ran in terror and shame** from the presence of their loving Creator who had come to **only share His joy** with them.

This is where **our kind of judgment contradicts God's** kind of judgment. No sooner had our parents indulged in eating from the Tree of Knowledge of both Good and Evil than **distorted beliefs** about how God felt toward them **commandeered their imagination**. This resulted in feelings of shame and terror of God's presence that drove them to hide from Him rather than to welcome His presence with joy. With their hearts now violated by all sorts of lies multiplying exponentially as they reasoned things out in the flesh, they judged God, **presuming that His warning** about what would happen as a result of eating from that Tree was **really a threat** that He intended to **punish them by death** for disobeying His command and **offending Him**. They gave **more credibility to their own feelings** of shame and terror over what they had previously experienced of God's passionate love for them, so **all the memory** of His trustworthiness, compassion and affection for them **dissipated, displaced by suspicion**, defensiveness, denial and even **accusations** that **He was the real cause** of their problems. Thus they **judged God** as untrustworthy, dangerous, threatening and demanding payment. God had suddenly **morphed into Baal** in their minds, so their hearts could **no longer believe** in His unconditional love.

Now is it making even **more sense why Jesus despises the shame** so intensely? It is the **lies of shame** instilled into the psyche of the entire human race that has **robbed God of the intimacy** we were intended to enjoy with Him. **His own offspring**, so carefully **designed to thrive in joy** when in His presence, now were **immune to His affections** and advances toward them. Suddenly the ones **designed for deepest intimacy** were **running in terror** from His presence. All this as a result of their believing slander by Satan. **No wonder He despises the shame**, for **shame is the cause** why God's plans, desires and **dreams for us have been thwarted**, denied and stolen.

But God does not give up, and He is **determined to do whatever it takes to win back our trust** in His heart, **no matter how long** or how **expensive** a journey that requires. **Shame will not have the last word**, and God will **stop at nothing to earn our trust**, to offer restoration and healing for the damage in our hearts and to **woo us back into that intimacy of heart** for which we were designed and for which **He longs for Himself with intense jealousy**.

Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who lives in us yearns jealously"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Be subject therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.... (James 4:5-8)

*looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who **for the joy** that was set before him endured the cross, **despising shame**, and **has sat down** at the right hand of the throne of God. For **consider him** who has endured **such contradiction of sinners against himself**, that you don't grow **weary, fainting in your souls**.* (Hebrews 12:2-3)