

EHC Week 9
Shame
Psalm 51
07/17/22

Introduction

Pray. Psalm 51. It's going to take us quite a bit of time to get there because I've got to help you see some stuff first.

**Now just upfront let me remind you of something that I hope you know but is worth repeating:
I love you and I want Jesus for you.**

My primary job as your pastor is not to get up here on Sunday and say a bunch of things you'll agree with so you feel good about yourself and then go home smiling. **My job is to help you look more like Jesus.**

And so sometimes that means I've got to say some harder things that might step on your toes a bit. But I do that because I want you to flourish with Christ.

Today we're talking about Shame.

Here's how I would define shame for us. This comes from NT Scholar Te Li Lau.

Shame is the painful emotion that arises from an awareness that one has fallen short of some standard, ideal, or goal.

Shame is the feeling of not being good enough. That something is wrong with you. There is a standard, that others have set for you or you have set for yourself or that (as we'll see today) God has set and shame is the feeling that comes when you become aware that you have not measured up to that.

This feeling of shame and not being good enough, can come from things you have done and also things done to you.

["Shame Put On You" article on the sermon page.](#)

But what I'm focused on today, really for the sake of time and clarity, is the shame that comes from wrongs we have done.

So I just want you to hear what I'm saying through that lens, ok?

Now, let's chat.

I don't know of a more hated emotion/feeling in our society than shame.

Shame is the universal emotional enemy of America. We have categories as a society for times where other painful emotions would be ok - where it's appropriate and healthy to experience feelings like sorrow, anger, grief, fear.

But collectively as a society, we wish to avoid shame as much as possible.

Consider **Brene Brown**, who became sort of the leading voice on all things shame in our culture after her 2010 Ted Talk “The Power of Vulnerability”, the one who many folks credit as popularizing the shame vs guilt dynamic - If you’ve heard of this. How guilt is “I’ve done bad.” Shame is “I am bad.”

She has gone so far as to say that shame serves no constructive purpose whatsoever at any point for any reason. She said a few years ago in an interview w/ Oprah - **“I think shame is lethal. I think shame is destructive. And I think we are swimming in it deep.”**

As a culture, we hate shame. This is why one of the things everyone in our culture is universally afraid of right now is being “canceled”. Because what is “canceling”? It is public shaming. It is the general consensus of the public saying - “You’re wrong. You’re not good enough. You’re out.”

And on the one hand this fear and hatred of shame kind of makes sense, right? We’ve all probably experienced, seen, or maybe dealt with first hand some of the destructive power of shame. The way it seems to tear folks down from the inside out, hurt relationships - makes people pull back and hide when they feel inadequate or not worthy of love.

Redemptive Shame

Here’s the problem - the Bible isn’t nearly as anti-shame as our culture and modern day counseling are.

So here’s my concern...I am not anti-counseling. I think counseling is a good thing, can be very helpful for some people in their walk with God. We have several folks in our church family who have been or are currently being trained to be good, Godly counselors. A good chunk of our members are in counseling right now. I think counseling can be a very good and helpful thing.

But some of my worry with a culture (broadly in America and specifically in our church) so centered around and fluent in counseling and therapeutic ideas...**is that there are ways our theology of shame has been shaped more by modern therapy than the Word of God.**

Here’s what I mean → I think most of us would agree with Brown here. I think if we took a straw poll and I asked - “Is shame ever a good thing?” I think most of us would say “maybe in like worst case scenarios when someone does something terrible, but overall no. Shame is not helpful. Guilt is helpful. Shame not helpful.”

Every psychology or therapy article I read the past few weeks had the same line - “Guilt can be constructive and good. Shame is bad.”

Shame can absolutely be destructive and corrosive in how we relate to ourselves, to others, and to God.

Shame can be destructive, BUT (according to the teachings of the Bible) shame is not always destructive.

In fact, sometimes shame is redemptive. I’ll take it one step even further - sometimes shame is a gift from God. Shame has the power to be, what one theologian called, a **severe mercy of God.**

Shame can be absolutely destructive and toxic, but in the narrative of the Scriptures **shame can be a powerful and healthy part of our moral formation.**

Consider Paul and his back and forth letters and interactions with the Church at Corinth.

