



## *Not Ashamed*

I'm sure you would agree that it isn't easy being a Christian in today's society –

including the workplace. Increasingly, we sense the antagonism of an unbelieving world; a world that scorns what we stand for, and the One whom we believe and serve. It is, of course, nothing new for the Lord's people to feel put to shame – such feelings have been experienced from ancient times (see Hebrews 11:36-38). However, in Joel 2:25-27, God promises that a time is coming when His people “shall never be ashamed”. It is that theme – not being ashamed – that I want to consider in this editorial.

### **Promises by God**

In the passage in Joel to which I have referred, we have a description of God's great provision, and of His people's enjoyment of this; also of His wonderful dealings and His people's praise for these. Verse 27 is about God's presence with His own, their awareness of this, and the fact that He alone is their God. So there are many reasons never to be ashamed.

In Isaiah 54:4-5 we read: “Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed... For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.” In these verses we can see Relationship and Redemption.

Earlier Isaiah had written, “But Israel shall be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you shall not be ashamed or disgraced forever and ever” (45:17, NKJV). And Peter quotes from Isaiah 28:16 when he writes, “Behold, I lay in Sion a corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded [*put to shame*]” (1 Peter 2:6).

### **Pronouncements by Believers**

As we have seen, there is much for faith to lay hold of, in what our God has said. In Psalm 119:6, the psalmist declares: “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto to all thy commandments.” The psalmist's confidence is not in himself, but rather in the Lord and His word. Later in the psalm, he prays, “take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments” (v. 43). Based on the Lord's hearing that prayer, he

can go on to say, “I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed” (v. 46). Matthew Henry gives Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (in Daniel 3) as an example. They fearlessly made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that they served God, and wouldn’t serve *his* gods, or worship the image he had set up.

In the New Testament, more than once Paul states, “I am not ashamed”, and gives a reason. In Romans 1:16 he writes: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”. In 2 Timothy 1:12 he declares, “For the which cause [*i.e. proclamation of the gospel*] I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Consider also this passage: “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation [*deliverance*] through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:19-21). Paul’s confidence here is related to three things: the prayer of the believers for him; the supply of the Spirit of Christ; and his experience, up to this point, of Christ’s being exalted in his body. Paul could truthfully say, “to me to live is Christ”.

## **Possibilities of Failure**

In 2 Timothy 1:7-8, Paul writes: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God”. In an atmosphere of persecution, it might be natural to wish not to be associated with the gospel, or with those who preach it. But it would be wrong to take this attitude. The reason given is the power of God, referred to twice in these two verses.

In the following chapter, the apostle has more advice for Timothy about not being ashamed: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [*handling aright, RV*] the word of

truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Here Timothy is being exhorted as a teacher of the believers, one who has particular responsibility for handling the word of God. He is told to strive diligently to present himself approved to God. I think this would cover his manner of life as well as the content of his teaching.

Peter also has something to say about the possibility of Christians being ashamed, this time because they are suffering for their faith. “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf...Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:16,19). The exhortation is not to be ashamed – rather, we should glorify God, continually honouring Him. Verse 19 says we should entrust our souls to Him, and should continue to do right.

### **Prayers for Success**

“O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed”. (Psalm 25:2)

“O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee”. (Psalm 25:20)

“Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee”. (Psalm 31:17)

In these verses, David is praying for himself, but in Psalm 69:6 he is praying for others: “Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.” I believe that here we have the psalmist prophetically speaking the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who endured all the shame men could heap upon Him. Here He is praying for His people. Remember how He said to Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:32).

May we all know the Lord’s help and strengthening as we continue to serve Him.