Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Who's Ashamed of Whom?
Scripture: Luke 9:26
Code: 42-123

Open your Bible to Luke chapter 9, if you will, and I want to call your attention to verse 26. We have taken a number of weeks to look at a particular paragraph in Luke 9, starting in verse 23 and running down to verse 26. It is at the very heart of the teaching of Jesus. It is at the very heart of the gospel. Verse 23 says, “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.’ ”

Before we can leave this passage, I want to address the words of Jesus in verse 26. “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.”

I want to focus on the term “ashamed.” When we speak of the worst kind of human character, or the worst kind of human conduct, we often say that someone is shameless, that they behave as one who knows no shame. There certainly are many people who have no shame when it comes to their own conduct, their own behavior. And they run quite a broad spectrum, frankly. There are shameless people who are very evil, very immoral, very profligate. They live the most wicked kind of lives, apparently having their consciences seared so that they fell no guilt and no remorse, no matter how many of God’s laws they break or how frequently they break them. These are shameless people.

But at the other end of the spectrum there’s another kind of shameless person, not an overtly wretched, and wicked, and evil person, but a covertly wicked person who on the surface is religious and self righteous. Convinced in their own minds, these people believe that they are by their own human goodness acceptable to God, that they don’t break God’s laws and so they are shameless also. They feel no guilt and no remorse because of their success at deceiving themselves about their true condition.

There are then wretched people who know no shame, and there are religious people who know no shame. There are those openly wicked people who feel no guilt because they’ve trained themselves to deny it. And there are those religious people covertly wicked who feel no guilt because they’ve trained themselves to trust in their own self righteousness.

As at all places and all times, Israel was filled with those kinds of shameless people. There were the reprobates. There were the prostitutes. There were the petty criminals. There was the flotsam and jetsam of human society. There was the riffraff, the tax collectors, the openly, outwardly wretched people who lived shameless lives. Worse in many ways and harder to reach were the religious elite, the scribes, and the Pharisees, and the chief priests, and those who shaped the religious establishment, who also were shameless because they believed that they held no guilt before God, that they, by their own self righteousness, had erased their culpability. In both cases, these people are proud of things they should be ashamed of. Outwardly wretched people should be ashamed of their wretchedness. Hypocrites should be ashamed of their hypocrisy.

Paul in Philippians 3:19 describes people who are proud about what they should be ashamed of, whether unbridled immorality or bridled hypocrisy. Sinners are very good at self deception, very good at feeling good about themselves, and that's particularly true in our day, when our society works very hard on convincing people that they should feel good about whatever it is that they choose to be and do because, after all, they have autonomy and a right to choose whatever they want. Sinners will train themselves not to feel shame.

In the 6th chapter of Jeremiah there is a good insight into this, and it describes the sinner in inescapably clear language. Listen to this. Jeremiah 6:15. "Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all. They did not even know how to blush." They didn't even know they were disgraceful. They didn't even know they were shaming themselves. They trained themselves not to feel it.

All sinners, whether they are religious or irreligious, whether they are moral or immoral, have plenty to be ashamed of, plenty. And the Bible makes much of this. The words associated with shame are all through the Scripture: Shame, ashamed, shameful, shameless. They appear in Scripture connected with sin, whether it's the hypocritical sin of self righteousness, or whether it's the sin of open immorality, or anything in between, it's a cause for shame, guilt, embarrassment, disgrace, or even that old word mortification.

My mother used to use that. I remember her saying to me as a kid, "You ought to be mortified to do that. I'm mortified that you would say that." And that was the severest way for her to express upon me shame. I'm glad I was raised by parents who said to me quite often, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself." It served me much better than having parents say to me, "You ought to be proud of yourself, or feel good about yourself." Because we have plenty to be ashamed of. We should teach our children to be ashamed of themselves, not just before people, but more importantly, before God. That will serve them well in leading them to repentance.

In reality, to just make it very simple this morning in the brief time that we have, salvation comes down to the issue of shame. It comes down to the issue of shame. To those who are ashamed of themselves, there is hope of salvation. To those who are not, there is no hope. That's what it comes down to. There is grace, and there is forgiveness, and there is eternal life for people who are ashamed of themselves. There is no grace and no forgiveness and no eternal life for those who are not. And that's the choice.

In fact, Jesus made the choice clear when He said, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory." You see, when the Son of Man comes in His glory, He's going to have to deal with sinners. And the only attitude that a holy God could have toward unforgiven sin is to treat the sinner with consummate permanent shame. For those people who will not be ashamed of themselves, Christ will be ashamed of them.