He writes his first letter, what we have in our Bibles as 1 Corinthians. And he's just blasting them for their sin. He says in several places:

1 Cor 6:5 - 5 I say this to your shame...

1 Cor 15:34 - 34 Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame...

He writes to them - "Hey some things are off in your life. Not ok. You're rebelling against God." Apparently this letter makes them really upset, but they repent! And Paul writes them another letter and this is what he says...

2 Cor 7:8-11 - 8 For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

See what shame has produced in you - repentance! Eagerness and zeal to live for God lives of innocence and holiness.

If we're not careful...our view of shame can be so co-opted and shaped by modern therapy - the enemy, only to be avoided ever, never helpful - that we can miss what God might do in this powerful tool of spiritual formation.

Shame is a difficult, painful, and yet necessary part of growing more and more into Christlikeness. IF we are willing to let God do a deeper work through shame to bring us to repentance, healing, and hope.

That's what I want to get into today — There is destructive shame and constructive shame...it all comes down, not to what you're feeling, but to what you do with the feeling when it arises.

And that is what we see happening in Psalm 51. The redemptive nature of shame.

Psalm 51 Backstory

Psalm 51.

Your Bible might be like mine where there's a heading at the top of the Psalm. See what it says?

Psalm 51. To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Now, to fully get the weight of what David is writing in Psalm 51, you have to understand this backstory of what has happened...

2 Samuel 11:

- David is king over Israel.
- Rooftop. Bathsheba.
- Sins in multiple ways:
 - Laziness and abdication of responsibility

- Objectification
- Sexual assault
- Bathsheba gets pregnant. Uhoh. David knows he's in trouble. Tries to fix it by bringing her husband, Uriah home from war so that he'll sleep with his wife and think the child is his.
- Doesn't work so eventually he just has him killed instead.
- **Chapter 11 ends with David marrying Bathsheba and wanting to move on with his life like nothing happened.

2 Samuel 12:

- God sends Nathan (prophet) to David.
- Nathan tells him this fantastic story:
 - 2 men. 1 lots of sheep. 1 with one sheep he treats like a daughter.
 - Man with lots of sheep had some out of town friends come, wants to throw them a party. Instead of killing one of his many many many sheep he takes the one sheep from the other guy and kills it and cooks it instead.
- David is PISSED. THIS GUY SUCKS. HE should be killed.
- Nathan says, 12:7 - "You are the man!" BOOM.

Psalms 51 is David's response...

Psalm 51

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Both destructive shame and redemptive shame start with the same feeling - I've sinned. I've done something wrong. There was a standard, I did not live up to that standard, that's in front of my face and I feel bad, I feel shame.

	Destructive Shame	Redemptive Shame
Feeling	Shame - "I feel bad"	Shame - "I feel bad"

Now this is where it starts to diverge.

	Destructive Shame	Redemptive Shame
Feeling	Shame - "I feel bad"	Shame - "I feel bad"
Core Problem	Mistakes or Accidents	

Hey, you just made a mistake. Maybe you should feel some "guilt". Guilt says you've done something bad, but it doesn't say you are bad. Shame says you are bad - and that is unhelpful. Just think of it as a mistake. You screwed up.

David could have chosen this path. It was a mistake. I messed up, made a bad choice - but don't shame me Nathan. I'm a good person, who just happened to do something bad one time.

But redemptive shame responds differently. It doesn't just say - "I did bad." but it acknowledges the reality of our sin and believes what the Bible says - It's not just that I did bad, it's that I am bad.

Look at how David talks about it...

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

	Destructive Shame	Redemptive Shame
Feeling	Shame - "I feel bad"	Shame - "I feel bad"
Core Problem	Mistakes or Accidents	Sin Nature and Godward Rebellion

My core problem is not that I simply made a mistake or need some behavior modification, my core problem is that I am a sinner through and through. I was born in iniquity. I came out of the womb with my heart bent and turned away from God. I've sinned against the Lord, but not only have I done the act of sinning, I am sinful. My very nature is bent away from God.

It's a doctrine called **"Total Depravity."** Here's what it means - **"the whole nature of humanity, not only the body and its desires but the body, mind, heart, and soul, is corrupt."**

So modern therapy would tell you - "Shame is bad because it says you're a bad person!" And the Bible would say - "Shame is telling you the truth!" The whole narrative of the Scriptures is pointing to this reality - you're a bad person.

