

Hour of Power Deutschland  
Steinerne Furt 78  
86167 Augsburg

Telefon: 08 21 / 420 96 96  
Telefax: 08 21 / 420 96 97

E-Mail: [info@hoursofpower.de](mailto:info@hoursofpower.de)  
[www.hoursofpower.de](http://www.hoursofpower.de)

Baden-Württembergische Bank  
BLZ: 600 501 01  
Konto: 28 94 829

BAN:  
243600501010002894829

BIC:  
243600501010002894829

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz  
Seest. 8  
3594 Güttingen  
Tel.: 071 690 07 81  
[info@hoursofpower-schweiz.ch](mailto:info@hoursofpower-schweiz.ch)  
[www.hoursofpower-schweiz.ch](http://www.hoursofpower-schweiz.ch)

Spendenkonto:

PostFinance AG, 3030 Bern  
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### GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

HS: Yes, welcome church family. It feels so good to be here with you today. You know it is not an accident that you are in this place right now. It is not an accident you are tuned in with us right now. The Lord wants to speak to you today. Turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you or give them a high five, and say God loves you and so do I.

BS: We're so glad you're here today, and just believe whatever burdens or things that you're carrying into this place, stresses; today is our time to Sabbath. Everybody just say Sabbath.

HS: Sabbath.

BS: You're going to take a nap today; you're going to get some good food. But hey, look we're just so glad that you're here today, and let's begin with a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you that you love us, that you've called us here. And Lord, we ask in Jesus' name that you'd open up heaven and pour out your Holy Spirit into the hearts and minds of every single person. Lord, we pray that you'd give us a fresh wind and new spirit and new life, and we thank you that you love using imperfect people to do impossible things, and we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen.

### SCRIPTURE – Galatians 3:26-28 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for Bobby's message, the words of our Lord found in Galatians 3:26: So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Church, we are trusting our Father when He tells us to keep asking, keep seeking and keep knocking on the door. Amen.

### DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, let's say this together. Would you hold your hands out like this as a sign of receiving, and we're going to say this creed together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world.

### MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "A Contract with God"

In a couple of weeks, we're actually going to do a series on that creed that we say every week called You Are Beloved, and in the two weeks in-between, I want to lay some groundwork about that creed. And today we need to talk about this thing called covenant and so I'm going to get there in a bit. It'll be a review for some of you who listened to the Name of God series.

But before I get there, I just want to start with basically my thesis, and that is that we as Christians, disciples, happy and whole students of Jesus, that we ought to be a hopeful people. That we ought to be the kind of people who live and give hope. This world is afraid. It's nervous, it's hurried, it's angry, it's embittered, there's walls and silos and bubbles, and into that world as disciples, we should not play the world's game. We should be an example of hope and joy in a very fearful world. We should proclaim everywhere we go the presence, the power and the kingdom of God.

## A Contract with God

We should be a kind of people who believe in, who proclaim and yes even perform miracles; that where we go, we know that heaven goes with us; that Christ goes with us and He hasn't changed. That Christ does the same things today that He did two thousand years ago, and He does it through the church. He does it through people like you and me, and that's very good news, amen?

Recently Hannah and I saved up some money and went on a vacation to Hawaii, and it was something we were excited about, but we were also, in a way, sad because we were able to bring our daughter Haven, but we were not able to bring our son Cohen because of his medical condition. He has seizures on planes and it can be hard sometimes in those environments when he's out of his rhythms. And so it was a really great and relaxing trip, and we certainly needed it, but there was sort of an undergirding sadness for all of us that Cohen wasn't there with us.

While we were there, Hannah, when she was reading, it was like a rainy day, and she came to me and she said 'what if we put together..' and I loved this idea: 'a vision for our family.' And so while we were there, we put together this vision of what kind of a family we want to have. We made a list of things that we wanted to be and I'm not going to get into that list today, but we did it with Haven and the one that Haven added at the end, and this had a hundred percent to do with Cohen, is that we will never stop believing in miracles.

