

MEDITATION 16, Psalms 31 & 32 :
“The Lord Vindicates the Righteous and Delivers From Shame.”

“In you, O Lord, I have taken shelter! Never let me be humiliated! Vindicate me by rescuing me! Listen to me! Quickly deliver me! Be my protector and refuge, a stronghold where I can be safe! For you are my high ridge and my stronghold; for the sake of your own reputation you lead me and guide me. You will free me from the net they hid for me, for you are my place of refuge. 31:5 Into your hand I entrust my life; you will rescue me, O Lord, the faithful God.”

“Then I confessed my sin; I no longer covered up my wrongdoing. I said, “I will confess my rebellious acts to the Lord.” And then you forgave my sins... You are my hiding place; you protect me from distress. You surround me with shouts of joy from those celebrating deliverance.”

Psalm 31:1-5; 32:5, 7 New English Version

A better translation of the plea in Psalm 31:1 is “Let me not be shamed! Restore my honor!” In many societies, few things are worse than being publicly shamed. Violating another person’s pride and honor is tantamount to committing a crime against them. Duels, honor killings, wars have occurred as a result of a shamed person or nation turning to violence to avenge shame and restore honor. The duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton resulted in Hamilton’s death and Burr’s self-exile from the newly established United States. More recently and tragically, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor was the outcome of nearly 80 years of American shaming of the Japanese people. For the Japanese, honor needed to be restored, the scales reset. The Japanese people paid dearly but Americans learned a valuable lesson that shaming an entire people because of their race or color of skin may not be a good idea.

The Psalmist was shamed, plotted against and spoken evil of by his enemies. He knew all this yet did not seek to avenge himself. He appealed to the LORD, asking God to vindicate him and restore his honor and reputation. The Psalmist believed God would rescue him from those who had shamed him. In Psalm 32 we read about something that may have contributed to the Psalmist’s problems. He had committed sin. There is a hard reality...we are not only sinned against but we are also sinners. Very often our experience of shame comes on the heels of some sin we have committed. The Psalmist knew this, knew what he had done and knowing what he knew about himself, he humbled himself before God and confessed what he had done. God forgave and restored to him a sense of dignity and joy so great that the Psalmist described himself as being “surrounded with shouts of joy.”

Prayer: “Lord, You are my protector and refuge. Where I have done wrong please forgive me. Deliver me from shame and those who speak evil of me. Surround me with a new joy! Amen.”