

Serenity in the Love of God

By Bobby Schuller

Today I'm going to be talking about that one simple fact that we truly are loved by God. If we can believe that, we inherit a sort of soul armor; a resilience to the pains and sufferings of living. That if we know that despite when we mess up, some people won't forgive us, some people won't let it go, some people will disrespect us, we have a God in heaven and on earth who loves us, always will love us, and that no one in the universe loves us in the same way or to the same degree that He does. We say this thing every week, and today's a bit of a one off, and I wanted to just take time to sort of refocus on this creed that we say constantly to remember what it does for the soul.

We get a lot of criticism because for some people, that creed can be offensive, but it's biblical. People say what do mean I'm not what I do? If someone murders somebody, he's a murderer, right? If someone has a million bucks, they're a millionaire. If someone is said to be an Olympian, they probably are.

See my point is that yes it's true that in many ways we can be identified in those ways, but to God, just in the same way that a mother doesn't think of her Olympian child as an Olympian, or a failure, or a winner, or a loser, the mother thinks of her child as her child. He or she

belongs to her. And nothing can happen to change that fact. God's love is so much greater that even the love of the greatest mother or father, God's love for you is so enduring and true, and infallible, and unchanging that there's nothing you can do to lose that.

And so for the believer, our goal is faith; to believe that what the scriptures say about God's love is true and to build our lives in response to the true deep conviction of that fact. If we do that, we inherit all we ever wanted and all we ever needed. I'm convinced, you see, that shame always leads to sin, and confidence in God's love always leads to righteousness. Always.

So today, I actually want to talk about serenity and how reputation management destroys serenity, and how we can just today let go of needing to prove ourselves to everybody, we can let go of always having to be honored, always having to be respected, we can let go of all those things today and know that pleasing God with our lives is enough, and more than enough.

It's like this: I remember I had the biggest crush on Hannah for years. I met her in high school. Many of you know this story, but I just pursued her for such a long time, but also didn't pursue her because she was dating a friend of mine, and there were layers, right? And I'm not even sure she knew my name. She certainly wasn't into me. And I remember after this long six year journey, finally, Hannah and I started

dating, and fell in love, and I remember that one day she said those words – I love you. And it was like the greatest thing I ever heard.

And I will tell you that especially when I was younger, was easily offended. I played ice hockey, I was a right wing, and one season the only record I ever set was for that season, most minutes in the penalty box for fighting. I just loved to fight and actually our coaches encouraged it. I digress.

So I was often an easily offended guy. And I remember after Hannah told me that she loved me, it was that next week somebody said something, I forget what it was, but really offensive and I just literally didn't care. And it was one of the first times I experienced that, where somebody was over the top, disrespectful, hurtful, unfair, publicly shaming, and it was like water off a ducks back. I just didn't care.

And you can probably, if you've ever been in love, you probably know that feeling. You're so overwhelmed with joy, I mean especially me, this dream girl of mine said she loved me. It's like who cares what some idiot says about me in a cafeteria.

And though every love except God's is fallible, every person you love will let you down from time to time; they will absolutely hurt you from time to time. If we can have that same kind of response in life that God, the creator of the universe adores us. That anyone who touches you touches the apple of God's eye. That you're His beloved sons and daughters. That He would do anything, including send His only begotten

son in place of you. He would do anything for you to go to heaven to know Him, to be with Him. He thinks about you, He watches you, He's involved in your life. To know that, and not just know it here, but to believe it in your heart, in your guts, well that gives you a sort of strength, resilience, and more importantly, a tranquility, peace of mind, and joy and life that always leads to holiness.

That's why we teach morals, but we also teach this because God's love is where the power to be a good person comes from. It doesn't come from trying harder, it comes from the confidence that even when I mess up, even when people put me down, even when people reject me or say things about me, I can just let it go because the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the master of the universe, well, I am His beloved. And you are. You're His beloved and He'll never let you go. Isn't that good news?

