

OpenTheo

Defending Shame with Te-Li Lau

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

We think of shame as destructive, manipulative, and toxic. And it can be all those things. But shame can also be a powerful and healthy part of our moral formation. In this fascinating conversation, Kevin talks to Te-Li Lau, a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, about his recent book *Defending Shame: It's Formative Power in Paul's Letters*. Together, Kevin and Te-Li explore the pervasiveness of our therapeutic assumptions, the central theme of shame throughout the Bible, and good and bad ways to think about shame in our own lives.

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Introduction and Sponsor [0:00-1:28] Guest Intro: Te Li Lau [1:29-8:44] Positive Shame? [8:45-11:43] Defining Shame [11:44-17:28] East vs. West [17:29-25:36] Shame vs. Guilt [25:37-35:26] Is God a Bully to Use Shame? [35:27-40:48] The Solution for Shame [40:49-47:50] Paul's Use of Shame [47:51-55:43] Reintegrative Shame Theory [55:44-1:00:22] Modern Objections to Shame [1:00:23-1:05:39]

Transcript

Greetings in salutations, welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin DeYoung and glad to have you with us. We now have YouTube, you can watch, and you can also listen on the podcast.

So if you're watching this, then I'm going to introduce our special guest in just a moment. And if you're listening, you'll get to that. But you can also listen to the podcast.

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And if you're listening, you'll get to that. And if you're listening, you'll get to that. But you can't see him yet.

Before we get to our conversation, I want to again thank our sponsor, Crossway. As always, they produce so many good books and are gracious to sponsor this podcast. Just want to mention today, the new book by Eric Ortland, suffering wisely and well, the grief of Job and the grace of God.

As any Christian or pastor or ministry leader can tell you, they're always going to be a great person. The ministry leader can tell you, they're always a need for good books on suffering because all of our people one way or another are going to go through suffering. Why does God allow suffering? How do we minister through suffering? And this book in particular, Eric, focuses on the book of Job, which is very well known as a book about suffering in the Bible, but sometimes misunderstood.

So this will direct us to deepen our relationship as we walk through suffering. So check that out. I am joined today by Tali Lau, who is a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, north of Chicago.

He tells me that it's snowing out his window this morning. So I wish you could enjoy some of this warm North Carolina air that I have here, but they haven't figured out how to get that across the internet yet. And Dr. Lau has a degrees from Stanford Trinity, where he teaches and has been since 2008.

His PhD from Emory. He served for a couple of years in the Singapore military. Then he worked in Silicon Valley.

He's a very interesting bio engineer, computer engineer, has a number of patents and did that for a part of a career before teaching at TEDs. So welcome, so glad that you can be here with us. And I'd love to just have you tell me, tell us a little bit about yourself, your background, your family, how you came to know the Lord, how you treat the Ted's.

Well, I grew up in Singapore. I'm actually still a Singaporean citizen, and I'm just a permanent resident in the United States. I came to study first in the US, and then after I did engineering, I did computer engineering, and after graduating, I basically stayed in Silicon Valley and did computer design, computer hardware.

I did that for about 10 years, and then I felt that God was calling me towards some kind of ministry. And so then, and so then I just transitioned to go to become a student at Trinity when Jelica the ability school before that I was actually a part time student at

Western seminary in the campus in San Jose, and I did that for a couple years before I became a full time student at TEDs. So there was so much of a major transition, you know, that and one of the reasons why I think that God I felt that God was leading me towards that transition was I was wondering what I wanted to invest my life in primarily, because I was designing computers, and you know it takes about four years to design a computer system.

I was designing, I was working at Silicon Graphics at a time. And you know, it comes up with great fanfare, but after about two years, the computer needs an upgrade. And after about two more years, you know, it's time for the dumpster.

And I just wondered whether I wanted to really invest my life in something that had such a short lifespan. And I felt that I wanted to invest my life and something that had, you could say had a greater our I greater return on investment so I want to invest my life, I think, in terms of your eternal things. But there are other things that kind of prompted me to take that move, but that that was somewhat the thing that really started it.

And I think that one of the things that there were certain movies that came up during that time, and it kind of prompted me towards that. I think that one of the movies that I really enjoyed was at that time, you know, that kind of led me towards taking this plunge was very hard. Ah, very good.

Yeah, you know that William Wallace Mel Gibson right he plays well Wallace he's in the dungeon and he's talking to the princess right. And then he makes a statement, you know that all men die, but not all men live. Me neither all men die physically but not all men live up to their full potential.

And so I was just wondering, you know, what am I living for, you know, what do I want to be remembered for. Then at that time for a scum was somewhat appeared. Yeah, good 90s movie.

You know, my always say that life is like a box of chocolate you don't know what you're going to get. So if you don't know what you're going to get then how do you live your life in such a way that really maximizes it. Engineering was entering was kind of a fun lifestyle.

I will get Silicon graphics, which was one of the most fun company to work for. We had during our Christmas festival, you know, we would rent up the entire San Jose arena. And then we had Natalie Cole come and sing for us.

And then we might rent out the Fairmont hotel in San Francisco. And then we had Patty Label come and sing for us. Hugh is Louis and the news he will do is a new thing.

He happens to sing for us. So it was kind of a fun lifestyle, you know that. But then I was wondering, what do I really want to be remembered for.

How do I really want to invest my life in something that eternal significance. And so that kind of led me to come to touch to study. That's great.

