

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 233

Honor and Shame

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Guest: David de Silva

Episode Summary

The subject of honor and shame-based cultures is familiar to anthropologists, but a foreign topic to most people interested in biblical studies. Nevertheless, it is an important aspect of New Testament interpretation. In this episode we chat with Dr. David de Silva, a recognized expert in this area of Second Temple period / New Testament study. As he wrote in *The Dictionary of New Testament Background*, "Honor refers to the public acknowledgment of a person's worth, granted on the basis of how fully that individual embodies qualities and behaviors valued by the group. First-century Mediterranean people were oriented from early childhood to seek honor and avoid disgrace, meaning that they would be sensitive to public recognition or reproach. Where different cultures with different values existed side by side, it became extremely important to insulate one's own group members against the desire for honor or avoidance of dishonor in the eyes of outsiders, since only by so doing could one remain wholly committed to the distinctive culture and values of the group. This struggle is particularly evident in the NT, as church leaders seek to affirm the honor of Christians on the basis of their adherence to Jesus while insulating them from the disapproval they face from non-Christian Jews and Gentiles alike."

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 233, Honor and Shame culture with David deSilva. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Mike, I'm excited about David. I love David. We had him on last time at SBL. And SBL's just around the corner, in a couple months, so maybe we'll get him again.

MH: Well, we'll certainly try.

TS: I'm excited to hear what y'all talk about this week.

MH: Well, we're thrilled to have Dr. David deSilva on the podcast. Our listeners will be familiar with David through some of the short interviews that we've done in

the past at SBL, but now we get him for a whole episode. And in this case, there really couldn't be a better guest to cover our topic. We want to talk about honor and shame culture, and how that relates to biblical interpretations. So David, welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast.

DDS: Thank you so much, Mike.

MH: Yeah, absolutely. And to refresh the memories of our listeners (we've gotten a lot of new listeners; the podcast keeps growing), could you give us a brief introduction as to who you are?

DDS: Okay. I work as Professor of New Testament and Greek at Ashland Theological Seminary. I've been there for, actually, 23 years.

MH: Wow.

DDS: And I love writing and scholarship, and so I invest a lot of energy there. On the side, I am ordained—an elder in the United Methodist Church, and I have served as an organist choir director for 33 years. I'm married; we have three sons and a stupid dog.

MH: [laughs] And what's your dog's name?

DDS: Athena, the Doggess of Wisdom.

MH: [laughs] "The Doggess of Wisdom..." Yeah, we have one of those, too. I like to say that my pug, when it stares off into space, is working on equations [DDS laughs], but I think we know better. Hey, we don't want to forget this, even though this is peripheral to what we're going to talk about today, but you also write fiction. Why don't you say something about that?

DDS: Sure; thanks. I wrote one novel, which was published in 2015. It's called *Day of Atonement: A Novel of the Maccabean Revolt*. And I got into that because the story of the Hellenizing reform and its aftermath and the lengths to which some Jews went to hold onto covenant loyalty, on the one hand (I'm thinking of the martyrs), to recover the political independence that would assure the possibility of continuing to live by Torah (I'm thinking of the Maccabean army)... It was just such a fabulous story, I wanted to get people into it—people that I knew would never pick up 1 and 2 Maccabees. [Laughter]

MH: Right, which is a pretty large crowd. We mentioned that novel when we did our last interview at SBL, but I just wanted to bring it up again because, whether you call it historical fiction or fictionalized history, that's just a good vehicle to get people into *content*, especially the way you described it there.

DDS: Thanks. It was fun to try to bring a world to life. We're not just dealing with texts, we're dealing with feelings, motivations, pressures... What was it really like to live out these values? Actually, we get into a fair amount of honor and shame exchanges, patron/client exchanges... What does purity look like on a daily/weekly/annual basis? And stuff like that.

MH: Yeah, it's good stuff. Well, I want to introduce our topic in a particular way today. I'm going to read the opening paragraph of your entry in the *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds* on honor and shame. Of course, you're the author. I'm going to read that, and then I'm going to ask you to unpack it a little bit as we begin. So you wrote:

5:00

Honor refers to the public acknowledgment of a person's worth, granted on the basis of how fully that individual embodies qualities and behaviors valued by the group. First-century Mediterranean people were oriented from early childhood to seek honor and avoid disgrace, meaning that they would be sensitive to public recognition or reproach. Where different cultures with different values existed side by side, it became extremely important to insulate one's own group members against the desire for honor or avoidance of dishonor in the eyes of outsiders, since only by so doing could one remain wholly committed to the distinctive culture and values of the group. This struggle is particularly evident in the NT, as church leaders seek to affirm the honor of Christians on the basis of their adherence to Jesus while insulating them from the disapproval they face from non-Christian Jews and Gentiles alike.

