

*I am not*   
**ASHAMED!**

# *Daily devotional*

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**READINGS AND PRAYERS FOR  
SUFFERING CHURCH ACTION WEEK 2017**

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**barnabasfund**  
hope and aid for the persecuted church



**Suffering Church  
Action Week**

# Introduction

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*I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
Nor to defend His cause;  
Maintain the honours of His word,  
The glory of His cross.*

(ISAAC WATTS)

The apostle Paul boasted that he would glory in the cross, and affirmed that he was not ashamed of the Gospel. In his calling as a preacher of that Gospel, in embracing that shameful and scandalous cross, he was willing to take the chains of a prisoner, to carry the marks of Jesus on his body, and to face a martyr's death. Paul was not ashamed; he knew that his life was lived before God and ahead of him was the judgment throne. He did not care what people said of him or his message.

Today the Church faces a crisis in many parts of the world. What to do with the Bible – is it truly the inspired Word of God? What to do with Jesus, the supreme revelation of God to humankind? What to do with His cross – “the old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame”? A hostile secular world, which ridicules and abhors what it sees as the dogmatism of Christianity, has led some Christians to compromise their faith. In their desire to be respectable and to conform to this present world, they have – perhaps unconsciously – retreated. It seems that the same may have been happening in the first century Church, as the New Testament addresses this issue several times.

Visible indicators of this compromise include the gradual removal of Christian symbols, especially the cross. In this retreat, the emphasis is on social ethics such as the environment and refugees (important as they are), rather than the commandments of God. There is a desire to avoid suffering and to embrace materialistic luxury. We are left with a Christianity that is deemed irrelevant, a Church that is obsolete, and many Christians who are uncertain of who they are and to Whom they belong.

We will all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Will we be ashamed on that day?

# SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER

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*God is not ashamed to be our God*

HEBREWS 11:16

**THE** patriarchs had an intense desire for God, and therefore a longing for His heavenly country. They recognised that they were strangers on earth and their home was in heaven. Because of this faith, love and longing, God is not ashamed to be called their God; in fact that He had already prepared for them the city on which their hearts were set. In the Old Testament, God is often identified as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Name which He takes for Himself expresses a relationship of love in which those individuals belong to God and He belongs to them. It expresses that He has made Himself their God.

When Christians live as pilgrims and strangers in the world, keeping themselves apart as Abraham lived apart from the other peoples, God is glad to call them His own. When Christians live distinctively like this, the world will know they are Christians; though the world may not like such Christians, it will respect them. But secularised Christians, whose lifestyles, opinions, goals and priorities are the same as the world's, who never think of the heavenly city, are

crucifying Christ again and subjecting Him to public disgrace (Hebrews 6:6). They bring shame on God and on the faith they say they follow. And God will be ashamed of them.

A cynical war-hardened journalist visited a colony of leprosy patients. There, he was asked whether he would like to see God. He was then taken to a leprosy patient who was a Christian believer, his face so ravaged that little but the eyes remained. The Christian told the journalist, “Look into his eyes.” The journalist looked intently - and saw the divine. It transformed him. In the brokenness of humanity, God had accepted this despised and disfigured “leper” as His son.

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*Ashamed of You, my God,  
I can never be.  
Vile sinner though I am,  
You made me Your son  
And gave me a new name  
Written on the palms of Your hands,  
Stamped on Your forehead indelibly.  
I am Yours and will forever be.*

# MONDAY 30 OCTOBER

*Jesus is not ashamed to call us  
His brothers and sisters*

HEBREWS 2:10-18

Jesus is not ashamed to call His blood-bought people His brethren. The eternal Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, humbled Himself, taking upon Himself all the frailties of a human being. He, the supreme Lord of glory, through whom all things were created, entered the realm of humanity. There He bore our weaknesses and sins, becoming the pioneer of our salvation. He, the perfect One, made Himself sin for us. This matchless Lord now looks upon His blood-bought saints as His brothers and sisters and is not ashamed to call them His own. Through His sufferings He identifies with humanity, sympathises with them, feels for them, understands them.

This new community, for which Christ sacrificed Himself, now bears His Name. Sanctified by Him, they show forth His glory to the world. The Light of the World shines through their brokenness; they become His lights in a dark world, so He is not ashamed of them.

