

Weekend Gathering 04252021 – Relationship Kryptonite (Shame and Vulnerability): The Math of Shame

Good morning, brothers and sisters! It is GREAT to be here with you this morning, both in-person and online. If you're just joining us this week for the first time in a while, you're joining us at a great time as Pastor Marvin has rolled us into a new series on the idea of Relationship Kryptonite. We're talking through some of the things that hinder us in our relationship with God and also in our relationships with one another, and last weekend, he walked us through the idea of Lies and how that can absolutely weaken and kill our trust, our intimacy and the strength of our relationship connections. And we're going to continue that series this morning by talking about something that I'm particularly passionate about, and we've got a lot to cover, so we're going to jump right in. Now here's some good news for you: Not only are my notes available if you'd like, but we've also written you a 1 page addendum on the concept we're covering that is available for download online. Anyway, when Pastor Marvin told me he was going to be doing this series, I asked him if I could take this particular topic because over my years in ministry, I have seen few things devastate individuals, families and even entire organizations or cultures quite like this particular kind of Kryptonite, and I think that it's important as followers of Jesus that we understand it clearly and what to do with it and about it when we find it cropping up in our lives.

One of the "Big Three."

We're going to be talking about Shame this morning, and it is what I call one of the "Big Three." If you spend any time around me at all, you'll probably hear me say something like, "Fear, Shame and Guilt are not from God." If you are a follower of Jesus, those things have been removed from you at the Cross, but the problem is, nearly everything that we struggle with as a sin issue or an obstacle in our pursuit of God is still rooted in the gravity of one of those three issues. Here's what I mean: A man or woman who struggles with Porn or Romance Novels or Fantasizing about their co-workers isn't really struggling with those things. Yes, Porn is a problem and I'm not saying that they shouldn't address it; I'm just saying that Porn may be a manifestation of the fact that they Fear real and authentic Intimacy or Fear never having real and authentic Intimacy. That Fear drives them to another outlet where they can control the variables better in their heads, avoid the potential of Rejection or Complexity or Sacrifice and create an environment in their minds that is free from the potential of Pain or Loss or Rejection or anything that they are afraid of. Do you see? Or perhaps they feel Guilt that they are attracted to someone who is not their spouse, or to a member of the same sex, and so they deal with that Guilt through Fantasy as an outlet, telling themselves that as long as it's in their head, it's not hurting anyone, but then, when they give in to that desire or the screen in their basement at 2 AM or their straying thoughts, they feel Shame at having done so, which drives them to doing it even more, thus compounding the Shame and Guilt until it seems that it's almost unbearable. You get the idea. Sure, the problem is a problem, but at the core of most of those problems and the stuff that we struggle with, I would bet you that there is a root of Fear, Shame or Guilt. They're "The Big Three," and if I'm right and for those of us who are In Christ, we shouldn't struggle with them at all, then why and where is the disconnect when clearly, so many of us still do? Great question, we're going to dive into that this morning.

For starters, let's talk about what those three things are, and then we're going to single out Shame as our Target for this morning and the Kryptonite that it is to our lives and relationships, and then what to do about it when we find it. Very simply, let's define Fear, Shame and Guilt as the following:

- **Fear** – is the impending sense of dread about what might be. It is future focused. It is prospective. It is the thing that might happen or you are sure is going to happen or that you are sure will be the result of your actions. We know that it has been removed from us because **1 John 4:18 (ESV)** says, *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."* I actually heard a friend say one time that, "Fear is what happens when we allow ourselves to imagine a future where the Goodness of God is not present." That's pretty powerful, isn't it? Fear is not from our Father for His children. That's not to say that we don't feel it. We do. It's a primal and human emotion, but WHEN we feel it, we remind ourselves what our Faith tells us and we submit that Fear to the feet of our Savior and our King.

