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GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION – Bobby & Hannah

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

HS: Welcome visitors and church family. We are glad that you're here today. You know, Jehovah Shalom means the Lord is our peace, and peace doesn't mean we don't care, but peace just pushes out the fear. Thank you for being here. We love you.

BS: Yes, we're glad to be with you all today. Sorry we missed you last week. We had a little family vacation and so we had John Huffman preach for us and we're glad to be back with you today. Thank you so much for being here. We know God has a good word for you. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we love you and we thank you that you've called us here just as we are and not as we should be. Thank you that you loved us first; that we're not saved by what we do, but that all that we do is in response to your love and kindness to us. Lord, we love you and we love each other and we thank you so much for this time. It's in Christ' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen.

HAVEN: Turn to the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – 2 Corinthians 3:12-17 - Hannah

In preparation for the message, 2nd Corinthians 3:12-17. Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses who put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end what was passing away. But their minds were made dull for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed because only in Christ it can be taken away. Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is a spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Amen.

INTERVIEW – BRIAN DAWKINS

Brian Dawkins is a former NFL star who spent a majority of his career as Safety for the Philadelphia Eagles. His incredible 16-year career landed him in the Hall of Fame in 2018. Now an author, his new book, Blessed by the Best: My Journey to Canton and Beyond, recounts his journey into the NFL and how his faith guided him along the way.

BS: Brian, welcome. Thank you for joining us. We got a lot of football fans in the house, who I think know you, but for those who maybe don't watch football or pay attention to sports, tell us a little bit about your background.

BD: Yes, thank you for having me, first of all. Brian Dawkins, born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida. Someone who always, when I grew up, always felt that I had to outwork everybody because I was not the biggest person in the neighborhood, so not a lot was probably expected of me the way that I felt about it. Maybe somebody in our audience know what I'm talking about. But throughout the way, I've been blessed to find Christ in and invite Him to my life in '91, which was my junior year in high school, and at first I welcomed Him into my life out of fear, but now I know Him to be a God of love, and He's taught me so many things over the way, and a lot of that is found in the book.

BS: Yes, awesome. I know a lot of people are excited about your book, of course we finished the Super Bowl not too long ago, and so football is on a lot of people's minds and it was an electric thing. But when I watch football, and I think about football, I think so many of us, we think about.. you know football is different in many ways than a lot of sports. Baseball has these rules, for example, about not showboating, and you're not supposed to walk across the pitcher's mounds, and it almost feels like the NFL has the opposite kind of rules.

Don't Veil Your Fading Glory

You're like kind of supposed to dance, and you're supposed to like show off your stuff, and I know that sometimes in football and NFL, that can be taken to the extreme. I'm sure you saw it with some of the guys you've played with where maybe there was some anger or women and drugs and stuff. In a world like that, how did you; you're this professional football player, on international television seen by millions of people. How do you balance that and the inner life with God?

BD: Glad you said that. So balance is possible. That's number one. And the balance for us believers, we know that it's found in following Christ Jesus and the character that He showed. But also understanding that some of the disciples weren't exactly the temperament of Jesus, right? So you had Peter, he would sometimes get uptight, sometimes he wants to fight..

BS: Cutting off ears.

BD: ..so all of us have.. yes, yes, so there's different, I guess, ways our personalities do things in life, and God does not necessarily want to change that, I don't believe. I think He wants us to use that for His glory. And so that's how I played. So a lot of times when I celebrated on the football field, you were seeing me screaming and yelling, but you couldn't hear what I was saying. I was literally saying hallelujah! Hallelujah! Thank you, Lord! So I was giving Him praise in some of the antics, so to speak, so once again to let people see the good that I'm doing, but let it bring glory to God.

BS: Yes, amen. I love that, and of course, Daniel, or David rather danced before the Lord in this crazy way. He wasn't naked. We say he was naked, but still, he was doing it in a way that was undignified for a king, and he would scream, he had passion for God, and so often I think sometimes we get humility mixed up with the propriety, and it's not the same thing, is it. I mean, you want to live. You want to live a bold, big, passionate life for God.