Now, David this sounds a little bit like peer pressure to me. [DDS laughs] Can you unpack the... You just heard me read it, and of course it came from you. For our audience, am I right or wrong? Peer pressure... is that too simplistic? How do we look at this?

DDS: Actually, it probably is not *too* simplistic. It's the case, though... I mean, let's not imagine the first century Mediterranean as a giant locker room where guys are just behaving like...

MH: Snapping towels... [laughter]

DDS: Yeah, and behaving like junior high students everywhere. But yes, we keep each other in line with the values that keep our society running well, moving predictably, and moving forward. And as I'm brought up in this environment, having the approval of my peers and my superiors is of immense importance—being recognized as a person of worth, as a person who has value. And that value is granted largely on the basis of the degree to which I exhibit the values and practices that keep the society functioning well. So, if that's peer pressure, it's a much more mature peer pressure. It's peer pressure that holds together the most important values and practices of a given society.

MH: Yeah. When I first heard of this years ago, it was in the context of missionary work. You'd hear a missionary or someone who had considerable field experience comment on how doing certain things in line with... or recognizing this shames a person or this honors a person, as opposed to just propositionally telling them something—how that really matters in, essentially, how missionaries (in this case) were able to become acclimated to the culture, become accepted by a culture, and not be perpetually perceived as an outsider—that sort of thing. So when it comes to the New Testament, one of the things that pops into my head right away is that we tend to think of Christians in the early Church (and really even now) as governing their lives completely by a set of propositions. Simple example: Mosaic law (the Torah.) A lot of that gets carried into the New Testament and reaffirmed both in word and certainly in conduct by the early Church. But this goes considerably beyond merely proof-texting a behavior. So can you get us into talking about how this worked, either culturally or specifically in the Church? And then (I'm just telegraphing where I'd like to go here) ultimately, I'd like to talk a little bit about what's the relationship behaviorally for Christians. What's the role of their culture, as opposed to truth they are told by an apostle or teachings of Jesus handed down—the more propositional kinds of things? How do those things work together? What does this look like? Give us a few examples, culturally.

DDS: These are great questions, great trajectories. And not to jump the gun (because you might eventually want to talk about this), but I was interested just to hear as you started, that you first really engaged these concepts in conversations with missionaries.

MH: Mm, hmm.

10:00

DDS: Because from a different point of view, I have been astounded (and actually to a large extent, gratified) by how much missionaries have found work in readings of scripture from the point of view of honor and shame, how this has helped them—"package" is the wrong word—but *conceive* of the gospel, *proclaim* the gospel, *embody* the gospel in modern contexts that are still honor/shame cultures. Because I think it was Werner Mischke, in his *Global Gospel*... I think he was the one who was talking about how, really, the majority of the world's cultures out there are much more attuned to the social dynamics of honor and shame than we are. So this really helps them in their work. However, that wasn't your question. [laughs]

MH: No, but that... I think it would be really hard to dispute that. I'm reading a book now on the death of Western culture. [laughs] Happy reading. And a lot of the book is oriented around what the author refers to as *tribalism*. That's his rubric for how he talks about exactly what you're describing—how behavior is molded and perpetuated, and ideas are actually stifled by virtue of the tribe's response to something. It's actually pretty interesting. But I wouldn't have any trouble believing what you just said—that most of the world thinks in these terms.

DDS: But you are taking us to the ancient world and, specifically, this question of propositional truth vs. living in the midst of these social dynamics. Is that about right?

MH: Yeah, ultimately, how do those two things correlate? Or butt heads—either way.

DDS: Well, I'm thinking about some stories in the gospels where certain practices that Moses is commanded (so *propositions*) are front and center. Thinking about the Sabbath, for example. The Sabbath is something that is commanded by Torah—*that* it will be observed, *how* it will be observed—and, of course, there's a great deal of expansion interpretation as to what constitutes work, what doesn't, how to keep the Sabbath... In the first century synagogues of Galilee, the people reinforced for one another the importance of this—what has become a major identity marker for the Jewish people. To be part of this group means to observe the Sabbath. To be part of this group that is favored by God and enjoys God's protection means keeping the Sabbath. And your failure (not you, Mike, but anyone in general)... Your failure to keep the Sabbath both erodes our identity (as we would say, as people of God) and it threatens our standing in God's favor, which is predicated on the covenant. So the covenant could be seen as a whole bunch of propositions (or imperatives), but in living it out there is a great deal of pressure from one another to remain within the bounds of carrying out those precepts.

