

## Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals

*This transcript was generated automatically. Its accuracy may vary.*

Grace that heals, you know, because of the hope, that of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, to which many of us have pledged ourselves, pledged our lives. The face to face meeting with our Savior will be the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams. Paul writes about the high calling in Philippians 3, verses 13 and 14. In the King James it reads, brethren, I count myself count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark of the for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I like how it's translated in the contemporary English version. Those verses read, my friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived, but I forget what is behind and I struggle for what is ahead. I run toward the goal so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize that God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done. Are you looking forward to the time when you will personally meet Jesus?

How do you imagine that will go?

Now? You may think that an odd question. Of course we are looking forward to that meeting.

Yet for myself, for many years of my consecration, that was not true. I dreaded that event. I imagine being brought into his presence with my head hung down, too ashamed of my sins and failures to look him in the face. I imagined myself sobbing and mumbling something like, I am so sorry that I've been such a great disappointment to you and your Father, and it reflected my feelings of utter worthlessness now, because in conversation with others in our fellowship, I know other brethren struggle with the very same image in their mind, because they've told me that that's not true of me anymore.

But the Apostle Paul tells us in second Timothy 2:15, be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed. Accurately Handling the Word of Truth now the phrase who does not need to be ashamed is translated from one Greek word that simply means not ashamed, and it's the only time this particular word occurs in the New Testament. Well, when you read this verse, do you understand it to mean that you do not need to be ashamed if you were to personally be in God or Jesus presence? Or do you understand it to mean that you might need to be ashamed because you have not been sufficiently diligent in presenting yourself approved unto God? We could read it either way.

From my own experience in speaking with other brethren, as I said, I know that some feel very ashamed of who they are as a disciple of Jesus. But many others feel otherwise, and I believe this represents the differences we have in our makeup, of our personalities and our patterns of thinking, and some struggle with this. I believe the Apostle John writes of these different perspectives in First John 3, 1822 First John 3, 1822, where he writes, little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but indeed and in truth.

We will know by this that we are of the truth and will assure our hearts before him in whatever our heart condemns us. For God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and whatever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

## Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals

Does your heart ever condemn you? You ever feel ashamed of who you are? Or are you free of such self condemnation? What does it mean to be ashamed? The Cambridge dictionary defines ashamed as feeling guilty or embarrassed about something you have done or about a quality of your character.

Other definitions include feeling inferior or unworthy, having a sense of personal inadequacy, unwilling or restrained because of fear of shame, ridicule or disapproval, and this definition kind of relates to the paralysis experienced by some people who are ashamed or depressed. They can't seem to do the things they need to do or make any forward progress, and at the extreme, being ashamed can lead to self hatred.

People who feel ashamed usually have a hard time reaching out to others for help. Instead, they carry their shame inside and they distance themselves from other people. Now that Cambridge dictionary definition mentions feeling guilty about something we have done, but that is actually quite different from shame. We feel guilty about things we have done that we should not have done or hadn't done what we need to. We feel shame.

Shame is different. Shame is something we feel about who we are as a person, and that can be overwhelming as a Christian. There is a clear remedy for the things that we have done wrong that we ought not to have done. It's called forgiveness, and we, we read about that in First John 1:8-22.

I'm just going to summarize that. It says that God is faithful to forgive us our sins if we confess our sins, and that tells us that we have an advocate with the Father Christ Jesus, the righteous, and he said it is a satisfaction for all of our sins, and that clearly tells us how to deal with the guilt we experience over things we have done that are wrong.

But how do we deal with shame when we feel that we ourselves are wrong, that we are unworthy or worthless in God's sight or in the views of people around us. Or most importantly, if that is the view we have of ourselves, how do we move to the condition that the Apostle John described as our hearts not condemning us of having confidence before God? Well, first let's consider how we can come into this condition of being ashamed of ourselves. Shame is a heavy burden. It is like a dark cloud that just hangs over us, blocking out any sunshine.

And for the Christian, it often blocks our communication, our fellowship, and our communion with our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus. Shame can come from messages we see receive from the world around us. But the messages that have the most impact are those that we tell ourselves about ourselves. These messages might be something like I sometimes feel as if I'm a fake. I feel that if people who admire me really knew me, they might have contempt for me.