BD: Absolutely. The way that I see humility is power under control. That's what it is. Its power under control. So the most powerful cat, and I say cat, to ever walk the face of the earth was Christ, and He was the most humble at the same time, so that's power under control. But again, our personalities, our personality, excuse me, He wants us to express those in a godly way. I'm excitable at times. I'm fine with that. And so that's the gift of motivation that I have. He doesn't want me all of a sudden to accept Christ into my life to become this meek quiet person in everything that I do. No, in those times, it is time to step up, to get loud, to have a good time. I'm going to have a good time. But at the same time, it's all for the kingdom building. All for kingdom building.

BS: I remember Kobe Bryant was known for being insane when it came to training, and somebody asked him a question – what if Shaquille O'Neil had practiced as much as you do. And he said he would have been the greatest of all time, because Shaquille O'Neil is just this brickhouse genetic fiend. And for you, as a professional athlete, Brian Dawkins, I mean, it's important.. training, you couldn't be where you are without training athletically. What does training look like for you spiritually in your relationship with God?

BD: Absolutely. So in order for me to have the success that I had, obviously, and that's a bust right there, the Hall of Fame, so in order for me to have that success, I had to have discipline. Discipline to do things that other people won't want to do, and as the saying goes, in order to have what others won't have, you have to do what others aren't willing to do. That's what I did. So that got me that. But from a faith standpoint, like I have to be disciplined in my walk to get up in the early in the morning to read my word, not just listen to word on tape, to not just listen to words, excuse me, when I go to church on Sunday's. No, to have church throughout the week, to have communion with my heavenly Father throughout the week in the way that I do things. I do specific things every morning. I pray, I read, I meditate, and I journal every morning, every morning. And so sometimes it's up to an hour now, but in the beginning, it started off like with five minutes increments, and then it grew to ten, then to fifteen. But we have to come up with these things because that's when we experience the presence of God, spending time with Him in all the things that comes from it.

BS: Yes, it's just like learning.. that's interesting you said you started with five minutes, then ten minutes, then fifteen minutes. It's almost like just get some time in, like make some time every day, and you'll grow, you'll see what you need to do as you grow in your faith, kind of a thing.

BD: It is, it is, and to give yourself that from a neurological standpoint, some dopamine, some of that feel good chemicals into your body, to have you check the box, if you will, in the beginning. But ultimately, ultimately for me, it's to spend time with the heavenly Father like Jesus did when He would get up before all the disciples to go and pray and prepare Himself for the day. We need to do the exact same thing. Spend that time early, to strengthen ourselves mentally, physically, you can do some push-ups as well, physically, right? But also spiritually, to prepare yourself to as I call it, dominate the day, not just survive a day, but to thrive and to dominate the day.

Don't Veil Your Fading Glory

BS: The book you just released is called *Blessed by the Best*. It's so encouraging. What is something that someone is going to learn about their personal life unrelated to sports. What's something somebody's going to learn when they read your book?

BD: That you have the capability and the ability to reframe and reshape the way you see your past that would help you in your present to go after a tremendous future. So my past, in the book, I write a whole bunch of different things of how in that past moments, it was extremely painful, it was. But now I can look back over that time to see how God was shaping me, how He was forming me, and understand this – when iron sharpens iron, there's a lot of friction that has to happen in order to remove from some impurities. So sometimes God allows us to go through those impurities to get some things removed for us so we can be sharper for the next thing that He has already prepared for us to do. And sometimes it's also to show us, for me looking back, of some of those people that were in the right place at the right time. I don't believe in coincidences. They were divine opportunities, divine connections for me to get the right word at the right time, for me to see things differently. That's what I hope that you then do. Read the book, see what I've gone through, yes, but look back over your life. What are those situations that I've struggled because of. Who are those people that blessed me the way that they blessed Him.

BS: The book is called *Blessed by the Best* by Brian Dawkins. Brian, thank you. He has such an amazing story, and I really want to encourage you to read it. You're going to learn a lot. You're going to grow in your faith. Brian, we thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to bless our church. We're thankful for you.

BD: Thank you for having me. Be blessed.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

No matter who you are, we're so glad you're here. Would you stand with us? Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord. We're going to say this 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. Its 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. Amen!

Next week I'm going to change that creed, believe it or not. There's one word I'm going to change and you'll have to come back next week to see it. See that's what you got to do in the church business. You got to keep people coming back for more. So come back next week, and bring a friend, too.

