

# B.12

## From Shame to Glory

In Which God is Glorified Amidst Our Shame,  
If We Choose His Glory Over Ours

As we finish this module, the most important lesson to remember is that wisdom and virtue are essential — but impossible! No matter how much we try or mature, we will never quite be able to fulfill everything God (or society, or even ourselves) expects of us. By God’s grace we may continue to improve, but we will never be perfect.

Western culture rarely admits the resulting sense of shame, but we still suffer its effects. The ultimate question is whether we will be “real” enough to submit our shame to the cross of Christ, so that He can heal us for His glory — or will we pridefully cling to our own glory, and remain simple, mockers, and fools?

### Assigned Reading

Peter Kreeft: *Back to Virtue*

In Conclusion: The Winsomeness of Virtue

Dick Hockett: *Foundations of Wisdom*

7. The Wise

## **Admonition: Habakkuk 2**

**Whom does God shame? Who gets the glory?**

- 1 *I will stand my watch  
And set myself on the rampart,  
And watch to see what He will say to me,  
And what I will answer when I am corrected.*
- 2 *Then the LORD answered me and said:  
“Write the vision  
And make it plain on tablets,  
That he may run who reads it.*
- 3 *For the vision is yet for an appointed time;  
But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.  
Though it tarries, wait for it;  
Because it will surely come,  
It will not tarry.*
- 4 *“Behold the proud,  
His soul is not upright in him;  
But the just shall live by his faith.*
- 5 *“Indeed, because he transgresses by wine,  
He is a proud man,  
And he does not stay at home.  
Because he enlarges his desire as hell,  
And he is like death, and cannot be satisfied,  
He gathers to himself all nations  
And heaps up for himself all peoples.*
- 6 *“Will not all these take up a proverb against him,  
And a taunting riddle against him, and say,  
‘Woe to him who increases  
What is not his—how long?  
And to him who loads himself with many  
pledges?’*
- 7 *Will not your creditors rise up suddenly?  
Will they not awaken who oppress you?  
And you will become their booty.*
- 8 *Because you have plundered many nations,  
All the remnant of the people shall plunder you,  
Because of men’s blood  
And the violence of the land and the city,  
And of all who dwell in it.*
- 9 *“Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house,  
That he may set his nest on high,  
That he may be delivered from the power of  
disaster!*
- 10 *You give shameful counsel to your house,*

- Cutting off many peoples,  
And sin against your soul.*
- 11 *For the stone will cry out from the wall,  
And the beam from the timbers will answer it.*
- 12 *“Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed,  
Who establishes a city by iniquity!*
- 13 *Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts  
That the peoples labor to feed the fire,  
And nations weary themselves in vain?*
- 14 *For the earth will be filled  
With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,  
As the waters cover the sea.*
- 15 *“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor,  
Pressing him to your bottle,  
Even to make him drunk,  
That you may look on his nakedness!*
- 16 *You are filled with shame instead of glory.  
You also—drink!  
And be exposed as uncircumcised!  
The cup of the LORD’s right hand will be turned  
against you,  
And utter shame will be on your glory.*
- 17 *For the violence done to Lebanon will cover you,  
And the plunder of beasts which made them afraid,  
Because of men’s blood  
And the violence of the land and the city,  
And of all who dwell in it.*
- 18 *“What profit is the image, that its maker should  
carve it,  
The molded image, a teacher of lies,  
That the maker of its mold should trust in it,  
To make mute idols?*
- 19 *Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’  
To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’  
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
Yet in it there is no breath at all.*
- 20 *“But the LORD is in His holy temple.  
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”*

## **Bible: Philippians 3**

*1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision,*

*who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

*7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

*12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

*17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from*

*which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

The pursuit of virtue is a long and difficult road, and it is easy to become discouraged. [C.1] That is why Paul begins his wrap-up, as we begin ours, with a reminder to rejoice:

*1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*

As G.K. Chesterton said, “Joy, which was the small publicity of the pagan, is the gigantic secret of the Christian.” The joy of the Lord is our “secret weapon” (cf. Nehemiah 8:10) in defending against those — including ourselves! — who use religious shame against us:

*2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!*

When we worship in Christ by the Spirit, we neither rely on nor become ashamed of our weak wills:

*3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,*

Though Paul himself was anything but weak-willed:

*4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

Here Paul recounts many of the things we also try to find our glory in:

1. religious upbringing
2. ethnicity
3. ancestors
4. culture
5. education and status
6. religious zeal
7. professional achievement
8. legalistic morality

An impressive list [C.2]. Are we tempted to envy his ability to achieve those things?