- **Guilt** – is different from Fear. It is the sense that we have fallen short of an objective moral standard, and for which we deserve punishment. Guilt is standards focused. Guilt is Judicial. It is the distance between your actions and the standard against which they are measured. And here's the thing, there is no greater standard for your actions than the Perfection of God, and here's the bad news, all of us fall short of that. **Romans 3:23** says simply and plainly that (ESV), *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* But for those of us who are In Christ, who know that what Jesus did on the Cross took our Guilt and our Sin and piled it upon Himself while taking His Perfection and giving it to us so that we could be declared Perfect and Holy in the Presence of the Living God. If you are a follower of Jesus today, your Guilt has been removed and when you feel it, because we all still feel it even though we know it has been removed, you do with it what you do with Fear and Shame: you submit it to the feet of Jesus our God and King because it is not His design for you to continue to function under it.
- **And that Brings us to Shame** – Shame is the sense that my actions have done something to call into question the nature of my relationship with God or others, and that it will somehow lower my value or my worth in one or more of my relationships. It is the sense that "I'm not okay" with you, or with God. Shame is Relational. If Fear is the sense that I'm not okay with the Future and Guilt is the sense that I'm not okay with God's Perfect Standard, then Shame is the sense that I'm not okay with you, and therefore, by extension, probably still not okay with God either. If you have spent time in Eastern cultures like I have you will probably have heard the phrase before that Shame is often spoken of as "Face" or "losing Face." It literally means that I have done something and I cannot hold your gaze. Something I have done makes me drop my head, hide my eyes from yours. I am not okay with you. I am... ashamed. But here's the thing, brothers and sisters, for those of us who are In Christ, Shame is not for us. Why? Because it has been removed from us with God, so I cannot hold you to a standard to which your Heavenly Father does not hold you. In **1 Peter 2:4-6** we read (ESV) that *"As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.'"* Do you see that? If you trust in Jesus, your Shame has been removed, so how can I hold you to something that your Heavenly Father clearly does not? If you are in Christ, Shame is not for you. That's not to say that you don't or won't feel it. You will, but when you do, you do with it the same thing that you are supposed to do with Fear and Guilt, you take it and you submit and surrender it to the feet of Jesus. That's what we do.

So What?

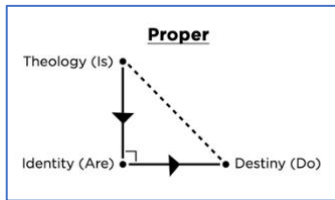
So when it comes to Shame, then, as one of the "Big Three," you may be saying, "Okay, cool, thanks, Jack. Maybe I get that Shame shouldn't be part of how I operate as a follower of Jesus or in my relationships with others, but if I'm honest, it still is, and I don't know what to do about it. I still feel 'not okay' in one way or another with most relationships in my life, and it seems like there's probably a bit more to it than just "submitting and surrendering it to the feet of Jesus" like you say. No problem. I get it. Let's talk a bit more about Shame specifically and about how it works, why it's toxic for our relationships, and what to do about it when we find it.

What is it and How Does It Work?

In their book *The Other Half of Church*, author Michel Hendricks and Neuroscientist Dr. Jim Wilder call Shame one of the most formative emotions that we humans have. And they point out that there are what they call both Toxic Shame and also Healthy Shame. But I don't believe in the concept of Healthy Shame. Maybe it's just semantics, but I don't think of Shame as being on a spectrum with Toxic one side and Healthy on the other. I can't get there Biblically, actually, and wish we had time to do a deep dive on Genesis 2 and 3 about this concept, but basically, I draw a line of difference between what I will call Shame, which is unhealthy and destructive to our relationships, and a word we don't hear much in our modern day but is used often in Scripture called Reproof, which is what God does with us and what we should do with and for one another. It is different from Shame in a big way, and I'd like to spend some of the time that we have this morning walking through the difference and why it matters.

