**REGRET AND SHAME**

Sunday School Lesson 7

*FORMER THINGS*

Jeremiah 3:25

3/20/2022

**Introduction:** Last week, we continued our study of how to deal with regrets. In that lesson, we observed that some regrets are caused by the decisions of other people. We all have to live in a world where things do not always go the way that we would like them to. Secondly, we observed that regrets over wrongdoing must first be confessed in order to be dealt with. We must confess them to the Lord, and we should confess them to those whom we have wronged. The third observation from last week’s lesson was very difficult for us to consider but nonetheless true. We observed that many regrets must be carried for a time in order to be dealt with. We would prefer to forget our regrets. It is wonderful that the Lord forgets our sin. Yet, the regrets serve a purpose of keeping us from turning to such bad decisions again. The Last observation was that regrets must be considered to be forgiven in order to be better dealt with. Thankfully, the Lord is faithful to forgive. Unfortunately, others are not so quick to forgive us of those things that we regret, but the Lord can still help us overcome unforgiven (from people) regrets as well. As we continue in the topic of dealing with regrets, we are going to be looking at regret and shame this morning. We must understand the role that shame plays in dealing with our regrets. Let’s consider the following truths about regret and shame:

1. **SHAME HAS ACCOMPANIED REGRET SINCE THE VERY FALL OF MANKIND.**
2. **Notice that Adam and Eve immediately dealt with shame after they disobeyed the Lord (Genesis 3:7-13).** Consider the behaviorof Adam and Eve in the Garden. As soon as they had eaten of the fruit, they sought to cover themselves because they were naked. Additionally, they hid themselves from the Lord. Adam claimed that this was only because he knew he was naked, but as the Lord questioned them, it is obvious that they were hiding because they were ashamed of what they had done. They had directly disobeyed God’s one commandment for them. Just as Adam passed down sin to all of mankind, he also passed down the regret, guilt, and shame that accompany it. While we know little about what life looked like for Adam and Eve after that, can you imagine the shame that they lived with in the world? How difficult must it have been for them to explain the state of the world to their children and later descendants! Everyone would know that they were responsible for having to live outside of the Garden and in a sinful world. While we do not know exactly how old Adam was when he sinned, it’s likely that he had to carry that shame and regret with him for hundreds of years.
3. **Notice that Cain had to deal with great shame when he was cursed by the Lord (Genesis 4:10-15).** While the shame of Adam and Eve had to be great, consider also the shame of Cain. He was so afraid of his shame that he told the Lord that his punishment was greater than he could bear. Cain had received a curse from the Lord as a result of what he had done to his brother Abel. The Lord told him that he was cursed from the earth. Of course, this was especially painful for Cain who was a tiller of the ground. As a result of his curse, he would live his life as a fugitive and a vagabond. Cain was so filled with shame by this curse that he expected that everyone who saw him would want to kill him. As a result, the Lord made a promise to Cain that He would take vengeance sevenfold on any person who would kill Cain. What did Cain do when he went out into the land after receiving his punishment? He sought to establish a city named after his descendant. Why is this significant? It speaks to his desire to change his legacy and clear himself of the shame that he had to live with. Unfortunately, it did not matter what he did; he still had to live the rest of his life with the shame of knowing he was a cursed murderer.
4. **SHAME IS BASED ON OUR REGRET OVER FAILURE TO ACHIEVE A SET STANDARD.**