MESSAGE/PRAYER – Bobby Schuller "Don't Veil Your Fading Glory"

Today, I want to talk about the real freedom that comes from the spirit of God. That's not an abstract idea. There is bondage that comes without the spirit. When you grapple on to your reputation, to prestige, to the opinions of people, to maybe your looks, maybe it's your money, maybe it's your position in an academic situation, maybe it's even your position in a ministry. When those things become who you are rather than being a child of God, you become a slave. And when you get the opposite of that, which is the spirit of God, the spirit of grace through Christ crucified and the resurrection of the dead, when you get the hope of heaven in your heart, and you're able to let go of your tight grip on the way people think about you, talk about you and see you, you get freedom. Today, we want to talk about the value of living a glorious life for God, and understanding what it means to have the glory of God within you. Today's title is called "Don't Veil Your Fading Glory." You see in life, there's going to be glories that you'll have that are worldly glories, that are not bad. But in time, no matter who you are, those glories fade. One of the saddest things that you can see are these movie stars. We did a video a few weeks ago about famous celebrities that the younger generation didn't know, that in my generation, I'm like I know all these people. I grew up with them. You don't even know who they are! And all of that is just a magnified version of something that can happen to all of us - how we experience a fading glory. Maybe you built a great business, maybe you had an incredible academic career and you had several papers published. Maybe you were an amazing parent, but you're an empty nester now. Maybe you had a great ministry but you don't have that now in your life. There are these fading's that we go through that are really painful, and they're painful even if you're a blood bought, Jesus-loving, Bible-believing Christian, it's hard. I know it's hard for you, it's hard for me when these things happen. But I believe that the scripture points us to not veil those fading glories because our greatest glory should be in Christ Jesus, in His accomplishment for the world, and living life for Him. That's a glory that doesn't fade.

Don't Veil Your Fading Glory

So we're going to talk about that. It's interesting, I was in Turkey many years ago with a tour group, and we were actually doing like a Bible teaching through some of the epistles of Paul, and so that brought us to a number of archaeological sites that were outside of cities. I still remember once; we were at this old Roman gymnasium that was sticking out of the ground, it was like an arch. And as I was walking along, there was like some mud on the ground, and I slipped on the mud, and it was almost like slipping in the kitchen. And I looked down and it was a mosaic like from the Roman era. And I grabbed our attendant, because I started moving it away with my hands, like what is this? Like what is this doing in the middle of a field? And I asked this guy about it, and he said oh it's a 2,000-year-old mosaic from Rome. It's whatever. It's not a big deal. I'm like what are you talking about! This is amazing! And what's incredible to me is that there's still so much of that ancient world that's under layers of soot and mud. Now it might have been that archaeologists covered it later, but when archaeologists came to Israel, after the second world war and the Holocaust, many Jews, of course, began coming back to Israel and there was establishment of the Israeli state, and a big part of that was a new sort of archaeology. And they discovered so many amazing things, but one of my favorite things they discovered when they were digging up the ancient world of Israel, was in the temple mount. Now you know the temple was destroyed, and as they were digging it up, they found parts of the foundation to that temple. And of course you would imagine that on the visible part, there were ornate stones, there's all sorts of carvings and well-done things, but then what they found was all of the other stones that were buried, or that were in places where nobody would see them, that they had the same unnecessary care and attention to detail and artistry. That means that there were some masons who spent the equivalent of tens of thousands of dollars in labor making sure that these stones were etched, even though no one was going to see the design. And the Mishnah in that, the way the rabbis teach, that is that when the ancient people of God built the temple, they weren't building it for visitors, and they weren't building it for themselves or for tourists, they were building it for one person alone – they were building it for God. And they believed that God saw the hidden parts of the temple, as well as the most bright and visible part. The lesson for us is that to the world, that seems like a waste of time, effort, money, but to us, that should be the way we lead our lives. That in the most hidden parts of our lives, we, too, know that God sees that, and that we want to be true to that to ourselves. Maybe you're not a believer and you just don't know what I'm talking about. Maybe another way of saying it is like this: for artists, especially, maybe you're an artist, there is something special about making something wonderful just to make it. Not to get applause, not to make money, not even for someone to see it, but just to make something wonderful for the sake of creating something wonderful. That touches on what I'm getting at in our lives for God. That we get incredible freedom when we live in the spirit, rather than in the law. We get incredible freedom when we live in the life of God and we just live for Him, rather than living for all the rules, or living, especially, to please people, or to get some kind of religious prestige. Live your life to honor God and be true to yourself always. Never fall into the trap of people pleasing, or being a fraud, or pretending like things are perfect when they're not. Don't always get people to fall in love with the fake version of you. Get people to see who you truly are, and then you won't be as lonely anymore. And you'll receive freedom in being you and being transformed and redeemed by God. Isn't this part of what Jesus taught us? Isn't this what He taught us? Don't be like the hypocrites who stand in the synagogues and the street corners blowing trumpets, right? Telling people what they're doing. Don't be like them. Don't be like the hypocrites, right? But for the God who is unseen, live for Him. It's something like that. I used to have it memorized, but I wasn't ready to say it today. I remember, I met a pastor friend of mine who went into a teaching role at a church, and he was supposed to be there for about two years, and then the senior pastor who had founded this big influential church was going to step down and he was going to step into that role. And now it had been eight years and the founding pastor was still there. I asked him and his wife, I said weren't you supposed to take over in time? And he said, well things change, and this is where we're supposed to be, and it was his wife who said this thing, and it wasn't the last time I heard it. She said: founding pastors don't retire, founding pastors die. Now I thought that was just a clever thing she came up with, but the little look behind the man behind the curtain, huh? This is a saying in vocational ministry. It's become an axiom that if a founding pastor says they're going to retire and hand it off to someone, they're not lying; they're lying, but they're lying to themselves. They're lying to themselves. Very often, founding pastors of large churches have a tough time letting go. I think this happens in business, as well, that founding CEOs, when they need to hand it off to the next generation of leaders, find it very hard to let go.

