

Dignity: Know Your Value in the Father's World

By Bobby Schuller

And that's what we're talking about today. Today, I want to convince you that you actually are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Maybe you come to church today and you're like Bobby, you don't know what I did this week. Or maybe you're coming in, you're just feeling beat up. Man, there are a lot of bullies in this world. There are a lot of passive aggressive people. We have parents and co-workers and kids and colleagues, and they can sometimes say the meanest things. And maybe you're just coming in feeling beat up. Maybe you just lost something, and the things you're saying to yourself are not according to God's word. You're saying things like I'm never going to succeed, I'm never going to thrive, I'm never going to be a good person, I'm never going to beat this addiction, I'm never going to beat my depression or my anxiety or my fear. I'm never going to get where I want to be. I'm not enough.

And maybe you're thinking these things today, and I want you to know that that is not what God wants for you. He wants you to say what the word of God says about you that you're above and not beneath; that you're the head and not the tail. That you're the apple of God's eye. That you're beloved, that you're forgiven, that you're chosen, that you're

victorious, that you're favored, that you're blessed, that you have nowhere to go but good places because you are in Christ Jesus. And that's the way we need to change our thinking.

Today, we're in the middle of a series, if you're just joining us, that's fine, and the series is called As a Man Thinketh, and it's based on the Proverb that says as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Or as a woman thinketh in her heart, so is she. Literally you are what you think. And I've said this every week, I'm going to keep saying it, but good thoughts bear good fruit, and bad thoughts bear bad fruit. Therefore, pay attention to what you think about and what you dwell on.

The mind is like a garden, right? And if you plant good seeds in that garden, it'll bear a good fruit. If you plant bad seeds or you let it run wild, it's going to bear bad fruit. And so tend to the garden of your mind because the things you dwell on and the things you think about, the things you study and read about, those are going to bear fruit in your life.

And very often we're just somewhere because of hard luck, you know, something happens, but even your ability to endure the suffering that has nothing to do with your thinking, that enduring will 100% have to do with how you think and the kind of thoughts you foster. Man, thoughts are powerful! You can go into shock because you're afraid. Your mind can cure the body. We don't know how, but when a drug is tested

in the market, there's a 30% chance that when you take a fake drug, it's going to cure you just because you're thinking the right kind of thoughts. That's crazy!

You can go delirious. You can have a heart attack. A million things can happen to your body just based on your thoughts. Your mind is powerful. It has an effect on your body, your soul, your behavior, your outcomes, your relationships, therefore pay attention to what you think about.

And today I just felt like the Lord impressed on my heart to remind everyone to do what Paul said. Whatever is noble, whatever is pure, whatever is holy, whatever is good, think on such things, right? To think about who you are in Christ Jesus. And maybe you grew up in a church where you were taught to beat yourself up and bully yourself. But I want to tell you there's a big difference between being a bully and being a coach. And many of you, you're not coaching yourself, you're bullying yourself, you're putting yourself down. You're constantly saying I'm not good enough, I'm never going to get there, I'm never going to thrive. And if you dwell on those thoughts, it will be so. If you constantly say to yourself I'm a dirty, rotten sinner, it will be so. Those are not holy thoughts. God never tells us to think that way in scripture. In fact, He teaches us to think I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. I am above and not beneath. I am chosen. I am called. I'm free from the

bondage of the law. I'm given total grace. Heaven is my home. These are the kinds of thoughts that the scripture teaches us to think, amen? So today I want to convince you to replace your thoughts of shame with thoughts of grace. Go easy on yourself. Can we do that?

I think oftentimes as believers, we think that if we beat ourselves up, or if we foster thoughts of shame, that it will lead to holiness, but we are utterly wrong. Shame always leads to sin. Grace always leads to holiness. Shame leads to sin! It does. When you beat yourself up and you say I'm a horrible, rotten person, you're going to see that that only triggers you to do more sinful things in life.

In addiction theory, this is called the addiction cycle. So what happens is you have an emotional trigger, right? Something in your life; you get stressed out. You have a bad day at work. You get in a fight with your spouse or your best friend, and now you're sort of emotionally raw and you need something to deal with that. And so the next step in that cycle is craving. You begin to crave a drink. You just want a drink, but you're like no, I'm not going to drink anymore. I'm not going to do that. And I'm just not going to do that.