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1. **Notice that shame may be caused by failure to follow the Lord’s standard (2 Thess. 3:14; Titus 2:8; 1 Cor. 6:5; 15:34; Eph. 5:12; Jer. 2:26; 3:25; 6:15; Is. 47:3; Ps. 44:9; 83:16; 89:45; Prov. 19:25).** Have you ever considered the cause of shame? It is the result of not meeting some form of expectation. As it relates to the Christian, shame should be the result of failing to obey the Word of God. In Jeremiah 6:15, we see the anger of the Lord against a people who were not ashamed at all about the abominable things that they were doing. They had no regrets, and they had no shame. That’s because they did not concern themselves with the commands of the Lord. In 2 Thessalonians 3:14, we see that shame is a device used to prompt believers who are disobeying the Word of the Lord to regret those actions and return back to obedience to the Lord. For some reason, we have this idea today that shaming someone should never be done. As long as there is some type of expectation, there will be shame experienced by those who fail it. The issue is what the expectation is; how it’s applied; and what happens after.
2. **Notice that shame may also be caused by failure to follow the standards of others (Matthew 15:2; Acts 5:41; Psalm 22:6; 69:19; 1 Peter 4:16; 2 Timothy 1:8, 16; Luke 16:3; Zech. 9:5).** This is an important distinction to make from our last observation of shame caused by failure to meet the Lord’s standard. We must understand that society also has their standards. It is amazing that people will not go to church because they state that people shame them for their open rebellion against the Lord, but they do not realize that our godless society is also in the practice of shaming. If you do not live up to their standards and expectations, you can expect to experience shame. As believers, we are commanded not to be ashamed of following Christ. Why is this command needed? It’s needed because the world will try to set an expectation of how you are to live and seek to shame you when you do not abide by that expectation. The Pharisees shamed those who did not live up to their standards, but their standards had become extra-Biblical (wash hands). If you are dealing with shame, let’s first consider the reason for it.
3. **SHAME MAY BE UNNECESSARILY INCREASED BY OUR PRIDEFUL EXPECTATIONS.**
4. **Pride will always lead to shame because we cannot possibly live up to its expectations (Prov. 11:2).** As noted in the last point, shame comes through our regrets over failure to achieve a set standard. It’s a good thing if that shame is based on God’s Word. It’s unhealthy, though, if that shame is based on our own expectations for ourselves. Our pride can cause us immense shame. The haughty spirit goeth before a fall. It’s not just that the Lord will bring down the prideful. Ultimately, He does not even have to. When the prideful puts himself up on a pedestal, he creates a standard that he cannot possibly meet. The only thing left is for that shame to come. Many people cannot get victory over shame of the past because they are not truly dealing with the persistent problem. That problem is their pride. Their pride has convinced them that such failure should have never happened to them. They were above it. They were better than that in their own minds. The irony is that it was likely this same pride that tempted them in the moment to sin by convincing them that it would not be a big deal for them.
5. **Pride will also lead to shame because we improperly emphasize our reputation (Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1; Colossians 3:17; Romans 2:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; Revelation 3:1; 1 Cor. 6:11).** A good name is important. The Bible makes this clear in the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. When we deal with shame, we are dealing with a hit to our reputation. There is a reproach brought upon our name. Yet, let us also consider that as Christians, we now carry the name of Christ with us. Our shame ought to be based more on how we have hurt the name of the Lord. If we have hindered the Gospel, that is certainly something that should cause us shame. A prideful person, though, is more concerned with his personal reputation. He has an image to keep up. He has his own brand to protect. As a result of this, the shame that comes by a failure to live up to his reputation is of great intensity. If you are dealing with the shame of the past, ask yourself what it is about that shame that has you most in pain. Is it how your reputation has been hindered, or is it truly about how you have hurt the testimony of Jesus?
6. **SHAME FROM OUR REGRETS IS USUALLY EITHER HIDDEN IN OR COVERED OVER US.**
7. **Notice that there is a tendency for man to try to hide his shame (Isaiah 47:3; Ezekiel 16:54; Hosea 4:7; Proverbs 28:13; Ephesians 5:12; Genesis 3:10).** We hit on this a little bit in last week’s lesson when we observed the difficulty of seeking forgiveness from others. It is a very difficult thing to have our shame from past regrets uncovered. For this reason, we tend to tuck our shame down as deep as we can get it to go. We will often go to great lengths to prevent that shame from coming out. Going back to the Garden, we see this to be the behavior of Adam and Eve. They sought to make clothes out of fig leaves in order to cover up their shame. Of course, we know that we cannot cover over our shame before the Lord. We might be able to conceal potential shame before others so that they cannot see how we have failed those expectations previously mentioned. Regardless of whether we are successfully able to do this or not, we still have to deal with the internal pain of that shame.
8. **Notice that there is also a tendency for man to be swallowed up in his shame (Jeremiah 51:51; 3:25; Micah 7:10; Psalm 44:15; 109:29).** The Bible mentions, on several occasions, where shame covered someone up. This is the opposite of what we see above where there is a desire to hide our shame. When our shame comes to light, it has a way of overpowering our lives to the point that we are completely covered by it. This can speak to two different facets. On one hand, this may speak to the infamy that accompanies shame. There are Bible characters who are only known for their shameful behaviors. They have been covered by shame. On the other hand, this may speak to how shame has a way of debilitating us. We are so overwhelmed by it that all we want to do is what the prophet Jeremiah spoke about in Jeremiah 51:51. We want to just lie down in it. This does not have to happen to us, though, as shame is not meant to debilitate us in the work but to encourage us in it.