

The Shame of the Cross

Hebrews 12:1, 2

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. *The Text in Context--*

1. Hebrews 12:1-6 the concluding exhortation of Paul after the great discourse on faith in Hebrews 10:35-11:40.
2. Paul exhorting Hebrew Christian not to forsake their faith, but to be patient and believe to the saving of the soul.
3. Verses one through three follow after numerous examples of persevering faith; each example was of a believer who endured, some even to death, without receiving the full measure of what God had promised them.
4. Yet, none of these suffered as did the Christ, nor had they yet begun to suffer as the noble men of faith and their Christ. Paul's exhortation is to consider their example, purge themselves of sin and faint not under their present trials remembering that they too are God's children.

B. *An Oxymoronic Statement--*

1. Paul writes a phrase that at first glance is ironic and seemingly self-contradictory; he says that Jesus, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."
 - a. How could any joy to be had in enduring crucifixion? It was a painful and torturous death which Christ was about to experience.
 - b. We could understand Jesus having revulsion, or contempt for the crucifixion and those that brought Him to it; yet, it was not this that Jesus scorned but the shame of it.
 - c. How could that which Jesus scorned be the occasion of joy for Him?

II. DISCUSSION:

A. *What Was "the Shame of the Cross" Which Jesus Despised?*

1. What does the word "shame" mean?
 - a. Strong defines "shame" (aischune) in this text to mean, "shame or disgrace (abstractly or concretely):--dishonesty, shame."
 - b. Thayer supplies the following: "ignominy; visited upon the wicked; which ought to arise from guilt." (This definition assigned to Hebrews 12:2.)
 - c. Of "shame" Webster says: "a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming or impropriety; the susceptibility to such an emotion <have you no shame?>; a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute: ignominy <the shame of being arrested>; something that brings censure or reproach; also: something to be regretted; a cause of feeling shame."
 - (1) Certainly not emotion caused by consciousness of guilt (I Peter 2:22; Hebrews 7:26).
 - (2) Certainly not the susceptibility to such an emotion (John 8:46).
 - (3) Certainly not anything that could bring censure (cf. Acts 5:28).
 - (4) Certainly not something to be regretted (cf. text and Philippians 2:5-6).
 - (5) What Jesus despised was the humiliation and ignominy associated with His death on the cross.
 2. What shame was there placed upon Christ?
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- a. There was a shameful accusation brought against him.
 - (1) The High Priest accused Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:64, 65; Mark 14:63, 64; Luke 22:71).
 - (2) Jesus was accused of insurrection against the Roman government (Luke 23:1-5; John 18:30).
- b. He experienced the shameful mockery of infidels and hypocrites.
 - (1) The priests and elders blasphemed (Matthew 26:67, 68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:53-65).
 - (2) The Roman soldiers mocked him (Mark 15:16-20; Luke 23:11).
 - (3) His brethren railed against him (Matthew 26:74; 27:25, 39-44; Mark 15:14; Luke 23:18-23; John 19:15, 26).
- c. Jesus was executed in the shameful manner reserved for murderers, thieves, and insurrectionists (John 19:17, 18; Luke 23:32, 33; Mark 15:27, 28; Matthew 27:38).
- d. His being numbered with the transgressors and dieing for the ungodly was shameful (Mark 15:28; Romans 5:6-8; Isaiah 53:1-3).
- e. The experience of death was shameful unto one who was eternal (Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 5:6-11; Acts 2:22-24).
- f. The fact that he was made sin for us; that is, He was treated as if He were a sinner. This was certainly shameful (II Corinthians 5:21; Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46; Isaiah 53:7-10).