So I believe that all of us, what many of us really want in life, we think about it, we recognize that its true, and I mentioned this a couple weeks ago at the end of my As a Man Thinketh series. I'm going to repeat this again because it's so important: we want serenity. We want tranquility of mind. We want to feel safe, fulfilled, unworried, relaxed, satisfied. That's what we want. And there's only one thing that can do that and that's the love of God.

And I think that we want this tranquility and serenity of life, and we're willing to do just about anything to get it. Many of us, especially now, there's a lot of talk about financial freedom, and the idea that one

day I'll be financially free. And I think that's good, by the way. You should invest and build a business and be financially free and remember that Shepherd's Grove is a tax deductible 501-C3. We appreciate your gifts.

No, I'm saying that we should strive for those things, but if you think that you're going to have serenity of mind when you get financial security if you don't have it now, you're dead wrong. If you think that you're going to get serenity when you go on vacation, but you don't have it now, you're wrong. Anybody with kids on vacation know that feeling? Kids on vacation. It's like more work. It's like extra work.

So my point is not to make you feel hopeless but to give you hope. You don't need money to have peace of mind. You don't need financial freedom and you don't need a vacation. You can have serenity of mind right now. Right now. Right now. Right in your bones. That no matter where you go you've got this thing inside of you that cannot be shaken. Peace of mind, tranquility, safety, and because of that, you can let go of reputation management. And I am convinced that in our modern world, the number one thing disrupting people's peace of mind, tranquility, serenity, the kind that leads to holiness is reputation management. Reputation management destroys our peace of mind. It is not worth it. Can I get an amen? Look, first of all, every preacher is preaching to a mirror. This is a sermon for Bobby Schuller, okay? I can tell you that when I am concerned about managing how people think about me, what

they say about me, what they see about me, I lose something in my soul and so do you. You lose power, you lose tranquility, you lose intelligence, you lose a lot and it's not worth it.

Today, we can let go of our need for approval, of our need to prove ourselves to others, and just let it go to God and live our lives to please Him. Can I just say people say stupid things and I am one of them? And I am going to be gracious when people say stupid things to me, so that when I say stupid things to them, they might let it go. People don't always give credit for the work we do. That's okay, too. It hurts, it's a bummer, but if all we're living for is the honor of others, the credit of other people, we are living for a stressed out, disappointing life, let me just tell you. There is nothing like getting true approval from God. To meditate on the idea that God is saying good things, and God sees the things you do in secret. He sees all the good, and all the evil, and He still loves you, and we just can trust that when we do good, look in general, whether we do good or evil, it comes around. If you've done something rotten, just tell someone and apologize. Just get it at the root. And if you're doing good and nobody is noticing, just trust that it's going to come around. It will. It will. It always does. It's going to come around in your relationships, in your business, and can we all just say that we cannot hide our lives from our kids. We can't hide our lives from our colleagues. And we can't hide our lives from our friends. If you do good for others, whether they say it or not, they see it. And if you do evil, they

see it. So trust that what we do will have a lasting impact on eternity, and don't worry about getting credit or being insulted or being disrespected or put down. Let it go. Live your life for the approval of the Lord and I promise you will have one of the most joyful lives, and people will think what can I do to be like her? What can I do to be like him?

I know you've heard this before, but never forget it: your ego is not your amigo. That's right, ladies and gentlemen. Your ego is hurting you. That's not an original. You can clap the guy on the internet that wrote it. That wasn't from me. I don't know who did, but let me just tell you that that is so true. Your ego is not your amigo. When you look back at the worst investment decisions you've made, or business deals, life decisions, very often you were making a decision about your ego, rather than something that's actually good. Again, Bobby Schuller's preaching to a mirror here. Your ego gets in the way, it clouds your mind. And just simply asking the question when you make an important decision, 'how much is my ego in this' is such a wise, prudent thing to do, and that question alone will lead to a more successful life, in my opinion. Jesus gives us this wisdom that we shouldn't build our lives for the approval of others. We should build our lives for the approval of God, and if we do that, we're going to do really well in life.

