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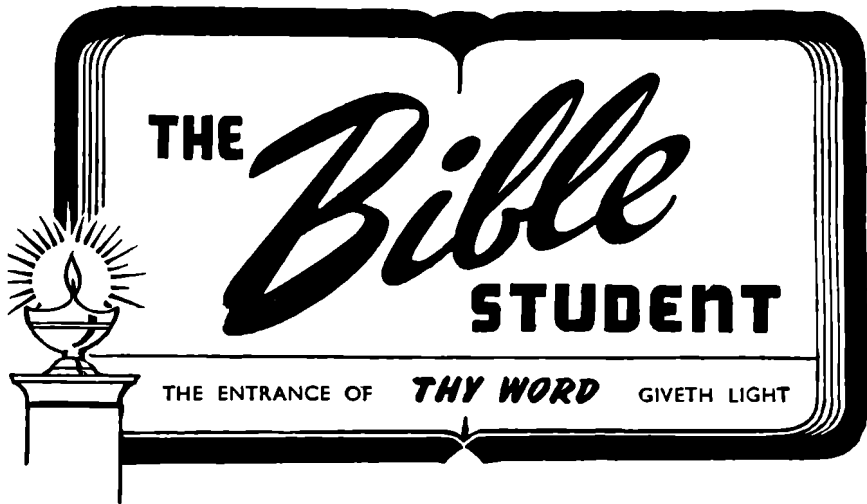
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THE GLORY OF THE UNASHAMED

A. MCD. REDWOOD

Shame is a moral reaction distinctive of man as a rational being. Because man is 'made in the image of God' he can think, feel and react to moral and spiritual impulses. Every such reaction is indicative of forces which mould and motivate the personality. There is always blessing when the conscience produces a genuine sense of shame and sorrow for sin committed. The New Testament classic, almost, is found in Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthian church, which was the outcome of the rebuke administered in the first epistle. 'Though I made you sorry with my first epistle', he writes, 'I don't regret it . . . for ye were made sorry after a godly sort' (2 Cor. 7:8-10; see specially v. 11). It refreshed his spirit and brought blessing to all concerned. To be capable of such sorrowful repentance and shame is of priceless value. It is one of the ways we learn to advance in holiness: it chastens the soul, hinders corruption, and purifies the mind.

The Depravity of the Shameless

It is far otherwise when the Devil and sin succeed in robbing the soul of its capacity to react against moral enticement to evil. The prophet Jeremiah utters a solemn indictment against his people on this very point: 'Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?' he challenges, and immediately makes answer: 'Nay, they were *not at all ashamed, neither could they blush* (ch. 6:15; and mark the repetition in 8:12). The barb in the second clause pierces deep; it expresses the prophet's agony of horror at the depths to which they had sunk. The soul must travel far and deep, however, before reaching that state. Yet, there is the possibility of blacker depths; for the same prophet-exposes to our horror, concerning Judah's sin: 'thou hadst a whore's forehead, *thou refusedst to be ashamed*' (ch. 3:3).

But there is the other aspect of the subject which is of immediate concern to ourselves, viz., the moral courage exhibited in attitude, action, and word, which stands up to some personal challenge of the Evil One in whatever guise he may present himself, when we refuse to bow to his threatening or enticement. These are occasions when to yield to the sense of shame would be actually to

betray our very soul and expose the Judas within. This requires the sensitive watchfulness of a Spirit-taught discipline, and such discipline must never cease till we end our earthly pilgrimage.

The Revelation of the Divine Grace

Before going further pause a moment to glance at an entirely different aspect of the theme, namely, the divine manifestation of the 'Glory of the Unashamed' as exhibited in the cross of Christ and all it has meant for sinful man.

Look first at two references to Christ Himself in connection with His redemptive work 'for us men and our salvation'. The writer of Hebrews puts it thus: 'Jesus the leader and completer of faith; who, in view of the joy lying before Him, *endured the cross, having despised (its) shame*, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 12:2; Darby's trans.). Here we have the immediate endurance of shame, and the ultimate triumph of glory. All heaven bowed in silent awe in that moment when in accepting it for our salvation, yet He 'despised' ('looked with contempt upon') the gibbet's unspeakable shame. Was ever the 'Glory of the Unashamed' more profoundly displayed, or more gloriously fruitful?

