

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY SHAME?

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Scripture: 2 Samuel 13: 1-17 (NLT)

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¹ Now David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar. And Amnon, her half-brother, fell desperately in love with her. ² Amnon became so obsessed with Tamar that he became ill. She was a virgin, and Amnon thought he could never have her.

³ But Amnon had a very crafty friend—his cousin Jonadab. He was the son of David's brother Shimea.

⁴ One day Jonadab said to Amnon, "What's the trouble? Why should the son of a king look so dejected morning after morning?"

So Amnon told him, "I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

⁵ "Well," Jonadab said, "I'll tell you what to do. Go back to bed and pretend you are ill. When your father comes to see you, ask him to let Tamar come and prepare some food for you. Tell him you'll feel better if she prepares it as you watch and feeds you with her own hands."

⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick. And when the king came to see him, Amnon asked him, "Please let my sister Tamar come and cook my favorite dish as I watch. Then I can eat it from her own hands." ⁷ So David agreed and sent Tamar to Amnon's house to prepare some food for him.

⁸ When Tamar arrived at Amnon's house, she went to the place where he was lying down so he could watch her mix some dough. Then she baked his favorite dish for him. ⁹ But when she set the serving tray before him, he refused to eat. "Everyone get out of here," Amnon told his servants. So they all left.

¹⁰ Then he said to Tamar, "Now bring the food into my bedroom and feed it to me here." So Tamar took his favorite dish to him. ¹¹ But as she was feeding him, he grabbed her and demanded, "Come to bed with me, my darling sister."

¹² "No, my brother!" she cried. "Don't be foolish! Don't do this to me! Such wicked things aren't done in Israel. ¹³ Where could I go in my shame? And you would be called one of the greatest fools in Israel. Please, just speak to the king about it, and he will let you marry me."

¹⁴ But Amnon wouldn't listen to her, and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her. ¹⁵ Then suddenly Amnon's love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. "Get out of here!" he snarled at her.

¹⁶ "No, no!" Tamar cried. "Sending me away now is worse than what you've already done to me."

But Amnon wouldn't listen to her. ¹⁷ He shouted for his servant and demanded, "Throw this woman out, and lock the door behind her!"

What a tragic account that we read in the Bible. David's son Amnon, consumed by lust for his sister Tamar. And that lust sets in motion a chain of events that leads to devastation. His obsession is not love, but lust disguised as love.

Amnon's lust was three things.

- It was self-serving, seeking only to gratify his own desires without any regard for Tamar's dignity.
- It was consuming, blinding him to wisdom, reason and any consequence from that action.
- It was destructive, leaving devastation in its wake, ruining Tamar, corrupting his own soul and tearing apart the fabric of David's family.

Scripture warns us that unchecked desire gives birth to sin. And sin, when full grown, gives birth to death. But further, Amnon is aided by a misguided friend in Jonadab, a shrewd but unscrupulous cousin. Instead of restraining him and sin, Jonadab enables it, proving how dangerous wrong counsel can be. We are reminded in Psalm 1:1, *"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers."* Amnon ignored this wisdom. Instead of avoiding ungodly influence, he invited Jonadab's advice into his heart.

Proverbs 13:20 says, *"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."* Amnon suffered ruin because he chose a fool's counsel. His cleverness without godliness became the spark that ignited destruction. But the other thing that Amnon had was power and influence. As the king's son, everyone was expected to do his bidding. And instead of using that privilege to protect and honor others, he used it to satisfy his foolhardy lust for his sister Tamar. And in doing so, he twisted the very power that was meant for stewardship into a weapon of exploitation.

Beloved, power is meant to protect, not to exploit. Yet, he silences others, isolates Tamar, and forces his will upon her. This is the ugly reality of unchecked desire. Unchecked desire paired with unchecked power. When these two come together, when desire is left without restraint, it feeds on itself and grows more brazen. And when power is left without accountability, it becomes a weapon that crushes instead of shielding. Unrestrained desire and power without accountability – together they form a deadly partnership that destroys lives and defiles God's design for authority. And God entrusts authority to us to protect and never to oppress.