So I think about Jesus healing on the Sabbath: a disputed work. Is it work? Is it not work? Is it an act of mercy that should be allowed? Is it a work that could take place any other day? And Jesus encounters active resistance from leaders of the synagogue. For example, Luke 13, where a woman who has been bent over for some number of years comes into the synagogue and Jesus actually takes the initiative and heals her. The synagogue leader issues a rebuke—not directly to Jesus, but to the people: “Don't come here to be healed on the Sabbath. There are six days for work to be done; come on those days, but not today.” So there's this attempt to reinforce the boundaries of Sabbath-keeping by putting Jesus down indirectly, by saying he just violated how to observe the stipulation. And Jesus seems to understand very clearly that this is launched against him, because the Lord answers him and says, “Hypocrites! You do this much on the Sabbath: you take your animals and untie them and give them water. Shouldn't we untie this woman from Satan's bondage on this same day?” And his opponents can't answer. So in this contest (really about how to keep the stipulation) Jesus wins in this public forum because the people who are there basically judge Jesus' response to be more correct, better landed.

MH: Right, and still consistent within their own culture because Jesus doesn't pull out some verse from elsewhere in the Torah or in the Tanakh and say, “The Pharisees got this wrong. Here's a competing proposition that's superior.” He

15:00

actually uses their own behavior—their own living out—of a proposition (part of what forms their culture). And I like the way you put it: He wins. [laughs] What can they say?

DDS: Indeed. So he successfully defended his honor and his authority to really define what Sabbath-keeping should be like—what it includes and what it doesn't include. And then, I'm thinking of a verse in Philo. (And of course, I can't come up with a reference.) You know. [Laughter] It's not going to happen.

MH: That's what indexes are for... [laughs]

DDS: But I wrote it down somewhere so I wouldn't have to remember. It's where Philo talks about how Jews throughout the Diaspora act as watchdogs for the ancestral covenant, how they apply social pressure, how they will shame deviations among their own from doing those distinctive practices of the Torah. So I guess this is a long way around to saying the propositions—if they are going to be enforced at all, if their practice is going to continue—it depends on the social practices of reinforcement of those practices. It is still as important to your honor today to be living in line with the Torah, and we are going to treat you as valuable, or we're going to treat you as deviant, based on that.

MH: Do you think this is part of what Paul meant (and he, of course, included his own countrymen here)—the whole idea of being all things to all men, that sort of thing, and the Jewish culture is included in that? Because it's very easy for us as Christians to say, "You go over here and you read the Pauline epistles, and Paul's *redefining* the..." (I think that's a fair word.) He's redefining (or repurposing—maybe reapplying in a new way) this propositional language about the covenant (and different covenants, but we'll just say *the* covenant) from the Old Testament, and including Gentiles and all of that. And so, it's easy for us to say, "Later on, when we have these controversies in churches, you could just quote Paul and just quote this passage over here and that should settle the matter..." But it seems like Paul is sensitive to the fact, even though he's speaking as an apostle, and he (no pun intended, or maybe pun intended) lays down the law in a few points, he's still sensitive to (I want to be careful with my terms)... I want to say the insufficiency of that approach—not the insufficiency of the truths that he's espousing, but the insufficiency of just proof-texting things. That he has to make sure his audience knows that he *does* view the law positively. He can criticize dependence on it over here, but then he can affirm it on the other hand. Do you see Paul in that way, that he's trying to stay within—play within the sandbox—but still doing different things because of his status as the apostle to the Gentiles?

DDS: Well...

MH: Or does it depend on [laughs] what passage you're in?

DDS: Let me answer it this way, and you have to understand that the Paul of Galatians is much more on my mind these days than the Paul of other letters. But I'll back up even one step further. Paul did not get a lot of support from Diaspora Jews. Quite the contrary. Wherever he went, he managed to make himself pretty much unwelcome in the synagogue—*persona non grata* within three weeks of preaching, which is...

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MH: [laughs] Right. Look for the synagogue, then look for the jail. Yeah.

DDS: Impressive record of alienation. Again, in that response to Paul, we see shaming. We see the synagogue treating him as a deviant because he's trying to move the ancient boundary markers. He's threatening those values and those practices that define our identity, and in line with which we conceive of our honor or another person's lack of honor. You know, in Galatians, Paul is really bracketing the old covenant in a way that is radical, saying that, "Yeah, that was exactly what God wanted Jews to do between the Exodus and the coming of Christ." And end of story at that point. It's *informative*, but it's not *normative* at any point after the coming of Christ and the sending of the Spirit. With a message like that, obviously, he is going to invite radical shaming, and those whom he converts to his way of thinking (especially Jews that move in that direction) will also be subject to a great deal of deviancy control—a great deal of shaming—by their associates and by their families because really, Paul could be seen as an apostate and leading people to apostasy from the covenant in what he's saying about the law and the kind of interaction he's encouraging between Jewish Christians and uncircumcised, non-Torah-observant Gentile Christians. That's not the question you asked, remotely, but it's what came to mind, this late on a Friday. [laughs]

MH: Well, it sets it up. We should tell listeners that Galatians is on your mind because you just wrote a commentary. It's going to be out really soon. When is it supposed to be out?

