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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. Good morning.

HS: And welcome friends. It's such a joy to have you here. The Bible says our faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Today, let's stir our faith and worship our living God. We're so happy you're here. You are loved.

BS: Amen. We are so glad you're here. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, thank you so much that you have sent your Holy Spirit on our behalf. We pray today that you would draw us more and more into your kingdom, to help us to love our neighbor just as you loved us. Lord, we thank you; it's in Jesus' name we pray, all God's people said, amen.

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

SCRIPTURE – Ephesians 2,19-22 – Hannah Schuller

Let's feed our faith this morning. Would you open your Bible's with me to Ephesians 2:19-22: Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Well welcome, we're so glad you're here. Would all of you, let's stand together. We're going to say this creed together as we do every week. Hold your hands like this as a way of receiving from the Lord. Let's 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. That'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 my neighbor. Thanks you can be seated.

MESSAGE/PRAYER – You Are a Child of Abraham

Today we're going to talk about a sermon that will be a little more, maybe notes heavy. There are certain sermons where I've talked about you really want to take notes, and this is one of them. It's going to be Bible heavy, note heavy, but I hope that it will touch your heart in a big way, and boy, if you get ahold of what I say today, it is going to open up your life to so much blessing that there won't even be enough room in your life to contain it. How does that sound? Is that a good promise? All right.

I want to begin by understanding, historically, I've talked about this before but it's worth revisiting, what a covenant was in the Bronze Age. Now we use covenant language today, even in legal terms, when we talk within businesses, or between countries, or contractual promises that are made, but the covenants that were made in the Bronze Age and in the old world were sort of deeper than that, and they had very deep spiritual importance.

Here's what a Bronze Age covenant might look like in the Middle East and the Levant. Remember in those days, in the Bronze Age in particular, life was dangerous and hard. Very often you'd have a farming tribe and that farming tribe was good at what they did, which was (AUDIENCE – farming) farming, right. They could grow bread, they could grow grain, they could grow vegetables, they could take care of cattle; they could take care of these things, but it makes them a target. Because remember in those days, there were also raiders who loved to just go around and just take what they wanted

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And so this farming tribe, they would have a great harvest, but of course even though they built maybe a little wooden palisade and had a couple of guards, if a big Viking hoard came or I guess we're in the Levant, aren't we, a bunch of Philistines came and tried to take their stuff, they would run into a cave and half their stuff would get taken, people would get killed.

Okay, now there's another type of person. Those same raiders, the warriors, they loved to go and raid, but what happens when they raid too much? All those farmers are dead and there's no grain left, and so they start getting hungry, that's right. And so very often what would happen is you'd have two different tribes or nation states or cities or families that would come together and they would make a covenant.

Let's imagine that this warrior tribe and this farmer tribe who have opposing problems decide they're going to make a covenant to be on a team together; to join, to become the same tribe. It would look a little something like this. You'd have the farmer family on this side, and you'd have the warrior family on this side. They look very different. In high school we'd call that the jocks and the nerds. Okay, and they're facing each other, and the chief-tans, the head of the household or whatever, of each tribe would come and stand before one another. Now there's been long talks before this, but here's what they do: they create a covenant, and often times they would exchange like their jacket, and it'd be funny to imagine what those jackets would look like if you're an artist. I think the farmer putting on the warrior jacket with like skulls and blood on it, and like the farmer put on.. I don't know what farmer jacket would look like. It wouldn't look as cool, though. We know that.

They would exchange their jackets, and then they would create a pathway, a sacrifice, usually this is in a pagan world, so they would make a sacrifice to their pagan gods, and they would split the carcasses of all the animals they sacrifice. Now also remember that the animal sacrifice is two other things: one, its wealth, so they're making a sacrifice of their wealth to show how serious they are, and number two, its dinner. They're going to eat it at the end. Anyway. Okay.

So they would make a path of these carcasses and in the middle would be.. this is a little gross, but it's the Bronze Age, a path of blood. The two heads of the household, now having traded jackets, will pass one another like this back and forth, repeating their oath, walking in the blood like this, you see? And so it might sound something like this. The head of the warrior family with the farmers jacket on, walk around on the blood saying something like 'I swear to you and to a thousand generations that we will protect you, that we will guard you, that we will do all we can to make sure you are safe. We promise you' and they'll probably say it more passionately than I am. 'We promise you that until the day you die, you will have..' I guess that's obvious. Something like that. We will protect you, we will die to the last man until the first one of you even has a pinky cut, something like that, and it's always extreme.