You know, I think for me, it was like an example of out of the mouths of babes and children, right? The word of the Lord comes. This was to me, something that all believers should proclaim. For us, it was the belief that our son will be well and be able to go on trips with us, and he's fine, he can do trips with us now. But I think for all of us, that ought to be a rally for most of us.

And I want you to know, maybe you come to church today and you're going through a sickness that you didn't expect to go through, it feels unfair. And maybe you're too young to have the sickness, or maybe you've been battling it too long, or maybe you don't know how you're going to get over it, or maybe you're facing some difficulty in your job, or in your relationship, or in your marriage, or whatever it is. I want you to know that God still does miracles today. God still raises the dead. God still heals the sick. And although it's not magic and there's no formula to it, and God is sovereign, we ought to be a hopeful people and never give up on the idea that God can and will do great things in our lives.

The church, in a fearful world that's so angry and so scared, needs, NEEDS to be a beacon of hope. We need to be a hopeful people that not only proclaim it when we're here, but when we leave here. It's like we're just slathered in hope. We're just so hopeful that everywhere we go, we don't raise the bar and make people more scared, but we lower the anxiety of others and we proclaim the kingdom of heaven on earth. In a fearful world, that's who we should be. And when people come here, we should proclaim a hopeful message. I believe that most people, when they come to church, already feel guilty enough. I don't need to do anymore.

People already feel beat up enough and tired enough and bummed out that they got to go back to work tomorrow. The last thing we need to do, especially when unchurched people visit this congregation, is to proclaim shame and guilt and beat people up. It doesn't mean we don't proclaim the truth. We do. But we should do it in a hopeful way, and help people understand that the gospel is good news! And it's good news for everybody. Can I get an amen?

Look, the greatest news through the gospel is heaven. Yes, the gospel does proclaim hope to the poor and to the sick and to the mistreated, but it proclaims hope for all of us because we're all going to die. Look, this is important. We cannot stop being the kinds of people that remind one another that this life isn't what life is all about. That yes, it is about living in this life and enjoying this life, but for all of us, that there is a hope to come. That when we die, if you are baptized in Jesus Christ, your sins are no longer on you and dying will be more like waking up than falling asleep.

There has been plenty of evidence and studies that have showed that the dread and fear of death lead to some of our greatest pathologies and brokenness in our relationships. Look, we don't have to have that. We not only get to enjoy the gift of heaven as believers, but the gift of freedom from fear of death. That we know that this life does matter, it certainly does. But that we have the hope that no matter what happens to us, only good things are coming for those of us who are baptized in Jesus Christ.

I want you to know that whoever you are, you don't have to worry. If you trust your life to Jesus Christ, you don't have to worry about your salvation. God's worked it out for you. You don't have to worry about anything. I want you to know that God is going to get you where you need to go. And the reason I believe in this is because I believe in covenant, and that's what we're going to talk about today.

## A Contract with God

You are in a covenant promise. If you proclaim Christ as your Lord, you're in covenant with God. You're His beloved child and everything He is doing in your life is for your benefit, even when it hurts. So I'm going to need those two dudes. Whoever they are, I hope they're about the same size and we don't have this like fat guy in a little coat scenario, if you've watched Tommy Boy. But it might happen and that'll be hilarious, if it does. Okay, we got one guy here and one other, someone with a coat, a jacket, anything. All right, we got Chad, okay. You two come on up. Just come on up onto chancel. Chancel is a big religious word for stage. Come on up. All right, I think you guys are going to be all right. All right. Tell us your name, sir. (MAN – Jesse). Jesse, all right. Great. Tell us your name, sir. (MAN – you know my name, Chad) Chad, this is my brother in law, and a very good friend. Jesse and Chad, you guys stand on either side here, facing one another, so Chad you stand there, and Jesse you stand there, facing each other. Okay, these are two dudes, right? And we're going to go back in time four thousand years to the ancient near east. And in this world, everything is dangerous, right? There's sickness and plague, there are raiders, there is famine, there is drought, and in this world, humanity struggles to survive. And the way that they survive is through tribalism and families. And the way those families and tribes are constructed is through something called covenant. Everybody say covenant. Covenant is a permanent promise that makes two tribes become one; two families become one for a greater purpose.