To do that, I need to start with something that we talk about often here at Trinity called the Covenant Triangle. It is a concept that utilizes what you probably learned in High School Geometry, and that is the idea that if you have a Right Triangle, which is a triangle with at least one 90 degree angle in it, and you know two points on that triangle, then you can automatically calculate the third point. You might remember this concept with equations like $A^2+B^2=C^2$, right? It works the same way with the Covenant Triangle. Let me show you:

- **Covenant Triangle** – In the Covenant Triangle, which is a Proper way of viewing things, we start with our



Theology, which is the concept of “Who God is.” It is the starting point for all Reality and it is therefore God who declares and defines Reality. He built it, He sustains it, and He sees it most accurately, so His concept and view of everything has to be my starting point. From there, we move to Identity, which is what is true about me and you. Identity is “who I am,” and you will notice that I don’t define or declare that, God does. It’s what the little arrows mean from Theology to Identity. Why? Because we

stated that at the beginning. God defines Himself, which is Theology, then He defines me, which is my Identity. Then, from there, He tells me what I was built to Do, that’s my Destiny. And I will ALWAYS live out Destiny as a function of my Identity. Theology drives Identity. Identity drives Destiny. This is a Biblical concept. Check this out:

- In Genesis 17, we see God say – “I am God. I do not call you Abram. I call you Abraham, it means something completely different, by the way. Now go to this land that I will show you and live out this promise until your descendants are more numerous than the sands on the shore or the stars in the sky.”
- In Judges 6, we see God say – “I am God, the God of your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I call you ‘Mighty Warrior,’ not Gideon. Now go and deliver my people out of the hands of the Midianites.”
- In Luke 1, we see God say – “I am God, you are going to name this child John and he is going to make straight the way for the Lord.”
- In Matthew 3 – 4, we see God say – “I am God, I’m going to split the sky to tell you that this is my Beloved Son. Now go into the desert and kick the devil’s butt for 40 days.”

This is Me. This is you. This is what you do. For us, it’s the same way. God declares who He is. Then He declares who we are. Then He declares what we do.

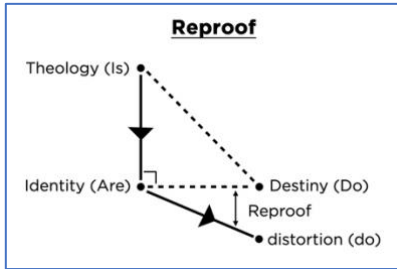


Theology. Identity. Destiny. And if you have the first two points, you can know the third. But it ONLY works in this direction. It doesn’t work the opposite way because that puts US in the seat of God where we declare Reality rather than God. We say “this is what I do, so this must be who I am, which tells me who God has to be or what He thinks about me.” And THAT is the difference we’ll explore next between Reproof and Shame. I’d also like to note before

we move on that there is a reason why I’m capitalizing the words Theology, Identity and Destiny here, because it is God who assigns them. They don’t change because God doesn’t change according to Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8, and that’s important as we talk about Reproof and Shame. You see, you can ignore your Identity, you can corrupt your Identity, you can refuse to live out your Destiny and what you are designed to Do, but you cannot change them. I use this example all the time: Let’s pretend that you could buy a Ferrari, okay? You drive it home and you park it in your garage and you never look at it again. Is it still a Ferrari? Yes. Let’s say that you put giant mud tires on it and an 8” lift kit and go mudding with it. Is it still a Ferrari? Yes. Now, that’s not what it’s designed for, but it’s still a Ferrari. Let’s say you park it in your driveway and then go get a sledge-hammer and beat it into twisted, unrecognizable metal. Is it still a Ferrari? Yes. Short of melting it down at the molecular level, is there anything that you can do to it to not

make it a Ferrari? No. There's not. Your Identity is the same way. You can't change it because you didn't give it to yourself. God did. And you can't change what you were built "for" because God is the one who designed you to do it. Like the Ferrari, you can ignore it, corrupt it, refuse it or occlude it, but you can't change it or destroy it. That's why I list those points with capital letters.

- **Reproof** – Now, check out the concept of Reproof. Reproof is simply a way of saying, "to correct." In Reproof, you will notice that there is a deviation from the Proper Covenant Triangle where I start with

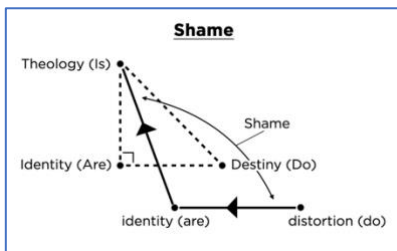


Theology and Identity, but then there is a rogue line that takes me off track from Destiny onto another path. I call this path a "distortion" because there is a disconnect between who God says that I am and what I'm supposed to do and what I'm actually doing instead. This distortion isn't my Destiny, which is why it's a lower case "d," but I am acting in a specific way. The concept of Reproof is the idea of correcting that "gap" between what I'm currently doing and what I'm supposed to be doing as a function of who I am, but get this:

- In Godly Reproof, my Identity is never in question, nor is my relationship with God.
- In Godly Reproof, the Spirit of God, the Word of God and the People of God step toward me in Love and Strength to help me see the distance and the disconnect, remind me of God's Truth about Who He Is and who I am, and then walk with me to correct the distance until my actions line up with my Identity and my Destiny.

