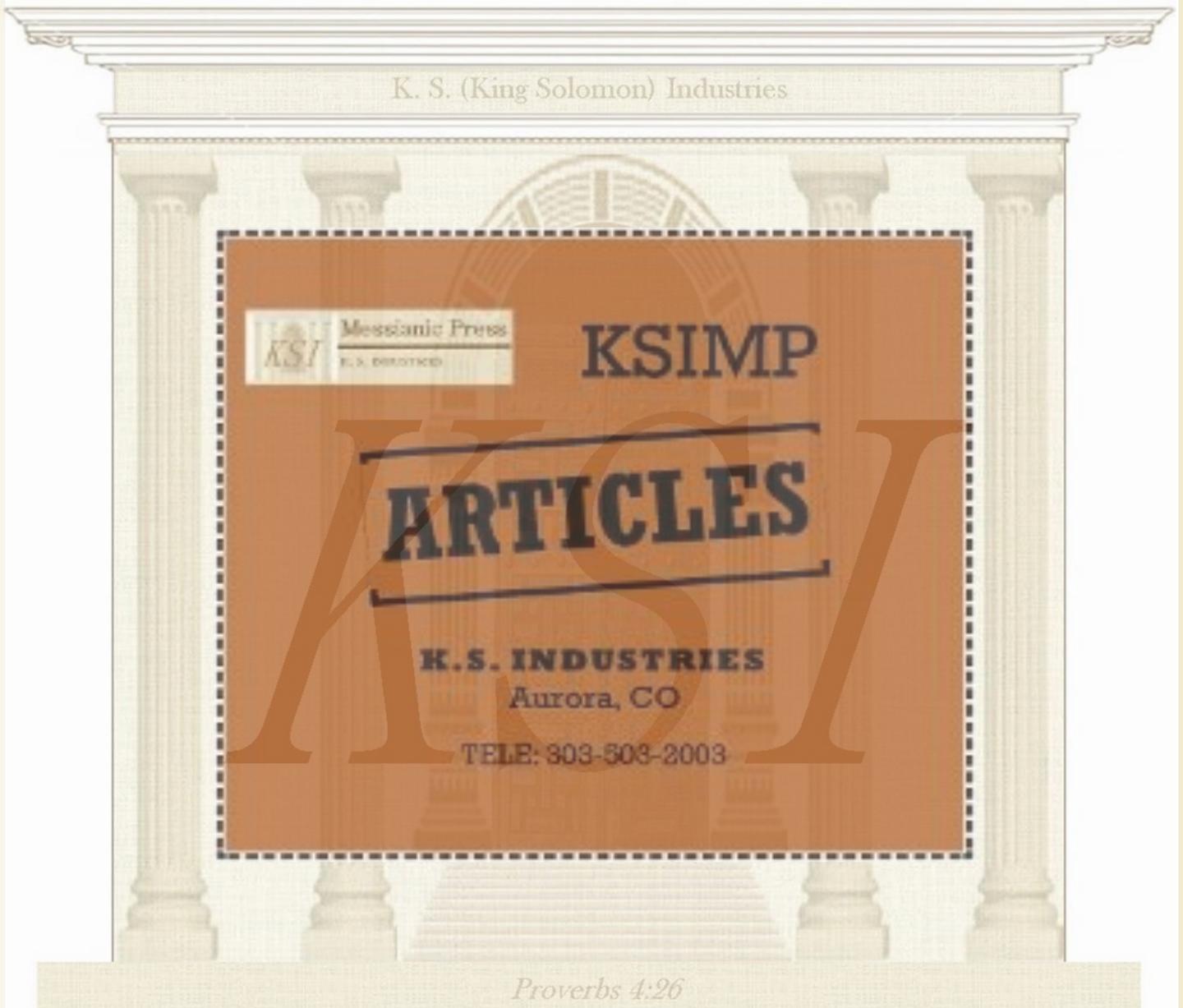


# Despising the Shame

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**VANITA LYNN WARREN**

## *Despising the Shame*

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*“We cry too often to be delivered from the punishment, instead of the sin that lies behind it. We are anxious to escape from the things that cause us pain rather than from the things that cause God pain.”*

--G. Campbell Morgan

### **Despising the Shame**

How do you feel about things that cause you pain or sorrow? What is happening in your life today? Are you hurt and angry, or abused and ashamed? Through Christ’s example, the Bible describes the attitude Christians should take regarding pain and suffering in their lives. Understanding His attitude toward His suffering helps us to deal with ours. Christ despised the shame and endured His cross.

