



Weekly Newsletter: 28 January 2025

Reflection: How to Overcome Shame and Rest in Love

By Joe Barnard

The last week I've been memorising the poem "Love Bade Me Welcome" by George Herbert. Reflecting on the poem is a happy way to prepare for the Lord's Table this Sunday. Therefore, let me share a few of the crumbs with which the Holy Spirit has been feeding my heart.

The poem begins,

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked any thing.

There are few actions more consoling than receiving a warm and sincere welcome. Most of us have an orphan mentality. We hide from others because we feel insecure. What a thought to picture Love swinging the door open to the soul. And do not miss the verbs, adjectives, and adverbs associated with Love in the poem. Love is "quick-eyed"; love takes the initiative (i.e. "drew nearer"); love speaks "sweetly". Who does not want to feel the delicious embrace of such Love?

Of equal interest is the description of the self in the stanza. I feel as if I know this "soul" intimately. In fact, it is mine. In spite of the greetings of love, there is something in the self that, like a hurt child, draws back. The response is not rational, but it is real. We all know what it is to turn away from the parent whose only desire is to comfort us.

The second stanza continues,

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

This stanza extracts the problem lodged in the self that results in slackness toward love. In a word, it is shame, a glaring sense of *unworth*. The soul steeped in shame is too self-obsessed to allow itself to be embraced. All it can think about is personal guilt, personal unimportance, and personal ugliness.

But true love is unrelenting. Again, pay attention to verbs used in relation to Love. In response to the downward cast eyes of a self-deprecating soul, Love locks hands, beams a radiant smile, and poses a coaxing question that – now, for the first time in the poem – unveils the identity of Love. This is not mere human love engaging the soul; this is what Charles Wesley would call Love Divine.

The final stanza is this:

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let me shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

Carried over into this stanza is the defilement of the soul. As of yet, the contest is not over. We cannot tell whether the self will find the courage to relax into the arms of love or whether it will stay frigid and hard. One can almost hear the voice of Peter in the lines: “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8). But love, like Jesus, wrestles on until it has the victory. Each excuse for flight is parried by a gentle question. Love refuses to play by the rules of desert. The debt of shame is cancelled by the extravagance of grace. Love did not need to be asked to bear the blame; the soul was loved before the soul even knew that Love existed.

The final three lines are a concise restatement of Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son. Just as the younger brother reasoned his way home by the logic of demotion, so the soul here is only willing to step across the threshold of Love if permitted to do service. Yet, here we see a new side of Love: its ingratiating stubbornness. Love does not say, “Please sit down,” but, “You must sit down.” Love knows that ultimately the change needed in the soul will not happen by logic or reasoning; experience is the only effective curriculum. To taste something is not to ponder it, evaluate it, or scrutinise it. We must think here of the beautiful lines of Ps. 34:8, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” The sweetness of grace is like the warmth of a hug: one must feel it to know it.

And so, the poem leaves us with the soul flat out of excuses and seated like the sinners of Galilee at a table as unexpected as it is unmerited. Love has won, as Jesus inevitably does. His love, which is stronger than death, is also stronger than shame.

Let me encourage you to reflect on this poem as you prepare for the Lord’s Table this Sunday. The message of the gospel is that of the poem: “Love bade me welcome.” Hear the voice of Jesus inviting you this Lord’s Day to lay down your shame, to detach from self-reflection, and to taste the sweetness of a food and drink that, among other things, is the voice of God whispering, “I love you.”

Christmas Appeal – Thank You from Neil Longwe, Merchant City Church Plant

Dear brothers and sisters at Holyrood Evangelical Church,

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the very generous gift of £1,427.38 that you have given Merchant City Church Plant. We thank God for putting Glasgow on your hearts. This seed funding will go towards the kingdom work of reaching Glasgow. It will specifically help in the hiring of the location where our core team are meeting and where we are engaging in marketplace evangelism. It is called The Social Hub, and it is a dynamic city centre building right in the heart of the Merchant City which incorporates:

- 1) a hotel which includes student accommodation, a gym, and a restaurant and bar
- 2) a co-working space for city workers needing a desk or office
- 3) rooms for hire, including an auditorium

As you may know, David and I are currently based in the co-working space. We are renting desks and are working alongside digital creatives, entrepreneurs and other workers who want to be in the city centre of Glasgow. And we hope to begin shortly to use it as the location for Sunday gatherings of our core team. The individuals that make up our core team are working in the fields of healthcare, culture, and in further education. Since August, David and I have been equipping our team to share their faith with their colleagues and to have confidence in the gospel message as we think through how to communicate it clearly.

We are honoured and humbled by your support, and we covet your prayers for this work. We realise we cannot do this work on our own. We are grateful to God for His people who are bringing our work before His throne of grace. Your support and words of encouragement are just another token of our heavenly Father's affirmation and love for us in this work. Hopefully you are receiving our prayer letters one should be coming out soon. I (Neil) am looking forward to seeing and worshipping with you all on Sunday 23 February.

In His service, Neil Longwe and David Trimble Merchant City Church

Wednesday Prayer Meetings

This Wednesday we are meeting to pray from 7-8pm in the building and a Zoom option is available for those who cannot make it in person. Refreshments will be served in the church from 6.45pm.

Next Wednesday (5 February) we are having a meal before the prayer meeting. Come from 5.45pm, food will be served at 6pm and we'll pray together from 7pm.

Men's and Women's Bible Studies

The women are looking forward to getting together on **Thursday morning from 10:30am – 11.30am** to study God's word, pray and enjoy fellowship together (and one or two scones!).

The men start their next block of studies on **Thursday 6 February** from 10.30-11.30am in the church. Please join these groups if you can!

Ladies' Breakfast – Saturday 15 February



Save the date! We are looking forward to having our next Ladies' Breakfast on **Saturday 15 February** and Lorna Ferguson will be our speaker.

We'll start with breakfast at 9.30am and a sign up sheet for food will be available in the church foyer over the next couple of weeks. We'll aim to finish about 11am. Please pray for Lorna as she speaks and that our time together would equip us to live wholeheartedly for Jesus. Contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org for more details.

Bethany Christian Trust Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre

The Crisis Intervention team at the Welcome Centre have made us aware of the need for toiletries, warm socks and underwear for their guests. If you are able, please consider purchasing one or more of the following items. There will be a labelled box in the church foyer for these items. They will be collected and taken to the Welcome Centre on **Sunday 23 February**.

Please note that the vast majority of guests at the centre are men. Items needed:

- New toiletries - shower gel, toothpaste, toothbrushes, face wash, moisturiser, lip balm, deodorant (full and travel size are needed)
- Socks- new warm socks, all adult sizes needed
- Underwear- new men's cotton boxer shorts and briefs, all sizes needed.

If you have any questions or need more information, speak to Hannah Rankin.

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm in the church and online. Refreshments from 6.45pm.
- Thursday: Women's Bible Study at 10.30am in the church
- Sunday:
 - Communion service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Evening service at 6pm – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
- Monday:
 - Baby & Toddlers Group 10am – 11.30am
 - Warm Space 12 noon to 3pm
 - Co-ordination Group at 7pm on Zoom



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