

Treasure the God who Treasures You

By Bobby Schuller

Today we're continuing our series on the Ten Commandments. Anybody like Monopoly? I remember when I was a kid, and we really got into Monopoly. I lived in Chatsworth and my next door neighbor Ian and I would play Monopoly all the time. And it was amazing. And I realized something about Monopoly – Monopoly brings the worst out of people. Pretty much every Monopoly game ends in someone flipping a table, or someone cussing someone else out, someone storms out of the room. Monopoly seems to have an amazing power to bring the worst out of the best people. It's like worse than like getting tougher with distant relatives or something. Monopoly - it's the thing that really drives us to the dark side.

And I remember when I was a kid, I had been saving up to buy 'Legends of Zelda: a link to the past' Super Nintendo, and I had gotten so close, I had about \$30. And I was playing Monopoly with my friend, and we were getting so into it. And my sister and her friend.. I was winning, by the way, and we left to get snacks or something, and while we were briefly gone, midgame, and I can't even tell you, I had a whole Monopoly on the green ones. That's good. That's like even better than the blues. Technically blues are more expensive, but there's three of the green so you do better. Anyway. I was killing it and my sister just came without even asking and took our board game. Packed it up and took it to Ian's

house next door. So we freaked out, right? Because I was winning, especially. He didn't seem to care as much, but we went over and I was like pounding on the door and I was pounding on the glass "give us our game back" and I broke our neighbor's window. And I had to use that \$30 bucks I had been saving up for Zelda to make up for my Monopoly mistake.

And the reason I start with this, I think there's something about Monopoly. The board game Monopoly began in the '30's during the Depression, and I think one reason it's been so successful is it touches a deep felt need that all of us have – a need for money. A need to succeed. A need to feel like I'm doing something with my life. These little plastic houses become so important in this one hour time span that we actually become rude to one another because this board game becomes something like important to us. I think within all of us there's this kind of deep need for money and for things.

There's this great story from John Ortberg, I've told it before, where he talks about playing Monopoly with his grandma. And he said my grandma was so good at Monopoly. She would always beat me, she'd destroy me, and he said one summer I started playing Monopoly with my friend every single day, and he said I learned the game. I learned the game. That the game is about total acquisition. That money is how you keep score.

And one day I went back to play my grandma and I just destroyed her. I took everything. I took all of her houses, I took all of her money, and she said son, now you've learned to play the game. And he said when I took that last dollar from her and I was glorifying in all of my money, and all of my stuff, she said it's time to learn your second lesson. Now it all goes back in the box. All that money, all those houses and hotels, all those deeds, they all go back in the box.

And as he was talking, he said this is true for our life. When we get to the end, all the material wealth that we valued so much, that we've accrued over all this time, it will all go back in the box. All your bustling portfolios, all your designer clothing, all your beautiful cars, all your trophies and all your accomplishments will go back in the box. And at that point, you're going to think about wealth and treasure very differently.

And what I want to say to you is you are learning to treasure things that are greater than trophies, clothing, portfolios. You are learning to treasure what really matters in this world, which is the things in the kingdom of God. Look, having money is a blessing. I've been poor. I know having money is a blessing. Having health is a blessing. But having God is the greatest blessing. Having heavenly treasures is having the thing that will never go away. Money is a blessing, but when money becomes the first thing in your life, it will degrade you and demean you. It will ultimately rob your life of meaning and dignity, ironically. Because

we think money and treasure will give us dignity, and give us meaning, but many of us will find ourselves at the end of that road wishing we didn't waste so much time pursuing things that didn't matter. But not you. Not you. You will finish well. You will finish well and you'll look back on your life and know that even if you accrued wealth, that wasn't the most important thing. That was the second thing. That God was first in your life. That your family came before all that other stuff. And that storing up for yourselves treasures in heaven was the thing that mattered.

Look, you deserve dignity, and if your dignity is rooted in what you wear, or what you have, or what people say about you, or even in just your good deeds, you'll lose it. But if you lose your dignity, and you trust your life to Jesus Christ, and you make a decision to live for him, you'll live every day in the dignity of heaven, and that's a very good thing.

Today we're talking about the second commandment, which in the Reformed and Jewish traditions is paired up with the idolatry commandment, which says "you shall have no other gods before me." And C.S. Lewis said, "It's the commandment to put first things first, and second things second."

Idolatry was a big deal in the ancient world. Here in the west, we don't see a lot of idolatry. You have to go to parts of Asia or Africa to really see idols on a stand, but we still have idolatry today. In fact America might be one of the most idolatrous nations in the world. And

it's poisoning many people's souls. And God hates it because God loves you.

In the ancient world, idolatry and pagan worship was a real problem, even for the Jewish people, for God's people. It was a constant temptation for them to be like their contemporaries and put their trust and their worth-ship. Worth-ship means to be worth into something. That worth-ship into these idols. And when you look at idols, even the ones that are made today, they always have like an abominable look to them, don't they. They always like have a creepy, uuaahh. Like a half woman, half scorpion, super weird stuff like that. These are real idols, when it's like half man, half animal is very, very common. Half woman, half animal.

