

## Polly's Pondering

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2*

We just celebrated the transfiguration of the Lord on the last Sunday in February so as we begin this new month of March, I thought it would be good to look at the difference between shame, guilt and conviction. The scripture above tells us we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. I believe that renewing of our minds is needed when it comes to issues that cause us guilt or shame. Otherwise, the enemy wins. Remember the last part of our key verse: "Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world but that through him it might be saved. John 3:17"

Webster dictionary states that guilt is "the fact of having committed a specified or implied offense or crime." On the other hand it states that shame is "a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior; a loss of respect or esteem"

Kegan Mosler, staff member with Cornerstone Christian Counseling relays the difference between guilt and shame in this way: "guilt is behavior-focused, and shame is identity-focused. Guilt says, "I did something disgusting" while shame says, "I am disgusting"

For those of us who believe we are created in the image of God and who know that God is not only good but very good therefore must logically follow that thought through to its conclusion - we *are not bad*, but rather good people making wrong choices. Shame is of the enemy. Satan loves when we feel that we are so disgusting that God would not even want to have anything to do with us. That is a lie. Nothing is impossible for God not even the redemption of the ugliness of our lives.

While guilt does focus on the action and therefore is somewhat apart from the person, it still opens the possibility of shame to seep in if not properly addressed. It might look something like, "You know what harm can that act do really? I know a lot of good people, Christians even who do this sort of thing. Surely, it can't harm me. This sort of thinking only leads us into more sin instead of away from sin. The other possibility goes something like this: "I can't believe I did that disgusting thing. I don't know how God could possibly forgive me for doing that. I think I am beyond his grace." That is simply a lie of the enemy.

Shame and Guilt often lead us to self-abuse, self-punishment or self-medicating behavior. We do things to numb the pain and cover the disgust we feel. This is self-destructive and the enemy loves it.

Conviction on the other hand, is more focused on the true identity of the individual as one who is made in the image of God and is very good, loved by God and created for good things. It comes to us as a gut feeling, a nudging of the Holy Spirit that says this action is not what God would choose for you. You were created for better things. Your body is holy and deserves to be treated as such. Your mind is fearfully and wonderfully made and created to think on lovely, pure, and holy things. It recognizes that what is being chosen is not helpful in drawing one closer to God, or for becoming all they were meant to become. It is selling oneself short. Buying the lie that we are not able to overcome, to choose better, or to make changes. That lie chains us to our sins, but conviction sets us free. Romans 5:8 says: "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." We are never beyond God's grace. It allows us to acknowledge our worth and to repent for what we have done, which then frees us to try a new thing. Make a different choice, choose a different path, create a different plan – one that brings us closer to our creator and to the people around us. It does not isolate us. It does not condemn us. It encourages, inspires, and gives us the power not only to overcome temptations but to reach for greatness and to find ways to live a forgiven life with power and belief in the redeeming, healing power of Christ.

I once heard it said, when the enemy reminds you of your past – remind the enemy of his future! Remember "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Let's stop trying to earn God's grace, and instead repent and believe the gospel!