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It can happen with a million things, but there are these things that we find glory in that are good things that when the glory begins to fade, it's so hard to let it go, but let it go. It'll be okay. And very often when God takes those fading things away, those fading glories, He's going to replace it with something else that's fun and interesting and meaningful to you. At the end of the day, make your greatest glory Christ crucified. Make the greatest glory the thing that God is doing in your heart. Make your discipleship and your studying of His ways the greatest achievement you can have and you'll be grateful. That's something nobody can take from you, and that's something that never fades. Can I get an amen from the saints in the house? More than that, and let me just be honest, people do not respond well to prideful, arrogant, self-glorifying or controlling ways in which we try to hold onto things that are not supposed to be there. People do not respond well to showboaters. People respond well to humility and vulnerability. Now this is something I had to learn as a leader. When you're insecure as a leader and you're a young leader, a temptation is to give an aura of strength. Strong confidence. But very often what you think is strong confidence is experienced as arrogance, or creates a fearful environment. People love to follow, at some level, someone who is strong, confident, but also vulnerable and humble. And there is a difference between those two things. In general, if you come off as arrogant, you're going to turn people off. I mean we all know that. We all know that. I was talking to my team; I was trying to think of a word, and maybe you're a wordsmith and you can help me; a word that describes what do you call a person who is arrogant or has a big head, and we came up with all sorts of words like a snob, or a showoff, but nothing really landed right. Haven helped me out. She was here earlier. Haven helped me out with this. We had to invent a word. The word is pookiebooper. Now I know you're like why did you pick four syllables. But I think it's just fun to have a name for someone that's like this, so you'd be like oh what a pookiebooper. They're just. If you're really looking for a solid definition, you're in luck. Give it five/ten years, it'll be in the dictionary. Pookiebooper is a noun. It's a person with a self-aggrandizing disposition; haughty; one who has a delusionally high opinion of himself or herself. There's this thing that happens in life where we have enough success in life that maybe came from a place of vulnerability, humility, but still confidence, but something happens where we find ourselves on this pedestal. I've seen many leaders do this. I've seen them in this arc where they go from pastor to pookiebooper. That go from founding member of a business to pookiebooper. They go from great teacher, then they get some great achievement in the university and then they become pookiebooped. Anyway. This is where we're in. So I think it's important that we learn that if you actually.. this is some real practical wisdom; people respond to vulnerability. And by the way, you will find freedom when you realize how much of a burden proving yourself to people is. How much of a burden always putting a mask before people that are close to you in your life. Of course we all have to do that, to some degree, don't we. I mean you have to be professional at work, but to your friends and your family and your church, it is important that your closest friends are people that invite you to truly be who you are, so that when you're loved and when you spend time with them, you don't feel lonely, and you don't feel like a slave to proving yourself to others. Social media is anti-social for that very reason. Its anti-social media. Come with me to Corinth. We're going to read from this passage. Ancient Corinth.. this screenshot may or may not be from a video game called Assassins Creed Odyssey. Now before you look down on me for being into video games, the budget for this game was five hundred million dollars. Just this game. And by the way, I'm not recommending you play this game, because you go around killing people. But for its historic effect, they actually put together these ancient cities that we read about in the Bible, they've so far done Rome and Athens, and here you have Corinth, and they actually do it with historians and typography, and with maps, and they actually remake the cities so that you can walk around these ancient cities almost like virtual reality. I mean it's amazing. And this is a screenshot of what really, really close what ancient Corinth would have been like. The first thing that comes to mind is for the ancient world just how wealthy, clean, nice it looks. The feeling you get when you look at this picture is the way that most people felt when they went to the beautiful emerald city of Corinth. I mean just a gorgeous place of immense beauty, wealth. It's a port city, so it's right on the ocean. Wonderful, wonderful place. The original Corinth was destroyed, I believe, by Julius Caesar, and was completely.. or no, maybe it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar, but it was originally destroyed and then rebuilt. And when it was rebuilt, it was not rebuilt as a Greek city, but rather a multicultural city. And it was the city of freed-men. So there was active slavery in the Roman empire, but unlike many slaveries, it was not based on race or anything like that. The Romans were not racist, they just enslaved everybody. There was equal opportunity in the Roman empire.