Have you found that any of that engineering part of your brain helps you and digging around Greek and or manuscripts or doing new Testament studies or is it just very different. I think it's probably not the technical expertise itself, but it is the logical way of thinking. Because, you know, when you program something, you have to be very systematic.

You have to approach a problem very systematically. And so that kind of systematic and logical way of thinking kind of filtered into how I write. And that I tried to be very systematic, very clear my thinking and try to be sometimes as concise as possible.

And one of the things in computer programs is that you try to be cut out the fluff, you know, try to just get to the main essence. So, so I think that that's somewhat of the entering background that I bring into my writing and my teaching to. And what about being from Singapore, how does that shape? I mean, we all, we all want to be as objective as possible and not have our cultures rise to the forefront.

And yet we understand that that's part of who we are. So how is that shaped? And maybe that even leads us into our conversation about the book today. I don't know if that's some of the background and your interest in this topic on shame, but just talk about being now bicultural still citizen in Singapore, having been in the United States for a long time.

And how that affects your scholarship. It does, you know, because I think that I come from a Chinese culture. And within the Chinese culture, the confusion, understanding the code, the confusion ethos permeates South Asia, permeates a lot of Southeast Asia, permeates Asia.

So I think that when I approach my way of my cultural mindset is then very much Eastern. But then at the same time, you know, I've been in the United States for so many years, so that I kind of appreciation, I think, the Western ethos, the Western way of thinking. And so that sometimes able to see things that I think that someone if someone who had grew up in the West, they might maybe have a little bit more difficult time understanding and appreciating so that when I approach a text, you know, sometimes I read it very much from a more of an Asian framework, or Asian culture ethos.

And that kind of helps me to see things that may not be that readily apparent. Yeah, so the book that we're going to talk about today, excellent book. I read it last year.

I thought it came out last year. I was going to put it on one of my top 10 books from 2021 and then I looked at the copyright. And it was 2020.

So I wish I would have seen it earlier, but it's called defending shame. It's formative

power in Paul's letters. And you talk at the book in the first few pages in the introduction about how shame is almost pervasively seen as a bad thing.

And certainly let's just talk about American culture and you quote several times throughout the book, Brene Brown, her talk there with Oprah about shame and she's sort of a guru of overcoming shame. You even dropped a really good South Park reference to this episode. There is no shame in my safe space and they're singing typical South Park style.

So you acknowledge shame has the capacity I'm reading here from you has the capacity to push us towards unhealthy, self destructive, violent patterns of behavior. So shame. Yes, you acknowledge can be a very bad thing.

And yet you've written a book called defending shame, which is full of a lot of good insights we're going to get to. But just from the beginning, tell us with all that our culture says about shame. It's terrible.

It's horrible. It destroys you. You have to overcome it.

Why do you think we need to, in some sense, defend shame? I think that shame can be toxic. And we've seen it how it can be used to destroy people. Not only the West, I think, but also in Asia.

So it's toxic. You see it very much played out, for example, in the honor killings that you heard about in Pakistan, various parts of India, various parts of the Middle East itself, where I think there's somebody, if one of your siblings basically brings shame into the family, you need to redeem the owner of the family by killing. You know, that's why I think shame has the propensity.

I think as a potential to be destructive, but I don't think it necessarily need to do so. And I think that once we understand it once we rehabilitate it, or once we understand it according to how God intends it to be to be used, then I think it can play an important part. The other thing is that shame is a moral emotion.

And as it being a moral emotion, you know, that then it has the capacity, I think, to structure how we think morally. And we can't really cut away or dissect or eviscerate shame as a moral emotion, but really destroying the moral emotions itself. Our immoral emotions are very much all linked together.

They're intricately linked together. And I think that if you destroy one, you pretty much destroy the others. And so that's why I think it would be neat to rehabilitate it and basically understand it.

According to how scripture understands it. Yeah, that's really good. You taught, let's circle in on your definition.

You say the conclusion of your definitional chapter. I thus define shame as the painful emotion that arises from an awareness that one has fallen short of some standard ideal or goal. So unpack that definition and talk about it.

How is shame different from humiliation embarrassment and importantly, how is it related to guilt. Well, that's, that's a huge thing. I think that shame is a very kind of a very slippery concept.

The things that we can use shame in multiple contexts for one thing, you know, we can make a distinction between objective shame and subjective shame. So objective shame with someone who is disgrace, you know, someone who has a status of not being honored, but someone who is a lower status right. So that's objective shame, someone who is just has the shame status.

We can talk about subjective shame, which is more of the feeling, more of an emotion itself so objective shame is more of a status social status, whereas subjective shame will be more of an emotion itself. And within that emotion, if you understand shame as the emotion, then shame is the painful feeling that one has fallen short of a particular standard. When you realize that you're fallen short of a particular standard itself.

So that is the, that is subjective shame. Now I think that in the American context, we usually conflate shame with humiliation. Yeah, two are not exactly the same.

And the thing is that shame embarrassment and humiliation are very closely related. We usually think that embarrassment is much more of a less intense form of shame, where humiliation is a much more intense of shame so intensity wise I think that that's correct. But I think that's a, for the difference between embarrassment and shame is that embarrassment is more for understanding that I feel that I have been misunderstood in terms of having fallen short of a certain particular standard, even though I do not believe that I have fallen short of that I have fallen short of that particular standard shame can always embarrassment could also be due to unknown, for example, attention being placed upon you.