B. How Was It That Jesus Despised the Shame of the Cross?

1. The word "despise" has several possible significations, being:
 - a. "To look down upon as hateful; to scorn." For example: "She despised him because he had treated her so cruelly."
 - b. "To look down on with contempt or aversion" or "to regard as negligible, worthless or distasteful, to regard as beneath ones notice and unworthy of consideration or interest."
 - c. Joseph Henry Thayer defines KATAPHRONEO as: "to condemn, despise, disdain, think little or nothing of."
 - (1) Matthew 6:24, Here Jesus metaphorically describes the consequences of a divided loyalty between spiritual things and carnal things. The servant cannot serve two masters without favoring one above another (cf. Luke 15:13).
 - (2) Matthew 18:10, here despite is the placing of a stumbling block in a disciple's way. Thus, these considered as nothing, the worth of the Lord's disciples.
 - (3) Romans 2:4, here Paul addresses believing Jews who were judging believing Gentiles in matters of liberty and unbelieving Gentiles because they were not circumcised. Paul condemns them in their wickedness and upbraids their impenitence, suggesting that they despise God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, that is, they do not properly esteem it, or else they would have repented long ago.
 - (4) 1 Corinthians 11:22, here Paul wonders if the Corinthians have forgotten that the church was purchased with the blood of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven is not eating and drinking. The Corinthians were not thinking of the church properly.
 - (5) 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul warns Timothy that some will look down on his youth if his conduct is not exemplary and of such character to command respect from believers. He must therefore be an example in all things.
 - (6) 1 Timothy 6:2, here Paul commands believing slaves to serve faithfully believing masters and not to hate them because they too are believers.
 - (7) 2 Peter 2:10, Peter warns of false teachers and the haughty pride of which they are possessed even so that they blaspheme against demons and such like, something that even the angels would not do.
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2. Now, we know that Jesus never hated or scorned anyone. Even in the midst of his execution he said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do." Therefore, what and how did Jesus "dispise" on this occasion?

- a. It is important to note that Jesus did not dispise those that shamed him, but rather, Jesus despised the shame itself.
- b. In other words, Jesus knew from the beginning what manner of death he would die (Matthew 16:21-23; 17:22, 23; 20:17-19; Luke 9:21-22, 43-45; 18:31-34). However, his knowledge of this He regarded as nothing and esteemed his godhood not as that to be retained (Philippians 2:5-8). Instead, Jesus looked ahead to the joy which was set before him.
 - (1) Not a selfish motive at all that Christ might obtain something more than He already possessed since He already was equal with God and was God.
 - (2) But, it was the joy of sharing in the triumph of eternal righteousness in the company of all the redeemed whose salvation He desired and was striving for, whose perfection God meant to be.

C. What Does Christ's Example Mean to Me?

1. There are three possible reactions to cross of Christ:

- a. A stumbling-block (I Corinthians 1:23a)
 - (1) Jesus was not what the Jews expected or wanted.
 - (2) They could not embrace a Suffering Servant, the sinless Son of Man as their Eternal Messiah, the Son of God.
 - (3) Israel unwilling to come to terms with their sins stumbled at God's righteousness.
- b. Foolishness (I Corinthians 1:23b)
 - (1) Jesus was not what the Gentiles had expected or wanted.
 - (2) The pagans had long pursued philosophy, but the teaching of Christ fell far short of their expectations "wisdom."
 - (3) The Gentile stumbled at an unschooled carpenter who spoke in parables and was whisked away to die like a slave.
- c. The power of God and the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:24)
 - (1) The believer looks past the apparent shame and disgrace of a crucified Jew and sees with the eye of faith the Glorious Son who left heaven to die for our sins.
 - (2) He beholds and rejoices in the magnitude of God's grace being in awe of the magnificence of what He has wrought to forgive the sins of man.
 - (3) So that which the world views as weak and foolish we comprehend as omnipotent and omniscient.

2. What will your reaction be?

- a. Will you stumble when you realize that Jesus is not held in esteem as a great man by the educated, the powerful and the elite?
- b. Will you turn away when you realize that salvation by means of the death of a Jewish carpenter executed like a slave and a thief is held in contempt.
- c. Will you in faith persevere to the end knowing that God in giving Him gave the most precious gift heaven had to offer in order to redeem you from sin.

III. CONCLUSION:

A. What Did Jesus Despise and to What End?

1. Jesus gave no thought to the apparent humiliation associated with His death on the cross.
 2. These things did not deter Him from making Himself an offering for sin.
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3. Rather, the ultimate joy He would have in knowing that He had redeemed mankind from sin overshadowed all other considerations and gave Him the strength and courage to endure.

B. Will You Despise the Shame of the Cross?

1. Believe unto righteousness (Romans 10:9–10).
 2. Repent unto life (Acts 11:18)
 3. Confess unto salvation (Romans 10:9–10)
 4. Be baptized unto the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38)
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