Or to use the language of the Scriptures - "you're a sinner!" Not just one who sins, but one who is a sinner. You cannot save yourself. You are the problem. **Sin is not just what you do, it's who you are!**

That's what Ephesians 2 tells us - We were dead in our sin and **we were by nature children of wrath.**

So you can separate out guilt and shame all you want to - I've done wrong vs I am wrong. But David owns both. I've sinned and I'm a sinner. I'm guilty and I'm shameful. I've done some bad stuff and I am a bad person.

So what's the solution?

	Destructive Shame	Redemptive Shame
Feeling	Shame - "I feel bad"	Shame - "I feel bad"
Core Problem	Mistakes or Accidents	Sin Nature and Godward Rebellion
Solution	Positive Self-Love or Cheap Grace	

Worldly shame offers self-love – you're not a bad person. You're a good person, you just made some mistakes. You just messed up. Let's just do better.

Or if we're going to be Christian about it - "Hey Jesus died for you. You don't need to feel bad. Let's move on."

Not the message of Psalm 51...David says - I'm a sinner through and through. I need something else. Look at what he says...

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

	Destructive Shame	Redemptive Shame
Feeling	Shame - "I feel bad"	Shame - "I feel bad"
Core Problem	Mistakes or Accidents	Sin Nature and Godward Rebellion
Solution	Positive Self-Love or Cheap Grace	Brokenness, Confession, Repentance → Healing and Cleansing from God

I need to be purged with hyssop (hyssop = branch used for ceremonial cleansing and washing). I need to be washed clean. My iniquities that are all over my nature need to be blotted out.

There is a different solution here - not you doing whatever it takes to absolve your shame and make the bad feeling go away - you need forgiveness. You need real cleansing. You need a real washing that only comes from God.

	Destructive Shame	Redemptive Shame
Feeling	Shame - "I feel bad"	Shame - "I feel bad"
Core Problem	Mistakes or Accidents	Sin Nature and Godward Rebellion
Solution	Positive Self-Love or Cheap Grace	Brokenness, Confession, Repentance → Healing and Cleansing from God
Result	Positive Self-Esteem or More Feelings of Shame	

What a cheap result. When we're in that incredible place of hurt and pain in our shame, broken over what we've done - what hope is there in platitudes? What hope is there in - you're a good person, don't worry about it, you made a mistake, learn and move on.

There is no hope in that.

David has a deeper hope, a true hope...

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

	Destructive Shame	Redemptive Shame
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Feeling	Shame - "I feel bad"	Shame - "I feel bad"
Core Problem	Mistakes or Accidents	Sin Nature and Godward Rebellion
Solution	Positive Self-Love or Cheap Grace	Brokenness, Confession, Repentance → Healing and Cleansing from God
Result	Positive Self-Esteem	Gospel Hope → Worship + Holiness

This confession of his sin, the path of redemptive shame, doesn't end with David having a bunch of positive feelings about Himself.

It ends with David praising God. Rich Gospel hope - He calls God "the God of his salvation." He sings his praises, he's restored the joy of his salvation. He asks for a clean heart and a right spirit. Walking through the shame, confessing and repenting, being broken before the Lord leads David to rich worship + the pursuit of a holy life.

Redemptive shame has been a severe mercy in David's life.

Painful? Absolutely.
 Feel good? Definitely not.

But shame is not an enemy that serves no constructive purpose whatsoever at any point for any reason. Shame has been a tool God used, delivered through the clarity, compassion, and courage of Nathan - to bring David back to Himself. To lead him into repentance and true healing and redemption and freedom found in God and God alone.

Get Into Lives - "Show"

So what does all this mean for us?

Here's where the rubber meets the road. Let me give you an example of how this plays itself out.

You're in Community Group - engage the heart (time we spend split off as men and women to confess our sin, pray for each other, encourage each other). And someone shares about their week and you can fill in the blank with whatever sin you want:

- Yelled at my spouse, just verbally berated them, never apologized.
- Looked at porn.
- I gossiped about my friend to another friend, completely just lied and threw her under the bus.

Fill in the blank, doesn't matter.

And rightfully the group wants to speak the gospel to them → "Christ died for you. He's forgiven you. He calls you son or daughter of Himself. You're washed clean and made new."

- Now, is that all true? Yes. This is not a trick question → yes it is true.
- And should that person feel shame over the acts that they have done? Yes! Shameful things are shameful.

