

Trinity Church Gathering Supplement: "Fear, Shame and Guilt"

"The Big Three": Fear, Shame and Guilt

The Bible has some strong words to say about Fear, Shame and Guilt. It seems that we as Humans have a natural proclivity to succumb to these things as core operating procedures for our day-to-day living. And there's a reason for that! Notice the following from Genesis 3:8-13 immediately after the first humans (Adam and his wife Eve) chose to rebel against God:

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool^[d] of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"^[d] ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

A Question of Origin

Our First Parents ran and hid because they were AFRAID, and God hadn't even come into the garden yet. They sewed fig leaves over their bodies because they were ASHAMED, but God wasn't the One who told them that. Instead, He actually asked them, "Who told you that you are naked?" And they blamed one another because they were GUILTY, but God had not actually judged them yet. Fear, Shame and Guilt are not from God, and they are not God's design or originally intended mode of operation for His Creation. They come as a result of sin but have been removed for those of us who follow Jesus as a result of His work on the Cross and through the Empty Tomb.

What Scripture Says About Fear, Shame and Guilt

One of the most interesting Scriptures about all three elements (Fear, Shame and Guilt) is found in the Old Testament. In Psalm 34, note that all three elements are addressed as David characterizes what is true of the people who know and are known by God:

- (v.4) *I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.*
- (v.5) *Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be **ashamed**.*
- (v.22) *The LORD redeems the life of his servants; **none** of those who take refuge in him **will be condemned**.*

Beyond that, however, the New Testament also has some interesting things to say about Fear, Shame and Guilt:

- **Fear** – 2 Tim 1:7: *"... for God has **not given us a spirit of fear**, but a Spirit of Power, of Love and of a Sound Mind."*
- **Shame** – Romans 5: 5: *"...⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*
- **Guilt** – Romans 8:1: *"There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

The simple Truth is that for those of us who are in Christ is that just as Fear, Shame and Guilt were among the first things to enter into our First Parents in the Garden, so they are also among the first things defeated at the Cross and Resurrection of our Savior! Thank God that we no longer have to be bound to those three monsters!

A Note About Conviction vs. Condemnation

Often, as we seek Freedom in Christ, people will ask about “Godly Conviction” of the Holy Spirit and will ask if that is a form of Fear, Shame and Guilt? And that’s a great question! Note the following:

- **Conviction** – The process by which the Spirit of the Living God in us produces in us an awareness of our shortfalls, destructive patterns of thought, action and error, and brings us back to confession, repentance, cleansing and restoration. *2 Cor 7:10 “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*
- **Condemnation** – The process by which justice is administered against a lawbreaker with punishment fitting to the crime.

The best way to know whether or not you’re experiencing Condemnation or Conviction is explained in the next section. Condemnation will create Fear of consequences, Shame with your fellow Christ-followers and people around you, and Guilt over what you have done. It will likely push you away from God and others and keep you dwelling on your sin rather than your Forgiveness. Conviction will draw you closer to your Father and to others, will remind you of a sense of Mercy and Gratitude, and lead to Authority and Power in that area of your life.

A Conclusion of the Matter

If in the process of prayer, you find that you are struggling with feelings or thoughts or memories of Fear, Shame or Guilt. But your Heavenly Father does not speak such things to His children, and He does not intend us to speak them to one another.

Praying Through Fear, Shame and Guilt

If you find that you are struggling with Fear, Shame and/or Guilt, the good news is that you can “get at” being released from them the same way that we “get at” other patterns of sin and action as we discover them. This is essentially just the process of utilizing “CRCR” by doing the following:

1. Admit that we have succumbed to Fear, Shame and/or Guilt = **Confess**
2. Admit that we no longer desire to do so = **Repent**
3. Ask the Father to forgive and cleanse you of the Fear, Shame and/or Guilt = **Cleanse**
4. Ask what is being Restored/Replaced in the place of those lies = **Restore**

This pattern of prayer follows 1 John 1:9’s exhortation that, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

In addition, remember that when you hear and receive what God is Restoring back to you, you should use the following “filters” to make help you know whether what you’re hearing and receiving is from God:

1. **Does what you hear and receive cause you Fear, Shame and/or Guilt?** If it does, it’s NOT from your Father.
2. **Does what you hear and receive accord with God’s Word (The Bible)?** God never violates His Word or His character, so if something you hear or receive is contrary to God revealed Word or His Character, it is NOT from your Father.
3. **Does what you hear and receive draw you closer to God and others or push you farther away?** God’s desire is ALWAYS to draw us closer to Himself and one another, so if what you hear and receive in prayer pushes you away, into isolation or away from God and His People, it is NOT from your Father.