The farmer then also would say 'we will work hard to raise grain, to farm the land, to treat the crops, even if we have to give you the flesh off our bones, you will never go hungry' and this is what they would saying going back and forth. And this is the covenant. It's a two-sided promise. The warrior family is going to protect the farmer family, the farmer family is going to feed the warrior family.

And then what would happen is they would inter-marry. There would be an exchange of gifts, and there would be a big festival, and the two tribes would become basically one tribe. You see? That's now.. one plus one does not equal two. In this case, one plus one equals ten. Because you have a great farm and now you've got a big castle around it, you got soldiers protecting it, and heck, they might even go do some raiding and bring some seeds and things back from a neighboring tribe. Why not? So this is a covenant.

Now we go to Abraham. Abraham is told by God that He wants to make Abraham, who is an old man, 90-years-old at the time, or 70-years-old, actually when He tells him, wants to make him a great nation, wants him to be blessed, wants him to be thriving. And Abraham believes God, as we know it, and it is that act of faith that calls Abraham righteous.

But time starts to go by and Abraham starts to ask God, well when Lord? Now it's taking 20/30 years. When are you going to do this? And this is where God says to Abram, or Abraham, we're going to make a covenant. And He does this exact thing. He tells Abraham take a heifer, a goat, a ram, doves and pigeons, and make this path, and the Bible says in Genesis chapter 15 that God comes down in like a smoking fire pot with a torch. I think that Abraham doesn't know what he's seeing. I don't think that's what it was. I think he's using his own language to describe God coming in the flesh. It was probably something he couldn't really look right at, because it was bright, but there was also a heavy darkness. There might have been a cloud, but all we know is that God Himself actually walks in this path with Abraham, and Abraham receives a covenant. How long does a covenant last?

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Here's the answer: as long as God lives. Do you hear what I said? How long does the covenant last? Is the covenant still in place? Okay.

Here's what the covenant says. Number one: I will be your God, and you will be my people. What does that mean? Effectively means no other idols. I'm the only God, and number two, you're going to obey the commands that I make. Now He doesn't give the law to Abraham yet, but to be my people will be clearly defined with Moses as obey my commands. Okay?

Number two: you will be blessed and you will be a blessing to the nations, or colloquially in church we often say you'll be blessed to be a blessing. To be a light. To help. To be the catalyst of change in the world around you.

And what does that blessing look like for the heirs of Abraham? It looks like land, it looks like provision, it looks like children, posterity, it looks like purpose to be this light, to be this help. So God's promise was to bless His obedient people so they would be a blessing to the nations.

What does that blessing look like, by the way? Just so you don't think I'm some other kind of preacher. This is what the Bible says. It's in many, many, many places, but the coolest one is Deuteronomy 28, so we're going to read from Deuteronomy 28, if you have your Bibles. Verse one. "If.." everybody say if (AUDIENCE RESPONSE – if) okay that's an important if. We're going to come back to that. Okay? "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on the earth. All these blessings" everybody say all (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – all) is it some or all? (AUDIENCE – all) Okay, it's all. "All of these blessings will come on you, and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God." This is the Bible, it's either true or it's not. Okay? "You will be a blessing in the city.. you'll be blessed in the city, and you'll be blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed and the crops of your land, and the young of your livestock, the calves of your herds, and the lambs of your flocks." Should I keep going? I will.

"Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You'll be blessed when you come in, and you will be blessed when you go out. The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction, but flee from you seven." Shall I keep going? I will.

"The Lord will send a blessing on your barns, and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he's given you. The Lord will establish you as his holy people. As he promised, you want an oath" in what oath? What oath? I'm pointing to it. The covenant, that's right. How long does a covenant last? (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – forever) Forever. "If you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in obedience to him." Shall I keep going?

"Then all the peoples of the earth will see that you were called by the name of the Lord, and they will fear you. The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock's, and the crops of your ground, in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. The Lord will open up the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty to send rain on your land in season, and to bless all the work of your hands, you will lend to many nations but you will borrow from none."

There's a big "if" big "if". Okay, that's a big promise, isn't that a big promise? Who wants that promise in their life today? I do. "If" what? If, if, if you obey my commands. Okay?

Now what do we see.. that's in Deuteronomy. What do we see in the rest of the Old Testament? A story of people believing that, and people not believing that. One generation believes "if" they do and they're blessed. They're blessed with provision, they're blessed with health, they're blessed with children, they're blessed with prosperity, they're blessed with full barns. Right? Because they obey the commands of the Lord.

