

Prophecy 108 (The Transformation of Shame)

Ezekiel 16

The Prophets (no. 8 in the series)

April 25, 2021

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/prophecy-108-the-transformation-of-shame/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

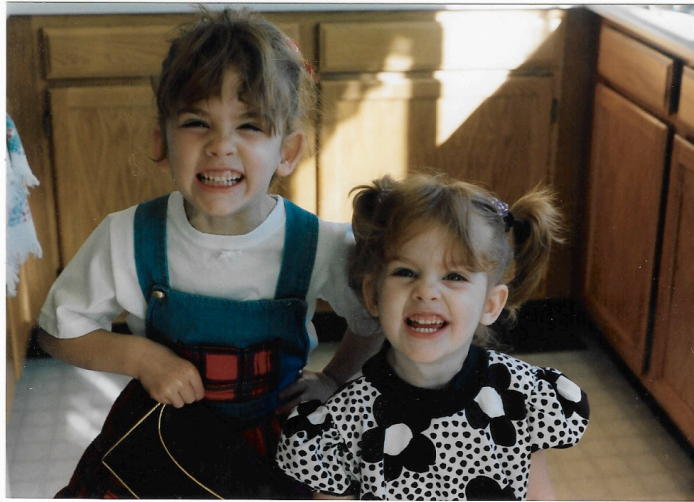
[Opening song: "Daughters" by John Mayer]

Message



These are my two daughters, Elizabeth and Rebekah. Elizabeth (on the left) lives in Chile with her husband Francisco, and Becky (on the right) just moved home, having graduated with a bunch of honors and a Master's degree from the University of York, England.

They are both beautiful, intelligent, and extremely capable young women. But now when I look at them, I also see something like this:



If you've seen our "Hallelujah in Hell" video, you know about Becky, so excellently played by Lilla Dancer in that video. Becky is there on the right.

Around the time of this picture, Becky ran up to a little boy at Eliches who had pretended to shoot me with a toy machine gun. She got up in his face and just ripped into him, saying, "Please don't shoot my Daddy! He's the only one we've got, and we love him very much!"

Seven and a half years ago, I had a heart attack, and I really thought I might die... and, sadly, I was pretty much OK with dying—I mean the previous six years had worn me out, and I thought Heaven sounded pretty sweet. I was OK with it, until I talked to Becky on the phone and heard her broken heart through a fountain of tears, telling me that I couldn't die... not yet.

When I look at them now, I see this picture... and sometimes I see this picture:



It was around the time of this picture that I came home from work late one night long after dark, and found my old blue shirt on the lawn. Susan informed me that Elizabeth went and got it out of the dirty clothes, then went and sat by the back gate—all day long, waiting for me. Susan even made her a picnic and encouraged her to come in, but over and over, Elizabeth would say, “No, I wait for Daddy.” Around 9pm, Susan forced her to come in, but she left the old blue shirt by the gate, for me.

It was also around this time that we went to a friend’s house for a pool party. I took Elizabeth aside and said, “Elizabeth, you need to stay with me and stay away from the pool.” About fifteen minutes later, I was eating hors d’oeuvres, laughing and talking with friends, when I just happened to hear a faint, “kerplunk.”

I turned and looked for Elizabeth, but she wasn’t there.

I ran to the edge of the pool, looked to the bottom, and my heart stopped. There in the bottom of the deep end... alone, floating in silence, I saw my daughter, my treasure. And without a thought, I dove in, hors d’oeuvres, clothes, and all.

