



**Changing Shame into Praise**  
**By Carrie Dameron, USA**

*Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.*  
*(Zephaniah 3:19, ESV)*

Recently, I was listening to teachings on the prophet Zephaniah. The teacher shared insight on how the Lord would fulfill his promise to Zion. The phrase, “*I will change their shame into praise...*” reminded me of an incident when I worked as a hospice nurse.

As a per diem or on-call home health hospice nurse instead of managing a group of patients, I would respond to the concerns that came in during the night or check up on patients admitted the day before. This was the case for a middle-aged gentleman who had been admitted into hospice a few weeks back. His diagnosis was liver failure related to cirrhosis of the liver caused by alcoholism. His assigned case manager wanted me to visit him over the weekend and check on his medication regimen and symptoms.

I drove to his house, and he happily greeted me when he opened the door. He was friendly, and we sat on the couch so I could complete his assessment. I asked questions about his symptoms, reviewed his medication, and educated him on how to adjust them for better management. After about an hour’s visit and thinking we were done, I packed my bag and we walked to the door, saying our goodbyes. I asked him my typical last question, “Is there anything else you need?” My patient boldly replied, “Yes, there is. Can you explain to me why my family is so nice to me?”

I have to admit I was shocked to hear his question. His family assessment revealed a very supportive wife as his primary caregiver. I said, “I don’t understand your question. Your family is nice to you because they love you.”

To which he replied, “But, they shouldn’t.” I knew we weren’t done, so we sat down and he told me his story.

“Years ago, when my children were young, I was a horrible alcoholic. I went out drinking all the time. I spent my paychecks on alcohol instead of providing for my wife and kids. At one point, when it was so bad, my wife kicked me out of the house. She went on to raise our three children on her own. We had been estranged for years before I got sick.”

At this point, my patient was getting emotional, yet he continued. “Recently when I was diagnosed with liver failure. My wife and children heard that I was ill. She reconnected with me. This was our house or her house. She had me move back in so she could take care of me. My adult children come and see me and assist my wife in caring for me.”

When he paused, and I knew he was done sharing, I said, “It sounds like, from everything you have said, your wife and family love you, and they have forgiven you.”

He immediately responded, “But why? Why would my wife forgive me when I was a horrible alcoholic?”

“Because she loves you. And your family loves you. I think the question is, have you forgiven yourself?” He stopped, and I could tell he was thinking about my question. At that time, his wife came home and beamed with love for her husband. He shared our discussion with her, and she reiterated what we all knew: “I love you. Our kids love you, and we forgive you!” I told him about our pastoral care services so he could talk more.

My patient felt shame about his previous life. He didn’t feel worthy to be loved, nor forgiven for his past sins and maltreatment of his wife and family. Yet, and I mean a big YET, God had already turned his shame into praise from his family. My patient just needed to forgive himself and accept the forgiveness God had already imparted.

As nurses, we care for patients who feel the shame of sin and suffer the consequences. Alcoholism, drug addiction, abuse, promiscuity, and others. We are privileged to bring God’s love and forgiveness to those suffering from shame, rejection, and despair.

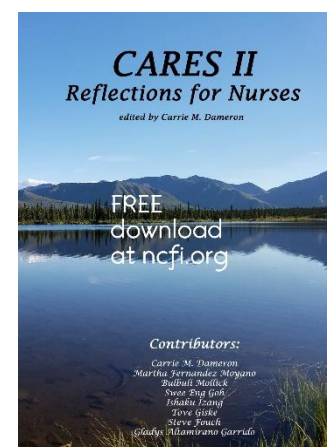
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