

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Sense of Shame

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ur ability to feel pain, may at first appear to be a negative thought, but in reality it is a positive and helpful part of our makeup. If we feel no pain while our hand touches a hot flame, we might keep our hand over the fire and do further damage resulting even in death. Likewise, a sense of shame helps us in avoiding permanent spiritual death.

A sense of shame is closely associated with our conscience. When we do things we judge to be wrong, we feel guilt. The action which falls short of the moral standard we acknowledge leads to the feeling of shame when it is made known. It may be only known by ourselves and God, leading to private shame. Some are willing to live with this shame and not change one's ways. When the unlawful action is known by many, public shame sets in. Compartmentalizing shame does not help us in our relationship with God. Like Paul, we must renounce “*the hidden things of shame . . . Commending our selves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*” (2 Corinthians 4:2). Living up to the proper standard to avoid shame-

period, not just public shame, is spiritually healthy.

We do not see much evidence of the sense of shame in the world around us. Men and women today flaunt their nakedness through immodest dress instead of covering up to avoid the shame of nakedness (*cf. 1 Tim. 2: 9; Rev. 3:18*). Lust producing movements on the dance floor are praised, instead of the feeling shame for a work of the flesh (*Gal. 5:19*). It is not that men and women are incapable of feeling shame today; they just do not acknowledge the standard of God's word in their conscience. Setting our own standard will affect our sense of shame. Men can be so hardened against God's law, that like God's people of old: “. . . *Thou hadst a harlot's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed*” (*Jer. 3:3*).

Have God's people today become like the people of old? What do you see today when you attend weddings among those claiming to be Christians? Do you see exposed bosoms, and bare backs through the immodest dress of the bride and her attendants? Do you see our brethren guarding their godly influence at the reception, or

do you see members of the church dancing with their wives in public before the gaze of many who are willing to feed lustful thoughts through the brethren's suggestive movements. We have not lost the ability to feel shame, we just refuse to be ashamed!

Coupling God's standard for living with a sense of shame can help us domestically. A caring and industrious wife can be a crown to her husband avoiding making him “*ashamed*” and thus becoming “*rottenness to his bones*” (*Prov. 12:4*). A son who *gathereth in summer*” is a “*wise son*” and thus avoids the shame of laziness (*Prov. 10:5*). The shame of discarding parents or treating them violently can help us make sure we requite them properly in a godly manner (*Prov. 19:26, 1 Tim. 5:4*).

Shame felt internally can help us in the discipline of our spiritual lives. Brethren taking away their social company with me over my sin should cause me to “*be ashamed*”, thus leading me back to righteousness (2 Thess. 3:14).