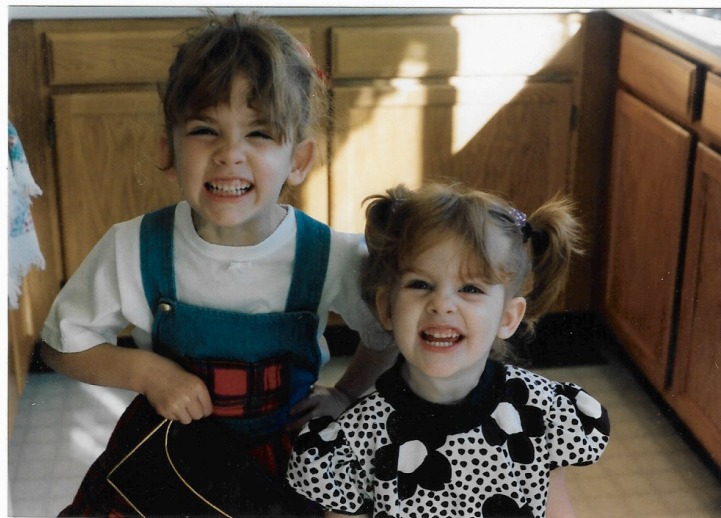
I remember standing on the edge of that pool, holding Elizabeth so tightly to my chest, unaware of anyone else’s presence, just praising God for my treasure... and that she was breathing.

Then, of course, I threw her back in, because she hadn’t obeyed, and I’m not just loving; I’m just...

No! Of course, I didn’t do that; I’m her dad, and she’s my everything. If need be, I’ll wait by the gate until the end of time for Elizabeth.

The Hebrews had this saying—or at least David and Solomon did—you can find it in Psalm 17:8 and Proverbs 7:2. In Psalms, David prays, “Keep me as the apple of your eye.” *lyshown bath* in Hebrew: It refers to the image of the little person reflected in another person’s pupil, reflected back at you when they look at you as you look at them.

Literally translated, it would be “little man, daughter.” *lyshown bath*. So the Father treasures his daughter, and the daughter delights in his gaze—the apple of his eye.



See, that's how my daughters used to look at me, and still do at times. There were some complications along about seventh grade...but we got through it. But they will always be the apple of my eye; my treasure; my life.

So, to save them is to literally save me.

But enough about my daughters, I need to preach the message. So, let's pray:

Prayer

Father, we pray that you would help us. We need help. We need your spirit, to hear your Word and not run away in terror but to surrender to you in Faith. So Spirit of God, give us faith. In Jesus's name, amen.

As I think you're aware, we've been preaching from The Prophets for a while. We preached quite awhile ago--some from Jonah and some from Jeremiah. Then I preached a message that I titled "Prophecy 101 (How to prophesy)." We talked of how prophets must experience the passion of the Word that they speak. After that message we just kept going:

- Prophecy 102 (Everybody Must Get Stoned): We talked about the fact that in the prophets, everyone gets stoned—that is literally destroyed that they might be made new.
- Prophecy 103 (The Not Boring Heaven): We talked about how, for the prophets, Heaven is completely non-boring.
- Prophecy 104: We talked about the Voice of God in the temple of the soul.
- Prophecy 105: how messing with the Word means the Word will Mess with you—And we've already messed with the Word.
- On Easter, we preached that the Word, the Lion of Judah, chases us, captures us, and turns a fountain of tears into a fountain of Life.
- Last time, Prophecy 107: We preached that God's retribution on our hard hearts is heart surgery—replacing our stone hearts with a new, living heart.

And that's the Gospel, the Good News, in Ezekiel 36:26.

But five verses later, the Lord says a rather strange thing:

"Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations."

Daniel ends his book with a cryptic comment about everlasting self-loathing. And you can find the word at the end of Isaiah, too.

Isaiah early on writes, "Every knee will bow..." Then, next verse: "To him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him," which is clearly everyone with knees. Then the next verse: "In the Lord, all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory"ⁱ —that is, glory in God while ashamed of themselves.... weird huh?

See the prophets have a weird perspective on shame, but perhaps nowhere is that perspective more shocking than Ezekiel 16. It's a chapter that I've wanted to preach for decades but have been afraid to tackle for fear I cannot do it justice—and I'm sure I cannot, but this week and next week we'll try.