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The way that you became a slave, most commonly in the Roman empire, was usually through debt, or through losing a war. And so then those prisoners of war would be sold or whatever. Very often, slaves could work off their time, so it wasn't a life sentence. It would be five years or twenty years, and sometimes it was a life sentence. This was a place where people called freed-men, those are people who got some kind of freedom either emancipated by their owner, or worked their way out, would go here to build a life. And it was a complete meritocracy. So the whole city was like just a place where all people were invited, and you just think about like New York or Hong Kong, just a mix of race, language, culture, song, dance, and for sure was a meritocracy where its dog eat dog on one hand, but incredible wealth and success on the other by people who are industrious and an entrepreneurial. In this world, Paul plants a church and the church does crazy well. It's a huge success. But, part of this.. you guys, if you're a pookiebooper, you know what this is, but maybe if you're not, you know the word "new money"? The expression new money is something that pookieboopers talk about a lot, and it's a thing where people that grew up poor become wealthy, and because they're self-conscious about it, insecure about it, they really show off their wealth. Over the top, everything. I think that whole thing is silly, but this was a thing that was, if you have the money, show it off if you want, or don't show off. Just do what you want. But in the city of Corinth, that was at play, but it was looked at as a good thing. So everybody shows off as much as they could. Everybody goes as baller as possible, and this starts to work its way into the church. And now, Paul is hearing that the church in Corinth is embarrassed by him. They're embarrassed of their founding guy for a couple of reasons. One, Paul was kind of poor and homeless a lot of the times. He made a lot of his earning through trade. Now as Christians, we think that's great, right? We love that. But in their world, they were kind of embarrassed by that. Paul wasn't fashionable. And Paul was a bad speaker, actually. The Bible just attests that. They say that Apollos was the great speaker, but Paul, even though he was a great thinker, was quite boring. In fact one story, Paul is preaching, and he's going on for hours, and he gets so boring that a guy who's sitting on a windowsill falls asleep and falls back out of the window to his death. Paul goes and raises him from the dead, brushes him off, the shoulders, the guy's raised from the dead, and then he goes back to press his glasses: 'please return with me to the book of Leviticus. Here we will read.' Actually you want to hear something funny? When I need my kids to go to sleep, this is how I read. I go: 'one day, there was a squirrel.' And that's how I picture Paul speaking. These are all things that are stacked against him, especially in a Roman world where being a dramatic speaker, as many pastors today are, is considered like a morally good thing. And so this is a problem, it's a problem for Paul. To the point where they actually ask Paul for his – listen to this – they want his credentials. What are your credentials? Can I tell you something? In those days, for Jews, your credentials are, one: were you mentored by a rabbi? Two: how great was the rabbi? Paul's mentor was; you go to any orthodox church today and you say this name: Gamaliel. He's the most famous rabbi in Paul's day – Gamaliel. He's the grandson of Hallel the Elder. Incredible, brilliant thinker. Paul's credentials by saying I was a Talmud under Gamaliel would be like if I went and somebody said what are your credentials and I say, I have published a hundred and seven scientific papers while being a tenured professor at Harvard University. That's about what he had. In his letter, he doesn't even mention Gamaliel or that he, Paul, is still considered a pharisee, an expert of the law, a rabbi and a teacher. He doesn't say any of that. He says you are my credentials! You! Look at what God did in your life and in your city when you received the gospel as it is. You're my credentials. Sounds like Jesus when He says you shall know a man by his fruit. Can I tell you, if I've learned anything, you don't know a man by his diploma. You don't know a man by his money. You don't know a man by his car. You know a man by his fruit. You know a woman by her fruit. You know people, if they're full of God and full of His glory, if they bear the fruit of life, and you do, and I'm so proud of you, don't ever let that go. And don't try and give that up for prestige or glory from other people. Don't give it up through people pleasing. Be the person that God made you and let everything else go. Paul says to them in this passage that Hannah read so eloquently, he references Moses. And he says Moses wore a veil to hide his glory. You know what he's talking about that? You know what he means by that? In the book of Exodus, Moses, who's one of my favorite Bible characters, goes up to Mt. Sinai to receive the law from God, but he doesn't go once, he goes many times. And when he comes down from the mountain the first time, his face is shining and glowing, and it's like he doesn't even know it. So that when he's coming down the mountain and the people see him, they all are terrified and they freak out. And so to keep them from being scared, he takes a veil, like a bride would, and he covers his whole face, not just his mouth. Everything gets covered so that the shining light isn't coming off of his face.

