

VISUAL THEOLOGY

EXODUS 30:17-21

GOD'S BATH FOR SHAME



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

I'm just back from a week in the UK, where, among other challenges, I was battling internet connection problems. It was painfully slow at times, it was non-existent at times, and it was expensive all the time. There was no Wi-Fi where I was staying and therefore I was relying on my phone as a mobile hotspot to help me keep up with work, booking flights, car hire, hotels, and so on. For long times I was totally disconnected from everyone and everything, which caused a number of problems.

There was also the challenge of Covid-19. My family has been very apprehensive about this virus and, as all good Brits, wanted to obey the government's rules. This too created a sense of distance and disconnection. Disconnection is a horrible feeling and has numerous consequences.

All this made me think a lot about spiritual disconnection, the problem and consequences of being disconnected from God. I'm sure you've felt that at times, haven't you? There are two main causes of it: guilt and shame. Guilt disconnects us from God because it makes us feel, "I've done wrong, God's angry, and he's going to punish me. Shame disconnects us from God because it makes us feel, "I'm dirty, God's disgusted, and wants to push me away."

Why is this so bad? It's not just that shame disconnects us from God, it actually makes us sin all the more. Sin makes us ashamed, but shame also makes us sin. (See Covenant Eyes article on connection between shame and porn).

We need to deal with both guilt and shame if we want to re-connect with God. Or maybe I should say, we need God to deal with our guilt and shame. And he can and does, as we'll see today as we turn to the Tabernacle again.

CONTEXT

Remember, the Tabernacle was the way God used to reveal himself to Israel and so connect with Israel. That's why the first lessons God taught with the first two items in the Tabernacle were, "I remove guilt" and "I remove shame."

The fire-pit or altar we looked at last time was focused on removing the priests' guilt by sacrifice. However, they were still dirty. Their hands and feet were soiled, not just from desert life in general, but from the blood and guts and ashes of the sacrifices they had just offered. They were dirty and needed purified. That's why the second piece of furniture was a big brass bath.



**What did God's brass bath teach them?
It taught them that God provided cleansing for them.**



1. GOD PROVIDES CLEANSING

The brass bath was filled with water which was allowed to escape through taps into a large shiny plate which also formed the base of the bath. We don't know the exact shape or dimensions of it, but the similar bath in Solomon's Temple was circular and huge. There were two main washings at this bath.

One-time full-body washing

When priests were first ordained and installed, usually at age 30, they were given a one-time full-body washing with water from the brass bath (Ex. 29:4).

Daily feet and hand washing

After installation, the priests were only to wash their hands and feet, but they had to do it every day, partly because these were most exposed to the world and therefore the dirtiest parts (Ex. 30:19-21).

APPLICATION

♥ **Jesus is our priest** (Heb 10:21). He was installed by his baptism in the Jordan. He stayed spotlessly clean throughout his life and death in this world. He had no shame of his own, but took our shame upon himself on Calvary (Isa. 53:3).

♥ **Jesus is our bath** (1 John 1:9). Jesus provides both the one-off all over washing of regeneration by the Spirit (Titus 3:5), and the daily washing of sanctification by the Spirit for our daily sins (Eph. 5:25-26; John 13:10; 15:3).

♥ **Shame multiplies sin** because "When we feel terrible about who we are, we pursue behaviors that provide irrefutable evidence that we are unwanted...Shame, not pleasure, drives pornography use...We will be healed to the extent to which we turn and face the stories that corner us with shame....One day of deliberately facing your shame with curiosity and kindness will lead you into greater transformation than will a decade of willpower and lust management techniques" (Covenant Eyes).

SHAME DIRTIES AND DISCONNECTS
CHRIST CLEANSSES AND CONNECTS

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
in my place condemned he stood,
sealed my pardon with his blood:
Hallelujah, what a Savior."

Living Hope

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The King of kings calls me His own
Beautiful Savior, I'm Yours forever
Jesus Christ, my living hope



"But my need of daily cleansing reminds me of ongoing imperfection and shame."
You're right, but that won't last forever.

2. GOD PERFECTS CLEANSING

Let's take a closer look at the brass bath. It was made of brass, a symbol of strength and indestructibility, endurance, and solidity (Ps.107:16; Dan.10:6; Rev.1:5). What about the base of the bath? We see two lessons there.

A base made out of mirrors.

He made the basin of bronze and its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered in the entrance of the tent of meeting (Ex. 38:8).

We're not told why they did this but a number of commentators speculate that they were giving up their focus on outward cleanliness and beauty to focus primarily on inward cleansing and beauty. They brought symbols of personal glory and dedicated them to God's glory. Group of godly women still gathered in similar way to serve in the Tabernacle in Christ's day (Luke 2:37).

A base made to be a mirror

Why did Moses and the priests decide to make the base out of these mirrors? Most likely so that the priests would have mirrors to use when they were washing at the bath taps. It was nerve-wracking to be a priest. **When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the Lord, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. 21 They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die** (Ex.30:20, 21). A speck of dust or dirt not only rendered them unfit for God's presence but rendered them subject to fatal judgment.

The mirror therefore helped them to see the dirt they needed to wash off, reminding them of their need for both outward and inward purity (Ps.24:3-5; 26:6). As they looked anxiously in the mirrors at the base of the bath, how they must have longed to see a reflection of one who was perfect and pure.

APPLICATION

♥ Such a one was Jesus Christ. He is the Priest the mirrors pointed towards (John 17:19; Heb. 7:26-28). He is the perfect Priest. Examine him all over from every angle and you will find him flawless. He has clean hands, a pure heart and never lifted his heart to vanity (Ps. 24:3-4).

♥ The hope of perfect cleansing becomes a personal reality for believers in glory. In Revelation 15:2,3 we read that the saints are standing on a "sea" (bath) of glass singing to the Lamb. The bath has no water in it because they don't need it any more. They remember it to celebrate their perfect purity.

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE BASE
HELP US SEE CHRIST'S GLORIOUS FACE.



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Holy God, I confess that shame disconnects me from you, but thank you for perfect Jesus who washes me clean and reconnects me to you.

FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [Shame's Massive Role In Porn Use](#)
- [When Shame Keeps You Away](#)
- [The Weight of Shame](#)
- [Shame, Shame, Boatloads of Shame](#) (Podcast)

Books

- [God in our Midst](#) by Daniel Hyde
- [Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection](#) by Ed Welch

Songs

- [Shame](#) by Fernando Ortega.

Discussion Questions

1. What disconnects you from God. What shame disconnects you from God?
2. Read John 13:1-17. What are the parallels with Exodus 30:17-21?
3. What role has shame played in your story and how is it influencing your life?
4. What difference has Christ's perfect cleansing made to your life? Your view of God and of yourself?
5. What can we use as a mirror to see our sins?
6. Part of heaven is being shame-less in the best sense of the word. What will that be like for you?

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WHEN WE FEEL TERRIBLE ABOUT WHO WE ARE, WE PURSUE BEHAVIORS THAT PROVIDE IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE UNWANTED...SHAME, NOT PLEASURE, DRIVES PORNOGRAPHY USE COVENANT EYES



Shame disconnects us from God

Biblical answer?



God provides cleansing

- One-time all-over
- Daily hands and feet

SHAME DIRTIES AND DISCONNECTS
CHRIST CLEANSSES AND CONNECTS

Ongoing imperfection and shame?



God perfects cleansing

- A base made out of mirrors
- A base made to be a mirror

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE BASE
HELP US SEE CHRIST'S GLORIOUS FACE.

Action?



Praise God for providing a perfect priest and a perfect purity to remove shame and to re-connect us to him.

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