I'll read the whole thing, for we need to feel the passion of the Word, let it chase us, catch us, cut us, even kill us, and give us a new heart. We'll read the whole thing; but before we begin, I'll remind you of a few things and point to a few other things:

- Ezekiel is prophesying to Jews that have been exiled to Babylon as slaves—slaves who know more than a little bit about shame.
- God refers to Ezekiel as “Son of Man,” which is fascinating, for this is how Jesus referred to himself.

There is endless speculation about the meaning of the term “Son of Man,” and yet it's rather obvious: If God is the father of Jesus, it means that man—that is “humanity,” “man” --“Son of Man”—must be Jesus's mother. And Jesus said as much.

Ezekiel is told to speak to Jerusalem (and you'll remember that Jerusalem is referred to as “the Bride of the Lord God,” and also of Jesus.) Ezekiel is to speak to Jerusalem about Samaria and Sodom, whom God refers to as “sisters.”

In Ezekiel 16, God talks as if we all—all of us—are female. (We'll talk more about this next week. But in Ezekiel 16, only God is male.) We are all “girls” [Peter begins to sing] “...And girls become lovers, who turn into mothers. So mothers, be good to your daughters, too.”

Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem are all sister cities. Cities remind me of psyches; they are a set of relationships. In the Old Testament, God is into judging and redeeming cities, as if one couldn't be saved without their city, because you *are* your city, like you are your psyche: a complex set of relationships.

Sodom was the leading city of the Old Canaanite region called the Cities of the Valleyⁱⁱ (the Valley of Salt), and Sodom had been utterly destroyed a thousand years earlier by eternal fire. Samaria started as a Canaanite City but became the leading city of the northern kingdom of Israel, which had gone into exile at the hands of the Assyrians a few hundred years before Ezekiel prophesied these words.

Jerusalem also started as a Canaanite City (comprised of Amorites, Hittites, and Jebusites), but she became the capital city of Judah over time, the land of the Jews: the Jews who were exiled, and actually are *being* exiled as Ezekiel is prophesying.

Ezekiel is going to talk about “sin”:

- Religious sin—particularly the worship of Canaanite idols, which involved ritual prostitution and child sacrifice.
- Sexual sin—for it had literally become a religion. And yet, Yahweh refers to all unfaithfulness to him as sexual sin—adultery and prostitution.
- Economic sin—ironically, this is how God describes Sodom's sin—a lack of concern for the poor.
- Political sin—Israel had sought alliances with the superpowers like Egypt, Assyria, and Chaldea, which is Babylon. (Imagine that: Israel seeking alliances with some superpowers rather than trusting God.)

- Social sin—Abortion, infanticide, and simply abandoning newborn babies in fields was common among the Canaanites, and now, the Jews. And yet, the Jews despised Canaanites: Hittites, Amorites, and their own cousins, the Edomites, and, of course, the Syrians—Those words had become “bywords” in their mouths.

The word “Samaritan” is derived from Samaria. The word “Sodomite” comes from Sodom. Originally, it may have had little to do with sexual sins, but much to do with consumerism and pride. Good Jews, wouldn’t even utter the word “Sodom.” That was like their bad word. They could imagine nothing worse than someone from Sodom.

And keep this in mind: English translations invariably clean up biblical language, dramatically. Many times, I’ve had to look up English words used in translation, only to realize: *Hey! There’s a perfectly good word for that! And I used to hear it all the time in the locker room—a word that made me not only think something, but feel something.*

Well, the Hebrew in Ezekiel 16 is so elicited and shocking that Ezekiel 16 was later excluded from corporate reading in the synagogues.ⁱⁱⁱ It was forbidden. And keep in mind, it’s God that’s dictating these words to poor Ezekiel.

The topic is shame; the language is shameful; the deeds of men are shameful. But what is most surprising of all is that the thing which the church has found most shameful are the last ten verses of Ezekiel 16... which no longer describe the deeds of men, but the final deeds of God. It’s been purposely mistranslated numerous times—the King James simply adds words, where there clearly are no words.^{iv} And then, modern translations, true to the original text, are repeatedly explained away by scholars and commentators, who in some form simply say, “Well, God clearly can’t mean what he just said, for we all know this is impossible for God.”