But then you engage. The next step is ritual. Ritual is like you drive by your favorite bar, but you're not going to go in. And so you drive by, well we'll just say Moe's Tavern, and there's Moe's and then you see all of your friends, they're getting out of the car, and you think oh maybe

I'll just go in and say hi. So you park and you go in to say hi, and then your buddy's, they say hey man have a drink. And you're like oh no, no I don't want to drink anymore. I've really been drinking too much, I'm trying to stop. And they say oh this one's on us. Just have one. Just for the road, you know?

Next thing you know, you've pulled a full on bender. That's the next step, the using. You know it takes so much willpower to resist that trigger, whatever it is. And so you use and you stumble home drunk, or maybe you get in a horrible accident, and this triggers then shame. Shame is both guilt and fear combined into one. It's not only did I do something wrong, not only did I make a mistake, its saying I am a mistake. I'm never going to get over this. I'm never going to beat this thing. That's who I am. I'm just made this way so I just going to have to deal with it and I stink.

And so that shame then becomes in and of itself an emotional trigger, and that's the cycle. The emotional trigger, the craving, the ritual, the using, the shame, the emotional trigger, and it goes like that over and over, and that's the cycle of addiction. Whether its substance abuse, like drugs and alcohol; pornography, which that addiction is at an all time high, is ruining relationships; gambling, compulsive shopping, work-aholism, over-eating, under-eating, cutting, I mean the list goes on and on, that we as people, at the root of our addictions, and I sort of

believe all of us are just a little addicted to something. At the root of our addictions is this one thing, shame. Shame says I'm not good enough, I stink, this is how I am, I'll never get there, and shame always leads to sin. Beating yourself up, bullying yourself will never get you where you want to be. It's the positive confessions of the scripture, the good things, the promises of God, professing those things over your life, even when they are overtly and obviously not true, proclaiming them over yourself makes it true! That's what faith is. That's what Jesus did. Jesus was constantly proclaiming things over people that in the natural just weren't true.

You remember when a bunch of people wanted Jesus to heal that girl, and He takes too long, and they finally say she's dead, and He says oh she's not dead, she's sleeping. She was dead. Right? But what did He do? He said she is just sleeping and it became so. And He said rise up and walk, and she did. And so the scripture, Jesus shows us what God is like, right? And here you see, Jesus proclaiming over sinners, holiness. Over lepers, cleanliness. Over dead people, life. And when He says it to be so, it is.

The power of Christ in your baptism came upon you. Whatever you say becomes so when you say it by faith. If you call yourself a dirty rotten, horrible sinner, you will never escape the pit of where you are. But if you call yourself the apple of God's eye, which is who you are, if

you call yourself the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, which is who you are, if you call yourself chosen, victor, intelligent, called, it shall be so! Believe that your words have power, even when they're said in quiet rooms, even when they're said alone. Pay attention to what you think about, and how do you speak to yourself? What Hannah said this morning was a hundred percent right. The person you talk to the most is you. What's your self-talk like? What are you saying to yourself? When you mess up, do you go I'm an idiot? Sure you do! I do, too! So change that. Change that.

Maybe you grew up with catholic guilt. Maybe you grew up with a rough evangelical family that always said you're horrible. Maybe you were abandoned when you were a kid. Maybe you didn't have a dad, or you didn't have a mom, or you didn't have a loving family and so you never felt like you were enough and so even when you do good you just feel like you're not enough, you're not where you want to be in life. Let go of those things. Change your thoughts. Begin to say the scripture to yourself in the promises of God, which is that you absolutely are loved.

There's this guy here in town, big preacher, and every time I listen to it, I just think this is the meanest person I think I've ever heard in my life. Like he's just mean. He's just like everybody's wrong and he's the only one that's right. Everybody's going to hell and that God hates you. He's got a big church. And I was talking to one of his colleagues once

about this, and I actually had some grace in my heart because he had an abusive father. Of course he never talks about it.

But one story, for example, when he was a kid, he messed up and so his dad took him and chained him to a tree and put a sign around his neck that said, I am worthless. And he left him there overnight. So this guy, when he's preaching, he's preaching from that place of a worthless child. That's how he views himself: worthless child that's only worth being chained to a tree. And so all these mean things that he's saying to his congregation, I one hundred percent guarantee he's saying them to himself a hundred times more. You stink, you're the worst, you're a sinner, you're horrible, you're going to hell. And that's why I believe shame creates sin, grace creates holiness. Scripture creates holiness, faith creates good victory in your life, and that's why we are free from the law and we are given this great thing, which is grace.

So God adores you, did you know that? I mean He loves you. You take the greatest, kindest, best father on earth, and that guy, Jesus almost says, is evil compared to how good God's love is for you. Nobody wants you to go to heaven more than God, nobody loves you more than God, nobody's on your side more than God, and nobody is saying good things about you more than the Lord.