Genesius, a famous Roman actor of the fourth century, planned to ridicule

the Christian faith on stage in front of the Emperor Diocletian, who hated Christians. But in the middle of his performance, Jesus met with Genesius, and the mocking performance became a reality, as Genesius declared on stage, "I came here today to please an earthly Emperor but what I have done is to please a heavenly King. I came here to give you laughter, but what I have done is to give joy to Him and His angels ... the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God." Jesus had met with Genesius, as He did with Saul, had made him His own and was not ashamed of him. Genesius was arrested, tortured and beheaded, still affirming, "Our Lord Jesus Christ is God and we shall have life in His name."

*Ashamed of You, my Jesus,  
I can never be.  
You purchased my salvation  
By Your blood, shed for me.  
You called me Your brother  
And brought me into Your family,  
Made me Your own.  
I am Yours and will forever be.*

# TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER

*Not ashamed of His cross of suffering*

GALATIANS 6:14

**I**n Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Mr Valiant-for-Truth declared: "My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who will now be my rewarder." Likewise the apostle Paul wrote of the marks of Jesus branded on his body (Galatians 6:17).

The Jewish Christians had boasted of their circumcision, which would save them from persecution by Romans and Jews. They were putting on a show to get human approval. But Paul's only boast was the cross of Christ – the ignominious, shameful instrument of agonising execution for the worst of criminals. Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23). The cross was "sneered at by Gentile, abhorred by Jew, but to his eye resplendent with a multiplicity of truths radiating from it to his soul of infinite preciousness" (*Pulpit Commentary*). Christ and His cross continue to be that stumbling block today, that "obnoxious object". But Paul gloried in that shameful cross.

Part of the weakness of the modern Church is that some Christians

seem ashamed of the cross and the offence it can cause. This is leading increasingly to the removal of the symbol of the cross from public places. Theology students at Glasgow University are given a "trigger warning" before lectures on Jesus and cinema which might contain "graphic scenes of the crucifixion," presumably in case they wish to leave the room.

Nadia Eweida courageously wore her cross necklace to work at British Airways. She met with opposition, ridicule and the possibility of losing her job. Many Christians reviled her. But for her, as an Egyptian Christian, the cross was central to her life and that to remove the visible symbol would be to deny her Master and Lord, who died for her on the cross.

*Ashamed of Your cross  
I will never be.  
On that wood of shame,  
Accursed, You gave Yourself for me.  
You bought my redemption  
When You bore my sins.  
How can I be ashamed  
Of You, Christ crucified?*

# WEDNESDAY 1 NOVEMBER

*Not ashamed of His suffering people*

2 TIMOTHY 1:8,16-18

When Paul was serving time in jail, many Christians turned away from him (v.15). But Onesiphorus was not ashamed to be associated with the prisoner. This faithful Christian, about whom we know so little, who had probably died by the time Paul was writing his letter to Timothy, made a world of difference to Paul during the shame and disgrace of his detention. When Onesiphorus (whose name means “profitable”) got to Rome, he eagerly sought Paul out. We can imagine him going from prison to prison or from cell to cell, asking for Paul. He was not afraid to do this, even though the Romans could have arrested him as well, for so openly identifying with their prisoner.

After he had found Paul, Onesiphorus “often refreshed” him. No doubt that included food and other practical needs, as well as encouraging him and talking with him of the Lord, so that the faith of both could be built up.

According to tradition, Onesiphorus was martyred by being tied to wild horses who tore him to pieces. What a contrast with the Christians who abandoned and betrayed Paul,

ashamed of him and his chains.

Nissar Hussain, living in the British city of Bradford, left Islam to follow Christ some 20 years ago. Of course, he was rejected by his Muslim friends and relatives, and over the years he, his wife and children suffered much violence and many false accusations from angry Muslims. Tragically, Nissar was also rejected by the church leaders to whom he turned for help. He was an obstacle to their dialogical relationship with the Muslim community. How Nissar needed an Onesiphorus to come boldly alongside him, not caring what others thought, to bring him practical help and encourage the family in their faith.

