



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: DECEMBER 2021 by Lee Shipp

THE GOD WHO COVERS THE SHAMED

The Lord didn't make shameful people. People make shameful people. It is the evil and perverseness in the heart of man that has brought forth the atrocities men have done to one another. The perverse uncle who violates his niece or nephew. The nursery worker betraying the confidence of a parent. The rage of a husband who strikes out at his wife and kids. The unfaithful wife who betrays her husband and her vows. God did not do these acts of violence - man did! The waves of shame that seek to drown us are the waves we have caused. We threw the stone into the lake that is rocking our boat. God did not do this.

When the Lord made us, we were without shame. "... they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). However, in just a moments time the narrative has changed: "... they knew that they were naked ... and they heard the voice of the Lord God ... and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:7-8).

Why did they hide? Because they realized they were naked. How? What changed for them to know this? "... the eyes of them both were opened ..." (Genesis 3:7). Their eyes were opened because they rebelled against God. They chose a life of sin, and shame came. Here is where shamed entered our world. Adam said to the Lord, "... I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10).

There it is in all of its ugliness. Shame exposed. It is the feeling of being naked. Of being exposed. The feeling that everybody can see how ugly you are. Shame is the feeling that you cannot live among people. It is the horrific feeling of believing that everybody can see how diseased you are, how contagious you are. All you want to do is hide.

The shamed just want to be left alone in their cold and depressing world. They just want a place to hide so no one can see them. And why do they hide? Because they are afraid. They are afraid of the judgment and rejection they will suffer. The fear comes from knowing they are guilty. If people saw them the way they see themselves then they would surely despise and punish them.

So, what is the hope for the shameful? The persistent God. The God of love. The God who comes into your world and calls for you, "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9).

The hope for the shamed is the God who will not stop calling you out of hiding until you are confronted with His love. Then you can choose. You can choose to go back into hiding and live in your shame. However, you can choose to be free. You can choose to let God rescue you and allow His love to cover you in the life of another. That day, in the garden with Adam, was not the only time God has called for you. He did it at the birth of His Son: "... fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day ... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:10-11, 14).

He came in love to save us from our shame. He came to save us from our need to hide. He came to save us from our fear that He will punish us hard. He came to save us, to heal us, to make us new, and clothe us with His righteousness. God will get the glory for this feat of redemption and man will get the mercy.

Come on, what else would you want to hear? Forgiven? Ok! Pardoned? Ok! Accepted? Ok. It's all yours!

You cannot escape your shame because it is not what you did, nor what happened to you; rather, it is what you became. You cannot escape shame because it is who you are. However, you can be saved from your shame because you can be saved from yourself. There is a shame-savior!

BUT YOU TRIED JESUS

I understand what some of you are dealing with. You have tried church. You have tried Jesus; however, it just didn't work for you. You went to church and found it

so hard to accept God's love because you had porn on your phone. You tried to worship but all you could think about was how drunk you were the night before. Your hypocrisy only intensifies your shame and all you want to do is run, to hide. But God will not let you get away so easily. He is calling you to come to Him. Why? Because it gives Him great pleasure to take away your shame. And that is why God sent a band of angels to announce His arrival in a manger. He wanted to let a world shrouded in shame know that He had come to extend "Good Will" to man, not condemnation.

Good will, wow! Just the thought of that - good will. Good will means kindly intent, delight, pleasure, and satisfaction. It was God's delight and pleasure to free us from our shame and ugliness. It is His disposition to heal us from our abuses, the devastating sexual violations, the despising acts of selfishness. For this baby Jesus, Who was sent to save us declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; He has appointed me to preach Good News (that is so lovely) to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted and to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be freed from their oppressors, and that God is ready to give blessings to all who come to him" (TLB).

THE CHURCH'S COMMISSION

Church, this is your commission - to go into all the world and tell the shamed the Good News of Jesus. It is not your job to point your finger at the shamed. Instead, it is your privilege; rather, it is your good pleasure to point the shamed to Jesus! When the shamed come into the church, it is our privilege to cover their nakedness, to give them hope. Satan would swallow them up with sorrow. We have to rescue them before Satan swallows them. And how do we rescue them? By confirming the love of God to them.

The shamed come to church thinking, "Nobody is going to like me." So, like them church! The shamed think, "They are going to reject me." So, accept them church! Oh, that we would fight for one another like Jesus did for us.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren, don't let him work through you. Instead, overcome Satan's oppression in your brothers and sisters. "... they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11). Notice church - they overcame Satan! It does not say the Lord overcame Satan because the Lord already overcame him in the cross. Now it is the responsibility of the Church to exercise that victory for one another.

"NO MAN IS MORE MATURE IN CHRIST THAN THE MAN WHO CAN LOVE AT ALL TIMES, TO ALL PEOPLE, UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES."

By the blood of the Lamb, by the word of God, and by fearless loving they fought for one another to live despite Satan's constant accusations.