Now I know if you grew up in church and you're a theologian, the temptation is to hear this message and to say well Bobby, what about

things like sin, and judgment, and hell, and God's wrath. You're rejecting those things. I am not at all. If anything, the fact that we have victory over those things, and the price that was paid that we could have victory over those things, if anything shows us how great and deep and undying the love of God is for you and for me. Amen?

Niebuhr's criticism was this – he says that the modern church of God without wrath brought people without sin into a kingdom without judgment, through ministrations of Christ without the cross. I'm sure you've heard sermons like that, and that's not at all what I'm saying. There is a heaven and there is a hell, and some people will go to hell. But God made a way that none of us should perish; that none of us should enter into that place. How can a loving God send someone to hell? I think, this is me personally, but I think a lot of it is more like chemistry where God is not only so powerful but so holy that sin literally can't be in His presence. And so He created a way that we could be sinless before Him. Putting something sinful in heaven is like, I don't know, putting aluminum in a microwave - it just doesn't work. There has to be a way in which we can be renewed, cleansed and restored, and He made that way. The way that that happens is you trade places with Jesus.

It's so unfair, isn't it? Jesus, the perfect life, did everything right, God in human form, gave His life on the cross that we could be renewed, restored, called holy and righteous and justified before the throne of God,

and that's who you are. All your sin, past, present and future, they're all wiped away if just one thing happens – you confess the lordship of Jesus in your life. It's that simple. It's that simple.

And that is indeed the one thing that makes our faith, Christianity, utterly unique and singular, it makes it different than every other world view, it's that every other religion says do this, do this, do this, do this over your life and you'll be saved. Christianity begins with you're saved! Now respond to that. Every other religion says work hard, do it right, be the elite, be the best, follow the rules perfectly, and then you'll probably go to heaven, or nirvana, or wherever. Christianity doesn't say that. It says believe simply in the cross and resurrection and you begin with it is finished! You begin with it is done! You begin with heaven. And everything flows from what the Lord has done in your life. It doesn't come from trying harder. It certainly doesn't come from beating yourself up. It comes from meditating on God's love and grace. Isn't that good news? God's not going to let you go. If you trust in Him, He'll never ever let you go. Never.

He'll never let you go. He'll never, ever let you go. Never. He will never, ever, ever let you go, ever. He loves you. I mean God loves you as much as He loves His son Jesus. He wouldn't have sent Jesus to take your place if He didn't. Jesus struggled. He didn't want to go to the cross. Father, take this cup from me. But not my will, yours be done. Right?

Christ was obedient to the Father. A true hero and He gave His life for us. Don't reject that gift. Just receive it. It's not your works, it's His works, amen? It's not what you've done, it's what He's done. You're renewed, so believing that by faith makes it so.

Speak to yourself the way that Jesus spoke to that dead girl. Speak to yourself the way Jesus spoke to that leper. Speak to yourself the way that Jesus spoke to those sinners who thought they would never be men of God, and He made them priests and prophets and apostles. Speak to yourself that way. You are called, you are loved, you are chosen, you are forgiven, you are renewed, you're restored, you have a bright future, believe it. You're not a horrible, worthless sinner. You're wonderful. So change your thoughts and it'll change your world. Change your thoughts and meditate on these things and it'll become so.

You are not disqualified. If the enemy wants to convince you of anything, it's that you need to be qualified for ministry or whatever it is you're called to do by never messing up. You are not disqualified. In fact God has made you qualified for whatever He's called you to do, even though you still struggle with certain sins and things in your life. Guess what – none of us will be perfect. You are loved.

Today's scripture that Hannah read, I just want to read it again to reinforce everything that I am saying. And of course this is all through the New Testament, but I love the way John puts it because he frames it

as God's love. John says, "No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us." In other words, you want to see God? Just look at what is loving and you've seen God at work. Just like nobody has seen the wind, but you've seen a tornado. Nobody has seen God but when you see love, you see the Lord.

"This is how we know that we live in Him and He in us. He has given us His spirit. And we have been seen and testified that the Father has sent His son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the son of God, God lives in them and they in God." Notice, it's not if anybody acts perfectly, if anyone gets it all right, if anyone obeys the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments every day. But we want to do those things, right? We don't want to sin, we want to be good people.