It’s too bad. For in the last ten verses, I think we learn the purpose of shame.

So, close your eyes; fasten your seat belts and just listen. It will take about ten minutes. —And, oh yeah, one other thing: If you want to be part of the New Jerusalem, I think you have to admit that you are, or at least were, the Old Jerusalem.

The Church *is* “Jerusalem”—the one that God is talking to...

Ezekiel 16: ¹Again the word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, ³and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. ⁴And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. ⁵No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.

⁶“And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ ⁷I made you flourish like a plant of the field. And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

⁸ “When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord GOD, and you became mine. ⁹ Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. ¹⁰ I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod [your feet] with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹ And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain [a necklace] on your neck. ¹² And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. ¹⁴ And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD.

¹⁵ “But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his. ¹⁶ You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be. ¹⁷ You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore. ¹⁸ And you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them. ¹⁹ Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey—you set before them for a pleasing aroma; and so it was, declares the Lord GOD. ²⁰ And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your whorings so small a matter ²¹ that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them? ²² And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your blood.

²³ “And after all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! declares the Lord GOD), ²⁴ you built yourself a vaulted chamber and made yourself a lofty place in every square. ²⁵ At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, offering yourself to any passerby and multiplying your whoring. ²⁶ You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger. ²⁷ Behold, therefore, I stretched out my hand against you and diminished your allotted portion and delivered you to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. ²⁸ You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. ²⁹ You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied.

³⁰ “How sick is your heart, declares the Lord GOD, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute, ³¹ building your vaulted chamber at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square. Yet you were not like a prostitute, because you scorned payment. ³² Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! ³³ Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings. ³⁴ So you were different from other women in your whorings. No

one solicited you to play the whore, and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; therefore you were different.

³⁵ “Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of the LORD: ³⁶ Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, ³⁷ therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. ³⁸ And I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. ³⁹ And I will give you into their hands, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places. They shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful jewels and leave you naked and bare. ⁴⁰ They shall bring up a crowd against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. ⁴¹ And they shall burn your houses and execute judgments upon you in the sight of many women. I will make you stop playing the whore, and you shall also give payment no more. ⁴² So will I satisfy my wrath on you, and my jealousy shall depart from you. I will be calm and will no more be angry. ⁴³ Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things, therefore, behold, I have returned your deeds upon your head, declares the Lord GOD. Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations?

⁴⁴ “Behold, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you: ‘Like mother, like daughter.’ ⁴⁵ You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. ⁴⁶ And your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. ⁴⁷ Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. ⁴⁸ As I live, declares the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. ⁵¹ Samaria has not committed half your sins. You have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. ⁵² Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have intervened on behalf of your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

“Be ashamed...bear your disgrace...” —Let’s stop there for a moment. How are you doing? If you have an emotional response, it’s entirely understandable...this is intense.

Ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, this utter lack of compassion that God is describing—some people talk about it as if it’s poetry, but it’s not just poetry; it’s not an abstraction...for me.



About 25 years ago, around the time I took this picture [above]...I prayed a dangerous prayer. I prayed, "God, I just want you to be more real to me... and I'll even pray for people with demons if that's what it would take."

Just a few days later, I met a friend desperate for help in dealing with demons.

You don't need to believe me, because people make up crap about this sort of stuff all the time... but some of you do know and may be terrified to say it: "The things described in Ezekiel 16 are not simply abstractions."

My friend suffered ritual sexual abuse for decades, and then she lost children in the most horrific of ways. It all started when she was a little girl at the hands of her father. I couldn't help but believe something so horrid had happened to her, for evil spirits would take over her body and try to keep us from the memories buried deep in her past... memories which my wife would also see in her own head.

At the time, people were terribly concerned about all the time I devoted to this—countless hours, usually in the middle of the night, wrestling demonic spirits, and remembering events that are utterly horrifying. But you see, I wasn't simply doing this for her; I was doing it for me.

[Peter sings] "Fathers, be good to your daughters; Daughters will love like you do."