So let's imagine that in these days, Jesse, because he has a moustache, is the leader of a tribe of warriors. They are strong and tough, their armored, they're good at blacksmithing, they're on horseback, they're nomadic, and they're tough and you just don't want to mess with Jesse James' tribe. Just kidding. What's your last name? (MAN – Vidor) Vidor, okay. Actually, I knew that.

So Jesse is the chief of this clan of tough warriors. Good! And only one problem is they only eat when they kill. So they don't like that anymore because they're hungry a lot. And they meet this tribe, the tribe of Chad. Chad, unfortunately you are very tough and strong, but you're going to be the farmer. (MAN – I'm the farmer) And Chad is the chief of the farmers, and they're agrarian, they have sheep and cattle, and they have farms and food, and they're really great at growing lots of food and storing it and building things. The only problem is they just look like a Honey baked ham to guys like Jesse. Right? They just like.. it's just waiting to be pillaged. And so they have their pitchforks and stuff, and they do their best, but it's really hard to fend off hungry mercenaries when they come to town.

So these two guys say hey way to tick.. what if we become one tribe and we help each other and become a nation, a tribe, a people, a city, and something like this happens. A covenant is formed, and the way that they did this in the near east is the two families would get together.

So Chad's tribe on this side, and Jesse's tribe on that side, and they're all facing each other and they're singing songs, and going through rites, and it's very Old Testament. Killing things and there's blood and it's awesome, right?

And what they do is they create a pathway of blood, so there are actually animals that are sacrificed to the gods, or to whatever, and then they are laid, the animals are split, if you're vegan I'm so sorry. This is a difficult.. they're split down into an aisle and then a pathway of blood is formed between the carcasses. This is very heavy metal, but this is what would happen.

And then the two would take off their coats, this is why I needed coats. Take them off. And exchange those coats as a gift. So as we learned last week in the Prodigal Son, right? The coat is a sign of honor, and it's a sign of their chieftomness, right? I don't know if that's a word, but if it isn't, I made it up. All right.

And then they begin, yep! That's not bad! That's not bad. And they begin to pace with everybody watching. Now you guys just walk back and forth. They begin to pace back and forth, proclaiming the covenant that they're making to one another and the seriousness of this covenant. And they go back and forth, and the warrior Chief Jesse says, we will protect you. We will defend you. We will fight for you. And they'll say to the last man, we will fight before even one of you gets a scratch on his finger. This is covenant. And they're going back and forth.

And Chad says something like we will feed you. We will grow for you. We will do organic, non GMO Mother's Market quality produce. It's going to be delicious. You're going to love it. And we will make sure not one warrior goes hungry. That we will give you the flesh off our.. you guys can stop now, the flesh off our bones. Thank you guys, let's give them a hand. Thank you so much. Appreciate you guys. Make sure to give your coats back to one another. And this was an important part of understanding that world. Covenant is a more than a business contract. Its two tribes becoming one, and its permanent. It's permanent. Its forever. Everybody say its forever.

## A Contract with God

God makes a promise to Abraham, who is Abram, and says that Abram is going to be a blessed man, and his posterity for all generations will be blessed so that they what? Can be a blessing to the world. So into, since the fall, the world has fallen into evil and sin and mankind's evil is evident in the cities and empire, the Acadian Assyrian Empire, Persian Empires, Babylonian Empires that are evil and rotten to the core, and murderous and horrible, and it's into that evil that God picks a shepherd that nobody's ever heard of named Abram to create a new family; a new family that is God's family. A new tribe that is God's tribe. A people that represents and lives out the values of the one true Yahweh God. A God of mercy, a God of compassion, a God of love and a God of might and power. And this God makes covenant with Abraham. And He does it when Abraham says Lord, how are my people going to be blessed if I'm an old man and I have no children.