But that would be one I think one the difference between shame and embarrassment where I feel that I have perceived to be fallen short of a particular standard even though I have not really fallen short. Let me give you an example. Yeah.

Maybe they'll help. Let's say you're living, I'm single, I'm living with friends living is some of my college buddies, you know, some of them who are drinking, you know that some of them more party animal kind of start. And then I decided I'm going to move up into find a place of my own so I get some of my buddies from church to help me move.

All right. So they come and help me move. And as they help me move they see in a in the living room, a playboy magazine.

When I when they perceive that you know that they may think, oh, am they may think that I'm reading that. But I know that I haven't read that. So they may have perceived me to be doing so but even though I have not really done that you know that the emotion that I'm feeling would be embarrassment, rather than shame.

So if somebody else's magazine got left there, you don't know how really right so it's not, it's not my own failing itself but I perceive to have that. So that would probably be understood as more of an embarrassment, rather than it, rather than me actually understanding that I am falling short of that particular standard. It's helpful, even when words overlap and humiliation shame embarrassment.

People use them interchangeably. And it's not that we have to go around and know you use the wrong word but I think what you're saying is really important because we live in a day where words are devalued and definitions are devalued and in particular on some of these very difficult issues. We're we like to borrow the the weightiest term term with the most gravity.

So, if I, you know, use a typical kind of embarrassment situation. I'm walking up some stairs and trip and you know I'm walking up into the pulpit and whoops I slip and I catch myself. That's embarrassment.

It wasn't a moral failing. You know, people may be snicker. People aren't going to go home and talk about that we use that as embarrassment.

It's a lesser intensity. It doesn't have a moral component. But there's a tendency that as I feel bad if that happens and I want to, I want to make that situation of the utmost gravity.

I start using other terms and talk about humiliation. I talk about the intense shame that the whole congregation put on me. And it's not that the words aren't related, but I think you're very right to say, let's, let's be careful and let's know what we're talking about here when we talk about shame.

One of the questions I have I'm really curious to Lee how you would you would answer this because I hear all the time that it's typical in even many pastors will say it just as an aside. They'll say the East is a very shame based culture, but we in the West are different and so we need to understand, you know, we don't understand certain dynamics of their culture because we're not shame based and I'll just give you my, my take on that and you tell me if you think that you're wrong. I think you know you've defined shame as a painful emotion arises from an awareness one has fallen short of some standard.

I don't think that's an eastern thing or an Asian thing. I think that's a human thing. So I think people in the West have just as much shame but maybe the difference is we don't,

we don't feel that in the same way or the community standards are often very different.

So just stereotyping in the in Eastern cultures Asian cultures, maybe there's much more of a you've let down the community or your family and there's a sense of shame, whereas Western prizes the individual and so there's not the same. So I think we look at that and we think, ah, the West must not be have to deal with shame, but anyone who spends time on the Internet, which may not be a good idea. You can see there is complete shame there.

That's how Twitter often functions is to shame somebody you said the wrong thing you liked the wrong person. You didn't say the right sort of words. That's often what these shibles are about is shaming people for doing the wrong thing.

So I'm not convinced that the West doesn't deal with shame, but I certainly think the way it appropriates it and the sort of structures that communicate it can be very different. So how do you explain what is different and what is is not different about Western and Eastern understanding of shame. I think it's a every culture has both shame and guilt and it's a company are right, you know that when you take a look at social media itself that's so much online shaming that's going on.

Even when you talk taking a look at back in the past during the Puritan time itself there was a lot of shame baits on punishment that's going on to think like a tiring thing like cat tailing you know and all those things that's why shame base kind of a thing stocks in putting you in the stocks yeah in the community that's shame. You know like the Scarlet letters kind of a thing nothing on the whole phone Scarlet letter thing you know that. So that it's a lot of shame I think that that it's very much pertinent I think in Western culture.

So I think it's a rather a matter of degrees you know that every culture has both shame and guilt but rather it's a matter of degrees. I think that one of the things why we think that the Western culture it's more of a guilt base is because we think it's more individualistic. So other than the Eastern being more I think communal or communitarian think you know that.

And so I think that that's one of the reasons why because we think that individual sex or therefore it's more of a guilt base you know that where it's a Eastern culture is more of a communitarian so therefore shame base. But we find that it's actually a mixture of both. And which one we do emphasize one or the other.

Yeah you think about Paul writing his letters in prison and he'll say sometimes you know they visited me they were not ashamed. That's right. And for us we think well, what's the big deal you're going to visit somebody in prison and you bought brought them some books or clothes or you brought them some food.

And these were very public settings, you had to come and you know slip them some some food and people could see you're identifying now from our safe cultural distance feels like well surely I would go help my brother, this Christian leader and give him some food and visit him and he wouldn't be ashamed, but then you think what would that what would that be like in our day it might be somebody who's just taken accusation that really lands on people no one wants to be accused of, say being a racist or being sexist or any sort of things that our general American culture would say no good person is like that. Yeah, so that's sort of Paul he's getting labeled with those things in fact he's there in prison. And you can imagine yeah a lot of us would myself included we feel like I'm not sure maybe I'll do this in the middle of the night and help this brother out because even if I don't think he's guilty of these things a whole lot of people do in my association with him is I think that's a shame on me.

