

Isaiah 54:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

Analysis

Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: yea, thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

The opening "Fear not" (al tir'i, אַל-תִּירָאִי) is God's frequent reassurance to His people facing overwhelming circumstances. The double promise—"not be ashamed" and "not be put to shame"—uses synonymous parallelism (tevoshi, תְּבוֹשִׁי and tikkalmi, תִּכְלְמִי) to emphasize absolute certainty of vindication.

The "shame of thy youth" likely refers to Egypt's bondage or wilderness rebellion; "reproach of thy widowhood" refers to exile when Jerusalem seemed abandoned by God (compare 54:1—"desolate"). The promise of forgetting these shames doesn't mean amnesia but removal of their sting and power to define identity. Past humiliation will be so thoroughly reversed that it becomes irrelevant compared to future glory.

From a Reformed perspective, this models justification and sanctification. Believers' past shame (sin) is removed through Christ's righteousness; former reproach gives way to honor as God's children (1 John 3:1). The shame of spiritual adultery (idolatry) is forgiven; the reproach of separation from God (spiritual widowhood) is ended through union with Christ. Romans 10:11 quotes Isaiah:

"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." This verse grounds confidence in God's redemptive reversal—past failures don't define future identity.

Historical Context

The shame of youth and widowhood encompasses Israel's entire history of suffering. Egypt's slavery involved forced labor and infanticide (Exodus 1). Wilderness wanderings included repeated rebellions and God's judgment. Exile made Israel appear abandoned—a widow without protector or provider. Neighboring nations mocked: "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:3).

The post-exilic return began reversing these shames, but complete fulfillment awaits messianic restoration. For the church, conversion marks transition from shame (Romans 6:21—"what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?") to honor (1 Peter 2:9—"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood"). The final reversal comes when Christ returns and believers are presented "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What past shames does God promise you can forget in light of His redemptive work?
2. How does 'fear not, you will not be ashamed' affect your boldness in Christian witness?
3. What reproaches from your spiritual 'youth' still haunt you, needing God's promise of forgetfulness?

Interlinear Text

אֶל H408	תִּירָאִי Fear H3372	כִּי H3588	לֹא H3808	תִּבּ וְשִׁי not for thou shalt not be ashamed H954	וְאֶל H408
	תִּכְלַמְּי neither be thou confounded H3637	כִּי H3588	לֹא H3808	תִּחַפּ יְרִי for thou shalt not be put to shame H2659	כִּי H3588
בְּשֵׁת the shame H1322	עָלֹמִי יְךָ of thy youth H5934	תִּשְׁכַּח חִי for thou shalt forget H7911	וְחִרְפֵּי ת the reproach H2781	אֶלְמְנוֹת יְךָ of thy widowhood H491	
לֹא H3808	תִּזְכְּרִי and shalt not remember H2142	עוֹד: H5750			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 41:10 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Jeremiah 31:19 (Parallel theme): Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

1 Peter 2:6 (Parallel theme): Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Isaiah 61:7 (Parallel theme): For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

Isaiah 51:7 (Parallel theme): Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

Isaiah 41:14 (Parallel theme): Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Ezekiel 16:43 (Parallel theme): Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Ezekiel 16:22 (Parallel theme): And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.