In Luke chapter 14, as I read earlier, Jesus is at this house of a prominent Pharisee, and this is really important because in Jesus' day, there was almost this cast system in place where the rabbis and the

religious leaders, they were like the highest, how they belonged the most, they were most respected and loved. Then you had these other people, they were outcasts. And then you kind of had these people in the middle, trying to like get closer to the people in power.

And so Jesus is invited to this feast. And it's at the house of this prominent famous Pharisee. We've forgotten his name, by the way, because in Jesus' day everybody cared, but today, nobody cares about that guy. They only care about one guy – the red-headed step-child of the religious community, Jesus Christ, who was standing over in the corner trying to teach people about the ways of God.

And it was in that space that Jesus asks. Somebody came in, it was the Sabbath, and they asked Jesus for healing, and He just turns to these religious folks and He asks them, hey, is it okay to heal on the Sabbath? What do you say? And nobody says anything. Why? Because they want to get the approval of this prominent famous Pharisee. Jesus heals the guy, a miracle, right in their midst; right in front of all of them. And guess what they say. They're not interested in what God is doing. They're not interested on whether or not it's okay to heal or not heal on the Sabbath. They're interested in one thing – the opinion of the host, this prominent famous wealthy guy. And so everybody now, so Jesus sees this. He's like this is amazing. A room full of religious people that claim to love the Lord. They just don't even care that a miracle just.. they just don't care.

And He's watching, and all these guys are vying to get close to this person of power, get his number. Get his digits. Let me get a follow back on Twitter. Jesus says to them, "Look, when someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, give this person your seat. Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you're invited, take the lowest place so that when your host comes up, he will say to you 'friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." God lays low those who exalt themselves and God raises up those who humble themselves. It is law. When nobody else sees the good you do, when nobody else exalts you, I promise you, God will be the host of that banquet. He will come to you sitting at the foot of that table, and will say friend, friend of mine, come sit next to me. And He will honor you in the presence of your enemies. He will honor you in the presence of your colleagues and your friends.

What you do in secret is the most powerful thing you do. What you say in secret is the truest thing you believe. And when it's in secret, only one other person other than you sees it, and it's the Lord, and He rewards the good that you do in secret. He does, He does. When you do good in secret.. there's a part of me that almost wants to do good in

secret and hopes nobody notices because I have seen what God does to people like that. He blesses them, He pours out favor, He opens opportunity. It always, always comes around. That's why Jesus said "everything that is whispered in the rooms will be shouted from the rooftops." That's a scary thing, isn't it?

So believe that what you do in secret is seen by God, and when they're good things, man, He is going to pour out blessing on that. What you say in secret, it's the most true. Like if I say to you, man, I love you, but in secret I'm like, man I hate that guy. Which one is more true? What happens in secret is what's most powerful. So when you do things in secret, good or ill, it's like planting a seed in the ground. It will take root, it will spring up, so if you mess up, just confess it to a loving friend, receive grace, and when you do good and nobody recognizes, let it go.

This is a great quote from Matt Chandler. He says, "God is awesome. He doesn't need us to be awesome. He needs us to be obedient." So today, do what you love to do. Enjoy your life. Do what God has called you to do, but don't worry about how people view you. Only think about what God thinks about you.

And I'll just finish with this. I came up with some practical things that when it comes to letting go of reputation management, I promise you, if you do these five things, you are going to be one of the most joyful, happy people anybody knows. Are you ready? If you want, you can pull out your camera and take pictures of these.

Look, can we just begin by saying the people we love the most, hurt us the most. And that's okay. If we put these things into practice, we will grow as such joyful people, with serenity of mind and peace of mind. The first thing Paul says when he talks about the characteristics of love, the first thing he says is love is patient. The choir knows, because they heard my sermon already. You didn't say it in the first service, guys, I'm sorry. No, no, you didn't. Like one guy did, but not all of you. Love is patient. It's patient.