I think one of one of the powerful things about your book is once you open this category up. It really is amazing. There's a lot of this in the New Testament and a lot in Paul he does his moral formation and talks a lot about shame good and bad.

Why do you think we've we've missed this or at least maybe in America we've missed this what why do we instinctively think shame is bad don't have anything to do with it when Paul has a much more nuanced view and there's actually a lot in his writings about the danger of shame and the power of shame for moral formation how have we missed something that's really quite prevalent. I think you know getting back and the whole concept on in shame that basically runs throughout the entire Bible all the way from Genesis, you know where Adam and Eve after they sin they hide them now because of shame. There's two talks about they were naked and they did not feel any shame and so shame then it's seen to be the effect of sin.

And then if you go all the way forward to revelation to anyone you know that and to the new heavens and the earth new heavens and new earth itself. Nothing shameful will enter into that city itself. See that within the book ends of scripture is a story from Genesis or the way to revelation, shame is a fundamental understanding you could say it's a thread that it seemed to be unpacked within the Biblical narrative of redemption itself.

But getting back to your question in terms of why are we so resistant I think or maybe a little bit hesitant. I think that it also boils down to why we consider shame to be something so negative is that we have very much fallen into very much of a therapeutic culture itself. So that everything is ready to make you feel good about yourself how do you validate it how to fulfill your potential you know that.

And so because of this any Christian Smith has really talked about this moralistic therapeutic days and so because the whole ethos is ready to make you fulfill you know you have to be you you have to be true to yourself. You can't let other people say

anything that's negative about you or crimp your potential, let it go frozen to know that he has a problem. And so because of that you know then we are very much averse to talking about shame or even to noticing shame because shame fundamentally it's the whole evaluation that you've fallen short of a particle standard as that sense of feeling and it's a very painful feeling.

And it basically cuts out you could say cuts at one person's identity itself. All right. And so we think fundamentally that shame destroys a person's self esteem.

It is right self esteem. And so we think that that's a best totally bad that's negative. And so we try to then minimize that.

One of the things you talk about is the relationship between shame and the conscience I want you to talk about that but let me set it up this way. I've thought a lot about this and I'm not sure I have a real good solution to this dilemma but related concept to shame is a stigma. It's really something that your group or society or network of relationships places a high degree of shame.

So it used to be that I mean whenever you watch these like my wife likes to watch old British dramas if they wear costumes and they have British accents she wants to see it. And so you watch some of these period pieces. And there's often this theme of, well these two people don't love each other but they can't get divorced, which is very strange for what you can't get divorced well no because there was a tremendous amount of shame.

And you couldn't be a person in polite society and get divorced or somebody had a child before they were married. And this was an illegitimate child there and had to be hidden away. And this was a tremendous amount of shame.

So in one sense as Christians, we feel this, you know, right sort of compassion. Wow, I don't want someone's someone's life to be utterly ruined because they had sex before they were married and they had a child and now the rest of their life. And so we have to be a second class citizen we have compassion we want people to have forgiveness or, you know, in our day a lot of that these shame questions have to do with feelings of same sex attraction I think there's a desire we have, we want to show compassion we don't want people to feel like you're consigned to be a second class Christian for your life because of this.

And yet, you know, take the example of a child born out of wedlock society was doing something useful even if sometimes the individual was not treated with respect or compassion or forgiveness as a whole society was doing something to communicate to everyone. And so there's shame in this, and in that particular case, it was a shame that was connected to a moral sin. So how do we understand shame is so powerful stigmas are so powerful and most most people in America would say, we don't want these

stigmas we don't want this shame, or even bring it back here to the conscience, even the sort of people sometimes talk about the the ick factor or the sense in your conscience.

And do that it just doesn't seem right. That's not always reliable, and that can lead us into a bad way. And yet, if we completely cut that off how God made us with a conscience.

And if we say society itself has no role in policing some of those boundaries and society is doing that all we have lots of taboos, lots of things that our culture says you shouldn't do you shouldn't believe. It's just that where they're changing from Christian to sort of post Christian. How do you help us as Christians.

Shame the conscience and society's role in policing some of these boundaries. Yeah, I think one of the better way to approach that Kevin is, you know, to go back to one of the questions that you talked a little bit earlier is the distinction between shame and guilt. So for example, like Brene Brown you know she would say that shame is totally bad, but instead of shame guilt is good shame is maladaptive, but guilt is actually useful.

The usual way that people distinguish and psychologists distinguish between shame and guilt is usually three ways. The first one would be in terms of shame focuses on one's identity one's self, where skill focuses on the act. So for example, you know, shame would be I emphasis I did that thing.

So the shame focuses on the self guilt focuses on the act, but the distinction between act and identity while it is good in theory it's very hard in practice. It's hard in practice itself and to buy for catered. And in fact, you know Jesus say you know them by their fruits.

You know a person's identity by their act itself so identity and act are very hard to separate. Right. Get access would be in terms of the external or public versus private.

So shame is public and that, as you mentioned, it's other people that are policing you. Where's guilt is really in terms of you yourself policing you yourself. It's your own conscience is doing it.

So that's why people usually are tied conscience to guilt here. But I can tell you that you can be very ashamed, even if you're alone. When even when you're with nobody around because you have internalize what other people are thinking about and that then becomes your own standard.