I feel inadequate. I seldom feel as if I am up to what is expected of me. I feel inferior to the really good people that I know, and I feel as if God must be disappointed in me. For people struggling with these kinds of things, for people struggling with this burden of shame, Jesus's admonition in Matthew 5:48 only seems to increase their burden. Matthew 5:48 says, Therefore you are to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

Thoughtful, conscientious people who have what we call perfectionist tendencies are more prone to shame and feelings of unworthiness. The challenge for such people is the standards of perfection that they they have in their mind, to which they try to hold themselves, are not necessarily so clearly defined, and there is usually no contemplation of progressive interim goals. It's kind of all or nothing, and we fail to meet that all. So with no clear target, such people can never realize when

## Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals

they have reached their goals, and consequently they can be doomed in their minds to unending failure.

They may try to comfort themselves in their shamed condition by reasoning that only very good people would strive to live by divine standards and consequently feel so badly about themselves for failing to meet those standards. I used to comfort myself along those lines.

I found comfort in Ecclesiastes 7:3:4, which says, Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. So I thought, my heart will be made better by how bad I feel.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the heart house of mirth. That made me feel a lot better. But striving for goals of ultimate but not clearly defined perfection creates unending cycles of failures and feelings of shame. You know, there is a pattern of human nature among conscientious people who are trying to live by high standards. If you ask such people to draw a vertical line on a piece of paper to make two columns, and then in one column you ask them to list their good qualities, and in the other column their bad qualities, there is a predictable outcome.

I was in a group of Christian people once when we were asked that given that assignment at the end of the time allotted for writing our list, the facilitator asked how many people had listed more good qualities than bad qualities. Nobody raised their hand. Then the facilitator asked, how many people had listed more bad qualities than good. Everyone in the room raised their hand.

The facilitator explained, in such an exercise, people will list a good quality only if they know they consistently think or act in that way. But they will list something as a bad quality if they think or act in that way only occasionally or even one time.

It is a pattern of conscientious people to look at themselves that way, and so this pattern of how we evaluate ourselves can lead to crippling shame when we see that long list of bad qualities and one or two things in the other column.

Our standard of living, our standard for behavior, is Jesus. But none of us can live up to that perfect standard in this life. We strive to do our best, but each of us will fall short in different ways and to different degrees.

I want to say what I have learned is that if we have done our best, there is no reason to be ashamed, and I believe God never uses the phrase we sometimes hear in this world, your best is just not good enough.

That's. That's not in God's vocabulary.

We should not judge ourselves based on any single day in our life or any single event. God doesn't judge us that way. If he did, none of us would inherit eternal life. I think the apostle Paul understood this when he wrote in First Corinthians 4:3, First Corinthians 4:3, I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court. Indeed, I do not even judge myself.

Coming back to the Scripture we read earlier in second Timothy 2:15, be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed. Accurately handling the word of truth. I think the point the apostle is making is to help us understand that if we are doing our best, if we are being as diligent as we are able at any particular time or circumstance in our life.

## Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals

There is no need to be ashamed in any way. The new International version, in fact reads that way.

Instead of being diligent, it reads, do your best, and I think of all the translations I looked at, I liked Weymouth on this verse. I like what yeah, Brother Brad said earlier, the best translation is one that supports what you're trying, the point you're trying to make.

Weymouth says, earnestly seek to commend yourselves to God as a servant who, because of his straightforward dealing with the Word of Truth, has no reason to feel any shame.

Brethren, if we are struggling with a heavy load of shame over who we believe we are in God's sight, or, as we suppose, in the sight of others around us, then we should seek to be healed, and the balm for shame is grace, the undeserved kindness that both God and Jesus extend to us. Grace as a balm to heal our shame must be understood as much more than a theological element working in God's plan of salvation. We must encounter grace and embrace it as an active force in our daily lives. That undeserved kindness is there all the time for us as it helps us survive life's ups and downs, victories and failures with our spiritual connection with God and Jesus intact and vibrant.

An Author Louis Smedes, a Christian author, in his book Shame and Grace, related his own struggle with debilitating shame and how he found healing in the grace of God, and here are some excerpts from his story.