If so, don't bother; he considers them a waste of time:

*7But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

To be blunt, he considers them “crap.” Why? They were all based on glorifying himself using the law, instead of relying on a relationship with Christ:

*9and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which [is] from the law, but that which [is] through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

This is one of the grand paradoxes of Christianity: that the only secure path to self-esteem and personal holiness lies in admitting our unworthiness and incompetence, and crying out to God — in faith — for Him to grant us His righteousness.

Now, instead of idolizing the Law, Paul's sole desire is:

*10that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

He is in the midst of a great and terrible quest, to

know:

1. Christ
2. The power of His resurrection
3. The fellowship of His sufferings, and
4. Conformity with His death

Many of us sincerely desire to know Christ and His power, but are we equally eager to follow Him into suffering and death? [C.3]

Paul does this gladly, for the hope of the resurrection:

*11if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

We might think this is easy for Paul, since he has already reached a place of spiritual perfection — but that's not what he says:

*12Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Despite what you may have heard, a mature Christian is not one with a complete understanding of biblical truth or perfect conformity with Christ's character. Rather, it is someone who is committed to spending the rest of his or her earthly life in pursuit of those things, and has learned how to continually lay aside anything that gets in his or her way.

Immature Christians think maturity is all about following rules and learning truths. As such, they are alternately filled with pride (when they succeed) or shame (when they fail). In the end, though, they are no better off than Paul was before he met Christ. The mature Christian realizes rules and truth can be useful — as we'll study in the next module — but are only the means, not the end. Ultimately, the only

end worth pursuing is Christ Himself — and the closer we get to Him, the more we realize how far we fall short (cf. 1 Timothy 1:15).

But rather than filling us with shame at our own sinfulness, this realization fills us with awe at Christ's transcendent glory. Because we are no longer pursuing our own righteousness to salvage our own reputation, but pursuing Christ's righteousness to magnify His!

This may be hard for some of you to swallow. [C.4] Fortunately, it is not necessary for us to agree about everything:

*15Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.*

The important thing is to submit to God's authority, and live out everything we do understand:

*16Nevertheless, to [the degree] that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

Following in the footsteps of those who reflect the “name” of Christ better than we do:

*17Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*

For many leaders — even religious ones — cling to their flesh and hide their shame, rather than glorying in the cross of Christ:

*18For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19whose end [is] destruction, whose god [is their] belly, and [whose] glory [is] in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.*

This is ultimately the choice we face. Will we

fight for our own glory in order to hide our shame, or will we surrender our shame at the foot of the cross so that Christ can glorify Himself in us?

*20For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

## Conversation

1. How have our studies of virtues encouraged and/or discouraged you?
2. Which of the items on Paul's list of “glories” (verses 5-6) have you taken pride in — or at least wished you could?
3. What might “the fellowship of Christ's sufferings” and “conformity to His death” (verse 10) look like in your life?
4. How has this study impacted your understanding of Christian maturity?

## Decision

- Repentance: What hidden shame must you surrender to the cross of Christ? How?
- Action: Find a Christ-like example (living or dead) you can follow in your ongoing pursuit of virtue.
- Worship: Reflect on our heavenly citizenship, and the glorious transformation that awaits our bodies.

## Explore More

- Shame - Int. Standard Bible Encyclopedia
- Acts 17:11 Bible Study: Shame & Love
- *If They Don't Win, It's a Shame* by Gordon Dalbey
- YouTube - THIRD DAY - Show Me Your Glory