There are people, obviously, who refuse to be ashamed of themselves, and so they are ashamed of Jesus and His message. They're ashamed of the gospel. They are ashamed to call Jesus Lord and Messiah. That would be a disgrace to them. That would be an admission of their wretchedness, and they refuse to do that. That was characteristic of the religious establishment. Notice Luke 9:22. "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, then to be raised up on the third day."

Jesus was not to be their Messiah. He was not to be their Lord, not to be their Savior. Jesus was not to be their King. They will not have this man to reign over them, they said. They were ashamed of Christ. Everything about Jesus was a stumbling block to them and an offense to them, not just the cross, everything else. They put Him on a cross because they were ashamed of the fact that He claimed to be their Messiah. It offended them that one so humble, one so meek would claim to be the Messiah.

And it wasn't the lack of noble character that offended them. It wasn't divine power that offended them. That didn't offend them. What offended them was His message. What offended them was that He called them sinners, that He called their fasting hypocrisy, and He called their prayers hypocrisy, and He called their giving hypocrisy. And He said, in fact, they were the poor, and the prisoners, and the blind, and the oppressed, that their true spiritual condition was one of absolute poverty, they were spiritually bankrupt. They were imprisoned to their own iniquity and headed for judgment. They were blind to spiritual truth, and they were literally burdened with the weight of guilt, and they would not receive that message.

In fact, when He preached that sermon in His own synagogue in His own town of Nazareth, the first time He ever came back to preach there in the synagogue He was raised in, where He spent 30 years of His life, where everybody knew Him, He preached that one sermon, and it was His neighbors, and His friends, and His extended family that after one sermon took Him to a cliff and tried

to throw Him off and kill Him. That's how much they hated His message.

And the bottom line was, it called for them to be ashamed of themselves. They had so convinced their own minds of their righteousness, their self righteousness that His message infuriated them to the degree that they endeavored to execute Him after one sermon.

And that's really where it all eventually comes, this matter of who goes to heaven. It's whether or not you're ashamed of yourself or ashamed of Jesus and His gospel. That's the issue. And you have, by the way, plenty of things to be ashamed of, plenty. You have a lifelong record of sin, unmitigated, unrestrained, and unmixed with anything that is truly righteous. Every sinner ought to be totally ashamed of himself or herself.

But I'll tell you, there is someone you shouldn't be ashamed of and that's Jesus. What is to be ashamed of? Perfect holiness, perfect righteousness, perfect virtue, perfect goodness, perfect knowledge, wisdom, perfect compassion, perfect love, perfect mercy, perfect grace, perfect power, perfect justice. What is to be ashamed of? To say that you would be ashamed of Jesus is to indict your own wretchedness. It is to say, "I am ashamed of what is holy." I am ashamed of what is right. I'm ashamed of what is good. I'm ashamed of what is honest, and true, and just. I'm ashamed of that. And that makes clear your condition.

That's why the apostle Paul said, "I will boast only in Christ Jesus, my Lord." Christians are people who are not ashamed of Jesus Christ, but they are ashamed of themselves and they come to Him in shame to be forgiven. Should I be ashamed of the one who died on the cross to deliver me from sin? Should I be ashamed of the one who loved me with a perfect love from before the world began? Should I be ashamed of the one who chose to be my friend and my Redeemer? Should I be ashamed of the one who has gone to heaven to prepare a place for me in the Father's house, and to receive me to Himself, and allow me to dwell in His holy presence forever and ever? What is to be ashamed of?

In Hebrews chapter 2 there is a very, very compelling statement in verse 11. It's a brief one but it's, frankly, a riveting statement. It says of Jesus, speaking of believers, "He - " Hebrews 2:11 " - is not ashamed to call them brothers." He is not ashamed to call them brothers. "He is the author of our salvation - " verse 10 says. "He is bringing many sons to glory." Through His suffering He purchased our salvation and "He is not ashamed to call us brothers."

Sometimes you hear people say, "Well he's my brother, but I don't want anybody to know it. I'm ashamed of him. I'm ashamed to be associated with such a person." Well I would have to say that the Lord Himself, the perfect, sinless Christ has plenty to be ashamed of about me. It's an amazing act of grace that the Lord would say, "I'm not ashamed to call John MacArthur My brother." I'm not ashamed to call Him mine. But I wonder how embarrassing it should be for Him to call me His? But He's not

ashamed to call us brothers.