The next generation, who is sort of given all this stuff, doesn't believe it quite as much. And the one after that believes it even a little bit less. And what one generation tolerates, the next generation embraces. And pretty soon you have idols and child sacrifice and turning our backs on the poor, and not even believing in God, and what happens? Catastrophe. They lose everything. They're scattered. And then some of those remnant, they read the Bible again, and they say wait, look what it says here in Deuteronomy. Look what it says here in Genesis. If, if, if! If we do this, then this. If we do this, then this. So they do it, and then what happens? They're blessed. And you see this over and over. And they're blessed, and they're thriving, and then what happens? Generation number two says ah, generation number three says, nah. It's funny. Voltaire actually said, and round and round it goes for like thousands of years, right, with the Hebrew people, God's people.

What did Voltaire say? This is kind of something that happens in civilization in general. He says "history is filled with the sound of silken slippers going downstairs, and wooden shoes coming up."

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What he means by wooden shoes, you can replace that with work boots or cowboy boots, right? Going up the stairs, hard work and farmer-type people. And we see that same thing happening in the Old Testament. And when you read the Old Testament, it drives you crazy because you just see the same thing happening over and over. Okay.

All right. So there's a problem here. The problem is that one generation believes, but the next doesn't. And very often what we see, too, like in Jesus' day, sometimes when they believe, it's not the right way. It's the law, and very often the law, instead of bringing life, can bring death.

Here's what Hebrews 8 says. This is the author of Hebrews writing to people. He is sighting Jeremiah 31 here. He says "this is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws on their minds, and write them on their hearts." This is what you need to capture here today, friend. I will put my laws in their minds and on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. And then He says by calling the covenant new, He has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

So what does this mean? It means that for many of us, the problem, that God's promise still remains true, but the problem is that the law is chiseled on tablets and not on hearts. And so God wants to find a way how do I, instead of chiseling this on tablets, how do I chisel this on people's hearts? And the answer is, Christ crucified. The atoning work of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. I know we're going deeper, but if you have a pen, I hope you're following this, because this has to do with that provision in Deuteronomy 28. I'm going to through Christ crucified move my spirit from a building, the temple, into a person, and into a people. And when that happens, they will desire to just do the commands. They won't need to always read them to know what's right. They'll instinctively know in their heart what is right.

Galatians 3:26-29 then says this, "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. Here is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs." Everybody say heirs (AUDIENCE – heirs) "heirs according to the promise." What promise? (AUDIENCE – covenant) The covenant. Okay? You're heirs. You're heirs.

Okay, imagine an attorney calls you, a cryptic attorney. Mrs. Jones, Mr. Smith, hello, my name is John Jacob Jingleheimer Smith, attorney at law and I'm here to tell you that you are an heir to the estate of J.D. Rockefeller. First you're going to think it's a joke, right? And then you're going to have a bunch of questions. You're going to say well J.D. Rockefeller's been dead for a hundred years. But he was the richest man on earth. Are they still J.D. Rocke.. wait, what does he mean I'm an heir? Am I related to..? You're going to ask all these questions, but ultimately the main question you're going to ask is this: what does that mean? And what you're saying when you say 'what does that mean,' what you're really asking is, 'how much do I get?' Do we have a range? Right?

Here's what you get, according to the covenant. All right? Listen, friends. So if I say you're an heir to Abraham, you say to me, he's been dead for 4,000 years. But God is not dead. God lives. Right? We have new access to the covenant through Jesus Christ. Same covenant, but new access.

And what does that mean? Here's what you get: if you believe you're an heir to Abraham, you get provision, you get joy, you get health, you get victory, you get favor, you get open doors, you get so much more, you get a thriving life. Everybody say "IF" (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – if) if what? Now in the old law, it was if you obey my commands. But in the gospel it's now inverted. It's if you have, according to Galatians and other passages, faith! If you have faith in Christ Jesus, and then if you have faith, its opposite. You will do what He says. IF you have faith, you will do what He says, not out of legalism, not out of looking at a chiseled tablet, but you'll have a new heart. You'll want to do it. You'll know what it is.