A person filled with shame can slide into this condition without realizing it. I have been there and I have met grace there. Anyone who has been there will recognize the darkness I am talking about, mind you. I believed in God at the time and with my head I believed in grace. I was not groveling in guilt over some horrendous sin.

I was feeling a load of unhealed shame that had little contact with my reality. The ideals I tried and failed to live up to were so absolute and so undefined that my shame was equally absolute and undefined. I was hopeless. I seemed to be sinking into a darkness where I would be stuck forever. It was only a dark feeling, you say?

But feeling is what hurts when it comes to shame. When a person has more unhealed shame than he can bear finally gives into his feelings, he falls into a sadness that has been stored up and not dared to feel for years. He is not sad about anything in particular. The specifics are buried in events he cannot even recall. It does not matter.

What matters is that finally he is feeling was there at the bottom that I discovered clear traces of grace. My desolation inexplicably gave way to comfort. I felt accepted and loved. It was only afterward, as I thought about it, that I realized what I had experienced was the grace of God. I heard no recordable voice.

I felt no physical sensation. But I felt that I was accepted and would not be rejected, was held and would not fall, was loved and would never be unloved. I have since thought that I experienced what the psalm writer must have felt when before he wrote, if I make my bed in Sheol, even there your right hand holds me. Grace is seen not in traces, but full face in the story of Jesus. As I read the Gospels, I am entranced by the simple and spontaneous way he accepted people heavy laden by their sense of being unacceptable tax collectors, the Samaritan woman at the well.

## Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals

He accepted them, the publicans and sinners who were despised and rejected. When he met them, he would simply say, without looking up their credentials or investigating their past, your sins are forgiven, you are accepted. Go in peace. No doubt about it, I met the grace of God in the face of Jesus.

This author emphasizes an important element of grace and being gracious, and that is acceptance. It is God's grace that enables him to accept us as his children. It is a kindness we do not deserve. That is why it is grace undeserved kindness. We have testimony in the Scriptures about God and Jesus reaching out with acceptance to members of the human family in order to have special relationships with them down to the present day, with all of us.

Here Hebrews 2, 10 and 11 says, for it was fitting for him that is God, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things and bringing many sons to glory to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father, for which reason he our Lord Jesus for which reason he our Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren and if he is not ashamed of us, we have no reason to be ashamed before him.

Hebrews 11, 13, 16 all these died in faith, without having received the promises but having seen them, and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth for those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own and indeed, if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had the opportunity to return. But as it is, they were looking for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them and for us it's the new Jerusalem.

Another author related this story in one of his books. He writes, Several years ago, Edward Farrell, a man from Detroit, went on a two week summer vacation to Ireland to visit relatives. His one living uncle was about to celebrate his 80th birthday. On the great day, Ed and his uncle got up early. It was before dawn.

They took a walk along the shores of a lake and stopped to watch the sunrise. They stood side by side for a full 20 minutes and then resumed walking, and Ed glanced at his uncle as they walked and he saw that his face had broken into a broad smile. Ed said, uncle Seamus, you look very happy, and his uncle said, I am.

And Ed asked, how come? And his uncle replied, the Father of Jesus is very fond of me.

The author goes on beyond the story writing, if the question were put to you, do you honestly believe that God likes you, not loves you? Because theologically he must, how would you answer? God loves by necessity of his nature. Without the eternal interior generation of love, he would cease to be God. But if you could answer, the Father is very fond of me, there would come a relaxedness, a serenity, and a compassionate attitude toward yourself that is a reflection of God's own tenderness.

That's the end of the quote. Now perhaps your mind wouldn't even allow you to contemplate making a statement like the Father of Jesus is very fond of me. Maybe that would seem presumptuous and arrogant, and yet there is scriptural support for that very thought. John 16, verses 26 to 28 John 16:26 to 28 in that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf, for the Father Himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed I came forth from the Father.

## Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals

I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. I'm leaving the world again and going to the Father. Now the words in this verse, trans related love are not agape, they are filial. For the Father himself, filial loves you because you have filial loved me, and if you look up in Strong's concordance, the definition of filio, it says to be a friend, to to be fond of.

It's right there in the definition.