So number one: don't leap to judgment. You know there's this temptation that especially when we are feeling stressed and angry and not appreciated enough, we jump to judge, to point the finger, to say you did this. Don't do that. Let it go, and remember, take a second to just listen. The soul is fragile. It is very fragile. And the toughest person you know is tender hearted. In fact, very often, the toughest people you know are some of the most tender hearted people. One reason they're so tough is because they've experienced so much emotional pain. I've learned this to be true. Very, very true of a lot of men, too. That though they may stonewall you and act like it's no big deal, it hurts. Don't judge. Don't leap to judgment. Leap to understanding before you judge.

Number two, and this is true in teams, especially, or anytime there is something like that, do your best to take the blame and give the credit. A lot of times, when as a team, the team deserves the credit or the blame, but if you can take the blame for your part in the failure of a team, and

give away the credit of the team's success to your team members, people are going to trust you, appreciate you, and they're going to take a lot of blame, and they're going to give you a lot of credit, and you're going to create a much more healthy environment than where everybody's vying for recognition.

Number three: don't one-up people. Encourage people. This is a major temptation for especially leaders. I remember not long ago, a few months ago, I was in a gathering of really important people for this big event, and it was one of these like black tie type things, and I was at this table and I was invited to sit with a really prominent pastor. Everybody in this room would know this person. And we're sitting there, and there's about ten people sitting around this table, and I watched as this guy I respect so much, and still respect so much, was sitting there one upping everybody. Some guy would say, 'we had a thousand people show up at our event.' He'd go 'oh that's interesting, I had a hundred thousand people show up to an event I recently did and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah.' And then somebody else would say, 'I've been to Israel five times,' and he'd go 'oh that's interesting. I've been to Israel twenty times.'

And in this moment, I was feeling so awkward around him, and thinking what a missed opportunity that if this guy said wow, what was Israel like? Or said, wow, congratulations on such a big event, encouraging people. Instead, there was no malice in it, I watched as he

was one upping people, and I left that dinner with kind of a bad taste in my mouth for this guy.

About a week later, something's going on and I'm meeting with another pastor, and I noticed, I one upped him. He was talking about his music program, and I was like well my music program; I love you guys, you know. And it was like the Holy Spirit brought it to my mind and I was like oh my gosh I do the same thing. And so much of that is coming from, not to get personal: I want to be a respected pastor, I want to do well.

So all of us, we have our journeys in which we need to let go of that stuff and recognize that for eternity, it's so much better to encourage others rather than to vie for our place at the table. It's so much better to give up our seat to others, rather than to vie for that seat of honor. Never one-up people. Always encourage people. Let other people one-up you.

Number four: if it hurts, say so, but don't hit back. This is the most important one. And this is usually going to be with your spouse and your kids, or your parents. If it hurts, say so but don't hit back. This is something we have to learn is that it does hurt, right? And so our response very often is power, fight back, but don't do the: 'well you do the,' 'well you said this,' 'well you did this to me,' 'well you forgot that,' 'well you,' right? No, you just, I mean there is something powerful that when you're on the other side of that and you do something hurtful and

someone doesn't hit back, but instead they go that really hurts, and then there's that awkward silence. That's so good for both people. To even say something that really hurts and that's not you, that's not you, I think really makes a big difference.

And finally, and this is the last one. Number five: pray for your competitors. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies. He says everybody loves people that love them. Everybody greets people that greet them. Everybody honors people that honor them. But it's special, it's special if you pray for those who hate you; if you love those who are your enemies. I know a lot of you listening, you're like Bobby, I don't have any enemies, and I want to say to you that in our modern world, most of us don't have like enemies, but we have competitors. Pray for your competitors. Pray for the people you're jealous of. Pray for the people that are doing better than you. Pray for the people that are succeeding in ways that you're succeeding, and pray that they succeed. Pray that they thrive. Pray that they get the things you want in life, and watch how that frees your soul of a toxic poison that is keeping your mind spinning its wheels, worried all the time. You begin to train yourself to walk in the easy rhythms of grace when you let go of having to manage what people think about you. You just live for God's approval and you'll be given such an amazing gift; a tranquility and serenity of mind. Amen?

Lord, we ask for this, in Jesus' name. And we love you, amen.