

## FROM SHAME TO FAME

**Today's Text:** Isaiah Chap. 61

**Extracts:**

**“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.” ...*Instead of your shame you shall have double honour, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion [Is. 61: 1, 3,7]***

*Ian Atherly is the Mayor of San Fernando, the second biggest city in the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago (West Indies). During the General Elections of 4 October 2002, he served as the campaign manager for the San Fernando West Member of Parliament, Diane Seukeran, who won and became a state minister. Soon after that election, Atherly was charged with ballot box tampering in one of the polling stations. If convicted, he faced jail term plus a fine.*

*Even though he pleaded not guilty, it was his word against that of the key state witness, the presiding officer at the polling station who, with a sworn affidavit, maintained that he did not authorize Atherly or anybody else to touch or interfere with the box in any way. It was dawning on Atherly that he could in deed go to jail. Then, on 3 March 2006, somebody who during the 2002 elections was an employee of the National Broadcasting Network (NBN), made available to the prosecution an unedited tape. The tape showed that the presiding officer had actually invited Atherly and several other individuals to inspect the box! In dismissing the case against Atherly, the judge expressed concern that “any citizen ...could be subjected to this kind of scandalous prosecution.” Atherly broke down in tears of joy.<sup>1</sup>*

*What was meant to shame Atherly turned out to confirm his fame as a man of integrity. Have you ever been in a shameful situation? Are you there right now? There is hope and Jesus Himself is offering it. Let us find out in today's lesson.*

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<sup>1</sup> Keino Swamber, “DPP to probe wrong evidence in Atherly ballot box case,” [www.trinidadexpress.com](http://www.trinidadexpress.com) of Wed., 8 March 2006.

## 1. Shades of shame!

We face shame when our standing (in society, family, office, congregation, etc.) is threatened. It can happen at any time, in any place and to anybody. In general, shame can come to us from the following major ways:

### a) *Self-inflicted*

According to an African proverb, “trouble was fast asleep when pride went to wake him up!” Many of us invite shame to ourselves by our acts of commission or omission. Let us illustrate with a few examples:

- Greed- some of us are so greedy that we do not know when we expose ourselves to shame and ridicule. Look at how some of your colleagues at work or church eat during official occasions. They eat like locusts as if they have no food at home! Not only that, they carry away packages heavy enough for a large family even when they live alone! Some people in high places grab everything in view for their own personal use and pretend to be surprised when they are charged with corrupt practices or nepotism. See the shame that came to Achan whose greed led to the defeat of the children of Israel before lowly Ai [**Josh. 7: 1-26**]. God had commanded Joshua to destroy everything owned by the pagan nations, but Achan coveted their gold and silver items that he took and hid away. When it was found out, he was humiliated before the rest of the people, who stoned him and his family to death.
- Immorality- sexual immorality has put high and low people to shame. For example, how did President Bill Clinton feel during his impeachment trial when he faced millions of television viewers worldwide to defend his sexual escapades with a White House intern? Look at the woman caught in adultery that was brought to Jesus. She might have got away with dozens of adulterous affairs in the past. Then, on that fateful day, she was caught in the act and dragged into the public domain for instant justice [**Jn 8: 1-11**]. What a shame!
- Addiction- all of us are hooked on one thing or the other. It could be television or a particular sport or hobby/pastime or alcohol or drug. Sooner than later, we reap shame out of it. Look at the openly gay clergy, V. Gene Robinson, that was made the bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire, USA, by the Episcopal Church. Even when there was public outcry in the worldwide Anglican community, the man wore a face of peace. Now, barely two years later, he has gone into a rehabilitation centre for alcoholism, a problem that he had been dealing with privately for years.<sup>2</sup> Now,

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Booze lands gay bishop in rehab,’ [www.cnn.com/2006/US/02/14/bishop.alcoholism.ap/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/02/14/bishop.alcoholism.ap/index.html)

the shame is hurting not only the bishop but also his diocese and church.

b) *Uninvited*

Most times, shame is thrown at us by man-made or natural/spiritual forces. Among such forces are, for example:

- Temptation- you may find yourself confronting an irresistible temptation and even when you are able to fight it off, you are not spared the shame. For example, Joseph was doing his work dutifully as the servant of Potiphar's, an Egyptian army officer, who trusted Joseph with the management of his household. His wife tempted Joseph uncountable times to sleep with her. He refused because he feared God. One day, as he tried to escape from her, he left his garment in her hands that she then presented to her husband as evidence of attempted rape. For that, Joseph was put in prison [**Gen. 39: 1-21**].
- Persecution- you may be persecuted by people in authority over you for no just cause. For example, Paul and Silas were clamped into a Philippian jail on the false allegation that "they teach customs which are not lawful for (the people) being Romans, to receive or observe." The magistrates tore off their clothes, beat them with rods and "put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks" [**Acts 16: 16-24**].
- Ingratitude- your kindness may be rewarded with ingratitude that winds up making you ashamed. Take the case of David's servants that he had sent to console the son of Nahash, king of the people of Ammon that had just died. On arrival, the princes advised the new king, Hanun, not to be deceived but to regard David's emissaries as spies. They "shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away" and David's servants became "greatly ashamed" [**2 Sam. 10: 1-5**].
- Illness- do you know of anybody who enjoys being sick? Yet, you may find yourself with an illness that makes you feel shame. For example, for reasons that he could not understand, Job suddenly lost his children and wealth and was struck with boils all over his body. His three friends came to commiserate with him, and "when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept" [**Job 2: 11, 12**]. Can you imagine Job's shame at that point?
- Tag name- how do you feel to be called a name that no longer reflects your current situation? May be you were once a thief or liar. Even now that you are clean, that is the tag that you still wear. For example, there was "a harlot called Rahab" even when she did not appear to still be in that business [**Josh. 2: 1**]. In Jewish