And God takes Abram outside in this really touching scene and He says Abram, look at the sky and see all the stars of the sky. Your posterity will outnumber even these. And the nations will call them blessed, and they will be a blessing to the whole world. Isn't that a great story? And then what does God do? He then creates, He says create this pathway out of blood and you and I will make covenant with one another. And then God and Abraham do this thing that those two guys did, walking back and forth in blood, proclaiming that a new family is made; a new tribe is made; a new people, a covenant people. And they make promises to one another to be a certain way and to do a certain thing, and to have certain values. And at the heart of that, is I will be your God, and you will be my people. This is important.

Very often, when we talk about the covenant we make with God, we talk about heaven, and I already did, and that's important, but we must remember that in a Jewish sense, to be blessed is more than just going to heaven when I die. And I get concerned about the Gnostic bits of the way that can be taught sometimes because in Judaism, God cares about the body and God cares about your relationships, He cares about your life, and He cares about what you're doing. God's interested in every aspect of your life. You can't deny it when you read the Torah, Deuteronomy 28, for example. Your kneading baskets will be filled, and your crops will grow.

And look, we have to be careful about, many pastors have come under criticism, and they should, about over leaning into that stuff, but it can also go the other way where we think that God doesn't care about my job. Or God doesn't care that I'm sick. Or God doesn't care about my marriage or what I'm struggling with. And you know what? He does because He's your Father. In the same way I care about everything in my kids lives, God cares even more about you. If I'm a fallen father, and imperfect in every way, how in His perfect and good love, how much more does God care about the little things in your life. And that's indeed what Jesus teaches us.

So into this world God gives covenant and God brings in all into that covenant, into a new covenant through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that is very good news because the covenant, the works part of the covenant on your behalf happens through Christ crucified.

Let me read Galatians chapter 3, where Paul says this. He's talking to a church in Galatia where people are telling them you have to do this right, you got to do this and you got to be perfect, and Paul is saying, no! The greatest work ever done has already happened on your behalf. He who knew no sin became sin that you could be called a dirty rotten filthy sinner. No! He who knew no sin became sin that you could be called the righteousness of God. And that's what you are. And it's by faith. That's what Paul says. I mean God pointed to the stars, and told Abraham you will have millions and millions of children and they will be blessed, the scriptures say that Abraham believed God and it was accredited to him as what? Anybody know? As righteousness. The righteousness was imputed into Abraham by faith and that's how it comes to us.

Galatians chapter 3, verse 26. Paul says this to you. "So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. For all who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile." That was a big thing back then to say something like that. "There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to that covenant promise." You know what that says? If you're a Christian, if you trust your life to Jesus Christ, Abraham is your great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandpa. And it is not the law that fulfills this promise to you, its faith. And although we as believers must strive for sanctification and a moral and good life, God is not punishing you or angry at you. You have been ingratiated. You have been given all the righteousness and justice you need to stand boldly before the throne of God. Isn't that good news? Man, it's good news that in His providence we can know you are not under a curse, God is not punishing you.

## A Contract with God

In our tradition, we talk a lot about the sovereignty of God, and I believe in the sovereignty of God and it gives me hope. But sometimes that sovereignty sort of sounds like because God is God, He can do bad stuff to people and it's okay. And that's not what sovereignty means at all. It means that we in our shortsightedness don't always understand that God's will and working in our life is for our benefit, even though sometimes it seems like it's really bad.

A good example of that is, you know I take my son, Cohen to Disneyland all the time. It's a lot of fun. He loves Disneyland. And we'll like, we'll get on a ride, let's say Buzz Lightyear. He loves Buzz Lightyear. And we get into the line, and there's the entrance. It's right there. It's right there. You see it, but first, before you go into the entrance, you have to go this way in the line, slowly, away from where you're supposed to go. And so when that happens, he gets all excited, it's his favorite ride in the whole world, and then we turn and go in the opposite direction, he's like whoa, hey! It's over there! No, that's where we need to go! And I, as a father, who knows more than my son, I'm like we're going, we're going. I'm making him promises. I promise him over and over, we'll get there, we'll get there, son, we'll get there, don't worry. We'll get there. We have to go this way to get that way. And to what him seems like walking away from my goal for us, is actually me getting him closer to where we need to go.

