They Could Not Blush

(Robert Turner)

The fat is in the sun – and, we may add, “in the fire” for all who question the various stages of undress seen in the stores and on the streets these days. The more angular and misshapen the woman, or the more knobby-kneed the man, the less propriety and modesty is shown. And no one blushes! Jeremiah prophesied against Jerusalem saying, ***“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush”*** (Jeremiah 6:15).

They could not blush. It is a terrible thing when a people can no longer blush. It means there is no sense of shame – the conscience is seared. They have so lowered their standards that “abominations” appear acceptable. Self-respect has been destroyed, and there is no personal pride to urge them to better, higher, more noble attainments. Their moral “slip shows” and they “couldn’t care less.” Further, they frequently compound their degradation by a blasé smugness, as though their calloused hearts were marks of high honor. He who blushes (should one remain) is a “square,” or maybe a “cube.”

Once my wife and I visited a woman whose attire was almost non-existent. We were so embarrassed for her that we sought to excuse ourselves; but apparently she thought her clothing (?) perfectly adequate. She sat, chatting gaily, until her three-year-old, wearing training panties, walked into the room. Then she rushed the child away with a “spat” saying, “*You know better than to come in here undressed like that!*” I suppose psychology has some explanation for it.

Paul commends “shame-fastness” – a word meaning “bound, or controlled by a sense of shame – modesty.” As a bedfast person is “bound” to the bed by physical disability, so a shame-fast person has a built in sense of right or propriety that “binds” and forbids appearing in public carelessly or improperly clothed (**1 Timothy 2:8-10**). When a friend of mine commented on the gross immodesty that prevailed in a western resort city, he was told, “After a while you’ll get used to it.” My friend replied that he hoped not. “Getting used to” something that degrades character and lowers moral standards is no inducement to one who can still blush and is proud of it.

**You Sinned… Again?**

(Allen Dvorak)

Jesus spoke of the inevitability of “offenses,” pronouncing a woe against those who commit such offenses (Luke 17:1-2). As serious as the consequence of sinning against others, Jesus warned the disciples about the awesome responsibility of men to forgive sins committed against them (Luke 17:3-4). “***Take heed to yourself***,” He cautioned them, “***If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him***” (Luke 17:3-4).

 Seven times in a day?? Has someone really repented if they are sinning seven times in a day? Of course, the passage in Luke doesn’t say that the sinner was committing the same sin seven times in a day, but the passage raises questions about repetitious sin and the implications of repentance. Repentance is literally “a change of mind” (Thayer/Vine). Thayer adds, “especially the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life…” The Scriptures distinguishes between sorrow for sin, repentance and the fruits which repentance produces (2 Corinthians 7:10; Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20).

 In a perfect world, the sinner who repents of a particular sin, i.e., decides that he will not commit that sin, would not ever commit that sin again. However, God recognizes that man does not carry out his intentions in a perfect way (“***The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak***” – Matthew 26:41b). In Romans 7:13-24, Paul pictured the struggle that man faces to do what he knows to be right. The apostle John conceded that Christians would continue to sin occasionally (1 John 1:8-10), even though they have repented of sin when they obeyed the gospel (e.g., Acts 2:38). He also affirms, however, that Christians may not live in sin, i.e., “walk” in darkness (1 John 1:6-7; 3:6-9). The Christian who continues to sin without sorrow for sin and repentance is not “dead to sin” (see Romans 6:1-4).

 Clearly God intends for Christians to grow spiritually (2 Peter 1:5-8; 3:18). We are provided divine help in resisting temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13) and expected to resist temptation (1 Peter 5:9; James 4:7-8). Conquering sin entirely is a lifetime project and even determined Christians will falter at times. As our desire to please God becomes stronger and our ability to discern between right and wrong grows, our repentance will become more perfect and we will sin less.