So in that way, you know the public versus the private dimension collapses. All right, so in that way, it's almost the same. Now, the fact that the XC is in terms of which shaming those different inductive is usually tied to moral, and then shame is tied to both moral and non moral.

And I think that that is true that you can be, for example, ashamed because of a certain

dyslexia that you have, you know, you go up to read scripture and then you are stumbling over the words because of dyslexia. But we will never consider that to be a moral failing even though you might be ashamed of it. So I think that there's all these three axes to differentiate between shame and guilt here.

And for me, you know, I think that shame and the conscience is very closely related itself. When we understand a shame is a broader category because shame can be both moral and non moral. So that when we understand the failing to be caused by a moral factor, then in that way, shame and conscience are actually the same.

Yeah. All right. Yeah, go ahead.

And now when you come at ads about the thing about the public in terms of enforcing it. Is that good or is that in terms of it, it is bad, you know that. I think that one of the reasons why is that guilt is usually considered to be autonomous.

That it comes from your own internal moral standards. Shame is typically considered to be hetero enormous. It's based upon other people's moral standard.

But what scripture is telling us is that shame should be feel enormous. That is standard for honor and shame should not be based upon society standard of all and shame, but should be based upon God standard of honor and shame. So this then brings up the issue that there are different courts of opinion.

That is the public court of opinion where everybody's telling you should do this. You shouldn't do that. All right.

But then there is the divine court of opinion, God's court of opinion, where God tells us what is right and what is wrong. And so that we should be living our lives according to the divine court of opinion, rather than the public court of opinion. So shame rightly understood according to scripture is feel namis.

It is based upon God's perspective for who I am, rather than society's perspective of who I am, or rather my own perspective of who I am. So I think that that's a very important distinction. Yeah, that's really, really good.

So not autonomous that it comes from the self, but the anomist that it comes from God. And once you have those categories, you can see so often what the Bible is doing, you think of famous Paul's words in Romans one I'm not ashamed of the gospel. He's saying, there, there is a shame that the world around him would have that this is this, how can the safe people and this isn't very intelligent it's not sophisticated, but I am not ashamed of the gospel.

And yet, to use your example that shame you could be all by yourself, you know, take the example you gave earlier, you know, somebody looking at pornography, you could

be marooned on a desert island for two years and somebody could guarantee no one will know anything you do, you're there, and you go and you know you look at things, these magazines, but you know there's a God, or at least you should know that there's a God. So even if society, there's no society around you and nobody's going to know about it. It's not just that you've internalized other people's expectations of shame that can happen.

But if we live all of life, you know, *Coram Deo* before the face of God, then it's also we're right to internalize God so so much of the Christian life is exchanging misplaced shame that we shouldn't have for the right sort of shame that means to form us. And then just to be clear, God doesn't want us to live in shame. He wants us then to be forgiven and to change one of the things you mentioned this in your book.

And I've been reading through I've been reading through Ezekiel in my morning devotional time and of course Ezekiel 16 is a hard chapter to read it's just so graphic and the Lord. I mean, it's amazing to think if this were just written today people would say what sort of this is, you can't do this to someone but of course, God has a purpose and a loving purpose for Israel for Judah. And he says, you've spread yourself to every whoring God and you didn't even pay them like a good prostitute, or they didn't pay you you paid them and then he just really says, because you were you say it this way because you were shame less.

You're going to multiply your shame over and over and show to the to the nations, your lewdness and your nakedness and strip you bear. How would, how would we preach that how would we use that really hard passage like Ezekiel 16 that if we're honest there's part of us that feels like is God really doing the right thing is God bullying somebody what's going on. We appropriate that in the right way understanding God's God and we're not so we don't have to act that way thankfully we're not judging the nations, but take a passage like that.

What are the dangers but what are the benefits of that sort of take toward moral formation. I think that easy for 16 passages so so important you know that Jerusalem, that is talking about the southern southern country and southern nations there is that it engages in morality itself. And then basically you could say that she's in the doubt rush she has a few associations of other gods.

And so then God in its mercy judges Israel and judges Jerusalem itself and brings upon the curses of the covenant. And then the covenant are then meant basically to put shame on her. And if she rightly feels the shame.

All right if Jerusalem rightly feels the shame, then she would then repent experience remorse and experience and return back to God. And that should be the typical paradigm of how it should work in terms of the Deuteronomy blessings and the curses. But in the case of Jerusalem itself it's so sad that she it's so hardened that even though

God puts these judgments on her, she doesn't experience the shame that she needs to experience in order to to experience this to turn back to God.

But then at the same time it is because of God's mercy that God identifies Israel so much that he then feels ashamed of the shame that Jerusalem is experiencing. It's that we because God connects so much with Israel that she he used the shame that Jerusalem ex few. It's just that you know if if I have a relative who is a sexual offender, then I would feel ashamed because I am connected with that with that person.

So in the same way because God still holds to his covenant with Israel and does not give up the covenant. So God feels you could say he's embarrassed he's ashamed of the disrepute that's brought upon him. So then he acts unilaterally and then rescues Jerusalem itself.

But then what's so insignificant in Ezekiel is that after Jerusalem has been brought back from exile, she experienced shame or what she has done. And the fact that she experienced shame for what she has done is because God has given Jerusalem a new heart, a new heart to know not only Yahweh itself, but also to know herself. And that new heart that is that basically causes this reconfiguration so that it's able to bring about this perspective that she has she is the recipient of the grace that God has given her.