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, this same reality goes deeper into the trinity, because in verse 16, in the middle of the verse, Hebrews 11, it says, “God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

You know, I remember reading an article years ago in *New West Magazine*, and they were writing a critical article on Christianity and the way Christians behave in public, particularly media-type Christians, celebrity-type Christians. And I’ll never forget the line. The author of the article said, “It seems to me that Jesus must have a lot more class than most of His agents.” What an insight. Why would Jesus ever want to call us brothers? Why would God ever want to rise up before the heavenly host and say, “I am not ashamed to call them Mine. They belong to Me”?

That is marvelous grace because we so readily and easily bring reproach on the name of Christ, and embarrassment on the name of God, and yet Christ and God, the Son and the Father, are not ashamed to identify with us. And yet the world shamed Jesus. But Hebrews 12:2 says He went to the cross. He endured the cross and despised the shame. The world heaped shame on Him, they still do, they still crucify Him afresh, put Him to open shame. Every sinner that rejects the gospel shames Jesus, disgraces Him, is embarrassed to even relate to Him. But He despised the shame from the world in order to endure the cross that He might be the author and perfecter of our faith.

You know, when the Lord was in heaven before He came down to earth, He anticipated and then experienced what it was to suffer shame, something He had never known in His entire eternal existence. But Jesus despised that, disdained that shame, in order that He might accomplish our redemption. And so, He received shame, treated it as if it was nothing in order that He might not be ashamed to call us brothers, so that God would not be ashamed to say we belong to Him.

What is a Christian then? Someone who is not ashamed of Christ, someone who is not ashamed of God, but someone who is ashamed of himself. Paul gives our testimony for us in Romans 1:16. “For I am not - ” what? “ - ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Paul says, “I am not ashamed.”

And we know that was true. Everywhere he went he proclaimed Christ. He was just like those angels that appeared to the shepherds and sang, “Glory to God in the highest.” He was not ashamed of the Son who was born Savior and Redeemer. In fact, in Philippians 1:20 he says, “According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ shall now, even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

I will live a life devoted to Christ. I will not be ashamed of Christ, and I will never be put to shame by Christ. He will put to shame those who are ashamed of Him. There will never be any shame for those who are unashamed of Him.

That was Paul and that was how he lived his life. In 2 Timothy 1:12 he said, “I suffer.” And he did. “But I am not ashamed; because I know whom I have believed and I'm convinced that He’s able to guard that which I’ve entrusted to Him until that day.” I will not be ashamed of Christ. I will live my life faithful to Him. I will glorify Him, and honor Him, and unashamedly proclaim Him. And he reminds Timothy, “Do not ever be ashamed of the Lord.” Peter in 1 Peter 4:16. “If any suffer as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed but in that name - ” in the name of Christ “ - glorify God.”

And it comes down to that. Either you’re going to be ashamed of Christ, or ashamed of yourself and unashamed of Christ. How could I be ashamed of the One who died for me? How could I be ashamed of the God of heaven who wanted to be my God? How could I be ashamed of the Son, the Son of God who came into the world to die for my sins so that He might take me to my home in heaven and forever call me His brother?

But sinners, impenitent, unbelieving sinners are ashamed of Jesus. They are embarrassed to accept Him, not because He lacks noble character, not because He failed to demonstrate divine power and proof of who He was, but because to be unashamed of Him requires being ashamed of themselves. It requires, if we go back to Luke 9, exactly what our Lord says here. “If you’re going to come after Me - ” here is what is required “ - deny yourself.” That essentially means be ashamed of yourself, self humiliation. We’ve talked about it the last few weeks, self shame, self hate. That’s the essence of repentance. Self denying cross-bearing. Take up your cross daily. Be willing to follow Christ, shamed over your own sin, thrilled that the Savior has come and forgiven your sins, and out of the thrill of that, willing to give your life for Him, even if it means death, and certainly it means to follow Him.

Forgiven sinners, then, are the ones with a strong, overpowering sense of shame for self, who call on Christ to save them from their shamefulness. The unforgiven sinner is the one with a strong, overpowering sense of shame for the gospel because he refuses to see himself the way he really is. If you go to hell forever, it’s because you were ashamed of Christ. If you go to heaven forever, it’s because you were ashamed of yourself.

Now in this text, just looking at it briefly, this is made clear. First you see the sinners who are ashamed of the Son of Man, and then you see the Son of Man being ashamed of sinners. Verse 26 begins, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words.”