ENOUGH OF THE DESTRUCTION

There is destruction going on in the Body of Christ and many do not understand it. Some abuses go on in the Body of Christ that serve the devil's purposes. These destructive abuses are seen in how the religious try to run other men's lives. Young men and women have learned how to rebuke and criticize one another "in the name of Jesus" [I say this sarcastically]. Souls, sent to our churches - lost, never given the chance to lay hold of the wondrous unshackling experience of Jesus' liberty.

The leaders of the movements that have presided over this carnage are not even aware of the destruction, much like the Pharisees in Jesus' day. They are not aware of the thousands of shipwrecked lives their ministries have caused. There appears to be an almost total disregard by the leaders in these groups of the mounting and appalling destruction resulting from this abuse.

There is no cause for a man seeking Christ to be wrecked by abuse in the House of God. No. No justification for it whatsoever. Therefore, the church should shield men and women from Christendom's corruption. The church should give the shamed an environment of liberty, grace, and hope. The church should lead the shamed into the fullness of Christ without fear of destruction and rejection.

The high level of bitterness and isolation among Christians these days only reveals the bankruptcy of love among God's children. Yet all the while, they would proudly proclaim that they are strong in God's love!

No man is more mature in Christ than the man who can love at all times, to all people, under all circumstances! Love is never more manifest than when it is suffering in order to extend forgiveness to those who have brought its sorrow and wound!

Love cannot forsake! Love cannot run away! It must stay and fight and labor for the benefit of those by whom it is offended! Oh, to God, this would be the fruit of believers' lives. If we would submit to the Holy Ghost, He would make us more than scholars; He would make us apostles of Love! And if He could mature us in Christ, which is to be a loving people, revival would be ceaseless in the House of God! Love does not run and hide because love cannot live alone! Love would rather be crucified by you than live alone without you! This is what the Holy Ghost is

conforming us to! This is the love that causes faith to work!

## YOU OUGHT TO FORGIVE AND COMFORT

Satan must not be given ground in the Church. Believers ought to forgive and comfort those who are seeking Christ lest they are swallowed up with sorrow. We should demonstrate and confirm the love of God to one another – by loving one another in sincerity. Paul said that if we do not extend love and forgiveness then Satan would get an advantage over us (2 Corinthians 2). Church, do you hear that? Satan would not simply swallow up the sorrowful, he would get an advantage over the Church (2 Corinthians 2:11). An unforgiving and harsh spirit will fall prey to Satan's plans.

This is a stern warning to us. It is a stern warning to preachers as well. There are two types of preachers/believers in the Church: those who are ministers of the letter and those who are ministers of the Spirit. The letter kills but the Spirit gives life. It requires a miracle to become a minister of the Spirit. It only requires Bible knowledge to be a minister of the letter. The sad truth is that both groups believe they are right and serving God. However, those of the letter are killing the shamed "in the name of Jesus."

The preachers of the letter are sincere. Preachers of the letter are not preaching error – they are preaching the letter, and the letter is correct. They want their people to thrive and live with power and victory. They really desire the best for the people. However, instead of giving them the ability to REIGN IN LIFE, they bring death. They get a Word and with it rebuke the failure of the people. This exploitation of the believer's failure and shame occurs week after week by those who preach the letter. The Church dwindles and the preacher doesn't understand. The preacher of the letter simply reasons, "I'm preaching the truth! But people do not want to hear the truth." But that is not the truth. The shamed do want truth. They want the Truth that brings life! Every service the shamed are in the altar hoping this time they will be able to perform the demands of the letter. There is not a lack of repentance in these ministries, there is a lack of grace.

Ministers of the Spirit give life. They preach hard. They preach truth. There is conviction. There is grace. The love of God and the hope of God fills the message. They assure people who are in Christ that they are accepted in the beloved. The ministers of the Spirit of life assure the shamed (that come into our churches) that God is excited that they have come.

The shamed are aware that God knows everything about them. Their sins are exposed. Where the ministry of the Spirit of life is at work, the shamed are called out of hiding. Their shame is dealt with. Under the ministry of the Spirit of life they have the keen understanding that God will accept them and sanctify them through the blood of His Son. However, in the churches where there is the ministry of death, the shamed are convinced that God will only accept them if they first become holy. Those of the letter insinuates, "We will approve of you if ..." Those of the Spirit confirms, "We approve of you because ..."

Ministers of the letter reinforce the fear and condemnation the shamed have. They speak to the conscience of men and not to their spirits. They show them they are wrong, and sinners, and then give them the rules by which they should change their behavior. They affirm their shame is a disgrace and make the shamed feel they must become different before God will love them. And, like Adam, the shamed hide behind prayers, deeds, and religion. They are afraid and grow more hopeless because they are reminded every week by the preachers of the letter of their constant failure. Ministers of the Spirit must defeat this fear.