And I think that's appropriate because that's what idolatry does to you. It doesn't lift you up to the angels and dignify you like the gospel does, like Jesus does. It lowers you down like the animals. When you look at the idol worship and pagan worship of the old days, it was evil and wicked and always degraded the people who believed in it. Idol worship in the ancient world included things like human sacrifice, slavery, drugs, prostitution. Very often those prostitutes were children or themselves slaves. The festivals were engaging in all sorts of terrible things that degrade the human soul. To make them more like animals and less like people. That's what idolatry does. It ruins your soul.

Idolatry is at the heart of the words that say I'm what I do, I'm what I

have, I'm what people say about me. But I'm not truly a child of God. That I am my stuff and I put my trust, and I put my worth-ship there. It degrades you. But not you. Not you.

You think there's idolatry today? You think it still degrades the soul? I think it does. Have you ever felt degraded because of our society's idolatry? Have you ever felt like you weren't good enough because you weren't wearing the latest designer clothing? Or you didn't fit because your car wasn't clean? Or maybe you didn't fit because you didn't have the same status in your college or your workplace that others had. You hadn't accomplished as much. And because of the idolatry of our society, you felt less than. You felt less than human, less than valued. Maybe that spurned something in you to prove yourself, and to become so thin of soul that you were completely exhausted. Maybe you neglected the true things that mattered in your life. Maybe the idolatry of our world has degraded a lot of us. But not you. Not you. You know you are not what you have. You know you are who has you. You trust in God. He is your first treasure.

And though many of you have wealth and you've succeeded, you don't need those things. All you need is God. You need him with all your heart and you trust in him. We cannot save ourselves without the help of our loving Father. When God is first in a society and idols are not, people are valued. Let me just clarify this – not religion, when God is first - because religion can become an idol. You know how much I adore and

love the bible, we should be people of the bible, but even the bible can become an idol. God must be first. And when God is first in a society, when people truly honor and worship him, they follow the second commandment of Jesus' great commandments, which is to love one another. Because we experience God's grace and God's forgiveness and God's mercy, we give it to others.

How can we treat God's children with contempt if God is first in our lives? When God becomes first in a society, people are treated with dignity. People are treated decently, and you deserve to be treated decently. You don't deserve to be mocked or downgraded because of what you don't own, or what you haven't accomplished. You are enough. You have done enough. Can you accept that? God gives you a free gift of his grace and love and power.

What do we treasure? We treasure lots of things, but you know what God treasures? God treasures you. God treasures you more than anything. You are God's most valuable treasure. He loves you. So today I say to you treasure the God who treasures you. In Orthodox Christianity, and this is where I part from Orthodoxy, God was described as being stoic. Or the word theologians like to use is impassable. It means he doesn't have emotions caused by our actions. I just don't believe that. I know God. He's an emotional guy. No, I think God is emotional. God feels.. how can you say that God feels wrath and anger, joy, elation,

grace, blessing and still say he's stoic? He's not. In fact, God is jealous for you. Scriptures say he's jealous. I love that.

There's something about when a boyfriend or a girlfriend feels jealous towards the other, the other kind of likes it, you know? It's not so bad. Why? Cause if they're not jealous, they don't care. Right? God is jealous for you. He cares about you. I think what God feels towards us, whom he's given free will and choice, I think God feels the dilemma of the king. The dilemma of the king is this – how can I truly experience love? All of my friends, most of the people in my life are either friends with me because they want something from me, or they're friends with me because they're afraid of me. And God has both, right? There are things about God we should fear, and there are things from God that we can get that are really awesome, but are those the reasons you love God? That's why when I preach, I try not to say come to God so you can go to heaven, or come to God so you don't go to hell. I don't think those are good enough reasons to know God. The best reason to know God is that God is so worth knowing. God is so full of and overflowing with love and beauty and joy. God is the most joy-filled being in the universe! There's nothing worth more than knowing him. That is heaven right now.

So many of us our theology is the theology of the gold-digger. I'm with God so he can give me stuff and when the money runs out, she gone. Some of us, we feel like it's an arranged marriage. Maybe you grew up in a church or like me, your dad was a pastor, or you feel like I'm just

stuck in this thing, but let me tell you, some arranged marriages are some of the best marriages in the world. Maybe you're doing it because you just don't want to go to hell. And you're just so afraid of God's wrath and punishment that you just stay in line. I don't think God wants any of these things. I think he wants all of us or none of us. He wants your heart. He wants to know you. He wants to be a friend with you.

And the dilemma of the king is this. Do they really love me or do they just want something from me, or are they afraid of me? God wants to know you. God wants the man or the woman who says take my food! Take my house! Take my clothes! Take my very body, but give me God. God wants the man or the woman who says of all things, the only thing I can truly trust is God. His faithfulness to me. God is so faithful. And I believe ironically that the person who has that heart will be more blessed in this life. The person that says I don't care about all those things in comparison to knowing Christ. The person who says that with all their heart very often is financially blessed, is blessed in their relationships. And I know a lot of people cross the line with this type of thing, but I actually believe when we put first things first, and second things second, things go better in life. I just believe that.