Glance for a moment at yet another picture, shewing us the resultant of this sacrificial display of divine mercy, seen in all those who have come to share by faith the new relationship between the Redeemer and the redeemed: 'For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified *are all of one*: for which cause *He is not ashamed to call them brethren. . .*' (Heb. 2:11, 12). 'Brethren'—one with Him now in life, nature, character. And yet, an almost greater climax is indicated by the apostle: 'Wherefore *GOD is not ashamed of them to be called their God*: for He hath prepared for them a city' (Heb. 11:16). Ponder that miracle of divine redemption viewed against the dark background of many a failure in our own life and witness!

The Apostolic Example

Turn now to Paul the apostle, the most outstanding personality in the era immediately following the Ascension. His life-history divides into two clearly-defined periods; that before his conversion and the period after. In both periods he lived a life before the

world for which he felt he had no cause to be ashamed, judged by the respective standards of each period. As a deeply religious man he could declare before king Agrippa: 'after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee' (Acts 26:5; see also v. 4). Later in life he writes: 'as touching the righteousness *which is in the law, blameless*' (Phil. 3:5, 6). But the day came when he cast from him forever all his self-righteousness and counted it 'but dung' (Phil. 3:8, 9). Henceforth he found the true 'Glory of the Unashamed' in an utter abandonment and devotion to the same Christ whom he had 'persecuted' in persecuting His followers to the death with 'exceeding madness'. Listen to his own declaration as he viewed his new life against the background of the glory which shone around him on the way to Damascus: 'my earnest longing and expectation shall be fulfilled that *I may never hang back through shame*, but now as always, I may speak and act courageously . . .' (Phil. 1:20; Lightfoot's trans.). Writing to the Romans he declares: '*I am not ashamed of the Gospel*; for it is the power of God unto salvation. . . .' (ch. 1:16)

So utterly did he abandon himself to the work of spreading the Gospel that it led to physical suffering and final martyrdom. Possibly we might never have heard much of these sufferings but for certain antagonists in the church at Corinth who sought to undermine his influence and belittle his teaching. He felt compelled, because of weaker brethren, to reply, as seen in chapters 11 and 12 of the *second* Epistle; they are most interesting chapters.

For our immediate purpose turn to that intimate reference regarding his sufferings in 2 Cor. 12. He is describing certain 'visions' and 'revelations' of eternal import, and because of which he was given what he terms a 'thorn in the flesh' (v. 7). Exactly what that was we need not enquire here: obviously it had a certain crippling effect on him, the more keenly felt by one of such forceful and ardent a temperament. The resulting liability to a keen sense of frustration might easily rob him of both joy and success, at least in measure. But we are mistaken; and these two chapters must be read to prove we are mistaken.

For example, in ch. 11:30, he asserts (almost vehemently, as it were) 'If boast I must, it shall be of things which display my weak-

ness'! (Weymouth). But he seems to reach what we might call the Everest of the 'Glory of the Unashamed' in ch. 12:9, 10; 'most gladly will I rather glory in my weaknesses (plural!), that the strength of Christ may rest upon me'. And the resultant sense of victory, so he declares, is 'when I am weak, *then am I strong*'! Which is a paradox of divine Love's own origination and sustenance; such triumphant glorying over maleficent Forces can never be of the flesh: the ultimate workings of mere flesh are defeat and debasement.

But we cannot close without a brief glance at the conclusion of such an Example: for towards the end of his life Paul opens to us once more the windows of his radiant soul. It is in his last letter, ere his martyrdom: for a fleeting moment he is looking down at his prison chains as they clank on the stone floor of his cell and dictates: 'For which cause I suffer also *these chains*'—but instantly; with uplifted face; he adds: 'Yet I am NOT ASHAMED; for I KNOW HIM in whom my trust reposes, for I am confident He has it in His power to guard that which I have entrusted to Him until THAT DAY'—the Day when the 'Glory of the Unashamed' shall shine with unutterable splendour; for 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for THEM THAT LOVE HIM (I Cor. 2:9).

In Christian Experience

There is also the personal challenge to be realized here and now in our individual experience as followers of the same Lord and Master who, as we have seen, 'is not ashamed to call (us) brethren'. Four references will suffice.