I was doing it for me, because I think I was ashamed of God our Father... I needed help. I knew, and it was obvious, that our Father was not an abuser, and yet somehow he had allowed for all of this abuse. I was ashamed and horrified that he would even allow for such shame, pain, and evil in this world he had supposedly created... I sincerely could not understand why he hadn't destroyed Dallas, Texas, where so much of this evil had happened. I was honestly angry that he hadn't destroyed Dallas, Denver, and everyone everywhere, just like he had destroyed Sodom.

[Peter continues singing] "Fathers, be good to your daughters; Daughters will love like you do."

I kept praying because I kept asking, "Father, where are you? And what are you doing?"

You know, the older you get, the harder it is to deny the evil, the pain, and the shame of this world... and that would include your own heart...my own heart. ...So close your eyes, and let's finish. Verse 52:

... So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

⁵³ “I will restore their fortunes, both the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes in their midst,^{vi} ⁵⁴ that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them. ⁵⁵ As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your daughters shall return to your former state. ⁵⁶ Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride, ⁵⁷ before your wickedness was uncovered? Now you have become an object of reproach for the daughters of Syria [daughters of Edom, that is Esau]^{vii} and all those around her, and for the daughters of the Philistines, those all around who despise you. ⁵⁸ You bear [“the penalty of” supplied by translator] your lewdness and your abominations, declares the LORD.

⁵⁹ “For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, ⁶⁰ yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth,^{viii} and I will establish for you an everlasting [eternal] covenant.^{ix} ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. ⁶² I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, ⁶³ that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you [when I forgive you] for all that you have done, declares the Lord GOD.”

What has Jerusalem done?

[Image: Still image on screen of Jesus on the cross from “The Passion of the Christ”]

You see that? That man? Hanging on that tree? That's what Jerusalem has done—that's evil and the revelation of our shame. And that's how God atones for all that Jerusalem has done—which is the Good and the transformation of our Shame into something... something else.

You can open your eyes if they're still closed.

When you look—when you truly look—on the one whom you have pierced, you will never again open your mouth against any of your sisters... because of your shame.

And yet, we “the Church” have opened our mouth against our sisters, appear to have no problem in assigning most of them to some sort of endless hell, and are most ashamed of Ezekiel verses 53-63, because our Father vows to have mercy on *all*.

So what are we ashamed of? We're ashamed of the Great Banquet, the Kingdom of Heaven, relentless love.

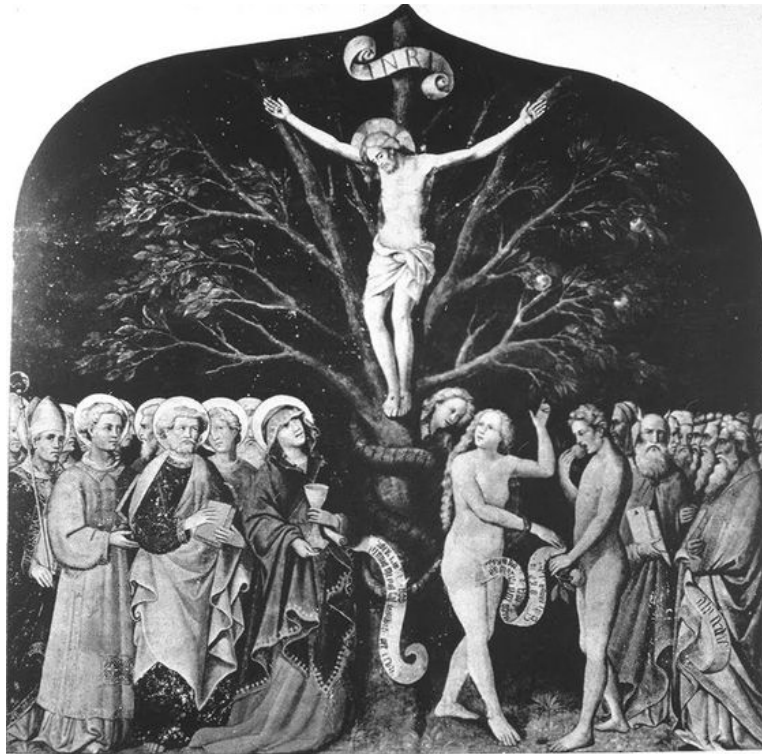


Figure 1 "Mystery of the Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena (1420)

That's the heart of our Father hanging on that tree. That's our husband, our helper, who came to cover our shame with his righteousness, fill our sin with God's Grace, and complete us in the image and likeness of God... with the very Spirit of God.