And how often are we in our lives thinking God, what are you doing? Why is this happening in my life? I need to go over there! What are you doing? And God's like just relax. Just relax. We'll get on Buzz Lightyear. See God is our Father. He's powerful, He's omnipotent, He's omniscient, He's omnipresent, all these things, but He's still your dad. He loves you. He loves you more than you love yourself. He's more interested in your life than you are. And everything God is doing in your life is for your benefit because He loves you. Even when our children get angry because we give them broccoli or don't give them a.. it's for their benefit. Everything we do is for their good, and everything God's going to do in your life is for your good.

So in short, keep hope alive. Keep hope alive. Keep hope alive. The you five/ten/twenty years from now will be so glad that you did. That you said at your lowest point – I trust God. That when you are at your lowest, you looked at that covenant and you knew you served a God who was faithful. That you serve a God who keeps His covenant. That even when we are faithless, He remains faithful because He can't deny Himself. That's what the scripture says.

So be a hopeful person and believe and proclaim and live the kingdom of heaven everywhere you go. And believe, not just for heaven when you die, but heaven on earth now. That's why Jesus teaches us when we pray the Lord's Prayer, He teaches us on earth as it is in heaven. How many times have you said that and not heard it? On earth. In Irvine as it is in heaven.

In this church as it is in heaven. At my job as it is in heaven. In my family as it is in heaven. That's what we're supposed to pray. In Jesus' words, with shameless audacity. We keep praying, we keep knocking, we keep believing and we never give up hope. We need to stay a hopeful people, no matter what happens. To never fall into the trap of fear mongering, of bitterness, of walls and anger, but rather to be a hopeful people, living hope and walking in hope.

So we should become a hopeful people who live in hope every day. We just choose to be hopeful. We just choose to trust in God no matter what we do in life. You know one of the best reasons to be a hopeful person is to help other people stay hopeful. When you study ancient warfare, there's really interesting. You get these pictures of like Braveheart where you got two armies and they go just (MAKES SHOOTING SOUNDS) and they just clamber into each other, whatever. But in a real warfare, that's not usually what happened. You would have two armies and they'd come at one another, and sometimes they would kind of bump, but they wouldn't really slam into each other like that. They would get really close, and then there would be like a ten foot no man's land of like jabbing and throwing things and this. And this would go on, sometimes for hours.

You see it actually still happen today when there's like a may lay and a protest where you see the police with their shields, and then the protestors throwing things and there's this like kind of weird no man's land. And what happens in warfare is people die when they retreat. And this is so important. It is when one side gets more scared than the other after a guy gets a sword in the chest or something, and you see it and you get scared. What happens is as soon as one person runs; all of them start to run because that line becomes brittle.

And so what happens then as they're running away, that's when everybody dies. And this is important because in the spiritual battle of life, we forget that our behavior – listen friends – our behavior and our attitude is affecting our neighbor. We are not in this fight alone.

## A Contract with God

When we become fearful, and when we give up and fall into despair and run away, we also sort of yield that emotion to our near dwellers. And that's not to say don't be honest about what you're feeling, don't be honest about what you're going through, but it is to say don't give up in the 11th hour. Don't quit. But do your best to remain a hopeful, joyful person, and that strength that you have as you're holding that line will be contagious to your kids, to your parents, to your colleagues at work, and to your friends.

Look, you are a hopeful person, and you have good reason to be. You are a, as Dallas Willard said, a ceaseless being with an eternal destiny in God's good universe. That's great news. That God's going to get you where you need to go, so don't be afraid. Be a hopeful person, and let's build a hopeful church together. Amen?

Father, we thank you so much that you love us. And that no matter what we do, you don't abandon us. We thank you, God, that you're with us, that you've called us, that you've forgiven us, and we thank you for the cross that it redeems us and saves us from all our sin, all our past, and it calls us to heaven and we thank you for that, Lord. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

### BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you His peace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.