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Resisting Satanic Condemnation

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Resisting Satanic Condemnation

There is a great scene in the children's book *Ramona the Pest* [1] where the kindergarten namesake of the book is reveling in her new red rain boots, invincible against the wetness and mud of the outside world.

Superior to anything she might encounter, she stomps through a muddy construction site, brashly ignoring the older (and wiser) kids who warn that she'll get stuck in the oozing mud. Ramona suddenly finds herself stuck in the middle of a muddy lot, unable to move for fear of losing her cherished boots, late for school, alone, and the object of classmate's stares and shaking heads. Her arrogance crashes quickly into hot tears of frustration and shame.

Shame. The plunging pit in the stomach, the heat, prickling up the neck, the wash of emotion that renders us small, paralyzed, stuck in the mud, scorned.

Shame. The awful reversal from the lure and appeal of temptation to the accusations: *"You must be stupid to fall for that temptation again,"* or *"See, you really are a failure, who do you think you are?"*

Shame is different from guilt. Shame is: *"I am bad."* Guilt is: *"I did something bad."*...Guilt: *"I'm sorry, I made a mistake."* Shame: *"I'm sorry. I am a mistake."* [2]

Shame paralyzes us in the midst of our life with Jesus because it accuses us at the core of who we are, at the level of our identity. *"You're a sinner and won't ever be anything else."* *"God won't forgive you this time."* *"God doesn't really love you."*

When we listen to that voice of shame, we remain stuck in oozing mud, hiding our face. With our face covered we don't see that God has already made a path out for us in Jesus. He stands ready to carry us to safety and clean us off if only we'd receive his help.

Romans 8:1,33-34 states the truth of God's forgiveness: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And, "Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us."

It is our identity as forgiven, beloved children of God that gives us the courage to face and reject the paralyzing lies of shame. We don't ignore what we've done wrong, we still have to turn away from sin and turn back toward God. But we know that when we turn toward God we are turning toward an embrace and welcome, not accusation or a slap.

1 John 1:9 promises, "But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness."

Our confession doesn't somehow make us able to be forgiven, it allows us to receive God's forgiveness—to reach out and **accept** the gift of forgiveness as something valuable beyond measure with gratitude. If we aren't turning away from our sin, then the gift is worthless and we have no gratitude.

But when we have named what we've done as wrong, we are able to joyfully receive the gift of forgiveness. Gratitude can spill out as we take hold of the strong hand that pulls us out of our muddy, arrogant mess. We can receive God's love as a child, thankful to be saved and forgiven. Safe in our identity in Jesus, we have the power to reject the paralyzing lies of shame.

[1] Beverly Cleary, *Ramona the Pest*. (New York, W. Morrow, 1968).[2] Brene Brown, "Listening to Shame," TED Talk, March 2012.

https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame?language=en#t-850145