He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Them" is all of us, and when we look on him, we come to know: Our judgment is evil...And "the Good" is the judgment of God, given to us; it's Grace. It's the revelation of who God is and who we are.

I've witnessed this over and over again in hundreds of different ways, but most memorable for me was the night my friend came to me and Susan with several different pictures stuck in her head. Most horrifying to me was of a Halloween night when she was a little girl, dressed like an angel for trick or treating, for that is what she always longed to be. But her father came home, flew into a rage, and abused her in the most unspeakable ways.

We prayed, and she had a vision and asked Jesus to hold her. But he didn't.

I was really confused by that... and she was too. He said, "You must give me those pictures."

I wanted him to destroy those pictures, but he said, "You must give me those pictures. Those pictures are part of who you are."

I wondered if it was really Jesus...

It took a long time, but each time that she gave him a picture, he would enter the picture or reveal that he had always been in the picture...feeling her pain, crying her tears, and then he would reveal the depths of his love for her. The passion of the Father's furious love for his daughter and the glory of the Bridegroom's relentless love for his Bride was breathtaking. Each time, he would transform the picture into a revelation of love and the story of Grace, then frame the picture, and hand it back to her.

The last picture was that Halloween night. She watched Jesus suffer for her, fight for her, cover her with his righteousness, a white robe that took the form of an angel costume—he dressed her, sat her on his lap, rocked her, held her, and then said, "You are, and you always will be my little angel."

Then as I held her and she wept, she heard him say, "Your pictures are my pictures." And then it occurred to me—I said, "Hey, he is holding you, and he's telling you who you are."

"Fathers, be good to your daughters; daughters will love like you do..."

Our friend now works with orphans in Kenya... a mother to all. But that day, after a time, she looked up at me and said, "How do you think it makes Jesus feel when we're ashamed of those pictures?"

I said, "Well, I suppose that means that we're ashamed of him, too."

Are you ashamed of Jesus? Do you tell people about Jesus? You know, shame is a funny thing: If you are ashamed of shame, and so cover your shame, you really can't testify to Jesus: The Savior, or become who you really are: One who is saved.

So, what is shame?

Well, when you chase it to its root, isn't it an awareness of your need for help...

What are you ashamed of?

Isn't it a place where you need help?

And what is Salvation?

Well, isn't it getting help, from your Helper?

And what is Sin?

Isn't it trying to get help in all the wrong places, or perhaps, in the wrong way? Isn't it hiding your need for help from your helper—hiding it in fig leaves, addictions, self-justifications, and ego; isn't it worshipping idols?

And what is wrong with that first Adam—that is, all of us?

Well, we can't find our Helper—our Husband, who is God.

We can't find our Helper, although he's with us all the time.

We can't find our Helper, for perhaps, we're unaware that we need help. For what has the snake told us? "You don't need help; help yourself."

So, what does our Father do?

He lets us try... and then saves us from the bottom of the pool.

When we deny our shame:

1. We deny who it is, that we truly are... the children of God.
2. And we deny who Jesus truly is... the one who dives in and saves us.

If you deny your shame, you cannot testify to Jesus, your Helper. Instead:

- You'll find a million subtle ways to testify to your ability to help yourself, which renders your Helper rather unhelpful.
- You'll find a way to testify to your knowledge of Good and evil, and your ability to take it, use it, and help yourself.
- You'll find a way to testify to programs, policies, and theologies... even as you take the life of your Helper on the tree.
- You'll find a way to testify to your own relative success and your neighbor's relative failure... and find yourself relatively alone. I do it all the time.