society, a leper was not allowed to mix with others until he had been pronounced healed by the priests [**Lev. 13: 17; Num. 12: 14-15**]. Yet, when Simon hosted a dinner in honour of Jesus, he was introduced as “Simon the leper” [**Matt. 26: 6**]! Would you smile to be so called?

We see from the forgoing that there are many sources of shame that we feel each new day. Some shame is buried deep in our subconscious. Some nags us as we look at our mirrors, jobs, marriages, ministry, and future. Some people commit suicide because of shame. Some drown their shame in drugs and alcohol. There is a better way! We can be transformed from shame to fame without our effort. That is the promise in Isaiah Chapter 61.

## 2. Let Jesus the Christ remove your shame!

Soon after He had returned from the wilderness to Nazareth, His hometown, Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. As He stood up to read the day’s scripture, they gave Him the book of Isaiah. He went straight to what we now call Chapter 61 and read the first verse:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*

Then, He closed the book, looked around and said emphatically, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” [**Lk 4: 16-21**]. What further authentication do we need to demonstrate that the chapter that we shall examine today is talking about Jesus the Christ?

Jesus is promising you that no matter the *type of shame* that you are facing, He is able *and willing* to take it away. Let us classify Christ’s remedies for shame into three: physical, psychological and spiritual. They are all covered in the chapter under review as follows:

### a) *Physical healing*

What is in your body or environment that evokes shame in you right now? Have you worked so hard without positive results to show for your efforts? Is your backyard littered with broken promises and failed dreams and aspirations? Do you find yourself trapped by economic hardship and misused by ungrateful status climbers or high maintenance bosses or partners? You have come to the right place because the Lord will heal the brokenhearted and set free those in captivity or prison [**Is. 61: 1**]. He will

give you “beauty for ashes” [v. 3] and repair your ruined cities [v. 4]. He will comfort and console you when you mourn [vv. 2, 3].

Jesus demonstrated it when He walked the earth as a man. He healed the sick and raised the dead back to life. He even paid Peter’s taxes [Matt. 17: 24-27]! After His resurrection and ascension, He sent angels to set Peter free from Herod’s jail when the wicked ruler was bent on killing him [Acts 12: 1-10]. When Paul faced shipwreck in a storm on his way to Rome, He sent an angel to assure him that he and other passengers would be saved and *it was so* [Acts 27: 21-25]. He is still with us today, in our hearts. You ask Him and see what happens. Therefore, prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers [3 Jn 2].

b) *Psychological restoration*

Do you have the “spirit of heaviness”? Jesus has for you the “garment of praise” [Is. 61: 3]. What is it that insults your honour, integrity and stability? The Lord has promised for your shame, “double honour” and for your confusion, joy in full measure [v. 7].

Can you imagine the shame that Martha and Mary suffered from their neighbours when their brother, Lazarus, died? They were supposedly the Lord’s best friends in Bethany, which was called “the town of Mary and her sister Martha” [Jn 11: 1-5]. Lazarus died and was buried. For four days, their best friend did not show up. Do you know what was making the rounds in the gossip mills of that little town? “*Now we know He is not as close to them as they make us believe!*” Then, Jesus showed up and raised Lazarus from the dead! I can picture Mary laughing and running around without saying a word. Her shame had turned into double honour. Her dignity had been restored. Never again would anyone doubt that Bethany was in deed Mary’s town!

c) *Spiritual upliftment*

If Jesus came to save those who were lost, it would not be enough for Him to only wipe away their shame on earth. He needed to facilitate their way to everlasting life in heaven. Therefore, He wants to cover you with the “garments of salvation” and the “robe of righteousness” [Is. 61: 10].

When the Lord showed John in a vision the Gentile multitude that would come out of the great tribulation, they were wearing white robes, with palm branches in their hands [Rev. 7: 9]. John asked one of the elders what that picture meant and the elder replied, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” He added, “they shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them, and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” [vv. 15-17]. Clearly, *Jesus is the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness*. When you wear Him, He can turn your stagger into a swagger!

### **3. Conclusion: make Jesus your role model!**

There is no shame that you have suffered that Jesus Himself did not experience, but conscious of “the joy that was set before Him,” He “endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the hand of the throne of God.” That is why we ought to look unto Him who is “the author and finisher of our faith” [Heb. 12: 2]. Having turned the shame of the cross to the fame of His eternal rule as King of kings and Lord of lords, to whom every knee should bow, “of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth” [Phil. 2: 10], who can separate you from His love?

All your bases are covered. Let people persecute you for righteousness’ sake. You are blessed and God’s kingdom is yours. Let them persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you to shame you or make you ashamed. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad because your reward is great in heaven [Matt. 5: 10, 11, 12]! From now on, don’t look at your shame. Look at the gorgeous garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness. That way, you will have moved from shame to fame!