

## Condemnation and shame

The dictionary defines shame as: A painful emotion caused by a strong sense of guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness, or disgrace.

The world is full of shame and condemnation. Some headlines from the Daily Mail in the first six weeks of 2010:

- Footballer **shame**: England captain could face World Cup axe
- Daily Mail readers **condemn** barbaric treatment of Somali adulterer
- Porn **shame** of hundreds of police staff
- Church of England **condemns** violent and sexual video games
- Expenses **shame** MP wants a £100,000 lobbying job
- Daily Mail **condemned** for homophobic attack

We come to a place of conviction about our sinful ways and repent of them but often we have become so used to our shame that we live with it instead of taking it to the Lord along with the sin.

Shame is like everything else; live with it for long enough and it becomes part of the furniture. **Salman Rushdie: Shame**

Sadly, the church is frequently seen as a place where people are shamed and condemned instead of the place of release and freedom that it is meant to be.

A prostitute came to me in wretched straits, homeless, sick, unable to buy food for her two-year-old daughter. Through sobs and tears, she told me she had been renting out her daughter - two years old! - to men interested in kinky sex. She made more renting out her daughter for an hour than she could earn on her own in a night. She had to do it, she said, to support her own drug habit. I could hardly bear hearing her sordid story. For one thing, it made me legally liable - I'm required to report cases of child abuse. I had no idea what to say to this woman.

At last I asked if she had ever thought of going to a church for help. I will never forget the look of pure, naive shock that crossed her face. "Church!" she cried. "Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse." **Philip Yancey: The Jesus I Never Knew**

### What is the difference between guilt and shame?

Guilt is about what you do wrong (for example: I lie, he cheats, she steals).

If I feel convicted of my guilt, I can repent and make amends. (As in a court of law.) Conviction and guilt are related.

Shame, on the other hand, is about who you are. (for example: Nobody knows how bad I really am. If they knew the truth about me, they wouldn't want to know me.)

We feel that we cannot change, so we hide or run away from any threat of exposure or attack anyone who might get near the "truth". We don't want our shame to be exposed.

Shame leaves us feeling condemned, because condemnation means that there is no way out, no solution, judgement and death. No hope.

Shame and condemnation go hand in hand.

### **What does the Bible say?**

The Bible makes it quite clear that condemnation and shame have been dealt with on the cross by the death and resurrection of Jesus. They no longer have power over those who are born-again unless we allow them to.

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. **John 5<sup>24</sup>**

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." **Romans 10<sup>10-11</sup>** (Quoting **Isaiah 28<sup>16</sup>**)

### **Who can condemn us?**

#### **God/Jesus?**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. **Romans 8<sup>1-2</sup>**

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Romans 8<sup>34-39</sup>**

#### **Satan?**

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. **Revelation 12<sup>10-11</sup>**

#### **Other people?**

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." **John 8<sup>3-11</sup>**

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. **Romans 2<sup>1</sup>**

### **Ourselves?**

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. **Romans 7<sup>24-25</sup>**

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. **2Corinthians 4<sup>2</sup>**

For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." **1Peter 2:6**

### **So, who can condemn us?**

- God doesn't want to.
- Satan has no power to.
- Other people have no right to.
- We have no need to.

Nobody!

### **The "unforgivable" sin?**

Some people read this passage in Matthew 12 and become distressed that they may have committed the "unforgivable" sin or may do so in the future.

Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub,

by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

"Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. **Matthew 12**<sup>22-32</sup>

The sin is not against the *person* of the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy against the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is exactly the same sin. The blasphemy referred to is directed *against* the *work* of the Holy Spirit. Whoever rejects the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven because the Holy Spirit calls us, creates faith in us and brings us to the place of trust in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. If we attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan and continue to do so, by definition, we have rejected the only way that we can come to God.

This sin remains unforgiven because of its type, not because of its magnitude. It is easy for us to imagine that this sin is unforgiven because it is so bad but all sin alienates us from God and we know that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven if we turn away from it.

People would not feel distressed if they really had committed that sin but they would find constant delight in blaspheming the Good News. If you are worried that you have committed the unforgivable sin then you haven't.

### **Summery**

Because Jesus has paid the price, we can live free from shame and condemnation no matter where it comes from.

There is no unforgivable sin - other than continuing to refute the very thing that will save us.

You need to get hold of this and by faith reject all shame that comes your way (for example "guilt tripping", shame about things which you had no control over, shame about our family or shame from our family) and refuse to use shame yourself to manipulate others.

You also need to reject any shame that you have inherited or adopted from your past and to surrender it to Jesus.

It will transform your walk with God and your relationships with others.

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. **John 8**<sup>36</sup>