*Ashamed of Your suffering people  
I will never be.*

*For they walk the path You trod,  
The path of pain and shame.*

*Falsely accused, reviled, condemned,  
Faithful unto death,*

*They gave their all for You, their  
Master and King.*

*How can I be ashamed of them?*

# THURSDAY 2 NOVEMBER

*Not ashamed of the Gospel, the power of God  
for salvation*

ROMANS 1:16

Paul’s astounding words that he was not ashamed of the Gospel are filled with courage, commitment and dedication. He recognised that the Gospel is unique. It is the Gospel of salvation. It was the Gospel that would bring light to a world that was in darkness, that would bring hope to a world that was in despair, that would bring life to those who faced death. Salvation for him encompassed all of life, whether it was salvation from physical illness, from our sinful condition or from the wrath of God.

In declaring that he was not ashamed, Paul expressed his loyalty, fidelity, indestructible hope, total acceptance and trust in the Gospel message. He recognised that within it was the dynamite-like power of God, power to change, to transform, to make anew. So he could be supremely confident that, although the message might be rejected or mocked, the Gospel would ultimately triumph and for this he could never be ashamed.

On 26 May 2017 a group of Egyptian

Christians was travelling on a remote road, when they were ambushed by Islamist gunmen. There were many children in the group, as it was a church outing organised for them. The gunmen began asking the Christians to repeat the Islamic creed (which, in the eyes of Muslims, would be an act of conversion to Islam). When the children were asked to do this, they responded by reciting together the Lord’s Prayer. Then the shooting started. Twenty-nine Christians were martyred, including children.

*Ashamed of Your Gospel, Lord,  
I will never be.*

*Your message of hope  
That alone can set us free*

*From the tyranny of sin  
This eternal message*

*Of divine Truth revealed  
I will forever proclaim.*

# FRIDAY 3 NOVEMBER

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*Not ashamed of being a messenger of the Gospel, not ashamed to testify*

**2 TIMOTHY 1:8,11-12; PHILIPPIANS 1:20**

**ON** the Damascus road, Jesus met with Saul and turned his life upside down. He would now be Paul, commissioned by Christ Himself to be a preacher, apostle and teacher. As an ambassador, he would represent Christ his Lord in hostile environments. He would boldly proclaim the Gospel for which He had been appointed a herald. He would teach and lead the flock that Christ had committed to him. For this he would have to suffer shame, abuse, beatings, imprisonment and ultimately martyrdom.

But at the very centre of his life was the One he knew, the One who had called him, the One in whom he had believed, the One who would guard the message until the final Judgment Day. In this high calling he could never be ashamed, for he saw it as a glorious task, an immense privilege, and a joy unbounded which was worth sacrificing everything for. To be a messenger of Christ, to be His

representative here on earth, and to call men and women to Him was the noblest of all callings.

On 29 January 2016 in Uttar Pradesh state, India, Hindu radicals burst into the home of a Christian called Awadesh Savita. They accused him of converting three Hindus to Christianity, and punished him by inflicting extreme public humiliation according to local customs. They had his head shaved as well as half his moustache and one eyebrow, hung a garland of shoes around his neck and paraded him through the town on a donkey.

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*Ashamed to be Your servant, Lord,  
I will never be.  
To sound forth the Gospel message,  
To serve You  
As You saved me  
For You came not be served  
But in sacrifice to give.  
How can I be ashamed of You?*

# SATURDAY 4 NOVEMBER

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*Not ashamed to suffer for Him*

**1 PETER 4:16; 2 TIMOTHY 1:8**

**S**uffering for Christ is a badge of honour, to be accepted with joy and worn with pride. Paul urges Timothy to share in his suffering for the Gospel. Peter wrote that we should not be ashamed to suffer as Christians, but should rejoice in those sufferings and glorify God.

There is a suffering brought about by our weaknesses, sins and failings. That is not what Paul and Peter mean. But there is another kind of suffering, which we must hold dear, that springs from the relationship we have with Christ – our faith in Him, our love for Him, our desire to be identified with Him. We live to bear His Name, that Name which is above all other names. As His disciples, marching with His standard before us, we are in a battlefield, scorn and abuse on one side, danger and death on the other. Some of life's sufferings are common to all, but suffering for Christ is a privilege granted only to Christ's people.