And so I think that that's a Ezekiel is a very beautiful picture in terms of how God's grace ultimately rescues us from a heart heartiness and then causes us to be able to recognize how far we have fallen short. So to bring it back to into the New Testament itself is that shaming when we, for example, I shouldn't shame you judgment. The only way I think that we can be able to understand the how far we fall short is because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit convex us of a sin convex us in terms of how far we found short of God standard and propels us to to approach God for repentance. Yeah. I really like what you said there and it's really important that the normal pattern with the spirits operative in our life that we feel this shame for something where we've really fallen short of God standard.

And then we repent and we're supposed to experience the freedom of then walking with God. It seems like as Christians, we understand shame is a powerful negative emotion and we don't want to live in it. But part of what's so good about your book is you're saying, there's really many different things we can do with shame in our world tends to just give one answer, which is, don't don't appropriate that shame, don't embrace that shame.

Those are other people standards, maybe guilt, we do mess up we do things that are wrong, but they're sort of way of getting rid of the shame is to say, those people shouldn't be putting shame on you or you're a good person. It really wasn't you who did

it it's not your identity. So they're really shame alleviation strategies.

But what we find in the Bible is either if it's misplaced shame, then you need to train yourself to say, okay, I am not ashamed of the gospel you think of Jesus he despised the shame that was before him so that's one strategy. But other times we are meant to say, I feel this negative painful emotion right now in other world says, well, whoever is making you feel that negative painful emotion, they have a problem. That's right.

But actually the Bible says, well, that could be the case, it could be their problem, but it could be also an indication that God is convicting us of sin, absolutely using this pain of shame, so that we say, I don't want to be humiliated. And so I'm going to repent of this. That's right.

Yeah, if we have, as you said earlier, a thoroughly therapeutic understanding will take painful negative emotion. And we won't we won't stop to think God may be using that painful negative emotion to show something in my life, and then to get me to repent and to change. And how have you helped people see this? And I think I want to thanks you know, getting back to this is that we don't need to feel shame for the sin that we have done.

And then we turn towards God. Yes. When we turn towards God, it is because Christ has taken away our guilt and our shame on the cross.

You know the cry of that election of Jesus on the cross. Jesus, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me. That was a shame of exile.

The shame of exile that Israel was experienced the shame of exile that Adam and Eve experienced when they were kicked out of the garden. And so, the grace has taken that shame upon himself. And so therefore we do not need to experience shame before God anymore.

On the contrary, you know that because of what Christ has done, we are adopted as sons. That means we have the honor that comes as being children of God. And so I think that that is one of the things that the painful experience of shame, it shouldn't just lead us to just, oh, I'm so bad, you know, I can't do anything about it and just become totally a basket case.

But rather it should propel us to towards contrition, towards remorse, propel us to come towards God. It should drive us towards God, because only he can be the one to give us the honor that we need. We cannot gain any honor on our own, only Christ and only God is able to do that.

So it should propel us towards God. And so often it seems like we, even as Christians, we approach shame without going through the one remedy for shame, which is the cross. Absolutely.

Yes, it is, first of all, in a toning sacrifice for our guilt, and we learn all the expiation and propitiation, all the right terms. But it's also a substitution for our shame when you look at, say, Mark 15, I'll preach to that passage a number of times. And Mark doesn't focus on the blood and the guts and the gore to mention another male Gibson movie like the passion.

He doesn't focus on that. But what he focuses on is he's being beaten, he's getting the crown of thorns, he's getting the cloak, he has the passerby's, he says people to ride him. And what is all of that doing it's showing all of the shame that was heaped upon him.

And so we're meant when we have this painful negative emotion, genuine shame for genuine sin to say, you know what, know what it feels like I deserve. I deserve to be spat upon. I deserve to be mocked.

I deserve. And our world says, no, no, no, you don't deserve any of that. But I think the gospel says, you know what, in our sin before God.

We do deserve that. But here's the good news. You don't have to face that.

Christ face that all that you deserved. And it seems like we're healing our people lightly by not really taking them to say, there's a remedy, the remedy for shame is not just to push it aside and say, you shouldn't feel that way. But to say, you don't have to feel that way anymore because of what Christ did.

Yeah, I think it's important that when we usually understand the gospel story, usually tell it in terms of guilt, in terms of the wrong that you've done. But I think that you can also tell the gospel story in terms of shame, in terms of honor itself. And I think that that somewhat seemed to be a biblical theme, a biblical thread to our basically from the Old Testament to New Testament itself.

And Romans actually talks about that shame and honor so much. Because I mean, talk about Romans 1, what is sin? Sin, it's not glorifying God. That's right.

Not glorifying God. What is the result of sin? It's that shame. God hands them over to shaming judgment and that they fall short of the glory of God.

And so you could tell the gospel story in terms of honor and shame categories. And I think that that it would be so powerful in certain countries, especially where honor and shame is such a very important categories. Just to give some of the categories you do really helpfully, to lead in the book, you talk about Paul and retrospective shame looking back.

And you talk about his shaming rebuke of Peter, his shaming rebuke of the Galatians. And then these verses which we can so easily miss 1 Corinthians 4, 14, I write these

things to shame you. 1 Corinthians 6, 5, I say this to your shame.