DDS: September 18th is the release date from Eerdmans.

MH: So that's the context for David saying that the Paul of Galatians is really what's been on his mind a lot. I can identify with that. When you get entrenched in a lengthy piece of work like that, you pretty much get a one-track mind. [laughs]

DDS: Indeed.

MH: Now, let's go back to that, though, because... In what way... How do you... I'm going to ask you to be thinking of scripture here but also feel free to use your imagination a little bit. In what way do you think the Jewish community would intentionally shame Jews who had converted? You can use the situation at

Galatia as an example or as a springboard. But how did this work? What would they do?

DDS: Well, there are some official actions that Diaspora Jews can take toward their own. They are allowed a certain measure, even of corporeal punishment. This is why Paul in 2 Corinthians says he received from the Jews five times the forty lashes minus one. That was synagogue discipline from...

MH: Right, from the Jews. Yep.

DDS: ...from the Jews in Diaspora synagogues. Just like he got beaten with rods by Roman officials a number of times because he was transgressing the norms and practices that *Romans* found valuable. But in a less formal setting, families would put pressure on—verbally cajole—a person to give up certain associations that were seen as damaging to the honor of the whole family. Because we can't keep our own in line with the covenant. Eventually, what that turns into is disowning—throwing out—a deviant family member to protect the honor of the larger family unit. This happens among Jews and among Gentiles. “If you're not going to be *fixed* by us, we're just going to have to disassociate ourselves so that you don't pull our honor rating down by association.” [MH laughs] Seriously!

MH: It makes me laugh because of the “thumbs up,” and the “likes,” and Yelp, that kind of thing. [Laughter] So it's our own shame/honor system right there. That just popped into my head when you said that. It seems to fit to me.

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So it's interesting that they had... They're living in the Roman world. There's Roman law, but then, both legally and culturally, they could do this. They could do these things. And that was just the way things were working out culturally. Let me throw this... I don't think this will be too much of a curveball, but we're used to this kind of *hold* of authority on people in a religious context, maybe from... I guess not so much nowadays, but I think of Catholicism, like medieval Catholicism, where the people were convinced that to go to heaven, we have to... There are means of grace, and those means of grace are held firmly in the hand of the institutional Church. And so you have these episodes (in Western Civ., in medieval times) where somebody would be excommunicated, which was... We look at that and think, “Big deal. Who are *you*?” But that was a big deal because you cannot participate in the means of grace in the Church, which means you ain't going to heaven anytime soon here. And then they would have interdict, where they could put whole geographical areas under excommunication. So there was a strong link to an institution here that would steer the herd—motivate behavior—with shame or basically say, “You have to conform to be back in the good graces here.” Do you think that the community... How strong... How much of a parallel is there to the Jewish community of the Second Temple Period? I know it's not the same because of this whole “means of grace” thing, but the covenant is a big deal. We lose sight of the fact that, “Hey, we were sent into exile because we didn't honor the covenant. And we

don't ever want that to happen again. So, buck up, Dude." [laughter] We don't think in those terms, but everybody had that on their mind. That was still fresh.

DDS: Let me just piggyback on that. "We went into exile in 721 or 587 BC because we didn't keep the covenant well enough. As we look back and think about ongoing Gentile domination, and especially the things that happened to us under Antiochus IV..." That's all interpreted again, in almost all of the extant literature, in terms of covenant infidelity on the part of Jerusalem elites, especially. If we don't keep the covenant, disaster happens. If that's not enough reinforcement, we have Pompey the Great's invasion. A much smaller scale invasion, but still... He comes in to settle the dispute amongst the last Hasmoneans, and when Rome comes in to help, Rome never leaves, apparently. But we have another example that the literature of the period (Psalms of Solomon and others) looked back on as the result of failure to keep the covenant. And it always leads to national disaster. So all of that reinforces your point to say, "Yes. If we desert the covenant, we are likely setting ourselves up for the continued experience of Gentile domination, of life in exile, and the failure ever to see any of those promises that we read in the prophets for restoration."

MH: Yeah, this is important, because our audience—my audience—needs to realize that this is more than just being an irritant. [laughter] The Jewish leadership weren't just *annoyed*, like, "We're right, Paul's wrong, and we need to win a debate here. He's just a blithering idiot," or something like that. It wasn't... It was so much more serious than that, because, "If we let this guy run around and do this stuff, we could be in huge trouble with the whole thing of being dominated in our own land."