Amnon used that power to violate Tamar. His supposed love turns to hatred, hatred even greater than the passion he once professed. And here, sin shows itself for its true colors. It promises pleasure, but delivers shame and guilt and hatred and brokenness. Lust is always, always self-centred. It is centred on me and my desires. Always. Once lust has gotten what it wants, it despises the very person it pretended to love. What begins in passion always inevitably ends in ruin.

James reminds us in 1:14-15, *"But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*

But, at the heart of this narrative is the haunting cry of Tamar, when she says, "Where do I go with this shame?" Look at her – used, thrown away like a filthy rag, in a world in which shame was not only personal; it was very, very social.

What could happen to her?

- 1) She would be stigmatized, labelled forever by what had been done to her.
- 2) She would be isolated, cut off from her community and any marriage prospects, her voice silenced by shame.
- 3) She would be dishonored, not because of her own sin, but because someone else's sin had stripped her of any dignity in the eyes of society.

And her words I believe, are not confined only to the pages of scripture. Through the ages, there are cries like Tamar's that have rent the air in silent shouts, screams that have said: What do I do with my shame? It's a cry of violated dignity. It's a cry of stolen innocence, of shame that is unfairly born.

I wonder today, whether there are some of you who resonate with Tamar's cry? Maybe you too have been the object of some kind of exploitation.

Exploitation need not be sexual, but it can take place in many ways. Exploitation of power can take many forms. Shame can be perpetuated in the home when trust is betrayed by harsh words, by neglect or abuse from those who are meant to nurture. It can be carried out in the workplace where manipulation, bullying or unfair treatment strips people of dignity. It can happen in relationships where love is replaced by control or betrayal. It can be found in communities where prejudice and gossip or discrimination brands people as "less than", "you'll never measure up". In each of these contexts, power that was meant for protection became a weapon to harm, and shame became the bitter fruit of that weapon.

Tamar's question becomes our question as well. And the question for us who believe in an all-powerful God is: Where is God in all this? What will, and can God do with the shame that I carry? How can He carry me through it? Where do I go from here? How can He shield me from the contempt of those who have wronged me? Is there a road to healing, to redemption and wholeness?

These are not ancient questions found in antiquity or scriptures. They are questions of every heart that has been wounded by sin, sin that has been perpetuated on a person. These are the cries of those who sit in silence, wondering if God sees, if God cares, and if God can repair and restore what has been shattered and broken.

If we are to find some kind of answer to the questions that we've posed, we have to understand shame for what it is first.

SHAME VS. GUILT

Shame is that heavy feeling that whispers, "There is something wrong with you." It's the sinking sense that I'm not good enough, not worthy of love, not worthy belonging. And unlike guilt which says, "I did something wrong," shame says, "There is something wrong with me."

Guilt points to behavior and because it is tied to an action. It can be resolved through confession, through forgiveness, repentance, and even where possible, making things right. In this way, guilt, though painful, can actually be healthy in some ways because it leads us back to God's mercy and to restored relationships.

But shame, on the other hand, goes much, much deeper. It does not stop at what I have done or what has been done to me. It attacks who I am. It whispers: I'm unworthy. I'm beyond love or belonging to any place or family or community. While guilt convicts us to change, shame condemns us to hide. It corrodes our identity. It attacks who we are. It distorts how we see ourselves and convinces us that we are defined by our failure or by what has been done to us. That's how we get defined by ourselves. That's how we think about ourselves.

Researcher Brené Brown describes it like this. "Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging."

The Bible illustrates it very well. Take Peter – felt guilt after denying Jesus, wept bitterly, but his grief led him to restoration. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, hid from God in their shame. Guilt can draw us to repentance, but shame drives us into hiding. Psychology echoes the same truth. “Guilt says I did something bad. Shame says I am bad.”

While guilt can be redemptive and corrective, shame is often corrosive and paralyzing. That’s what happens with shame. It’s corrosive; it eats into you and paralyzes you, prevents you from being who you are meant to be. It thrives in secrecy and isolation, produces a sense of unworthiness that fuels anxiety and depression and destructive coping mechanisms.