So what is Paul doing in some of those passages dealing with retrospective shame? I think that Paul is that for the Corinthians, they are so hardened itself. They are not amenable to gentle rebuke, to correction itself. That Paul then has to take a much more drastic step.

So he's ratcheting up his counsel. Yeah, he doesn't start with this. He doesn't launch in.

I want to shame you. He tries to guard it, but yeah, keep going. So he basically that when they are resistant to instruction itself, or when the choices that they make, I think are so fundamental that it almost lead to their moral destruction itself, for example, like the Galatians, you know, basically say you foolish Galatians, you know that.

In those certain cases, then Paul ratchets up the, I think, his counsel, and then he begins to shame them so that by shaming them, you know, that he is trying to evoke the feeling within them. And this, when this feeling itself should hopefully cause them to realize that, hey, maybe what I was thinking was not the right way to think about it. The values that I had was not the right values, so that the system, you could say that this cognitive dissonance in your mind.

And with this cognitive dissonance in your mind, you know, then they begin to say that maybe I should pay attention to what Paul is saying, and that maybe his values are right. And so therefore then look at it from a different perspective. So the painful emotion hopefully would enable us to have a different perspective, you will see things from Paul's perspective, rather than the perspective that we have held for so long.

So I think that that's what Paul is trying to do. But when Paul is doing that, you know, causing them to have this pain itself, he's doing it in a very, I think, in a very carefully, godly. He's doing it coming from a perspective of someone who is their father.

Right. And so it is then very much different from humiliation itself, hopefully a bit different from humiliation, because if I'm humiliated, I basically think that the person has it out for me. He's out to destroy me.

He doesn't know who I really am, you know that, and that I don't feel that this is justified. So that's typically in terms of what humiliation is. Because Paul has planted this church and current, he knows them, he has labored with them.

He is so, I think, so deeply in love with the church, and what he wants the church to be that he says difficult things. And faithful are the wounds of a friend, what probably says, right. And so Paul is basically putting it, I think, telling them in very harsh terms, the danger that they are facing if they continue on this path.

Yeah, and that's really insightful because, you know, just to use our current example, it's

not as if Paul's launching onto the internet indiscriminately shaming whoever he can. These are people that he is a spiritual father figure to them. And I know of his care, they've had a rough relationship at times, but it's more akin to, you know, me speaking very hard words to my son or daughter to say, this is not who we are this is not what we do in our family.

And if you've gone back to this, then it is to launch with shame, shame is sort of a last resort even go back to Ezekiel 16. It's not that the Lord launched into that justifiable harangue upon their first sin. This was years and generations of recalcitrants that now that because it is such a powerful emotion.

It's not where we start but sometimes it's where you have to end if the the gentle in treaties don't get anywhere you really need to help someone see their sin and the shame. And you do a good job with not only looking at Paul in retrospective shame, but then you call it Paul in perspective shame so that's looking forward. And you really point out things that we can easily miss the Philippians for example.

Well, here's Christ's story of humiliation and exaltation. What is your story going to be? And are you living and following Christ in such a way living honorably shining as stars among a crooked generation or you talk about how often Paul in that little letter of Philemon is trying to persuade Philemon to welcome onusumus back and he's really using language of honor and shame. So talk about how does Paul use this prospect of future honor or future shame to try to motivate us.

You know the thing, tell me the stuff. We tend to think that honor and shame are opposites. But in the ancient world itself, honor and shame, the are two sides are the same coin.

Meaning that you can't have honor if you don't have an appropriate sense of shame. If you don't have this propensity, you could say this fear of having fallen short of a particle standard, you won't be able to gain any honor at all. I think that for Paul that in order to honor and even honor a living God's perspective, we must have this proper sense of shame where we will not want to do anything that will bring shame to God.

We will not want to bring anything that will bring shame to the church, bring shame to Christ or bring shame to our fellow brothers and sisters or even to bring shame to ourselves. Because we want to have the honor that rightfully comes from God. And so I think that we need to understand this.

The difficulty is that in the English language, you know, the sense of shame and shame is almost tense. We see it as two different words. It's a or modesty.

We tend to think of sense or shame to be modesty and then shame to be adjusted detrimental effect itself. But in the Greek language, they are one and the same, they are

the same word. And so the same word does WTT for both.

And I think that for us is that we have to develop this dispositional sense of shame so that it then becomes a hedge. It becomes a hedge towards. And this developing this dispositional sense of shame is really developing our conscience.

That our conscience functions as a hedge hedge so that we do not do things that would fundamentally are dishonor God. So I think that that's we need to do that. We need to instill that I think within the church itself.

We need to instill that within our family that we have to maintain the honor that rightfully comes from God. Yeah, that's really good. We just have time for a couple more questions.

So before some wrap up, let's go here and maybe pick one of these topics because in the second half of the book, you took it, you look at the Pauline concept of shame. And then you put it alongside two other theories of shame. Reintegrative shaming theory.

RTS, not RTS, that's my seminary RST. Very different. And then confusion.

So take one of those and your interest there and how it is alike and different from the Pauline concept of shame. So take the one by the RST, reintegrative shaming therapy, and I think it's somewhat helpful. And that is actually insights gotten from criminologists itself.

And they recognize that in order to really to bring down the offense, you know, the level of crime that the criminal or the offender really needs to view shame or what they've done. They need to recognize that what they've done is wrong. Otherwise, if you just slap a punishment on them, you know, then they will consider that to be the expense that they need to pay in order to maintain the criminal lifestyle.