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And so that's how we read it if we just read Exodus. But Paul, who was an expert of the Torah, and this might be an ancient way of seeing it, says but after a while, Moses wasn't wearing the veil anymore to protect people from his glory, he says, Moses was wearing the veil to hide his what? Remember? Fading glory. He was hiding his fading glory. In other words, when Moses was away from the mountain, it was like the glory was almost gone, but he kept the veil on pretending that it was still really bright. And he hid, he veiled his fading glory from the world. Why would Moses do that? Why would he do that? Because he's a human being. Right? Because I do that. Because you do that. That's what we do. You get this amazing thing, it's a glorious thing, but as it begins to fade, oh just hide it from the world. Pretend like it's not happening. You veil that hidden glory. But that's not the way of Jesus. That's not the freedom that God promises. God promises us something better. And this will actually make a lot of sense when we get to heaven, but we will understand, especially then, what real glory is, and glory that doesn't fail. My friend, all that to say, just even as practical wisdom, there's no sense in veiling fading glory. But there is something valuable in just facing the music and being an honest person about your life, and being at peace with that, and receiving freedom that there is a glory in Christ that is so much greater than any glory I could get from whatever it is I think makes me special, that I already had it. I already had it the second I was born. You are the beloved Child of God. There is no greater glory than that. Did you know God loves you as much as Jesus; God the Father loves you as much as Jesus. So that's that Orthodox thing to say, but it's a weird thing to think, isn't it. If God loved Jesus more than you, and not the same, He wouldn't have sent Him to die for you. You see? That's the thing that's so obvious about the cross, is that it shows us that even though we're sinful, God still treasures us to the same degree He treasures His son Jesus Christ. When we own that, there's a freedom that comes in the spirit of being like even when I was so far from God, He still loved me, and He still loves me. And He still loves you today. So build your life in response to that. I'll finish with this thought. We're always tempted, all of us: I am, you are, to wear a veil; to hide. We have to do it sometimes, that's part of the problem. You have to do it at work, for example, but when you're with your friends and family, remove the veil. Let them see some of the things you're going through and I promise they will appreciate that about you, most people will, and if they don't, maybe that's not a good person to have as a friend in your life. But I promise your spouse almost for sure will. And that's something I had to learn in life as a man. Particularly men are not.. this is a broad stroke, a lot of men are, but a lot of men like me are not naturally vulnerable people. I remember there was this gorgeous girl when I was in high school, beautiful brunette named Hannah Presley that I had a crush on for a long time. And I remember, I was like looking back, I was thinking about.. you guys have no idea how much of a hot ticket Hannah was at our school. So we were we were both going to this school in the same city, but we were at different schools on the opposite side of town, and I was with my friend Vick, who also went to a different school than me AND that school, and he knew who Hannah Presley was. Like everybody knew in this big city, everybody knew who Hannah was, it seemed like, because we were connected to the church world. But I asked him, I was like if you could like take anyone to prom, who would it be? And he was like you mean like someone at my school or just like anybody, like I can take a movie star or anybody. I was like anybody. And he was like Hannah Presley. And I was like me too, Hannah Presley. And we like kind of knew her, but like. She hates it when I do stuff like this, by the way. She's like really self-conscious. That's part of what makes her such a catch. And I remember being in college, I'd had a crush on her for like five years, like everybody else in that town, and I remember we went on a missionary trip, and I saw this very good-looking guy who was just so like six pack, good looking, and Hannah was like touching her hair when he was talking to her, and so just kidding, I know. But we weren't dating. I remember looking at this guy and like man he is laying it on thick, and feeling like competitive towards him. And then I just decided to count in my head, not including this guy, how many guys told me personally that they had a crush on Hannah, and so I counted it, and it was 13! I personally knew 13 guys who were really into Hannah. It's the curse of beauty, poor thing. Poor Hannah, let's just pray for Hannah. Cursed with beauty, the poor dear. This is a true story, though. This is true. I literally felt bad for her that she was so pretty that I was like you know what, because I have four sisters, too, I was like you know what? She's an unattainable unicorn, I'm just going to be her friend. She needs a guy that's just a friend, and I'm just going to be her friend. And you know what's so funny? Before that, whenever I'd see Hannah, I would always like try and be Rico Suave, like get my game on. And she was just not into it. This is a true story, too. I could go on forever, but I remember like one time when we were at her parents' house, because her brother was a great friend of mine, in the like awkward chit chat.

