

Repentance Leads To Christ-like Character

Being Afraid or Ashamed to Speak of Jesus or God's Word to Unbelievers

Fear and shame can be overpowering emotions that keep you from doing what you know is right to do. These feelings can remain hidden deep in your subconscious until an event occurs which arouses them to impede you from fulfilling your good intention or purpose.

Let's define fear and shame so that you may see if they hide within you:

Afraid

- feelings of fear or anxiety;
- ongoing worry that something undesirable will occur or be done to you;
- a paralyzing unwillingness or reluctance to do something because you might fail.

Ashamed

- persistent feelings of embarrassment or guilt because of something you've done or a perceived personal defect or deficiency;
- an incapacitating reluctance to do something through fear of discomfort or humiliation;
- fear of disgrace or loss of reputation by being associated with a particular person.

When we willfully resist representing our Lord Jesus or God's Word to unbelievers, we're denying our own relationship with Him as Lord of our life. We're refusing to identify with Him out of fear of reprisal or unacceptance by those who have yet to encounter Him as Lord. Think about your silence from the vantage point of the One Who has so loved you that He laid down His life to reconcile you with your heavenly Father: *You are Creator of all the universe, the One Who through all wisdom and might sustains the very ground Your creation walks on—and*

those who claim to be Yours are ashamed to speak Your name.

Let's look at some examples of fear and shame in God's Word:

*"Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Him. But because of the Pharisees **they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God**" (John 12: 42,43).*

*"If anyone is **ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation**, the Son of Man will be **ashamed of him** when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).*

Jesus was addressing both His disciples and the interested crowd when He told them that following Him would entail denying self and taking up a cross. He minced no words that living for yourself would mean *forfeiting your soul*; but dying to self-will and self-gratification because of loving Him and sharing His good news would bring deliverance.

- How strong a warning is our Lord Jesus giving us when He says "*the Son of Man will be ashamed of*" anyone who is ashamed of Him and His words?
- Do you really purpose to continue living in fear or shame of representing our Lord and His Word to unbelievers when you know the grievous consequences when He returns?

If you are born again, our Father has a great Kingdom purpose for you. That's because you are "*God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to **do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do*" (Ephesians 2:10). The key purpose He has given you above all others is to be His

representative to a sinful world so that they might respond to Him and repent.

The following passages parallel both the ministry of Jesus and that which He has given to His followers:

“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32);

“All this is from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us” (2Corinthians 5:18-20).

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Our Lord Jesus shed His blood to reconcile us to His Father by atoning for our sins on the cross. To follow Him as a child of our Father is our God-given and Spirit-empowered privilege and responsibility: to actively pursue being His ambassadors through whom our Father is making His appeal.

Our earnest desire to carry out this work flows from the loving power of the Spirit of Christ within us. The responsiveness He produces through us is proof that we are truly born again, *“for Christ’s love compels us”* (2Corinthians 5:14).

“The righteous are as bold as a lion”
(Proverbs 28:1).

Frequently Christians who are plagued with fear or shame of represent-

ing our Lord Jesus or the Word of God are holding on to unconfessed sin. Prolonged periods of unrighteousness because you refuse to confess and repent often lead to cowardly silence when you’re given an opportunity to be our Father’s ambassador.

The righteous ARE as bold as a lion and are prepared “in season and out” to represent our Lord, His righteousness, and His truth when they’re talking with unbelievers (Ephesians 5:8-10). They don’t have to try to conjure up courage, for the Spirit makes known with whom He wants them to share and the words that will be *“gracious and seasoned with salt”* (Colossians 4:6).

Paul admonishes those who are living righteously in Christ,

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15,16; see also Colossians 4:5).

Then as now, the “days are evil” and lawlessness reigns in people’s hearts. While it is yet day, however, our Father’s will is that we be available and willing vessels of honor to speak and to do that which makes Christ known.

Become Like Our Father, Abraham

Our heavenly Father is in the midst of restoring the Hebraic foundations of love-grounded obedient trust that guided the first followers of Jesus. Repeatedly the Bible affirms how God took delight in the Hebrew, Abraham, even referring to him as His friend (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). The Patriarch’s obedience as well as his courage to identify himself as a man who trusted the One true God was commendable in His sight (see Genesis 14).

We who claim to belong to our Lord Jesus need to learn from Abraham if we're to overcome any fear or shame and be the ambassadors our Father purposes for His children. Isaiah chapter 51 offers important insight into Abraham and how those who are his children in the faith should respond when confronted by people who have yet to bow to God:

*“Listen to Me, you who **pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD**: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; **look to Abraham, your father...**” (Isaiah 51:1,2; see also Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7).*

*“Hear Me, you who **know what is right, you people who have My law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults**” (Isaiah 51:7)*

*“I, even I, am He Who comforts you. **Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass**” (Isaiah 51:12; see also Luke 12:5).*

*“I have **put My words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of My hand—I who set the heavens in place, Who laid the foundations of the earth**” (Isaiah 51:16; see also Matthew 10:28).*

Such servants of God as Abraham, Joseph, David, Daniel and many others displayed courage because they knew in their hearts that they *belonged to God*. Is it any wonder that the Newer Testament commends the love-based courage of those who refused to be crippled by fear or shame as chronicled in Hebrews chapter 11 for us today?

Followers of Jesus shouldn't hope for acceptance by unbelievers, for they are still ruled by the god of this world, Satan. What we say and do doesn't make sense to them,

for it's foolishness to forfeit the goals and values of this world to love and obey a God you can't see. Yet we still need to represent our Lord Jesus and God's Word to them in love and respect for them as individuals made in the image of their Creator. Jesus has already told us what to expect when we present Him as the incarnate God He is:

*“All men will hate you because of Me, but he who **stands firm to the end will be saved**” (Matthew 10:22).*

*“Blessed are you when men **hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man**” (Luke 6:22).*

If Satan appeared before our Lord as an accuser concerning you, could this be said of you?

“[Your name] overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of [your] testimony; [you] did not love [your] life so much as to shrink from death” (Revelation 12:11).

If this doesn't describe your own loving determination to stand up for the Lord of life, then **repent now!** Cast down the cowardice which fear and shame produce, and resolve by His power and grace to be that willing vessel through whom He speaks and acts. He promises a glorious inheritance to those who overcome! (See Revelation 21:6,7.)

Those who are controlled by fear and shame, however, join the company of people destined for hell: *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur” (Revelation 21:8).*

Be an “Abraham”—stand up for our Lord Jesus and His Word! Don't let fear and shame cause you to deny Him!