Simply put, “sin” causes the pain and sorrow in the lives of men. It’s not trivializing to simplify man’s misfortunes into one word. Sin is responsible for the totality of emotional discomfort felt by God’s people and the unregenerate. Often, the occurrence of sin and the consequences of sin are out of our control. Satan roams about like a lion seeking whom he may devour. There are sins committed by others that affect the innocent. Criminals roam our streets freely. Many terminal illnesses are the result of the fall—a cursed creation—caused by original sin. Our bodies decay because of the sin nature we inherit from Adam.

On the other hand, people are also in crisis because of sin they commit on their own. As Paul lamented in Romans, *“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* (Rom. 7:15, 24). Whether it’s the death of a loved one, financial setbacks, or emotional baggage; some form or fashion of sin causes human crises. How can we escape the sin that so easily ensnares us? Follow Jesus! He endured the cross, while despising the shame!

*“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Hebrews 12:1, 2)

### **Therefore! We Also!**

The Body of Christ is not immune from sin. As a matter of fact, Satan’s attacks will only intensify, and his attempts to entice us to disobedience will increase. In some cases, God allows the temptation to come our way that we may mature spiritually. Therefore, bad things do, and will happen to “good” people. But really, who is good? Repeatedly, Scripture says, *“There is no one who does good, no not one!”* (Rom. 3:12; Psa. 14:2, 3; and Ecc. 7:20). Even the Apostle Paul said, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...”* (Romans 7:18)

So, who is “good” in God’s eyes? Only Christ is! Apart from Him, the rest of us are nothing but filthy rags. Sometimes, as Christians, we become so secure in our eternal security, we momentarily forget that we are still sinners. We are saved sinners—but yet, sinners. *“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and*

*hating one another*" (Titus. 3:3). Paul further emphasized this fact in Colossians 3:7; Ephesians 2:2-3; and 1 Corinthians 6:11. It is easy to forget, because pride rears its ugly head and impresses upon us that we are better than "those" ungodly people out there who don't believe in the Risen Savior.

As I ponder these passages, I know that I must not allow myself to lack a spirit of humility toward my own sin. Although I will not be judged unto condemnation, I will be judged unto reward. And although I deserve nothing, I do not want to lose anything that Jesus desires me to have. Therefore, "we also" have a mandate to examine ourselves, and the circumstances which cause us pain and sorrow. Is it an attack from the enemy, or is it our own disobedience?

### **We Are Surrounded by Witnesses**

Since "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses," we must examine ourselves. These witnesses are our fellow servants who have gone on before. They followed Christ, and like Him, they are examples of what faithfulness is. The Old Testament and the New Testament saints witness to us through their examples of faith and endurance. We can see Christ's high standard when we learn about their lives.

You may feel, "No one in the world has ever gone through this." Or maybe you've said, "I am the only one who feels this way!" And even though you know neither of those statements are true, at that moment, you still feel totally alone. Whenever you find yourself in that rut of solitude, open your Bible and draw strength from the great cloud of witnesses who followed Christ before you. You will find them in every book, among various peoples, throughout all ages, and in diverse circumstances. You are not alone. God said, "*That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun*" (Ecc. 1:9-10). Concerning "new" things, Charles H. Spurgeon made a profound observation:

***"That which is true is not new, and that which is new is not true."***

In addition to the witness of the saints who have fallen asleep, we are also witnesses. Christians witness to each other and to a dying world everyday. The question is: what kind of witness are we being? "*You are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify you Father in heaven*" (Matthew 5:14, 16). Lastly, the angels also witness the things we do and the life we choose to lead. *To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.* (1Peter 1:12) All angels minister to the saved. They learn of God's wisdom through His dealings with us, and they rejoice when we repent and turn to God (Luke 15:10; Eph. 3:10; and Heb. 1:13, 14).

In contrast, Satan is a constant witness against us. He constantly He tempts us to sin, then accuses us before our Father. But Paul exhorts us to: "*Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*" (1 Peter 5:8, 9). Therefore, as you endure the pain of your trials and temptations, remember: you are not alone, resist the Devil, and follow Christ's example.

### **Lay It Aside**

Sin is a heavy burden. Do you remember *Pilgrim* and the burden he carried on his journey (*Pilgrim's Progress*)? That is what you feel on your shoulders when pain and sorrow have you in their grasp. However, with the armor of God (Eph. 6:11), we can lay aside the weight, and the sin, which so

easily ensnares us. This includes sin in any form and from any direction—internal or external. God knows our weaknesses, but so does Satan. In order to make us fall, at every opportunity Satan will use our weaknesses against us. This is why we must confess all sin in our lives to God, and then turn from it. When we expose sin, we manifest the truth. Through truthfulness, we renounce the things hidden because of shame, and we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in God’s sight.