DDS: Indeed. So there isn't the same centralized authority yet that you saw in the medieval Church. There's still a fair amount of diversity and diffusion among Jews. They have a lot of disagreements among themselves about how to keep covenants. Just read the Dead Sea Scrolls where this small circle of Jews thinks every other Jew is doing the covenant wrong, but "We're going to do it right. We're going to do it so well that God will look upon *us* and have mercy on the nation... And send them all to hell." [MH laughs] "Sons and daughters of darkness." But they do agree that if you're going to just go off and not observe the Sabbath, if you're going to play fast and loose with dietary laws, if you're going to try to make us like the nations, if you're going to try to break down those boundaries that separate us from the nations, you are endangering the people as a whole. And most of us can agree with that, and most of us will put pressure on you to stop. And that's precisely Paul's mission: to break down "the dividing wall of hostility," from his perspective, which was the protective palisades that God put around God's precious people from the other perspective.

MH: How do you think... This is good, because, in a nutshell, what you just said is that inviting the nations in to the membership of the people of God is one thing, because we had that in the Old Testament. There were provisions for Gentiles

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living among the Israelites. Then there was, of course, conversion—at least in theory. So inviting the nations in is one thing, but making *us* like the nations is quite another. Those are two related but different things, and the second one is far more dramatic. But how do you think the Jewish community—the Jewish leadership—would have reacted to passages like Isaiah 66? Because it's easy for us to think, "Good grief. Isaiah talks about making the Gentiles priests of the Lord. Couldn't they just read that? Obviously, they have to believe that Jesus was who he said he was, and that they're in this time period now, or this is the kind of thing that God is okay with *because* of this passage..." How do you think the Jewish community would respond to some of these late passages (either exilic or post-exilic passages) that talk about not only Gentile *mission*, but there are a few of these dramatic ideas in there.

DDS: Hang on, I'm still trying to find Isaiah 66... No, I'm just kidding. [laughter]

MH: You're looking at it in the Septuagint, right? [laughs]

DDS: I'm cheating with English. Well, I think in the tail end of Isaiah's oracles, you have the forecasting of Gentiles flocking to the worship of the one God, but you also have verses (and I can't put my finger on it the way you're able to with Isaiah), but the assurance that the uncircumcised will not...

MH: 66:21.

DDS: Well, I was thinking about something in the 50s, but I can't find it right now. It's somewhere in my Galatians commentary. I can't find it.

MH: Get it in Logos; then you can index that right away. [laughs]

DDS: Logos, what's that? [laughs]

MH: Yeah, I was thinking of Isaiah 66:21. "Some of them [these Gentiles he's been talking about] I will also take for priests and for Levites," says the LORD." Then you have this new heaven and new earth vision. You could see Paul, and he does this a couple times... He'll point to those sorts of passages, and then that's a propositional argument. I'm just wondering how you think the community would respond to him, or just that whole idea.

DDS: I finally found it. Isaiah 52:1. "Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean." I think they would respond...

MH: [laughs] Quote that one... [laughs]

DDS: "Check your foreskin at the gate." I think they would respond by saying, "Sure, of course. We look forward to the incorporation of the Gentiles *as Jews*."

We look forward to them proselytizing the full way— taking on the yoke of Torah just as we hope that all Jews will take on the yoke of Torah completely. *This* is the future God has for us—not *yours*, Paul, where we all just set the Torah aside and just follow some nebulous spirit who will make some Jesus take on life in us, so that it's no longer us who live, but Christ who lives in us. This is an identity we don't want, because it means leaving behind so much of the identity that we have prized and by which we have known ourselves to be honorable people or not."

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MH: Yeah, so it goes right back into that, "Inviting the nations in is one thing, but making us like the nations is quite another." That's going to be the point of contention. What do you think of... Without pinpointing different groups here, but there is a (I think fairly significant) movement. I don't know if you've noticed this in your neck of the woods, but I don't think it's going to be isolated, either, to just internet theology. But there seems to be a serious movement that would be akin to what we are accustomed to calling the Judaizing element of the New Testament. Of course, that's a pejorative that's brought on by the things that Paul is saying, but... There seems to be this propensity among a number of believers to, "Yes, we accept Jesus as the Messiah, but we should be Jewish. We should observe the calendar, observe the food laws, observe Sabbath. In other words, make ourselves as Jewish as possible and yet still try to affirm Jesus as the Messiah. Do you have an opinion on any of that? And the most extreme elements end up dumping Jesus in the end. But without going that far, do you have any thoughts on that?"