If you sin against a holy God, you sin against another person → That should produce a sense of Godward shame.

Can you imagine if this David situation goes differently?

- Nathan shows up - “hey man, no big deal. I know you killed a guy. I know you abused a woman. Don’t worry about it. There’s no condemnation for God’s people. David I know you might feel kind of bad about it, but man you just made a mistake. No shame though man, this is a shame free zone. Just remember your true identity - you’re the chosen king of Israel. All good man.”
- Or can you imagine if David responded differently - “Why are you shaming me Nathan? I’m the chosen king of Israel. You’re making me feel bad, and I don’t like that or you anymore.”

Is that not how it would go today??

But instead Nathan shows up and says this is wrong. This is off. Yeah you’re still the chosen king of Israel but this is shameful. This is not ok. This is broken and sinful. In fact part of why it is so broken is because of your identity. You should be living differently.

And instead of disregarding it or getting mad at Nathan for “shaming him”, David feels the weight of his sin. Feels the shame - and God uses it to change his heart.

David doesn’t feel shame over this Bathsheba stuff, he’s not writing Psalm 51. He’s not going to God saying - Lord purge me with hyssop. Clean me. Forgive me. Redeem me. That comes out of healthy and holy and Godly redemptive shame.

That’s where holiness comes. That’s where true redemption and gospel life is found.

Shame is meant to be this severe mercy in our lives that though painful, pulls us back to the reality of who God is and how we have rebelled against Him. And that we never move past our great need for the gospel of Jesus Christ that washes us clean and makes us new.

But what happens, when shame becomes the enemy, is that we spend more time using the gospel to fight our shame, than using the gospel to fight our sin.

And repentance can be more about not feeling bad about our sin anymore, and less about receiving absolution and forgiveness and cleansing from God. Which is what we truly need.

I’ll say it this way → **If we’re not careful we can think the goal of maturity when it comes to shame is to pacify our conscience not purify our lives.**

I’m not sorry my shaming grieved you Corinthians! I’m glad you wept, because when you wept in your shame that led to repentance, which led to zeal for godliness, which led to holy lives, to flourishing with Jesus.

I want more of that, don’t you? I don’t want platitudes. I don’t want to be placated - “Don’t worry about it. You’re good. You made a mistake. Don’t feel bad.” I don’t want that → I want holiness!

I don’t want a pacified conscience. I want a purified life!

Broken and Contrite Heart – Gospel Hope

We hate shame. We run from shame...And yet this is the beautiful offer for us in Christ Jesus...

Psalm 51:16-17 - 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

God is after our broken and contrite hearts. That is redemptive shame. God disciplines and breaks those He loves so that we will love Him more and look like Jesus.

In fact, because the gospel is true, because there is no condemnation, no penalty, no punishment. The punishment for our sins has been poured out on the cross on Jesus - that actually gives us the freedom to feel the shame. Why? Because we don't have to pretend! We don't have to hide!

We no longer have to run *from* shame, we can run *through* shame.

We can let our shame we feel over the wrongs we have done be a redemptive tool of God in our lives. Don't spend all of your time trying to run from it, see how the Holy Spirit might use it to help you look more like Jesus.

This shame is a tool to show me my sin, bring godly conviction, lead me to sorrow and repentance at the foot of the cross, and move me forward into holiness.

Let's not give each other false truths and false hopes.

Because we feel the pull of our shame. And we believe what shame tells us – I'm not enough. I have fallen short.

And we try our best to offer gospel hope - "In the gospel you are enough." And we're setting ourselves up to fail. Because we begin to think - "Man, why don't I feel that yet? Why don't I believe I'm enough yet?"

You will always fail to believe it because it's not true! The gospel is the good news that you're not! You're not enough. You'll never be enough. But don't let that crush you.

That's the good news of the gospel!!!

You're not enough. But Jesus is.

You're not good. But Jesus was.

You can't do it. But Jesus did.

That's where true hope is found. That's where true life is found. Let shame be the redemptive gift of God in your life to push you further into the gospel, into holiness, and into union with Christ.

Practicals

So what do we do?

1. Go In

Search your heart. Do you feel shame over sin? Is your conscience seared?

2. Go Up to God

Confess and trust Him with the work out of your shame.

3. Go out to others

Confess well, do not hide. Own your sin.

Communion. Pray.