The Bible rejects the argument that Christians should never suffer, or that suffering is a disgrace to God. Some are repelled by this Biblical teaching. Yet this is to reject the One

who suffered for us and the privilege of suffering for Him – a glorious gift of which we should never be ashamed.

In February 2015, Islamic State militants in Libya kidnapped some Egyptian migrant workers. They separated the Muslims from the Christians according to the men's names. But one in the group of Muslims spoke up. He had a name that is mainly used by Muslims but occasionally by Christians. He told the militants that he was a Christian and wanted to go with his fellow-believers. He and the other Christians were beheaded.

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*Ashamed to suffer for Your Name,  
I will never be.  
To bear Your marks on my body  
So let it be.  
How can I deny Thee, when Thou didst  
not deny me?  
To boast in You is all I seek  
And to suffer for Your sake.  
How can I be ashamed of Thee?*

# SUNDAY 5 NOVEMBER

## *Not ashamed in the final judgment*

**MARK 8:38; 1 CORINTHIANS 3:12-15; MATTHEW 10:33;  
HEBREWS 11:16; 1 JOHN 2:28**

**T**here is a Day coming when we shall all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. There, our sins will be laid bare, our lives opened as a book, and all our aspirations, motivations and actions revealed. The vain pursuit of pride, pleasure, power and possessions will be of no value. What we have built on earth will be tested by fire: anything built with “gold, silver, precious stones” will survive, but anything built with “wood, hay, straw” will be burnt. On that Judgment Day, will we be ashamed of the life we have lived?

Will Christ be ashamed of us? The words of Jesus in Mark 8:38 have a terrifying aspect: “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” If we are ashamed of Christ, deny Him or disown Him, how can we stand before Him on the Day of Judgment?

A life of faithfulness to Him and to His work, a life that has embraced

His holy calling, a life of selfless and sacrificial service, a life dedicated to the glory of God – that is what He requires. Will we hear on that fateful day, “Well done, good and faithful servant?” God calls us to faithfulness above all else. It is not great achievements that He judges us on; rather He looks for faithful service in simplicity and singleness of heart. It is on this that we will be judged.

When Stephen was about to be stoned, he gazed into heaven. “I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God,” he said – and was dragged out of the city to his death. (Acts 7:54-60)

*Will You be ashamed of me, O Lord,  
When I stand before Your throne  
On the Judgment Day,  
My sins laid bare,  
My motives and all thoughts made plain?  
Faithful I pray I will be,  
Ever loyal to the unashamed.*

Ashamed of You, my God,  
I can never be.  
Vile sinner though I am,  
You made me Your son  
And gave me a new name  
Written on the palms of Your hands,  
Stamped on Your forehead indelibly.  
I am Yours and will forever be.

Ashamed of You, my Jesus,  
I can never be.  
You purchased my salvation  
By Your blood, shed for me.  
You called me Your brother  
And brought me into Your family,  
Made me Your own.  
I am Yours and will forever be.

Ashamed of Your cross  
I will never be.  
On that wood of shame,  
Accursed, You gave Yourself for me.  
You bought my redemption  
When you bore my sins.  
How can I be ashamed  
Of You, Christ crucified?

Ashamed of Your suffering people  
I will never be.  
For they walk the path You trod,  
The path of pain and shame.  
Falsely accused, reviled, condemned,  
Faithful unto death,  
They gave their all for You,  
their Master and King.  
How can I be ashamed of them?

Ashamed of Your Gospel, Lord,  
I will never be.  
Your message of hope  
That alone can set us free  
From the tyranny of sin  
This eternal message  
Of divine Truth revealed  
I will forever proclaim.

Ashamed to be Your servant, Lord,  
I will never be.  
To sound forth the Gospel message,  
To serve You  
As You saved me  
For You came not be served  
But in sacrifice to give.  
How can I be ashamed of You?

Ashamed to suffer for Your Name,  
I will never be.  
To bear Your marks on my body  
So let it be.  
How can I deny Thee, when Thou didst  
not deny me?  
To boast in You is all I seek  
And to suffer for Your sake.  
How can I be ashamed of Thee?

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