John 1 says, “He came into the world, the world was made by Him, the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, His own received Him not.” And yet He was the manifest glory of God. John 1:14 makes it so clear it cannot be mistaken. “The Word became flesh, dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The revelation of Jesus was clear. It was manifest that He was God, unmistakably so. His revelation was clear. His message was true. It was against sin. He deserved honor. He deserved glory. He deserves worship. There is nothing in Him to be ashamed of. In fact, you get a glimpse into heaven in Revelation 5, and all of the hosts of heaven angelic and glorified saints, as well, are saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory, and honor, and riches, and power, and wisdom, and strength.” And all of eternity in heaven will be a time for praising and praising Christ in all the glory of His absolute perfection. There is nothing in Him to be ashamed of.

And as I said earlier, if you’re ashamed of Christ, that’s a commentary on you, how warped, and depraved, and sinful your mind is. The cross is a stumbling block and an offense to those that are perishing, 1 Corinthians 1 says. Jesus is offensive to those who want to hold on to their sin, whether it’s immorality or morality.

Why do they do that? Why are they ashamed of Christ? Love of self, love of sin, love of acceptance. They don’t want to live a holy and pure life if they’re immoral because they would lose their friends who are immoral. Their friends would belittle them and mock them if they got religion. And on the other hand, the self righteous don’t want to admit their sin. They don’t want to call them sinners, themselves sinners, or they will be alienated from their hypocrite friends.

The preservation of self, the preservation of whatever mode of sin you found your comfort in, the love of being accepted in your chosen group of sinners is what holds the grip on the sinner that makes the sinner ashamed of Christ, ashamed of the gospel that unmasks them as wretched and doomed to eternal judgment.

Those people are described there in verse 26 as those “ashamed of Me and My words.” And that goes right to the issue. You can’t separate Jesus from His gospel. Me and My words go together. It isn’t just being enamored with Jesus, it’s embracing the gospel that He preached. But wherever the fear of alienation or ostracization from your group, or the love of self, or the love of sin dominates the heart, the sinner will not deny himself, he will not willingly take up a cross, he will not follow, and therefore verse 24 says, “He will lose his life.” He’ll lose his life in the eternal sense.

Well, it comes down to who you’re going to be ashamed of. And nothing ever, ever could come close to the seriousness of being ashamed of Jesus Christ and His gospel. That is eternally disastrous. And the second part of the verse points that out. First you have the sinners who are ashamed of the Son of Man, and then you have the Son of Man being ashamed of sinners.

He says, “Of him - ” that is, whoever is ashamed of Me and My words “ - will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” That’s looking at the second coming. When Jesus comes in full blazing glory, the glory of the Father, His own glory and the attendant glory of the accompanying angels, scenes described in the prophetic

portions of the Scripture, in Daniel, in Matthew, later in Luke, in Revelation, when Jesus comes back to sit on the throne of judgment, He is going to have nothing but shame to heap upon those who are ashamed of Him.

The words of Jesus here in verse 26 are tied directly to an Old Testament text that was familiar to the Jews who heard Him say these things. They were very aware that Daniel had prophesied the coming of the Son of Man, the Messiah. And that when He came it would be with the glory of the Father, and with the attendant glory of the angels. And it would be a throne of judgment. And I want you to look at that by turning into the Old Testament to Daniel chapter 7. Daniel chapter 7. This is unmistakably the text that Jesus had in mind.

Although He referred to Himself as “Son of Man” routinely, in this case “Son of Man” directly goes back to Daniel 7. And I want you to look, first of all, at verses 9 and 10. In Daniel’s vision he says, “I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took *His* seat.” He sees God enthroned. “His vesture was like white snow - ” symbolizing purity “ - the hair of His head like pure wool - ” symbolizing wisdom. “His throne *was* ablaze with flames, its wheels *were* a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him,” symbolic of judgment fury.

This is like Ezekiel chapter 1. This is the war machine of the throne of God starting up. This is divine destruction, absolute purity. Holiness is offended. Absolute wisdom responds appropriately with absolute judgment, fury of the very war machine of God. And if you want to a further description of it, you’ll see it in Ezekiel chapter 1, and there’s also a picture of it in the fourth chapter of Revelation. This is judgment time. “Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him.” And those are the angels, the holy angels.

We’ve already seen the glory of God, the Ancient of Days in His white pure flaming glory. And now we see the glory of the angels that are there at that judgment. And verse 10 ends by saying, “The court sat.” This is a courtroom. “And the books were opened.” What are the books? The books are the record of every person’s life and everything ever thought, ever said, and ever done is in those books.