So we know this. Jesus teaches us. One, that it comes by faith in our crazy confessions, what it says in the Bible, we're saved by grace through faith, right? So it's God's gift for free. It comes by faith, but there is also evidence that it's happened, and that evidence is the new command. Jesus tells us. He says somebody asks Him what is the greatest command, and He says what? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. And second of this, love your neighbor as yourself, and then famously He says, this what? Sums up all the commands. If you want to do everything that's written in the law, and you just focus on these two things: loving God and loving people, you're going to do it. And the way you're going to do it is if it's not written on some tablet like can we say an I-pad? It's not written on an I-pad, it's written on your heart. It's written on your heart.

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Jesus also says here's a new command I give you. Love one another the way that I have loved you. Here's the promise: if you believe by faith, and love the Lord, and love your neighbor, you're going to inherit all the promises of the covenant. All the promises of the covenant.

God's commands are practical. Like even the commands that He gives, if you really understand the spirit of it, which so many didn't. If you understand the spirit of the law in the Old Testament, all of those ideas are practical. And what happens is super religious people always mess it up. They get like obsessive compulsive about it and they ruin it. This is what the Pharisees did.

Here's what God says, for example, in His law. Honor the Sabbath and keep it holy. What does that mean? Well, it tells us. Here's what you do to honor the Sabbath. You take a day off and you rest, and you don't buy or sell anything. A lot of times we forget that that's part of it in America. You don't buy anything, you don't sell anything, and you don't work. What do you do? You go to church, or if you're Jewish, you go to synagogue. You gather with God's people, you worship the Lord, and you spend the rest of the day relaxing and spending the time with the people you love. What a gift that is. So what do the Pharisees do in Jesus' day? They said no work means a bunch of things, but for example, some of the more ridiculous ones, no spitting. Did you know you can't spit? Why? Because it's kind of like work, and when they said when the spittle hits the ground it rolls and it looks like it's working, so you can't do that. That's real! No eating sunflower seeds. Unless its pre.. you can't like.. at a baseball game, put the sunflower seed.. why? Because you're working on removing the shell from the thing. Right? Even crazier, no healing on the Sabbath. Remember, that was a big issue. Here's Jesus healing on the Sabbath. And even today, when you go to Israel, the ultra, ultra, Orthodox have new rules that didn't exist in Jesus' day, but one, for example, it drives me crazy, is no pressing elevator buttons. So in Israel on Shabbat, the elevator is pre-programmed to stop on every floor so you don't press the elevator button. You tell me – is that more work or less work? See that's what religion does. It takes a law that says less work, and it makes it more work. Classic Satan, right? And we love our Orthodox Jewish brothers and sisters. I'm not trying to make fun of them. I'm just saying even still one that puzzles me, if you drive around on a Sabbath morning, Saturday morning, you'll see Orthodox; they don't drive. Can't drive. But is driving more work or less work than walking? It's less work, and yet you can't drive.

I had a really good friend when I was a kid who was Orthodox Jewish and we always used to tease him because he had to pre-tear his toilet paper before Shabbat because tearing was work. Is that more work or less work? Especially when your friends are razzing you about it. He was our friend, so it was okay.

So Jesus, being frustrated, says this is not about Sabbath. This is about how religious people take a rule that's a gift and they make it a burden for people. Christian churches do this, too. This is why it needs to be written on our heart and not on a tablet. It needs to be chiseled on our heart that we understand. Sabbath is a day to rest. And that's why Jesus said, God made Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath! Can I get an amen? (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – amen) Okay.

So you want to know what the spirit of the law is. Here's how you know if the spirit of the law is written on your heart: Jesus tells you. The law is written on our hearts if we love one another. First, we got to love the Lord. Number one: you love the Lord with everything you've got. With everything you've got. Here's kind of what that looks like, but don't chisel it on a tablet. This is more like to check yourself. Okay? It means you give thanks because God's given you everything.

Pray before and after your meals. Tithe. Give to the poor. Don't slander God's name. Don't say 'oh my G' or whatever. Do what's right when no one's looking. And most of all, love His kids. Imagine somebody said to me, Pastor Bobby, I love you, but I hate your kids. Okay? Imagine that. Pastor Bobby, I love you but I hate your kids. Someone says Pastor Bobby, I love you, but I kicked Haven when she was down, because I know you're a pastor and I know you want people to do what's right, and she wasn't doing what was right, so I kicked her when she was down. I made fun of her and I shamed her. Aren't you happy with me? What?

Imagine somebody said Pastor Bobby, I love you but I hate your son, Cohen. I hate him. He was just making all sorts of noise in church and I know you're a pastor and you don't like that, so I kicked him out. Kicked him out of church. No more noise. Your church is clean, Pastor Bobby. What would I say to that? You hate me. If you hate my kids, you hate me. You want to love the Lord, love annoying people. You want to love the Lord, love your enemies. You want to love the Lord, love your neighbor. You want to love the Lord, love other believers.