It silences joy, distorts identity and colors how we see God, ourselves and others, convinces us to keep our struggles hidden, which only deepens the wound. It whispers that if people really knew us, they would turn away. And so, it locks us into loneliness, cuts off every relationship that could bring empathy, acceptance and healing.

And we begin then to believe the lies about ourselves, about others and about God Himself.

- Lies about ourselves: Shame tells us “I’m unworthy. I’m broken beyond repair. I don’t deserve love.” But what does God say to you? He says, “You are My beloved child, My masterpiece. You are fearfully and wonderfully made.
- Lies about others: Shame whispers, “No one can be trusted. People will only hurt you. If they really knew you, they would reject you.” What does God say? He says, “Carry each other’s burdens. Be there for one another. Encourage one another and build each other up.”
- Lies about God: Shame distorts our view of Him, making us think, “God must be so disappointed with me. He could never really forgive me. I have to hide from Him as well.” And God says to you and me, “There is no condemnation if you are in Me today.”

Beloved, I want to say this to you, and I say this as gently as I can. Healing from shame comes only through Jesus. At the cross, Jesus bore not only our sins, but also our shame. He took it. He cancels the record of our guilt as we see in Colossians 2:14. But He also restores our dignity as beloved children as we see in 1 John 3:1.

How does He restore our dignity?

- 1) By taking our place. Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus endured the cross, conquering its shame. He willingly entered humiliation that we deserved so that we could stand unashamed before God.
- 2) By giving us a new identity. In Christ, we are no longer defined by our failures. All the things that have been done to us. by God’s declaration, He says, “You are My beloved child.”
- 3) By bringing us out of hiding. Just as God called out to Adam, “Where are you?” Christ invites us to step into the light where His blood cleanses and His love covers.
- 4) He clothes us in honor. instead of the rags of disgrace, He covers us with garments of salvation and robes of righteousness.

In short, Christ heals shame by bearing it, breaking it, and replacing it with the honor of being God’s beloved. The honor of being His child, His son, His daughter, princes and princesses of the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

The gospel declares guilt is forgiven and shame is lifted. The process of healing begins as we bring shame into the light.

Psalm 32:5 teaches us to name our struggles before God.

1 John 1:9 assures us that confession brings cleansing.

Psalm 34:5 says, "Those who look to Him are radiant." If you look to Him today, His radiance will be on your countenance. Their faces are never covered with shame. That's God's word.

And God's answer to Tamar's cry and to ours is complete restoration. Will I ever be whole again? Can I ever assume the plan and purpose that I thought many years ago God had placed in my life? Can I ever be that person that I thought I would one day be? can I ever get over this thing that has been such a stumbling block in my life that has sucked out the very joy and peace that should be mine as a child of God"

And the answer to that is a resounding YES." If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come."

Beloved, today if that's what you want to do with the shame that you have lived with, you need to name it as the old you. Only then will you be able to accept being a new creation. Call it that was who I was until Jesus took me and made me brand new, as one who is loved and honored by Him, one who is filled with His purposes and plans for my life, one who tells me that they can and will be fulfilled by the power and the anointing and the presence of God's Holy Spirit in me. I can be a new creation.

Beloved, that's the reality that you and I need to walk in. That's the reality to accept that what happened is part of my old person, but today, I'm someone new. Accept the breaking that He has done. Accept the honoring that He places on you. Accept the knowledge that you are His beloved. Look at yourself and think of yourself as God's masterpiece. Not a filthy rag that has been used and thrown, but God's masterpiece. The temple of the most high God, one who houses the eternal God within him or her this morning.

Shame has no hold, beloved, on you today. If you've struggled with shame, I want you consciously to turn to the Lord today and say, "I give it up to You. I won't carry it anymore, Lord. I want to trust Your word for me. I want to walk out of here knowing that I'm a new creation in You, and Your masterpiece. That's who I am. That's how I want to walk from this point on.

Let's pray.

Amen.