This is HUGE because Reproof does not accept my current distorted actions as definitive proof of who I must be and how God must think of me. Rather, it sees my distorted actions as something that need to be brought in line with Truth, and we all need Truth. We all need correction. We all need Reproof. I think that it's fantastic that in the King James Version, in **2 Tim 3:16 – 17 (KJV)** Paul describes the Word of God as, *"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* Further, the Apostle Paul uses that same concept again just one chapter later when he encourages Timothy, his young apprentice, to *"preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."* (**2 Tim 4:2**) (ESV). As followers of Jesus, we welcome Reproof from the Spirit of God, the Word of God and the People of God because it helps us operate more fully in the light of who we are created to be and what we are created to do, or, as we're saying here, our Identity and our Destiny.

- **Shame** – But when we talk about Shame, though, it's different from either the Proper or Biblical Reproof. Shame violates the Covenant Triangle in a number of ways. It creates a whole new counterfeit Triangle where we start with the distorted versions of what we "do" – notice that it's in lower case letters again



because even though it's true that we may be doing certain things, they are not what we are actually built and meant to Do in our Destiny -- and then we let those distortions back-fill and dictate who we "are," thus creating for us a false identity other than the one God gives us as His children – notice the lower case "i" in identity here – which defines how we must view ourselves in our relationships with those around us and also with God. "I do this, so I must be this, so God and people must think this about me." This is actually very

American, isn't it? We're extremely pragmatic as a culture, and we reinforce this idea all the time. In the movie *Batman Begins*, and while talking with his childhood friend and love interest Rachel Dawes, Bruce Wayne internalizes something that Rachel tells him and then repeats it back to her when he is operating as Batman. Check out this scene from the movie *Batman Begins*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwvrzauErQ0> Did you catch that? "It's not who we are underneath, but what we do that defines us." I would submit to you that while this sounds good, it is fundamentally incorrect. Rather, you will ALWAYS behave out of who you believe yourself to be "underneath." You will

always act out of your believed or chosen Identity. Show me a man who consistently behaves Worthlessly and I will show you a man who, at the core of his being, truly believes that he is Worthless. Show me a man who believes that he is Worthy because of who God says that he is, and he may mess up from time to time or distort his actions as we have discussed, but he will largely resist that temptation overall because he knows who he is and he knows that it is inconsistent with his Identity and his Destiny. With Shame, though, you allow your distorted actions to define you and then dictate your relationship with God, or worse, who God must be. Rather than allowing God to make us in His image, we make Him in ours, the epitome of blasphemy, friends. And when we do this, note that the wider the angle between your distorted actions and your false identity and your perceived Theology of who God must be, the more Shame you feel and experience. This is why I say that Shame is not from God.

For my brothers and sisters who are parents in the room, let me give you an example. Let's say that you have a child who cheated on a test at school and the lied to you about it. When you finally put all the pieces together and confront them, let's talk about the difference between Reproof and Shame. Ready?