But He says the thing that saves us is "anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the son of God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love." That's a powerful statement. Not God is loving. That doesn't say God is loving. It's even deeper than that. God is love! When you experience true agape love, you are experiencing God. "Whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in them." Did you catch that one, too? "This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment. In this world, we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has

to do with punishment.” See fear of punishment is not love. It’s not godly. It’s not faith.

“The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because He first loved us.” Theologians call this the principle of first love. It all begins with God’s love. It all begins with God’s work in us. So we can’t make ourselves holy. The only way to be truly holy is to live in God’s grace and love, and it flows naturally out of us, just as planting flower seeds in a garden and nurturing them will bear flowers, so will planting your life in the love of God naturally cause you to blossom and thrive in life.

I’ve talked about this before, and I’ll finish with this – I want to be careful here because it is good to confess your sins, on occasion. It is good to, especially confess your sins in terms of like I’m struggling with this, I need help. But very often as Christians, our confession of sins doesn’t look like I’m struggling with this, I need help, can you come alongside me. It’s more like Martin Luther, which I think this was a mistake, I’m a rotten sinner, I’m trash, I’m garbage, I’m worthless. Scripture never tells us to do that. And by the way, the scripture only tells us twice to confess our sins. Its only in two places in the bible – one is in James, confess your sins that you may be healed, and I think this is in part because when we sin, though we don’t fall away from God, we do lose spiritual authority, right? So there’s a certain power to our prayers when we walk in holiness. And then the other one is first John, confess

your sins to one another and He will be faithful and just to forgive you. Is that right? So those are the two places. But Paul, the Apostle Paul who wrote almost all of the New Testament never once says to confess your sins. Did you catch that? It's not in Romans, it's not in Corinthians, it's not in Galatians. Neither does Jesus say to confess your sins.

What does the scripture teach us? It teaches us to confess the promises of God! It teaches us confess the name of Jesus. It teaches us to confess that He is Lord. And when this happens, true change happens in our life. Never confess your sins unless afterwards you also confess that you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Never confess your sins without also confessing that they have been forgiven, and that you have been restored, and that you are chosen, and that you are called and that it's okay. Confessing your sins without confessing your justification is like confessing the cross without confessing the resurrection.

So yeah, it's like when the devil is the one who is called the accuser of the brethren. He's the one that points at you and says you're a rotten, horrible sinner. Oftentimes from Paul you get this image of your life sort of being in a courtroom and you've got the prosecutor, the devil, who's on one side, and Jesus, your brother, who's on the other, and your brother is your attorney. And the devil is looking at the judge and he's saying she is a rotten, horrible sinner, she's a bad mother, she's never

achieved anything in life, she's passive aggressive and anxious, and she probably has mental problems and honestly, she's a rotten sinner. And did you see what she did to her sister?

And you've got Jesus over here saying she is loved, she is forgiven, she is called, it is paid for. Yes, she messed up, but I paid for it. It's taken care of a hundred fold past, present and future. Your honor, this case is closed. And then you stand up and you're like no, the devil's right. No, no, no, your honor. He's right. You're subverting your case.

And that's the thing. Why would you agree with the enemy when the scripture tells us to agree with all these great promises? We're called, you're loved. And that's the difference. Sometimes we're like well should we never feel guilt or shame? You should never feel shame, you should often feel guilt. And this is a nuance, but it's important. Guilt says - when you mess up, it's good to feel guilt because guilt stretches you to be better. Guilt says I made a mistake. I can do better. Shame says I am a mistake. I'm going into hiding. When you say to yourself I messed up, that's okay. And that's good, actually. When you say to yourself I am a mess up, that's bad and that's not from the scripture.

And so when you juxtapose, when you do something that's not coming from a place of God's love in your life, you can fix it. But never think that your messing up will ever cause God to let you go. I'd never let go of my kids. I would never let go of my kids, would you? Never. And

God loves you more than I love my kids, which is crazy to think about.

He won't let you go.

Zechariah talks about Jerusalem, and he says someday I know my people, you've been harmed, but one day Jerusalem will have no walls. In fact, there will be a wall of fire around it that will protect you. Zechariah says whoever touches you, touches the apple of God's eye. That's how much God loves you. He protects you, He guards you, He calls you. The only one who can throw your life away is you. And the only way you throw it away is in your thinking.

So meditate. When you're tempted to say I'm worthless, I'm horrible, I'm going to hell, I've lost my salvation, I'm a mess up, whatever the things are that you say about yourself, cast those thoughts away. They are not from the Lord. They are from the enemy. And confess out loud I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. I am chosen. I am loved. I am called. I'm above and not beneath. My future is bright and watch how meditating on those things will transform your future forever.

Amen.