Don't Veil Your Fading Glory

Hannah asked me how much I could bench. And I was like 15 or 16. She asked me how much I could bench, and I didn't know what that meant. And so I was like oh it's pretty good. I mean it's like, it's not like a football player, but I can hold my own, it's pretty good. And she's like oh, cool, cool. And no joke, I enrolled in weight lifting. That's why I work out even to this day, is because I enrolled in weight lifting back then. I was doing all of these things to pretend to be someone, in a way, I wasn't to win over this girl. And she wasn't into it. Until I quit. It was the day I gave up, and it was like I'm just going to be her friend; I'm just going to be like a brother, that she fell for me. Who knew! That's all it took! Is just being regular Bobby, instead of cool Bobby. And can I tell you honestly, that really did happen. And I am so glad that my wife fell for the real me, instead of the pretend me. I'm so glad that 22 years later, I'm not still pretending to be some other guy. We intuitively all know that. That when we can have friends in our lives, meaningful relationships where people love us for who we really are, with all of our short comings and hard days and unfinished symphonies and struggles, they still love us, well there's something really special in that, and that's what the Bible calls freedom – where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom because when you receive the spirit of the Lord, you should be free from just having to prove yourself to others. You don't have to prove yourself religiously, you don't have to prove yourself in the way you look, you don't have to prove yourself with your career, with your money, with your achievements, you are treasured and loved by the Lord. You are free, my friend. You are free to be the person God created you to be and to live a life doing your best and just forgetting the rest. Amen? You just do your best and forget the rest. Just let the rest go, and receive the freedom that comes from knowing that God loved you even before you even knew who He was. I'm thankful for that. Let's pray: Father, we trust our lives to you. Stand with us, Jesus, and help us to see that our value is not in our achievements or in our social status or in money or in anything like that. It's in you. Thank you for the freedom that comes through the resurrected life of Christ within us. We thank you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, all God's people said, 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.