DDS: Yeah. Actually, I have had some conversations with someone who was formerly a close friend around this very topic. Because I expressed my opinion, I have to use the word "formerly" to describe him, which is quite sorrowful in retrospect. But my thought is, on the one hand, sure, it's cool to do a Passover Seder. It's cool to dig into the Old Testament heritage of Israel into which we've been grafted. But on the other hand, to begin placing any value on it that says, "You will be more Christian by doing these Jewish things" seems to me to fly in the face of the direction in which Paul was going. We will all be more like Christ if we do *these things* together. And it wasn't training Gentiles to be more Jewish in their calendrical observances, their worship practices, or what have you. It was coming together in a common new ground. So I default to Romans (oh, dear, 14 or 15?) 14. If you do it to honor God, great. If you do it and that becomes a measure for another person's place in Christ or depth in Christ, then you've gone too far.

MH: Yeah, that's basically my take. If this draws you closer to God in your Christian walk, as opposed to dispensing with what's new about Christianity... If you can avoid that and it's helpful to you spiritually in some way, great. That's a wonderful thing. You and I are on the same page there. I just get hit with this a lot, because the internet and the email... there's a lot of this that's dropped on my doorstep.

DDS: Mm, hmm.

MH: And I may have a disproportionate view of it because of that (in other words, its bigness) and it may actually be small. But there just seems to be this kind of thing going on where “I’ve discovered something about the Old Testament and Judaism and this unlocks some sort of special knowledge about how to be a better Christian if we do this Jewish thing.” I tend to see a lot of that, so it’s... I just wanted to know what your take on that was. It seems that Paul ran into this a lot, and in the context of our discussion, you could see why he would. It’s not something we should make fun of his opponents for, because it was really serious because of what we’re talking about here—this shame and honor. And then in a transcendent sort of way, this whole notion of exile and dominance. That wasn’t ancient history to them; that was a current problem, which I tend to think we forget about.

Let’s go over to the area of moral practice, because you have this in your DNTB [Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds] article, as well. You bring up the example of adultery. So let’s spend a few minutes on this sentence you have here:

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The threat of dishonor supports a society’s prohibitions of socially disruptive behavior. For example, adultery—the violation of the sanctity and peace of a bond that is foundational to society—often carries the threat of disgrace (cf. Prov 6:32–33).

So let’s just take that. Would a Jew in the second century feel more apprehension about committing adultery because of the Torah or because of the environs of their culture? Is that a false dichotomy? How would you talk about that?

DDS: It’s an interesting way to put it. You keep referring to my DNTB article. Have you seen my book *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity*?

MH: I don’t have that one in my system, so... [DDS laughs] I’m cheating for quick reference here.

DDS: I’m going to ask Bob Pritchett if he will unlock this for you [laughter] as a gift. Because there’s a lot more in there. So if I am a well-formed Jew (actually, or Christian), I care about God’s opinion of me. I care about God’s judgment, verdict, valuing of me. And so, I’m not going to commit adultery because (bottom line) I want God to look upon me as an honorable client and a grateful recipient of God’s favors such that I’m not going to go out and do what is hateful to my divine benefactor.

MH: You’re going to be loyal to the grace that was shown you.

DDS: Exactly. Now, if I'm a not so well-formed [laughs] Jew or Christian, and if, "Yeah, I kind of am interested in God's opinion of me, but man, she's really hot," social pressure is going to help. It's going to step in. And if I share my thoughts about committing the act, my better-formed peers are going to shame me into not. If I am so brazen and shame/less as to commit the act and it becomes known, I will be ever more deeply shamed because of it. And it will take some time to repair my honor rating, if you will, in the community. And even if I don't have any thought about God, my concern about being known as a person of value (my honor rating, as it were) will likely keep me moving in straight paths.

MH: You just described sanctified peer pressure. Well done.

DDS: There you go. That's really what Paul is after. And the author of Hebrews is deeply interested in sanctified peer pressure. That author is addressing Christians who have really fallen significantly in their honor rating in the eyes of their non-Christian neighbors, whether those be non-Christian Jews or non-Christian Gentiles. And it's been a while, and it's wearing on them. It's wearing on them so much that some of them have stopped coming to visibly identify with this Christ cult. They've stopped gathering together. They've shrunk back, as it were. And the author of Hebrews wants to energize sanctified peer pressure. "Watch out, lest there be in any one of you a wicked heart of distrust that turns away from the living God. See to it," and the first imperative is plural, "see to it, all of you, that no one of you fails to attain God's gift." And stuff like that. It's just full of exhortations to keep one another on track and keep one another's eyes on the honor that the group will bestow upon them and the honor God will bestow upon them.