The Unashamed Witness

(a) I Peter 4:16, '*If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this Name.*' What's in a name? Often nothing; but sometimes everything! It all depends. 'Christian' means practically 'Christ's man'; one who is redeemed by His blood, possessed of His Spirit, and obedient to His leadership. The name was first given at Antioch (Acts 11:26), and possibly passed unnoticed by the general community. But the

faith and character of those who bore it was such that the name came to have an unmistakable meaning amongst the people of Palestine and elsewhere. Even the Emperor Nero later on was made to feel the spiritual impact of its meaning on his own conscience, and tried to rid himself and his world of that day by persecution and slaughter of those who bore that Name. But he failed to extinguish the radiant 'Glory of the Unashamed' Christian testimony of the church and its noble martyrs.

In the preceding verses 12-14 (ch. 4), Peter holds out the expectation that the true Christian *will* be tested in the 'fiery trials' permitted of God in order that he may 'share in the sufferings of Christ'. 'Blessed are ye', he says exultantly, for in such experiences 'the Spirit of Glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you' (v. 12): And, 'at the revelation of His glory ye also may rejoice with exceeding joy' (v. 13). There was a day when even Peter himself shamelessly denied his Lord, but his recovery holds out the promise that any believer similarly tested may come to know the 'Glory of the Unashamed' in recovery.

There is a very suggestive reference on this point of faithful witnessing for Christ in Phil. 1:20, where Paul expresses the *conviction* ('hope' here has that force) that, '*in nothing shall I be put to shame*, but that with all boldness, as always, so now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death'. Moule points out that the word 'put to shame' practically means, in this verse, 'disappointed with the shame of a miscalculation'. Christ will never 'disappoint' *us*; shall we His witnesses 'disappoint' *HIM*—and lose so greatly the 'Glory of the Unashamed' through lack of 'boldness'?

The Unashamed Workman

(b) We find this aspect introduced in 2 Timothy 2:15.

First remark the *ambition* he is to display in his work, as expressed in the A.V. by the phrase '*study to shew thyself approved*', and in the R.V. '*give diligence to present thyself approved*'. The two verbs are in the aorist tense, because that tense gives the *verbal* idea always; having the force, 'make your supreme ideal in service for God the *winning of His approval*.'

That implies an essential prerequisite, viz., the full surrender

of the whole personality to God, as the Apostle indicates in Rom. 12:1, 2. That was not written for some special class of preachers or teachers, but for ALL who engage in the service of Christ—not forgetting the Sunday school teacher! The passage demands most serious personal application. A 'workman' so equipped will also 'hold a straight course in the Word of Truth' (R.V. marg.), which is the *whole* Word of God: He will know how to use it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, never give in!

Possessed of such an ambition Timothy is not to be 'put to shame', in fact *he will have no cause for shame*: this passive sense of the verb *anepaischunton* is considered by many Greek scholars as being more in harmony with the context than the rendering of the English version 'that *needeth not* to be ashamed'. The idea is the maintenance of a persistent *purpose* to be approved.

It reminds us again of the Ideal Servant, Who, at the close of His ministry on earth, was able to say: 'I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do'. But does not that Ideal Exemplification of the 'Glory of the Unashamed' Workman carry within it the divine purpose and possibility that we, in our own humble measure, can (yea, *must*) follow in His footsteps? Is *that* not the teaching of the Parable of the Talents in Matt. 25:14? The matter is settled for us in verses 21, 23 (and by contrast in verses 25 f.), in the twice repeated pronouncement: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things.' For such faithful servants the true 'Glory of the Unashamed' is in the *final* clause—'*enter thou into the joy of thy LORD*'! As the old chorus puts it, '*That* will be glory for you, for me!'

(To be concluded in next issue)

THE CHRISTIAN'S GIRDLE

(Eph. 6: 14)

Take the truth, and wrap it round your life. Wear it like a belt, to give you strength. Let it gather up the whole of your life, and bind it into compactness. Do not let your life be loose, indefinite, limp and inconclusive. Let it be firm assured, decisive. If we feel loose and limp, it is because we are not wearing the girdle of truth.

—J. H. JOWETT, D.D.