When the letter was being given on Sinai, amid the quaking mountain, the thunder, the lightning, the people were afraid of God, and rightly so. However, when the Spirit was being given on Calvary, multitudes would draw near to God: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

## THE SHAME SAVIOR

The greatest minister of the Spirit – Jesus, delivered people from their shame. He preached to them Good News. He proclaimed to them the acceptance of God. He assured them that He had not come to condemn them but to save them. And the children ran to Him. And the sinners flocked to Him. And the woman at the well, who was living with a man after five failed marriages, brought an entire city to Him. Why? He was life! People were safe in His love. Likewise, the New Covenant minister (of the Spirit of life) will not give place to Satan. As Paul testified to the Corinthians, "... I do not have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.... I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad.... [God] ... hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.... Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 1: 24; 2:1-2, 6, 17).

Make up your mind that you are going to forgive and free everybody just as you need to be forgiven and free. Bear in your body the marks of Christ, which is Love. "You have life before you. Once only you can live it. What is the noblest object of desire, the supreme gift to covet? We have been told that the greatest thing in the

religious world is faith; however, faith cannot work without love" (Henry Drummon). "The one great need in our Christian life is love, more love to God and to each other. Would that we could all move into that Love chapter and live there" (D.L. Moody). Paul said the greatest of these is love. Peter declared, "Above all things have fervent love among yourselves." John the beloved Apostle testified, "God is love."

*Take any of the commandments. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." If a man loves God, you will not require to tell him that. Love is the fulfilling of the law. A man in love with God would never dream of taking God's name in vain. If he loves God, he must love man ... for God loves man! It would be preposterous to tell him not to kill. You could only insult him if you suggested that he should not steal – how could he steal from those he loved? He would never covet what his neighbors had. He would rather they possessed it than himself. Christ's one secret of the Christian life, the key to fulfilling all the law – LOVE!*

*Missionaries can take nothing greater to the heathen world than the LOVE OF GOD working within their own character. What is love in the character? Patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, guilelessness, and sincerity.*

*Take into your sphere of labor, where you also mean to lay down your life, that simple love, and your lifework must succeed. You can take nothing greater; you need take nothing less. You may take every accomplishment; you may be braced for every sacrifice; but if you give your body to be burned, and have not love, it will profit you and the cause of Christ nothing.*

*We hear much of love to God; Christ spoke much of love to man. We make a great deal of peace with heaven; Christ made much of peace on earth. [Consider] Christ's Life: He spent a great portion of His time simply in making people happy, in doing good turns to people. There is only one thing greater than happiness in the world, and that is holiness; and it is not in our keeping; but what God has put in our power is the happiness of those about us, and that is largely to be secured by our being kind to them.*

*The greatest thing a man can do for his Heavenly Father is to be kind to some of His other children. I wonder why it is that we are not all kinder than we are? How much the world needs it! How easily it is done! How instantaneously it acts! Love never faileth: love is success, love is happiness, love is life.*

*Where love is, God is. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. God is love. Therefore love. Without distinction. Without calculation. Without procrastination, Love. Lavish it upon the poor, where it is very easy; especially upon the rich, who often need it most. Most of all upon our equals, where it is very difficult, and for whom perhaps we each do least of all. Give pleasure. Lose no chance of giving pleasure; for that is the ceaseless and anonymous triumph of a truly loving spirit.*

*I shall pass through this world but once. That good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.*

*Withholding love offends the Holy Ghost and is the proof that we never knew Him nor cared for Him! It means that He suggested nothing in all our thoughts, that He inspired nothing in all our lives, that we were not once near enough to Him to be seized with the spell of His compassion for the world. It means that: I lived for myself, I thought for myself, for myself, and none beside – just as if Jesus had never lived, as if He had never died. (Henry Drummon, The Greatest Think In The World).*

I select these comments because it seems all too common for people to run away. Their feelings get hurt, a legitimate offense occurs, and they are offended. The typical response is to run, flee, and forsake the body. But is this love? Does the love of God run? When our sin offended God, did He run and forsake us?

Recently I was convicted and confronted by a modern-day example of love. Here it is as told in the devotional, Extreme Devotion.

*What is Love?*

*In the jail at Gheria, Romania, the names of prisoners thought breaking the rules were noted, and each was given twenty-five lashes. There was a special day set aside when the painful punishment was administered. On that day, the officer would pass from cell to cell, gathering those who were to be flogged.*

*Since the wardens changed shifts continually and the prisoners were many, it was impossible to know all of the inmates by name. A certain Christian inmate would step forward and say, "I am he." each time a guard called in his cell for one to be beaten. He would be brutally whipped again and again in the place of another.*

*In the end, when this Christian prisoner was near death after one of the sacrificial floggings, the other prisoners tried to comfort him. They told him, "Brother, be happy now. Soon everything will be over. You will be in heaven. There will be no more pain, only joy!"*

*He turned, looked at them with love and replied, "May God do to me as he wills ... but if he were to ask me, I would tell him not to take me to paradise. I would prefer to remain in jail. For I know that above are unspeakable delights, but in heaven one thing is missing: to sacrifice oneself for another.*

*Love, just because it is love, exposes itself to all risks – even the risk of being misused by the wicked – in order to win all. We must not give up teaching love for one's enemies, even though, for a time, God haters profit at our expense. We believe that the Word is God and in the end this Word will change the hearts of even those who hate God. (Richard Wurmbrand, page 131, Extreme Devotion).*