But to testify to your Helper, you'll testify to your need for help. And the greater your need for help, the more impressive the Helper. You'll testify to your shame, but you'll forget that it's shame, for even as you testify, it's transformed into glory—the Glory is the revelation of God's love for you, in you, and through you.

A couple of weeks ago, Anthony sent me a letter. He watches online, and so he talked about a recent message, the Good hanging on the tree in the middle of the garden, and how it makes sense that he comes for all. Then he writes:

"I was lost in agony of the soul for 10 years... a hell of mental illness...I hope this does not sound sick, but when I was in the worst state of mind, praying constantly for God to use me, in my dreams would appear a light and laughter, a voice of concern, support, and caution—a voice of comfort would speak to me.

"When I would wake, encouraged, I had the strength to face the torment. Unbelievably, the Good, brought me to where I am today. For whatever I think it is worth, however imperfectly, I give my recovery and success entirely to God."

And now, you don't need to become mentally ill to testify to Jesus. You already are mentally ill, for you ascribe some of your success to yourself. You have believed that you have created, saved, and sanctified yourself.

To testify to Jesus is to simply believe that Jesus creates, saves, and sanctifies you... and everyone around you, like Anthony.

Years ago, I went on an Evangelism Project with my brother Andrew Trawick. We were in Brazil, preaching to crowds in open fields under the sun; I remember looking out on all those faces—brown, black, white, dirty, sweaty, handsome, and homely—and just not feeling it... you know? My education had taught me that some were chosen, and some were not chosen... which made it easy to justify myself, and disregard the lost.

Others with us believed some would choose correctly, and some would choose incorrectly and be damned... Believing that made it easy to scare people, but almost impossible to love people or testify to a savior.

But for some reason, I just decided to picture Becky out in that crowd



I pictured Becky, but a Becky that didn't know she was "Becky," and didn't know she had a father who loved her, and a mother who'd die for her. I pictured my daughter lost in that crowd, and I preached, "Becky, come home." —And it was then that I began to preach the Gospel.

When we deny our shame:

1. We deny who it is that we truly are...
 2. And we deny who it is that Jesus truly is...
 3. And we are unable to join the Great Banquet...
- Surrendered shame is death to self.
 - Surrendered shame is freedom from the tyranny of your own ego.
 - Surrendered shame is the ability to have compassion, to forgive as you have been forgiven, to laugh at yourself, and laugh with your neighbor.
 - Surrendered shame is the ability to see your neighbor for who and what they really are—they are the apple, the daughter, of your own eye.

[Peter sings] "Girls become lovers, who turn into mothers...so mothers, be good to your daughters, too."

Ezekiel 16:60:

I will establish for you [Jerusalem] an everlasting covenant. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder (Samaria) and your younger (Sodom), and I give them to you as daughters...

"...as daughters."

Wow. I think that means that this is your daughter:



And this is your daughter:



And this is your daughter:



And this is your daughter:



And this is your daughter:



And this is your daughter:



And this is your daughter



...The Apple of your eye...

You have at least seven billion daughters, and one day you will hold all of them tightly to your chest the way I held my daughter Elizabeth so tightly to my chest after I pulled her from the bottom of the pool.

And then you will know the Good, and the Life, and a depth of Joy that you cannot even begin to conceive of right now... all because your shame has been transformed into Joy.^x

Communion

And so, on the night we all betrayed him, our Helper took bread and broke it, saying, “This is my body given to you. Take and eat, and remember...remember me.”

And in the same way, he took the cup, saying, “This is the covenant”—this is a marriage covenant; he’s talking about two covenants: one that was broken and that got destroyed, and he’s talking about establishing this eternal covenant that we read about earlier on in the book of Genesis, it’s called the Eternal Covenant— “in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness, the atonement, of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me.”

So look on the one whom you have pierced. This is the revelation of your shame. And this is how your shame is transformed into joy. This is the Eternal Covenant.