So this is the second. This is how you know if it's written on your heart, and this will open up so much blessing in your life: love people like crazy, especially other believers. Now when you read the Bible,

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I think most Christians would think you kind of love everybody the same, but actually the Bible seems to point to us to love everybody a lot, like crazy, but go like an extra mile with other Christians. What does that look like? It looks like when you're blessed.. let me ask you a question: child of the covenant. Child of the covenant. Heir to Abraham. Why are you blessed? To be a blessing! Child of the covenant, why are you blessed? (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – to be a blessing) Amen. Thank you, Lord. Be a blessing.

Love people. Be a blessing. Touch as many lives as you can. Touch them as deeply as you can. Touch them as richly as you can. Take it slow. Take it slow so that you have margin in life to pray with someone, to touch a heart, to compliment a person, to listen to a person, to give to someone in need, to comfort someone. If you want to walk with Jesus, you got to do it at a walking pace. You cannot be in a hurry and love people practically. Those two things don't go hand in hand. Forgive people. Don't make little things a big deal. If somebody cuts in front of you in line, if somebody cuts you off in traffic, if your spouse keeps doing that thing that's annoying, it's only a big deal if you make it a big deal. Don't make it a big deal. Let it go. Forgive people.

Be slow to anger. Yes, sometimes we get angry, but be slow to anger. You say, well what about righteous anger? Here's a good revelation: all anger is righteous anger. I have never met an angry person in my life, and I've met many of them; I'm around a lot of Irish people. I've met many angry people. Every angry person thinks their anger is righteous. Amen? Next time your spouse is angry with you, and you're angry with your spouse, you say, you want to know something? I have righteous anger, but your anger is not justified, and you see what they say. All people believe their anger is righteous. All people believe they're justified. That's why they're angry! Okay. So let it go. Forgive people.

Don't curse. Don't use foul language. Don't use obscene gestures. Don't yell at people. Don't call people names. Don't type negative things about people, even politicians, online. If you're going to make a criticism about a politician, make it thoughtful, not obscene. Okay? This is how they'll know we are Christians, by our love. This is how you'll know my disciples if you love one another.

It's true, being agreeable all the time is not love. Don't be a pushover, but also don't push. Don't shove people. Don't be passive aggressive. Don't be ice cold and don't put up walls. Don't embarrass people. Don't gossip about people. It's amazing to me, very often that the same people in our culture that tout love like crazy, very often tend to be the meanest, most violent and most vengeful people you see in our society. Why? Because love is chiseled on a tablet and not on their heart. See? Love only counts when it's towards people you don't like. That's not always true, but that's what Jesus tells us. What does it matter if you just love your friends? The pagans do that. Right? Love your enemies. Love annoying people. Love frustrating people.

You won't lift yourself up if you tear others down, so be kind, and be tender-hearted. And like all the commands of the Lord, it works. What does the word of God say? Love never fails.

Who wants to be blessed today? Who wants what Deuteronomy 28 says? The Lord's looking. Who wants it, raise your hand? Love people. Love God with all your heart. Love the people that it's hardest to love, and just watch as God pours out abundant blessing in your life. That's a promise.

All right, stand with me. Very hard when you're going through tough times to think about other people, but here's what happens when you're going through tough times and we choose to love people anyway. We get the eyes off of our problems, we stop worrying, and we start to help other people, and God brings us out of the rut.

So let's lift our hands to the Lord now. Lord, we come before you in Jesus' name, and we choose today to respond in faith and not fear in every conflict, in every challenge, in every doubt. We receive the promise of the covenant, a promise of provision, a promise of health, a promise of joy, a promise of victory, a promise of open doors. We know you'll keep your promise. We know you'll do what you say you'll do. So Lord, in rejoicing and faith, we choose today to love you with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with everything in us, and we choose today to love people, even when they don't love us back. To forgive people, even when they don't forgive us. To be slow to anger, to be tender-hearted, to be kind, to lay down our lives for others as you lay down your life for us. And to excel in love and in all things.

We choose today because we can, to love our neighbor with all that we've got, Lord, because you loved us first. Thank you for your love for us, God. Thank you for the broken chains. Thanks for the forgiveness of sins. Thanks for the new spirit. Continue to write your commands on our heart, and we ask it in the strong name of Jesus, and all God's people said, amen.