So we could just as well translate that verse. For the Father himself is fond of you because you are fond of me. If we believe this and trust that our Heavenly Father's in our Father's deep love for us, we can find the acceptance in his grace that can unburden us of any load of shame that we are carrying. I think that sometimes we can find ourselves imagining that there maybe is a limit to God's love for us. Yet the scriptures provide no escape from our duty to love one another despite our quirks, our mistakes in speech and behavior.

Because we're all imperfect. So we're to love everyone despite those things?

You think God has asked us to do something He Himself is unwilling to do, to love beyond all those imperfections? I don't think God asks us to do something He Himself will not do.

Jesus said a new command. I give you love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another, how does Jesus love us always and completely?

Do you think his love to you or his love for you diminishes when you fail to follow his teachings about love and mercy and righteousness? Do you think he loves you more when you do good and righteous things? Do you think he loves you less when you timidly fail to speak about him when there is an opportunity to witness?

I would suggest if Jesus love for us was that fickle, we would have reason to be concerned about our standing with the Lord Jesus and His Father, because we have our ups and downs, our successes and failures in our Christian walk. But God's love and Jesus love for us is not like that. That is more of a description of the way love oscillates in human relationships. Here's what the apostle Paul tells us about Jesus's love. This is Ephesians 3, 16, 19 Ephesians 3, 16,19 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know that this love surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Paul prays here that we might have the power to grasp the vastness of the love of Christ, asserting that Christ's love for us is so great that it is beyond knowing, beyond our comprehension.

Christ's love was so great that he willingly gave his life in a very painful and humiliating way upon the cross.

If we find ourselves imagining limits to God's love for us, perhaps we are projecting onto him our own thinking and perspectives, the limits that might be in our own mind and heart. Or we may be projecting onto him the character and personality of someone who has been a stern authority figure in our life. It is easy to do that, but we should be careful not to do that. The fact is we are all terribly imperfect, and accepting and admitting that is the key to seeing and understanding how deep and

## Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals

wide and long is the love of Christ and His Father. It is the key to seeing and understanding how utterly dependent we are on God's compassion and his grace.

His grace can heal our sense of shame if we are carrying a burden of shame. His love for us is extravagant and his willingness to forgive our failures is unending. He told us to keep on forgiving one another, and we don't really want to draw the line at 490 times 7 times 70. He didn't mean it that way. So if we are to go on forgiving one another, would God be asking us to do something he's unwilling to do?

Brethren, I am not in any way suggesting we ignore our conscience or the negative feelings that we experience when we do something wrong, or the gloomy feeling that our pathway in life is not leading in a good direction, a direction that is honoring to God and our Lord Jesus. Because sometimes we lose our way for a while.

But we need not carry a load of guilt over our weaknesses that overwhelms us with a sense of shame of who we are.

We're just like the world around us in one sense, and we are very, very special in God's eyes. In another sense, we live in both camps, just like our neighbors that we're called to love unendingly. But we're also the few that have voluntarily given our hearts to God, and so from that standpoint, we're very special in his sight.

Romans 8:1 and 2 says, There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set you free from the law of sin and death.

People who are heavily burdened with shame are the kind of people Jesus may have had in mind when he said in Matthew 11:28-30, Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. He does not place that burden of shame upon us. It comes from within ourselves and others around us. We don't need to put that upon us.

What I am suggesting is that if we find ourselves bearing a heavy burden of debilitating shame, we should liberally apply God's grace in our lives through study and meditation on that subject and those that we have discussed, his undeserved kindness toward us, his acceptance of us with all of the blemishes that we have as marvelous healing properties. Jesus said in John 6:37 all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

They don't give up on us.

Letting the grace of God heal our shame can move us to a more joyful, confident relationship with our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus. The kind of confidence expressed by the Apostle Paul in these two scriptures with which I will close John 2:28 and now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. That's that's what we want to have a joyful a joyful introduction to Jesus and 2nd Timothy 1:8-12 2nd Timothy 1:8-12 Therefore I do not therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of Me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the Gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by

## **Tom Gilbert - Grace That Heals**

the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to life through the Gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day, and he will guard what we each have entrusted to him until that day.

May the Lord add His blessing.