MH: Yeah, and that's an important reference there—the whole corporate idea (sanctified peer pressure). Because a lot of those passages (not only in Hebrews, but other places) can be misread as a merit-based thought system, that I have to... This whole idea of earning your way to heaven, that sort of thing. When actually, it's trying to reinforce your *loyalty* post-commitment, post-conversion, to the grace that was shown to you and using the community as a benefit for doing that. Yeah, that's good stuff. Now, if you were... Let me, before I get to the question I wanted to ask... I want to ask something about Gentiles. So let's say you've heard Paul preach. You're a Gentile. And your community is quite different in some ways than the Jewish community—your neighbor next door—and you've both heard Paul preach. Maybe you both (for the sake of the scenario) believe the message—you both believe in Jesus. Now, when you overhear some of these discussions and these debates—these conflicts that Paul is having with his community—how are you as a Gentile processing this? What do *you* do if *your* community would shame you in a different way that would conflict with the Jewish community? How do you parse this? You have access to Paul so you ask him, "What should I do?" What do you think the thought process would be? How do they approach this if they're

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coming from a totally Gentile orientation, and here we have this guy who stands in the middle of these? What do you think that conversation would be like?

DDS: If I'm understanding your question correctly, I would respond this way to it. Paul does talk to Gentiles who are being shamed by their non-Christian Gentile neighbors in ways very similar to Christian Jews who are being shamed by their non-Christian Jewish neighbors. 1 Thessalonians 2 pops into my mind, where Paul talks to a predominantly Gentile Christian audience in Thessalonica. "You are suffering the same thing from your compatriots as they (the Judean churches) suffered from the Jews." These are shaming techniques that look quite similar but are applied because of different values being violated. In the case of the Thessalonian Christians, my neighbors (let me be a Thessalonian Christian) really are upset that I ceased to be a pious member of the city—that suddenly I am no longer interested in paying the gods their due or showing solidarity in my family unit or in my social networks (old-fashioned social networks, where they actually had to be people *with* each other, not this other internet stuff) or showing up in civil settings where the whole town is out because sacrifices are being performed to the emperor or to the city's patron deities. And we're all going to enjoy a feast together because this is one of the few times we get free meat in Thessalonica, and I've become anti-social. And I've become (ironically) an *atheist*. This is a word that appears again and again in non-Christian Gentile criticisms of Christians. So they will do the same things. They will avoid my business. If I'm an artisan, I'm going to be in jeopardy of losing my livelihood. They will reproach me as they pass on the street. If I walk down a dark alley, I might get beaten up. And the whole goal is to say, "Fall back in line, for heaven's sake. You used to be a good, valuable, honorable member of this city. Why did you fall for this eastern cult? And why do you listen to that charlatan who blew through here (Paul)?" [laughs] Is that getting at what you're asking?

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MH: That *is* getting at it. I'm hoping that listeners can see that there's a reason, other than wanting to cloister themselves, why Christians stressed community. It wasn't just, "Come out from among them and be separate (separate from the world)." It wasn't just a negative formation. Let's just put it that way. But Christian community was a big deal because of this shame/honor dynamic. Whether you're a Gentile or a Jew, yeah, people are going to avoid your business. You're going to lose your job. You're going to be ostracized. You're going to be shunned. And so the creation and the healthy functioning of Christian community is really a more positive thing. It's to replace that which was lost, not just so that we can go off into the hills and cloister ourselves and do whatever. We tend to think of withdrawal from life and from circumstances when we think of Christian community, at least in a number of our American contexts (I'm thinking of Fundamentalism or something really conservative), when the reality in the New Testament was we have to have a community to help each other get through life because of these circumstances.

DDS: Exactly.

MH: The approach—the mentality—is quite different than what we might be inclined to think.

DDS: I'm thinking especially of what Jesus said when Peter said, "Look, we've left everything to follow you." And Jesus said, "There's no one who has left behind father or mother or siblings or houses or fields that will not receive a hundredfold in this life mothers and siblings and houses and fields, and in the life to come (eternal life)," because we become family to one another. We, by virtue of having come together around Jesus and having been, in Pauline language, adopted by God into his household, we take on the responsibilities and we enjoy the benefits of one another as family. And, just to get back to honor and shame, our interactions with one another... First, our relationships with one another and our investments in one another have to be stronger than our relationships with and investments in those who are not Christians, so that our social reinforcement will be more forcefully felt. Paul will urge Christians to exercise, in effect, community discipline to keep individuals living the new life that Christ has called them to, as opposed to falling back into their old patterns that they might formerly have enjoyed, like the fellow in 1 Corinthians 5 who... I can't remember the specifics, but he was having sex with someone he wasn't supposed to. That much I remember.

MH: With his father's wife.

DDS: Or those who are contemplating continuing in fornication or consorting with prostitutes in 1 Corinthians 6. "You just can't be doing this. There's a new set of values and we have to hold each other accountable." And if that person will not, we excommunicate the person. This is kind of the birth of excommunication, in 1 Corinthians 5. And we hope that that person's desire for God, who is known in connection with our community, will be greater than his desire for his father's ex-wife.