- Shame says something like this: "Look, you cheated and you lied. That's bad. And I won't have a liar or a cheater in my household." Do you see that? That parent took the child's action and immediately made the translation to a statement of identity. And what's more, the parent called into question the nature of their relationship with the child and put it in jeopardy. If you grew up in church, you might even quote Scripture and say, "in Proverbs 6:16-19, God says that of the seven things He hates, a lying tongue and a heart that devises wicked schemes are two of them! You just did both. You should be ashamed of yourself." Whoof. Now, here's what tough about that, friends. Yes, it's true, lying and cheating are bad things. Yes, God hates them. But He doesn't hate your child for doing them. In this example, the parent says, "I won't have liars and cheaters in my house," which says to the child that the parent thinks that because they cheated and lied, they are a Liar and a Cheater, and beyond that, the extension is that God doesn't want Liars and Cheaters either – which the parent told them that they are. Do you see how this can really mess you up? Many of us, brothers and sisters, may have grown up in homes where this was commonplace, even with very loving and well-meaning parents, but I'm telling you, Shame can damage you and your relationships with God and others because what is that child going to do now? They could say, "Okay. Fine. I'll never do that again!" which is great, except that they may also have internalized that the parent and God only love them when they are not behaving like a Liar and a Cheater, something that hinges the parent's and God's acceptance of them on their Behavior, which is incorrect. Or, they may just say, "well, I guess if I'm a Liar and a Cheater and my parents don't accept me and God doesn't accept me, then, I'll go be a Liar and a Cheater since that's obviously what I am." Do you see how that works?
- But Reproof would say something like this: "Hey, buddy, from the time you were very little, we have loved how you have valued Truth. And we prayed that for you, even before you were born. We prayed that you would be a man of Integrity and Honesty because we knew that world that you're going to grow up in is going to become increasingly confusing and dark. And we have watched you live that out, even before you gave your life to Jesus two years ago at camp. You're becoming a man of Integrity, Truth and Honesty, and God built you for those things, and we agree that they are True of you. But this particular situation is inconsistent with those things. It's not who you are or who we know you to be. And we need to talk with you about both what's going on that would make you act so differently from who you are and also what we need to do about it with you to correct it and make it right with the people who are involved."

Look, parenting is hard, and I wish I could tell you that I always get it right or that I always have, but I don't. For that matter, relationships are hard, whether you're a parent or not, but I'll tell you a quick story from my own life. Before I understood all of this, when my son Elijah was about 6 or 7, I was struggling with what I perceived a lack of industry on his part to do his chores, clean his room or exert himself with his homework from school. I remember putting him on my knee and saying something like this, "Bug, you know that I love you. But you're lazy. I'm not just saying that you're acting lazy, I'm saying that it's who you are, and you're acting out of that. And you're going to have to correct that if you're ever going to amount to much in this world as you grow, serve God, your family or others." Yeah. That

was straight up Shame, guys, and I now regret so much that I did that. A few years later, after I learned this, I went and apologized to my son and told him that Shame is not from His Father and so it should not be from me, and you know what? If you've leveraged Shame as a parenting tool in your family, you may need to do the same thing. And the same would be true in your marriage, your friendships and your co-workers.

What Do We Do About It?

Now, this may sound heavy, friends, so I get it if you're feeling a little bit uncomfortable, but hear me when I say that in the process today of my talking about Shame, you should not be feeling Shame about all the times you may have used, leveraged or felt Shame throughout your life. Remember that Shame is just one of those things that is normal for us as Humans, but is not God's intended design for you to live in or function in, so we're going to spend the rest of the message this morning talking about what to do with it when you experience it. I think that it'll help you end on a high note, and then, in a few minutes, we're going to have some time to pray together to actually put into play what we are learning. But let's start with where all this leads us and what it means for us. Now that we understand that Shame is not from God and how it works, let's talk about what to do with it when it pops up in our lives. This'll be short, but I think it's super important. Here goes:

- First, as the People of the Living God, we commit to the idea that if God does not Speak Shame over us, then we simply refuse to speak it to one another. Since God does not leverage Shame as a manipulation tool with His Children, we do not leverage it in our friendships, our marriages, our parenting or our work relationships. Most directly, what that means is that we listen for and with one another when we make labeling or categorizing statements about ourselves or others, and we call them into question immediately under the authority of Godly Reproof. When your friend says, "Yeah, I'm just not a very kind person," you say something like, "Really? Who told you that? That's not what your Father says about you. You may be not acting very kindly at the moment, and we can talk about that, but don't say what is true of you that your Heavenly Father does not say."
 - This is a bit of a side trail, but I think it's important. I have been doing a lot of study on this concept over the last year, and I am increasingly convinced that for us as followers of Jesus, there are two very specific words to use that we need to learn. One is the word Blessing. We like that word. You might think of Blessing as some sort of magical dust that God and Pastors have to sprinkle on things to make them go better, but I assure you that such is not true. Neither Pastor Marvin, myself, Pastor Bob or anyone else on Staff or at this church or any other church have some sort of magic bag of mojo to improve things for you that would otherwise go badly. Rather, since God is the originator and declarer of "True Reality" about Himself, myself, you and the world around me, to Bless something or someone is simply to speak and act toward them the way that God is speaking and acting toward them. It is to agree with ultimate Truth about those things, and then act in such a way as though they are Reality, and regardless of the distortion that may be apparent. The person may struggle with an addiction. That is a distortion of who they are because God did not design them to be an Addict. As a result, when I pray over that person, I speak and act toward them in a way that is consistent with God's Reality and ask God to bring it into being. To Bless is to "speak and act in accordance with what God is saying and doing."
 - Do you know what the opposite of Blessing is? To Curse. It's to speak and act toward God, myself, others and the world around me in a way that is inconsistent with what God is saying and doing about, with and for them. When I called my son "Lazy," that is not what God says about him. Sure, he may have been acting Lazy, but that's not what God created him to be, nor what God created him to do as his Destiny. I was speaking toward him something that was inconsistent with what his Heavenly Father was saying and doing, and in that moment, I Cursed him. As the People of God, we are called to be People of Blessing, not People of Cursing. Shame is a form of Cursing, friends, so let's commit to not using it, leveraging it or accepting it in our relationships because no Healthy relationship is built on a Curse.
- And second, when find Shame in our lives, we do with it what we do with all things that do not align with the Truth that God desires: We Confess it, we Repent of it, we ask God to Cleanse us of it, and then we ask

Him to Restore back what rightfully belongs to us in its place. If you've heard me talk much, you know that my mentor calls this the CRCR process: Confess, Repent, Cleanse, Restore. This is based on **1 John 1:9** (ESV) where we read, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* The idea of Confession is that we simply agree with what God says is True. "Yes, Father, I have allowed Shame to define me rather than you. It's true. I acknowledge that before you and agree that that is not what you would have me do or have me live under." If you were to talk to our friends in Celebrate Recovery, they'd tell you that you can't do much with someone who isn't actually willing to admit that they have a problem or confess that they need help. So Confess. Next, we Repent of it. Repentance is simply the idea that we want to go in a different direction. We're going this way and we want to go the other way now. The Biblical idea of Repentance is to "change our mind" about something. Confession and Repentance are our part of the equation when we come to God because we're admitting that it's the wrong direction through Confession and telling Him that we want to go a different direction through Repentance. When I Repent of something, I literally take my hands and do this with them and say something like this, "Father, I don't want this any more. I take my hands off of it. I tell you that I know that damage and the carnage that this thing has caused me in my life, and I don't want it any more." There may actually be action associated with this, friends. Sometimes, Repentance is more than just a concept, it carries weight. If you're Repenting of gossip, it may require that you ask forgiveness from a friend, or for accountability from a coworker. And here's the thing: sometimes, I have found that the deeper the issue requiring Repentance, the more ingrained it is in me and the less likely that I can fully turn away from it on my own. That's where Cleansing comes in. I ask the Father to completely wash me clean of this thing – in our case today, that'll be Shame. I ask Him to Cleanse my Heart, my Mind, my Will and even my body of the Shame that I've carried and all that has been attached to it so that I don't operate under it any more. And did you catch what Scripture said? It said that if we do that, He is Faithful and Just to forgive us of it and to cleanse us from it. And then finally, we get to ask Him what He is giving back to us in place of that thing, and that's Restoration. You see, when Shame has occupied a big part of your life and He takes it away, then there's a sort of "hole" there that can be filled. And because your Father loves you, He always desires to give back to you what will make you more Whole, more Complete and ultimately, more like His own Son Jesus. Imagine what wonderful thing He might give back to you in exchange for your Shame, friends! To the people of Israel in Isaiah 61 (ESV), God says that: *"Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy."* As we go to the Father now in prayer together, let's look forward to what He will offer us in exchange for our Shame. Let's pray!