*Heaven-Sent Promises in the Midst of Our Earth-bound Pain*

“Everybody hurts. Sometimes.” That is the truth of this sin-filled life. We are not alone, though. While grief may be a companion in this life, Christ is still the treasure of our hearts.

How?

Sometimes, guilt and shame can creep up on us and catch us off guard. We’ve all been there. The very first indications that Paradise had changed for Adam and Eve was the presence of guilt and shame. The Bible gives an answer to why there is suffering and pain in the world. The cause, ultimately, is sin. The “Why?” leads to “How?” How can God allow this to happen? How can this possibly work for good? But, as we continue to seek the Lord in his Word, we will find him. One way we can tell that our faith is maturing through trials is when our “why” questions become “how” questions.

**Focus Verse**

**27But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.**

 **1 Corinthians 1:27**

See if you can identify with these questions:

* How are you going to use this in my life, Lord?
* How will you influence others through my struggles?
* How will you bring about good through this misery?

There’s a popular phrase which goes something like this: *“God wastes nothing.”* Share your reflection or observation on that statement. Would you agree or not?

As we mentioned, the presence of guilt and shame can often lead us to question how the Lord might be able to work. Let’s read Mark 5:21-34:

21When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” 24So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” 29Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

30At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

31“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

32But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Before we discuss that reading, consider the following ways that guilt and shame can reveal themselves in us:

* **Isolation –** *guilt and shame may cause one avoid people and activities due to conflicting emotions of joy and anger, happiness and sadness.*
* **Silence –** *shame and fear may cause a person to refrain from talking about struggles or pain.*
* **Doubt –** *shame, guilt, and fear over past loss or pain may cause a person to question whether it is acceptable feel as s/he does or to even question one’s worth as an individual.*

Consider the woman mentioned in Mark, chapter 5. Discuss how her health condition might have allowed guilt, shame, and doubt to overwhelm her daily life.

(Keep in mind that this health issue continually caused her to be ceremonially unclean. See Leviticus 15:19-31 for further study.)

How did this shamed woman demonstrate a “shameless” act of faith?

Read Isaiah 53:3-5:

He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. 4Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

How does the knowledge that God knows our shame help us eliminate the effects it may have on our life?

At the beginning of this study we looked at 1 Corinthians 1:27. What does St. Paul give us as an answer to how God works through even our pain and struggles?

Romans 8:28:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, whohave been called according to his purpose.

What is God saying and not saying in answer to how he works things out?

What is the most difficult trial you’ve gone through? How did the Lord use your pain to make a change in you? How did he use it to impact someone else?