Revelation 20:11-15 gives the same scene in different words. In fact, as you close the Bible there in Revelation 20, getting right to the very end, this scene is depicted, and the books were opened and everybody is judged out of the books. That’s the scene that our Lord had in mind when He spoke in Luke 9:26.

There is coming a time when He will return and He will take His place as judge. God will be on the throne at that great white throne judgment, as the writer of Revelation described it. Christ will be the judge. John 5 says, “The Father has committed all judgment to Christ.” He will rise to the throne, along with the Father, that’s why there’s more than one throne there in verse 9. And from that throne

He will judge.

Verse 13 describes that. “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days.” Here comes the Son of Man, He comes up to the throne where the Ancient of Days is seated. “He was presented before Him. And to Him - ” by God the Father - as John 5 describes it “ - was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. This is the Father giving to the Son the kingdom, as He comes to render judgment. To Him is given dominion, sovereignty, everlasting dominion, glory and the kingdom. That is the scene of judgment.

The Son comes to render judgment and to receive from God the Father His kingdom. That judgment is further described in chapter 12 of Daniel. At the end of verse 1 it talks about another book and everyone who is found written in that book will be rescued, delivered, escaping judgment, so that “many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to shame *and* everlasting contempt.”

There is coming a day when the Son of Man comes to the throne of God to render judgment. All those whose names are written in the book which we know is the lamb’s book of life, the list of those that have been forgiven through faith in Christ, will be rescued from that judgment. All the rest will be raised out of the dust, their spirits already with God. There will be bodies coming out of the dust to join them so that they will suffer forever in hell in some kind of body suited for that punishment.

And they will be shamed is the word. This is exactly what Jesus was talking about. In that day He will be ashamed of them, they will be ashamed, they will be a shame to Him and receive everlasting contempt, while the saints - verse 3 - will shine brightly in the glory of eternal life.

Jesus then was saying that. You can go back now to Luke chapter 9. Jesus was describing here in very brief words that very same scene and saying the time is going to come. You who are ashamed of Me and My words, I’m going to be ashamed of you in that glorious judgment.

Why? Why such shame? Because the books are there. The books are there. And when the books are opened, as Revelation 20 says, as Daniel 7 says, when the books are opened, every thought you ever had, every deed you ever did, every word you ever spoke, every right thing left undone, every impure motive less than glorifying God is all there and all that’s in the book is reason for eternal disgrace, eternal shame. And some will protest. And some will say, as in Luke chapter 13, I think it is, “But we were there in the streets with You, and we ate with You, and we were around, and, You

know, we heard You, and we were kind to You." And He says, "Go away from me, you evildoers." And others will say, "Well, we went further than that. Lord, Lord, we did wonderful works in Your name and we prophesied." And He'll say, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you." There are going to be protests in that day.

There are going to be protests from other people who are going to say, "But we were religious and we were good enough." The record is, however, accurate, and they will be thrown immediately into everlasting disgrace, and contempt, and their response, according to what our Lord said, will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. That is just horrible to think about, Luke 13:28. When He says, "Depart from Me, you evildoers. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

What is that? I'll put it simply, this. You're ashamed of Jesus now, He will be ashamed of you then. The record of your shame will be displayed at the judgment, and you will spend the rest of eternity with nagging, gnawing torment in full recognition of your shame. Be ashamed of yourself now, be forgiven. Or be ashamed of yourself forever with no relief.

This is the first mention in Luke's gospel of Christ's return, but not the last. And Luke mentions it often as a day of reckoning. You're not going to have it then the way you want it. You're going to get it the way God determines is just. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, the call is simple. If we would come to You and be forgiven we have to be ashamed of ourselves. That's what self denial is. And it is so total that we're willing to take up a cross daily and follow You, whatever that means. How I pray, O God, that sinners will be ashamed of themselves, willing to admit their sin, willing to be rejected by the world, willing to abandon the deceptions of personal freedom, willing to lose their life in order to find it forever.

How I pray, O God, that sinners would feel shame in exchange for glory, suffering in exchange for blessing, submission in exchange for eternal life. And we remember the words of Romans 9:33. "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame." Ashamed of ourselves now and never ashamed throughout all the joys of eternity, or ashamed of Christ now and ashamed of ourselves forever.

I pray, O God, that Your Spirit would prompt a right response, and forever is the key, a day of reckoning is inevitable. Father, I just pray that You would work in the hearts of those who hear this message to make a right judgment that they should be ashamed of themselves and certainly not of our blessed Redeemer. We pray for His glory and in His name. Amen.

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