*“Therefore since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2).*

Where do we begin? How do we “lay aside every weight?” I think the sin of “unbelief” is a good starting point. We must have complete trust in the promises of God and complete confidence that our life of faith in Christ will end in victory. We must remove any doubt that our sins are forgiven us, and walk convinced that Jesus paid for all of them—past, present, and future. When we acknowledge His great sacrifice, we want to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit so that we are able to stand when pain and sorrow comes our way. Sin is a heavy burden, but even heavier is the guilt that accompanies it. Lay aside “every weight” and believe in the promises of Christ, because His load is “easy” and His burden is “light.”

### **Run with Endurance, Looking to Jesus!**

*Run?* I thought we were supposed to stand! Well, Scripture tells us to do both. Sometimes we are told to “stand” and sometimes we are told to “run.” At times, we are even told to “be still” and “know that I am God.” There is a time and a place for all of them. Paul said, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race....”* (2 Tim. 4:7). Standing our ground is our position in spiritual battle. Unless the Holy Spirit specifically instructs us to “be still,” running is our duty at all other times.

The Christian race is not a leisurely walk. Our Christian “walk” refers to path we choose not the pace we set. The Christian race is not an easy sprint nor is it a test of speed. It is a long distance trek that we must run with endurance. We must persevere until we reach the finish line. And, though we all run at the same time, we run individually. Christians do not race against each other, and we are not in competition with one another. It is a race of spiritual endurance—the will of God over the flesh. We run against the Devil, and that is why, every now and then, we have to stand and fight. In Ecclesiastes. 9:11, Solomon wrote, *“The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong....”* Scripture is clear that these two events—battle and race—go hand in hand. Our goal is to fight the battle and finish the race. There is no second, third, or fourth place, only first. We run to win first place, and to leave sin and the Devil in last.

*“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25).*

The past is the past. Don’t go back and pick up something you dropped along the way, particularly old sin baggage that you can’t seem to let go of. There is nothing more important than the “joy set before you” at the finish line. Keep Paul’s admonition in mind:

*“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forward to those things, which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*

(Philippians 3:12-14).

### **Endure Your Cross”**

Whatever obstacle God allows to come your way, endure it. Your cross may be the result of Christian persecution, sins you’ve committed, sins committed by someone else, or the natural consequences of this dying world. God promised not leave you, nor forsake you. Therefore, do not feel disgraced or humiliated; He is with you:

*“For I know that this will turn out for my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:19-21).*

Again in 2 Timothy 1:8: *“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God....”*

And in 1 Peter 5:16: *“If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”*

Confess your sins knowing that God is faithful and just to forgive you (Rom. 10:9-13).

Then, turn away from anything that will lead you to disobedience. And, do not allow sin from external sources to throw you back into disobedience. Do not return evil for evil. Let Christ’s example be ever before you as you run your race.

*“The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back. I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. (Isaiah 50:5-7)*

### **Despise the Shame!**

Shame travels on the tail of sin. In the Greek, *shame* means disgrace or reproach. It refers to a shameful thing, action, or disgraceful conduct. The writer of Hebrews used it to refer to Jesus’ reproach, *“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach”* (Heb. 13:13). In his commentary, Matthew Henry wrote the following about the reproach that Christ bore:

*“All the reproaches that were cast upon Him, both in His life and at his death, He despised; He was infinitely above them; and He knew His own innocency and excellency,*

and despised the ignorance and malice of His despisers.”

As the Lord bore His shame, we should bear ours. Scripture exhorts us to, *“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time”* (1 Pet. 5:6). Do you have sin in your life? Have you been shamed because of someone else’s sin? Don’t hide it! Confess it! Despise the shame, and endure your cross. Christ was innocent, and could justifiably despise His shame. Yet, while innocent of the accusations thrown at him, He bore our guilt, and eternally paid for our sins. Is it not right, that for His sake, we should also bear our reproach—the same reproach that He was so willing to lay upon Himself? The reproach is ours to begin with.

When men discover you have, or have had sin in your life, they will mock you and call you a hypocrite. Nevertheless, I’d rather be a hypocrite in man’s eyes than a hypocrite in the “Hands of an Angry God.” Stop hiding the reproach of sin that God has already forgiven you for. Endure your cross, and if necessary, bear your shame before men! Because... *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”* (Psalm 103:12).

### **Patiently Await Your Reward**

Sin is the reason we live in a dying world. As a result, we experience pain and sorrow in all shapes and forms. But no matter what it looks like on the outside, the trials and tribulations we endure are identical at the core. They are the result of sin. *“In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Oh, what comfort we have in Jesus! Our inheritance is secure, because He has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

*“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).*

I don’t know what you’re going through today, but Christ does; and I don’t know where you hurt, but Christ does. However, there is one thing I do know: He will give you strength for your battle and endurance for your race. And like the witnesses before you, you too will be able to say:

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on the Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

**Shalom!**

