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"The Saviour not ashamed of those ashamed of themselves!"



Based upon a sermon preached by
Rev. Ivan Foster
in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church,
Lord's Day evening, January 22nd, 2006.

**"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city,"
Hebrews 11:16.**

God's grace and love are so far beyond our comprehending that we often refuse to believe they can be so wonderful, so boundless!
No phrase sums up the believer's blessedness like the one contained in our text.

The God of the whole earth is, in a very special way, the God of the Christian. Christians have a special relationship with Him that none other can claim. He is our God by creation. This is the case with all of His creatures. But He is also our God by redemption. This is something only the elect can claim.

I. GOD IS NOT ASHAMED OF HIS PEOPLE THOUGH THEY ARE DEEPLY ASHAMED OF THEMSELVES.

The Lord is not ashamed of us even though there are so many times when we are ashamed, deeply ashamed, of ourselves!

Christians are often deeply ashamed of their failings.

The lament of David in Psalm 51 and the bitter tears of Peter, recorded in the gospels, are symbolic of what true believers feel on many occasions. Indeed, every time we bow the knee in prayer we feel a sense of shame and failure and yet God is there to meet with us with grace and mercy and pardon and restoration.

1. Before our conversion we were, by and large, the meanest of people. As we look back upon ourselves do we not feel ashamed? We certainly have nothing to glory in regarding who or what we were!

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are," 1 Corinthians 1:26-28.

We have nothing to boast of in our lineage or upbringing!

2. Since our conversion we have done much we have been ashamed of. The people of God have had amongst them many who brought great public shame upon the gospel cause. Indeed, some of those guilty of the most shameful behaviour have been the chiefest of men. Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, Peter. These names spring to mind but how



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many more there are! Yet God never disowned them or ceased to be their God! mark of grace

To feel a sense of shame is an evidence of grace within the soul. This needs to be stated. To be ashamed of our sin is a mark of an awakened soul. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . O wretched man that I am!" Romans 7:18, 24.

3. A sense of shame is something believers frequently express. "I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven . . . We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses." Nehemiah 1:4, 7.

"We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly," Psalm 106:6.

"We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments," Daniel 9:5.

As Martin Luther wisely said, the essence of true religion is continual repentance.

4. Despite our determination not to sin we still do. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Romans 7:18-19. We have the desire and the will to obey God within our new nature but we do not of ourselves possess the power to overcome the baser instincts of our fallen nature.

5. Thus it will continue to be until we are delivered from this body. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," 2 Corinthians 5:1-2. Until that day of perfection we must continue our pilgrimage, battling against sin within and without and praying: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," Matthew 6:13.

II. GOD IS NOT ASHAMED OF HIS PEOPLE THOUGH MEN BE UTTERLY ASHAMED OF THEM.

When men utterly detest all that believers are and stand for, God is honoured to be called their God.

1. He adopts their name as His surname. Such is the meaning of the Greek word behind "called." "And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed (called) Peter, were lodged there," Acts 10:18.

Thus we find God surnamed Abraham in Genesis 26:24. "And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father," Genesis 26:24. Please remember the origins of surnames. "John Smith" is but a shortened version of "John the son of the Smith." So we see that God has surnamed Himself after our names. He permits us to call Him our God, "the God of . . ." and each true believer may fill in the blank with his name. For us to be surnamed after the Lord — as we are, for we are the sons and daughters of the Highest — is a glorious truth, but for Him to be surnamed after His people is too



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glorious to fully comprehend!

2. He calls them His glory. "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory," Isaiah 46:13. (See also 44:23; 49:3.) In His High Priestly prayer in John 17:10, the Saviour prays: "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." His people, though despised by men and often filled with a sense of their own shamefulness, are nevertheless, His glory. So stated Peter. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Peter 2:9. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise," Isaiah 43:21. The word "praise" means "hymn". Is this not unspeakably wonderful that we are a hymn of praise in God's ears!

3. He calls them His portion. "For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance," Deuteronomy 32:9. The word "portion" is linked to a Hebrew word meaning "flattery." As a garment may flatter or enhance the features of the person wearing it, so God counts His people as those who flatter or enhance His person and majesty. This is beyond our understanding!

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine," Exodus 19:5. Counting us as His treasure, He is not ashamed of His people.

III. THIS VIEW OF US BY THE LORD IS NOT ALWAYS EVIDENT.

1. The circumstances of God's people at times seem to deny this fact. It was so with Job when he was amidst His great afflictions. It was so with David when he was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains by Saul. Throughout history there have been times when heaven seemed to disown the people of God. There were times when even the enemy rejoiced in what they perceived as God's forsaking of His people. "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?" Psalms 115:2. But even then God was not ashamed of them but was merely working out His purpose in love toward them.

2. Such circumstances will not prevail and the Lord's true feelings regarding His people will be seen by all. During times of persecution and trial, the Lord has conveyed His love for His people to them in a secret fashion. This was the case with Paul in the midst of his trials in Corinth. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Acts 18:9-10. Even if life should see no end to these harsh circumstances, eternity will. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matthew 25:34. Every troubled saint has this assurance of God's love. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," Isaiah 49:15.

IV. THE REASONS WHY THE LORD IS NOT ASHAMED OF HIS PEOPLE.



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1. They have believed on Him. The word “wherefore” in our text is a word meaning “on account of which.” It is linked to an explanation. Those of whom the Lord is speaking “all died in faith,” verse 13. Because His people are those who have believed upon His Word and embraced His gospel promises, “God is not ashamed to be called their God.” They are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and are accepted of God through Him, the One with Whom the Father is “well pleased”. That is why He is not ashamed of His people!

2. They have chosen His kingdom above the things of this world. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” Hebrews 11:8, 13. Like the thief on the cross, they preferred membership of God’s kingdom to all that the world claimed to offer them.

3. They were not at home in this world. Hebs 11:14-16. “For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” God’s people do not view this world as their home, but they look toward the everlasting hills of God and pine for that land which “is very far off” (Isaiah 33:17). They are but “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11) here in this world.

4. They have chosen to bear reproach amongst men by seeking to bear His image before men. The Lord is not ashamed of them for they are not ashamed of Him. “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God,” 1 Timothy 4:10.

Moses depicts this virtue for us. “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Hebrews 11:25-26.

Those who have boldly and unashamedly stood for Christ, will be honoured by Him.

“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels,” Mark 8:38.

How solemn and terrible are these words in the light of the current compromise and backsliding amongst God’s people and the unending attempts to remove from the religion of Christ all that offends the world!

It is clear from what Christ says here that there will ever be in His message that which will prove embarrassing to the world and the false professor of faith in Christ. Christians will ever be under pressure to adjust the gospel to remove these embarrassments. That is what lies behind the thinking of many who would seek to promote new “ideas” on the subject of new versions and translations; simple and Biblical worship; modest and decent apparel and appearance; separation from the worldliness of the cinema, the dance, the nightclub.

They are ashamed of the way of the cross, the way of reproach. They desire the approval of the world, not its derision.



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Hymn

Years ago, the Free Presbyterian Church rejoiced at protests amidst the derisions and scorn of worldly religionists and ecumenists to sing the words of the old Isaac Watts hymn:

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I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause;
Maintain the honour of His Word,
The glory of His cross.

At the cross, at the cross,
Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!

Jesus, my God! I know His Name,
His Name is all my trust;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.

Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.

Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face;
And in the new Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.

I hope that we can all sing it with the same zeal and fervour today!
In the light of our text I am sure that we would wish never to be ashamed of our Blessed Redeemer and Friend.