

Evotional

Date: 4th May 2008 (am).

Speakers: Neil Durling.

Message title: “The silencing of shame.”



Bible passage: Romans 10: 8-13.

The message in brief:

There are many different views of the cross:

Jesus was our substitution to satisfy God’s love.

Jesus’ death released us from the devil and brought victory over evil.

As we look at the cross, Jesus’ death moves us to change our lives and follow him.

In this series we haven’t mentioned penal substitution (the idea that, as Jesus stood in our place, God punished him for our sin). Why? I struggle to find this teaching in the Bible and (more importantly) in this idea Jesus seems to be saving us *from* God. The cross is about Jesus saving us *for* God and to be *with* God.

Kraus took the message of the cross, packaged in the “penal substitution” idea, to Japan and gained no response. He asked a group of scholars and intellectuals why this was the case. They pointed out that Japan was an “honour and shame” culture (similar to the Hebrews, Greeks and Chinese); they had little concept of the idea of guilt.

What is the difference between guilt and shame?

Guilt:	Shame:
In a guilt culture when we send someone to prison they are punished <i>by</i> society.	In a shame culture when they send someone to prison they are excluded <i>from</i> society.
Guilt is about boundaries being touched (committing sin).	Shame is about not meeting goals in life.
I am guilty about <i>what I’ve done</i> .	I am ashamed of <i>who I am</i> .

The root meaning of shame is to “uncover, expose, or wound”. In the end shame alienates us.

In the KJV Bible *guilt* is mentioned 25 times, whereas *shame* is mentioned 220 times. Should we be paying more attention to the shame people feel about *who they are*, rather than the guilt they feel about *what they’ve done*? Is this relevant to our culture? My answer is a resounding “yes”. We live in a culture where we are surrounded by the dangers of perfectionism. This idea is prevalent in the Church; so much striving takes place to be like Jesus, when a close look at Jesus shows that he was who he was by resting in and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, there are seven penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143). They speak of the damages of sin, the estrangement caused by sin, etc.. All of them say that it is God who sorts out our sins; none say “I’ll do better next time!” There is an acceptance that we sometimes sin and that God always sorts out the mess. Never do these Psalms switch over to an attempt at being perfect. Do we just sit back and do nothing then? No! We rely on the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

I think many Christians are ashamed of who they are. Is it any wonder that, although God tells us to “go” 512 times in the Bible, we find it hard to? If we feel ashamed of who we are, why would we share this with others?

In Japan Kraus realised that we need to be reconciled to God and ourselves. How is this done? He read of a Japanese man who committed a crime in Holland and was shamed in his homeland until his father committed suicide. This was seen as an act of atonement on his son’s behalf that removed his shame. He was no longer alienated. Sound familiar? Jesus was shamed in his birth, life and death to remove our shame.

In Romans 10:8-13 Paul quotes the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30:14, Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32); he is reminding us that his teaching about Jesus is foretold there; and his teaching is this: If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth you will be saved. He then repeats the words of Romans 9:33: “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” God won’t let us down, or leave us in the lurch, or fail us.

Some of us need to hear that Jesus satisfied God’s love, or evil is triumphed over, or that we should change our ways because of what Jesus has done for us. But others of us need to know that the shame we feel about who we are has been removed. What does Elisabeth Fritzl need to hear?

Question: Do I feel ashamed of who I am?

A prayer: Dear Father, I thank you that I don’t need to feel ashamed of who I am. Amen.