

Saved from Shame

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Do you ever wonder what life was like for Adam and Eve before they sinned? What complete freedom they must have enjoyed as they walked with God? They didn't have any dysfunction or emotional scars. They didn't regret the past. They looked forward to each day with joy, knowing they would continue to spend every moment in the Lord's presence.

Genesis 2:25 tells us that though Adam and Eve were naked in the Garden of Eden, they were not ashamed. I believe that in addition to indicating they were without clothes, this Scripture also implies they were totally open and honest with each other—not hiding behind any masks, not playing any games. They were free to be themselves because they had no sense of shame. Once they had sinned, however, they hid themselves (see Gen. 3:6-8).

If not for the work Jesus did on the cross, all of us would have to live with the overwhelming shame of sin. But because of His sacrifice, mankind has the opportunity to enjoy perfect freedom with one another and with God.

Unfortunately, very few of us are able to do so. Most of us pretend. We create false personalities and hide behind them. We act as if we are not hurt when we are or pretend we don't need other people when we do.

The meaning of the word ashamed as it is used in the King James Version of Genesis 2:25 is "to be disappointed, or delayed ... confounded." The word confounded simply means to be

frustrated or confused.

There is a type of shame that is normal and healthy. If I lose or break something that belongs to someone else, I feel disappointed about my mistake. I wish I had not been so careless or negligent.

I am sorry, but I can ask for forgiveness, receive it and go on with my life. Healthy shame reminds us that we are imperfect human beings with weaknesses and limitations.

But there is a poisonous shame that can dramatically affect the quality of a person's life. When people are being abused or mistreated they can internalize the pain they feel. They are no longer ashamed only of what is being done to them but also of who they are.

So many Christians spend their entire lives in this pitiful condition—living far below their rightful position as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (see Rom. 8:17). I know, because I was one of them.

My life was filled with confusion. I always felt defeated because no matter what I accomplished, I still felt bad about myself on the inside.

I was continually rejecting my real self and trying to be someone I was not and could never be. I was ashamed of me! It was a great day when the Holy Spirit led me to understand that shame was the source of many of my problems.

There are many promises in the Word of God that assure us we

can be delivered from shame. Isaiah 61:7 says, "Instead of your [former] shame you shall have a twofold recompense; instead of dishonor and reproach [your people] shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double [what they had forfeited]; everlasting joy shall be theirs" (The Amplified Bible).

Recompense is a reward or compensation for injury. In other words, if you trust God and do things His way, He will see to it that you are repaid for every injustice ever done to you. You will receive double what you have forfeited or lost, and everlasting joy will be yours! That is a wonderful promise, and I can vouch for the reality of it. God has done that very thing for me, and He will do it for you too.

God can deliver you from shame. If you have suffered emotional or verbal abuse, pray and ask God to set you free from the shame that tries to build up within you. The prayer of the psalmist can be yours also: "O keep me, Lord, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed or disappointed, for my trust and my refuge are in You" (Ps. 25:20).