I remember when a friend of mine, Don Trotter, who is a Baptist, he had an insurance business that was really struggling. He was struggling to put food on the table. And he decided he was going to set aside some of his money to reach the teenagers in a little high school

called Coweta. He was going to try and reach them for Christ, and help them and encourage them because high school's hard. It really is. It's harder today than it's ever been, by the way. Have grace for high school and junior high students. It's really hard. And he decided to be there for them.

And so he opened his house and he started spending.. it was really a big sacrifice for him. He started spending money on like.. he got like a little like elevated pool and like a slide and all sorts of, you know, like a guitar and things like that. And he started having little pizza gatherings at his house. And he said the more money I spent on helping these teenagers, the better my business did.

And I want to be careful here because sometimes you try and make formulas out of this but I think when you put God first, when you use your resources to help people, I think that the old cliché – you can't out give God is just absolutely true. When you treasure God, when you put God first, God will put you first. When you put God second, God will put you second. And when you put God last, he'll put you last. Jesus said anyone who acknowledges me before men, I'll acknowledge before the Father. But anybody who denies me before men, I'll deny before the Father. You put God first, God will put you first. And that is a promise.

I remember Pastor Russ told me a story when he first got into ministry, he came from the business world, and went to Fuller, where I met him at seminary, and started doing this chaplain work with the sick

and dying. And he was doing it in a place in Irvine where most of the people that were there were extremely affluent, and extremely wealthy. And he said all of these people who had all of this stuff, had all these amazing houses, amazing portfolios, incredible accomplishments in academia and in society, their life would be reduced to a little box, a little room where they were staring at the ceiling and all they had was me, this chaplain. And many of them would say stuff like I wish I'd spent more time with my family. To me it sounded like a room full of regrets. That's not going to be you. That's a promise. That will not be you because God has given you knowledge that to put those things first in your life is folly, and that wisdom is to seek God and his kingdom and to love your neighbor as yourself. That that is the heart of wisdom.

So I think, I know this might sound cheesy but I think if Jesus were preaching the Sermon on the Mount today, instead of saying store treasures in heaven he might say build up for yourself a spiritual portfolio. Build up for yourselves a portfolio of things that even if all of your material wealth is taken away, that you have this thing here. But what is that? Well I think favor with God and man. I think there are lots of things that are heavenly treasures, but I think wisdom is one of them. I think if you seek wisdom, that treasure will follow and it'll come and go. I really do believe that. In fact the scriptures teach that.

Let me ask you a question. Would you rather receive a million dollars or the knowledge of how to make a million dollars? Think about

that for a minute. You're such a liar. You're such a liar. So someone's holding a check for a million dollars. Or like the Matrix thing where they can plug it into your brain and teach you how to make a million dollars. That's too cool, actually. That coolness of that would make me want to pick that so we need to do something else. Someone's offering you a million dollars, or the knowledge to make a million dollars, what do you honestly choose? Three percent of you in real life would actually choose the knowledge. Even though all of us probably know well choosing the knowledge is the best one, but I can still learn and have a million dollars. Every study shows most people who win the lottery end up worse than before they won because they don't have the knowledge that went with earning that money. And the rare case when people do fine, it's usually they were already doing well financially. They knew how to make money.

Let me tell you something – anything can take away your money. One lawsuit. One health problem. Any of those things. One policy from government can take away all your material wealth, no matter how smart you are.

I think these are what it truly means to have heavenly treasure. That you store up for yourself a life that when you're finished and this life is so fast, that you look back and you say I wasn't perfect, but I sure did store up for myself the right kind of stuff. I didn't put my trust in all those other things. And maybe you have those things but you use those things to bless others; to live a full life.

In the end, money, power, status, they will not matter. You'll wish if that was you, that you could go back and start all over. Don't wait until that moment. Don't wait to get to the end and say I wish I would have spent more time with my kids, I wish I would have spent more time praying, I wish I would have spent more time worshipping, resting, and living. And it's not too late, no matter how old you are, or how sick you are. This word is for you. God is proud of you. Do not fall into the temptation of putting your trust in material gain. How far must we go down that road to see where it truly leads?

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven because there are some things that don't go back in the box. There are some things that if you attain them in this life, you will never lose them, and that's a promise.

Let's pray: Father, we love you and we thank you that you have made available to us all of the goodness, life and wonder that is in heaven. You have opened up the heavens to us, and you say my son, my daughter whom I love, receive this gift. If you're here today and you need to make a decision to follow Christ and to put him first in your life, I want you to repeat this prayer after me. Father in heaven, I reject idols. I trust in God. I put my faith in Jesus Christ and in his good work for me. Forgive me of my sin. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. Teach me your ways. Mark my name in the Lamb's book of life, in Christ' name I pray, amen.