MH: Mm, hmm. Yeah. Really. Last question before I want to give you a chance to talk about any of your books that you want to (and I do have one question on the Galatians commentary). But last question as far as the subject matter: If you were shamed—if you lost honor—how would it be regained? You hinted at this in what you just said in 1 Corinthians 5. The issue there is repentance. Your expulsion is ultimately aimed at restoration, but if you can widen that a little bit. You're a believer; you've been shamed. How do you regain your honor?

DDS: If you wish to continue as a believer, you regain it by repenting—by going through the process of restoration in the community. It's not so well spelled out in the first century, but it actually becomes quite developed in the second and third centuries. And it's really, in its conceptualization, a very positive process, specifically to restore honor and value to the person who was turned away from those sinful practices. There's another side to that, of course. At any point, I can

also regain my honor in the eyes of the non-Christian world by repenting and find my way back into the good graces and respect of my peers, because I have put aside these foreign—these atheistic—commitments.

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MH: Yeah, ultimately, it's which honor community—which honor—do you esteem more?

DDS: Exactly right.

MH: Obviously, I think we can all sense that that would've been a real struggle for many people, both now and in antiquity. What were some of the steps, just real quickly, in the second and third century? Because I know they had a big problem. Even with the Nicene Creed, there are parts of that that deal with people who have lapsed and what to do. But what are some of the steps?

DDS: I've got to be honest. This late on a Friday afternoon where I am [MH laughs], I don't have... I know there was preparation of fasting and repentance, especially during the pre-Easter season, and a public restoration (welcoming back into the community and to the Lord's table) at the Easter vigil service, which gave birth to our practices of Lent from Ash Wednesday to Easter. But more than that, I cannot say.

MH: That's a good one, though. That's a pretty concrete example. What we're going to do is, for sure, I'm going to give Trey the links to your *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity* book, so that people can find that real easily, and the Galatians commentary. In regard to the Galatians commentary, how would you describe this? Do you need facility with Greek to benefit from this commentary? Someone without Greek, can they get a lot out of it still? How would you describe it?

DDS: I think the latter. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (and Joel Green, the current editor, is really quite good and adamant about this) is meant to serve pastors, not necessarily scholars. So especially the main running text has got to be accessible, or else Joel just isn't going to have it [laughter]. The footnotes (just going to be honest) could be another story, but that's okay [laughter]. Yeah, it has a ton that those who have no facility in Greek will be able to grasp. And every writer for the series is careful to explain grammatical terms and what have you and at least lay out clearly what the differences are in English so that it can be readily grasped.

MH: Good, good. Well, we'll be sure to put a link to that on the episode page. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us about, that either you've put out in the past, or is coming in the near future?

DDS: If I might, I am very excited about the Apocrypha. I think that cultural backgrounds are great: honor, patronage, reciprocity... Textual backgrounds that

are right at our fingertips are great, and the Apocrypha is just the best collection of Second Temple Jewish literature that your listeners can easily find and read. The second edition of my textbook introducing the Apocrypha just came out earlier this year with Baker. I'm very happy that they gave me the opportunity to revise—update—this volume, and in about a month, the second edition of my introduction of the New Testament will come out with InterVarsity Press. And again, it's a major investment that a press makes to create a second edition, and I'm grateful for the chance to update—to correct—a bunch of things. [MH laughs] Archeology, especially, because between the first and second edition I've actually gotten to visit most New Testament sites and I've discovered, "Oh, heck, that's really over *there*, not over there like I thought." [MH laughs]

MH: Google Earth let me down! [laughter]

DDS: Well, the first edition, I didn't have Google Earth...

MH: So what we'll do is on the episode page for this episode, we will put a link also to the new edition of the introduction to the Apocrypha. And when the New Testament new edition drops, shoot me an email about that. I may see it in the catalogue. I saw the Apocrypha one in the Baker catalogue recently. But shoot me an email about that so we can put something on the blog about it.

DDS: Excellent. Thank you so much, Mike.

MH: Yeah, well thank you for spending part of your Friday with us.

DDS: A great pleasure.

TS: Alright, Mike, another great interview.

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MH: Yeah, it's always good to talk to David, and he had a lot of good insights on some things that we can easily read over but that are actually pretty important.

TS: And next week, we're going to have two interviews with Johnny and Joe.

MH: Yep, some friends of ours who are doing some interesting things, both to raise money for the persecuted church and also to get good resources—good tools—into the hands of really anybody who cares about Bible study.

TS: Alright, that sounds good. Looking forward to it. Alrighty, just want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.