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This week we continued our current series 'sin and how to solve it' as we, each week, consider a different model of sin in the bible and think through how the cross is that answer to that model. We want to grasp something of the depth and breadth of sin in the bible, so that we grasp afresh the heights of the cross and God's love for us.

Having introduced the series and then considered idolatry and adultery we thought about shame.

We began by explaining why shame is a tricky concept for us to get our heads around

- 1) Much of the bible was written in a shame and honour culture, which, in our western mindset, we struggle to understand (and are confused / appalled by when honour killings happen)
- 2) Much of talk of shame is about feelings - how we feel about things - things that we've done, things that we've not done or things that have been done to us (including 'right' shame for these things at times)
- 3) Shame affects both our standing in the community (we feel ashamed before people because they know our past) and our standing before God (we feel unable to approach him because of our shame)

We began our time in **Genesis 3** noting various aspects of shame that arise from Adam and Eve eating the fruit. We noted that actually began at the end of chapter 2 where the couple were naked but felt no shame. It's from this place that they seek to hide after they are disobedient. There's something about sin that means we feel exposed and seek to cover ourselves.

- They hide from each other as they seek to cover their nakedness, shame and vulnerability.
- They hide from God as they cower in the bushes.
- They hide from themselves as they seek to point fingers and blame anyone else in the room.

We also noted that God, in his kindness, covers them by means of animal skins, signifying a sacrifice is made. This covering though is temporary and points ahead to the cross.

We then moved to **Isaiah 54** as God was speaking to Israel post-exile and promising them that they would not have to be ashamed any more. The chapter is outlining the fruit of the work of God's suffering servant, Jesus. The shame is painted in various terms but

especially as a widowed /barren / deserted wife (Isaiah deliberately mixes his metaphors). But now she is to be associated with her husband and find her identity there. Her husband is King and he is Kind, compassionate and powerful.

We then began to think about how both we and Israel find our relief from shame in the same place - in the cross of Jesus. God's covering of Adam and Eve by means of animal skins pointed ahead to a true and final and perfect covering that finally and forever removes our shame. Jesus was completely and totally vulnerable and shamed (Hebrews 12v2) so that we don't have to be ashamed anymore. The challenge is increasingly to find our identity in him and his work on the cross for us, rather than the things that shame us in these bodies.

At the end of the sermon we quoted extensively from a blog post by Emma Scrivener – you can find the transcript here: <http://emmascrivener.net/2014/12/dear-shame/>

***Here are just a few questions that might get things going, please feel very free to ignore / adapt for your group***

How has last week's sermon / study on adultery affected you this week?

What is shame? Do we feel shame? For what kind of things?

Imagine one person in the room had a telepathic gift and knew all that everyone else was thinking and had ever done. How would you feel? ☺

Genesis 3

Have a look at Genesis 2v24 - what does it mean to feel no shame?

What do Adam and Eve do after they eat from the tree?

Why? How do they hide?

How do we mirror this hiding in our behaviour?

How does God (by the end of the chapter) show them grace?

Isaiah 54

Have a look at Isaiah 54v1-8

How does God describe the shame of his people?

Why did they actually feel shame?

Why are they no longer to feel shame?

How do these 2 passages point ahead to the cross?

So, why do we still feel ashamed?

What is our daily battle?