So there needs to be a sense in terms of where they have, they recognize that they have done wrong. And so, so John Braithway, he comes up with this reintegrated shaming therapy or theory that tries to distinguish the question. So to distinguish between shaming in two ways, reintegrative shaming and disintegrated shaming.

So disintegrative shaming is shaming done by people who do not know you. It's permanent. And it then basically destroys you for who you are.

Whereas integrated shaming is done, shaming done by people whom you trust, people whom you are who know, who you know that they love you. So, you know, if you're not being a victim of shame, it's basically held for a much shorter period. And that other that period in which you have, I think, experienced remorse, then you are brought back into the community.

So it tends to hopefully reintegrate you back into the family. And this actually reintegrated shaming is done by. People in New Zealand is done by more in terms of a tribal communities because they recognize that they can't permanently pick somebody out the community, but they can do certain sanctions on the person, hopefully the person repents and that slowly bring the person back into the company.

And so I think that when Paul, in terms of this, when he shames actually people, it is more reintegrative than disintegrative. It is really that he shames people, only who, who he personally knows and his personal relationship with them. And so, I think it is for a limited time, and with the intent to restore them so shame is more meant to be redemptive rather than punitive.

The shaming punishment is meant to be redemptive, the shame is meant to be redemptive. Yeah, that's really good. And even anybody watching this listening to this, dealing with their own shame or maybe helping a love don't shame just some of those categories.

And the shame that I'm feeling is it coming from people who don't know me. So this is just, you know, some Instagram account or somebody out there. I don't know.

I don't have a relationship with. Are they do, are they interested in a redemptive arc reintegrating me, or is it really disintegrative is it really to destroy me to take me down. And so that's probably some shame that we ought to push aside and despise that shame.

And yet, because we have so much of that, people sometimes say, well, every kind of shame is disintegrative. And so you ask yourself, is this negative emotion coming from people close to me now people close to us can get things wrong too but but do they try are they trying. Do they really do they have a track record of loving me of caring about me of wanting what's best for me.

Are they going to be are they eager to welcome me back into this community, rather than their goal is to push me out all of those things. And so the next process is this shame, something that's I need to despise or something that I need to own because it's leading me in a good direction or it can. Here's how you end the book.

You talk about three contemporary challenges so maybe just speak to one or all of them but just say a little bit about how we face these contemporary challenges one guilt, not shame is the better moral emotion. And this is sort of how our world understands it so one challenge is a lot of people would say, well guilt but not shame second challenge. People say shame is manipulative it's illegitimate it's abusive.

Third shame is toxic it destroys self esteem and leaves a stigma. It's a it's an attack. And you argue for a rehabilitation.

So just speak into those three challenges we've touched on them already but guilt is the better emotion shame is manipulative shame is toxic. What's right about those assertions and then how do we also need to change those assumptions. I think that one of the things is that it's shame.

It's a very difficult thing to grasp especially because the emotional like seems in one culture doesn't really map to another culture. So that when Paul actually talks about shame itself and also very much in the Greco Roman world, the understanding of shame really encompasses our modern understanding of shame and guilt. And so I think that that's one of the one of the difficulties here is that you know we tend to think that shame and guilt are totally two different things.

But in the in the ancient Greco Roman world is usually one under one umbrella, one concept here. And so that's why I think that when we think that shame tends to be destructive in terms that shame destroys a person's identity, and that you can't do anything to to undo it. Paul, that's not right, because for understanding of shame basically encompasses both guilt and also shame.

So that's that's one of the tricky things in terms of trying to to understand it. But when you take a look here in terms of shame being toxic. And I think that for us we tend to think that the absence of shame itself is steam.

But for Paul and for the Greco Roman world itself the absence of shame is shamelessness. And so it is then very much important to understand that how we have to supplement that I think with a biblical understanding of shame. But also that when Paul deals with shaming itself you can see that it's very different from the online shaming that we see.

So therefore Paul shaming cannot be done and shaming cannot exist without empathy for the person. For Brene Brown you know she would say that shame cannot survive with empathy. Shame cannot survive empathy so that if you put empathy there the shame would just melt away.

But for Paul shame cannot exist without empathy in that empathy is needed in order to do this shaming properly. In that you need to basically when you have this shaming judgment shaming punishment shaming discipline itself is done with tears is done with much prayer and much dependent upon the Holy Spirit to bring about a change in the person. And so I think that those are some of the fundamental things that are important for Paul.

That's good. Thank you for giving so much of your time just again defending shame it's formative power in Paul's letters published by Baker academic Dr. Lao professor at New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Tilly thank you for being here thank you for writing this book I really encourage people it's a it's a really fine work of New

Testament scholarship also interdisciplinary with.

You know reintegrative shaming theory and also Confucianism there's theological components but it's also just good. If you can get through all of that there's really good practical how do you counsel people how do we live. You know this can help us have good conversations with our kids who are constantly dealing with is this a good shame or a bad shame so you deal with it in a very nuanced way it's not a celebration of shame yay it's good but it's defending in its proper place that we shouldn't remove it but rather rehabilitate it as a really key biblical idea God given function for our moral formation so thank you for being with us thank you for the book keep up the good work at Ted's and thank you to everyone who's listening and until next time glorify God enjoy him forever read a good.

[Music]