Run from this... and you will hide in hell.
Run to this... and all shame will be transformed into endless joy.

It will take a lifetime, but it begins here and now.

So, think of your shame; feel it in the pit of your stomach. Then take the Body and the Blood of your helper and put it in that place—that place where you feel shame.

Benediction

So, like I said, I have two daughters. And I know there have been times when I know that they have doubted my love. Even though I’m there, and have given them a house, but that’s the way we are, right? And I’m an imperfect Dad. But God’s a perfect Dad...but we doubt his love.

Well, there’s been times that I know they have doubted my love, and if I knew that one of them was struggling and really doubting my love, and would hope that the other one would say, “Becky, Dad really loves you.” Or, “Elizabeth, Dad talks to me about you. He’s nuts about you.”

And you’ve got a whole bunch of sisters who don’t believe Dad loves them. And you’ve been called. Chosen to tell them. So testify.

In Jesus’s name.
Believe the Gospel.
Amen.

Endnotes

²² “Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.
²³ By myself I have sworn;
from my mouth has gone out in righteousness
a word that shall not return:

*'To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear allegiance.'*
²⁴ *"Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me,
are righteousness and strength;
to him shall come and be ashamed
all who were incensed against him.*
²⁵ *In the Lord all the offspring of Israel
shall be justified and shall glory."*
 -Isaiah 45:22-25

ii Genesis 14:2

iii Check out Ezekiel 23:18-21, where God through Ezekiel expands on the sins of Israel (the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom, Samaria and Judea, Israel and Judah, Oholiba: "woman of the tent" and Oholah: "her own tent"). Even in the polished English translation, it's rather hard to miss the intent of these words: *"When she carried on her whoring so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, as I had turned in disgust from her sister. Yet she increased her whoring, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt and lusted after her lovers there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses. Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom and pressed your young breasts."* ...And people say the Bible is boring.

iv See, Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God* (Eerdmans, 1993) pp 50-53

v Notice that they are to be reduced to how he found them "naked and bare." And notice that we all must be reduced to dust—which is how he found us. We must surrender our "breath" to learn to trust that he will inspire us with more.

vi *And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."* – John 8:7-11

When Jesus forgave the prostitute *in the midst* of Jerusalem and the Pharisees, he was doing what his father was doing and had been doing all along.

vii Some ancient manuscripts have "Syria," some have "Edom." Edom is the nation of Esau.

viii This must refer to the covenant of law instituted at Sainai, and re-enacted in all the temple rituals in Jerusalem.

ix This must refer to the unconditional Covenant that God makes for and with Abraham in Genesis 12, or for and with Noah in Genesis 8, or perhaps with Adam in Genesis 3, or with himself in Genesis 1:26

x God also showed me that sin is not shameful to man, but his glory; for in this revelation my understanding was lifted up into heaven; and then there came truly into my mind David, Peter and Paul, Thomas of India and the Magdalene - how they are famous in the Church on earth with their sins as their glory. And it is no shame to them that they have sinned, any more than it is in the bliss of heaven, for there the badge of their sin is changed into glory. In this way our Lord God showed them to me as an example of all others who shall come there.

Sin is the sharpest scourge that any chosen soul can be struck with; it is a scourge which lashes men and women so hard, and batters them and destroys them so completely in their own eyes, that they think they only deserve to sink down into hell. But when the touch of the Holy Ghost brings contrition, it turns the bitterness into hope of God's mercy; and then their wounds begin to heal and the soul begins to revive into the life of Holy Church. . . . Although a man has the scars of healed wounds, when he appears before God they do not deface but ennoble him. And as on the one hand sin is punished here with sorrow and suffering, on the other it shall be rewarded in heaven by the generous love of our Lord God almighty, who does not want the toils and troubles of any who come there to be wasted. The reward we are going to receive there will not be a small one, but great, splendid and glorious. And so all shame will be turned into glory and into greater joy. And I am sure, by what I feel myself, that the more every well-natured soul sees this in the kind and generous love of God, the more loath he is to sin.

- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 26-27