

Hour of Power Deutschland  
Steinerne Furt 78  
86167 Augsburg

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

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

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

BAN:  
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:  
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz  
Leeststr. 8  
8594 Güttingen  
Tel.: 071 690 07 81  
[info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch](mailto:info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch)  
[www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch](http://www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch)

Spendenkonto:

PostFinance AG, 3030 Bern  
Konto: 61-18359-6  
BAN:  
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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: Welcome, church family. It is so great to have you here. Thank you for making time out to be with us this morning. We hope you leave here today with a new understanding of God's deep approval of you. Not of His approval of you this morning before that car cut you off on the way to church and you said some inappropriate things, but His approval of you right now just as you are.

Turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

BS: Welcome to the Hour of Power. We're so glad you're here, and we believe you're here for a reason, even if you just sort of stumbled in here, or you don't know why you came, or you got guilted into coming, we're just so glad you're here, and we really believe you're going to leave here with a full tank, excited and ready for a new week.

Lord, we thank you. We pray in Jesus' name, Father that you would fill this space with your spirit. We believe, God, that you love us, that you're not angry with us, and you're not holding things over our head, and we thank you, God, that you love us just as we are, not as we should be, because we're your kids. And we thank you, God, that you teach us to let go of judgment, especially judging ourselves, and learn to live every day in grace. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

### SCRIPTURE – Ephesians 2:8-10 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for Bobby's message, the words of our Lord found in Ephesians 2:8 through 10:

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God. Not by works so that no one can boast, for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We, church family, are rejoicing that we are loved just as we are, and not as we should be. Amen.

### DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, let's say this together. Hold your hands out like this. Let's say this: 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.

Thanks, you can be seated.

### MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "You Are Loved Just as You Are, Not as You Should Be"

Today I want to tell you that God loves you just as you are, not as you should be. That with all of the things that we don't like about ourselves, the things that we wish were better, the baggage that we switch from one hand to another, despite it all, God loves us. God loves you. That you're not alone, and that God has provided a way that we don't have to worry about our salvation, we don't have to worry about God turning His back on us because of the good work of Jesus Christ; that this has real consequences for our heart and for our life. That is to say you don't have to worry about the things you're struggling with. You don't have to worry about all the ways in which you think you're insufficient. God loves you just as you are, and not as you should be.

You are not what you do. Now today we are carrying on this series on my book that's coming out, and my book is on this creed, and this creed is a vision for this church. I think it's important that we understand why we say this creed every single week.

## You Are Loved Just as You Are, Not as You Should Be

I think especially with two churches coming together, working together, becoming one in ministry, mission, we have to understand that at the core of the future of this church is going to be a drive to teach people about grace. That you are not what you do, you're not what you have, and you're not what people say about you. You are God's beloved, and that is at the foundation of our faith. It's at the foundation of our doctrine. And yet so many people are unsettled by it. It's a fresh way to say to everyone – it's not by works.

Now we want to be a people who are holy. We want to do good. We want to treat our neighbor rightly. We want to be good parents and spouses. We want to work hard and achieve a lot, and live a life that's worthy of living, right? Of one that's worthy of emulating. But this is the thing that makes Christianity different than every other faith on God's green earth – every other religion says do it all right and you belong. Do it all right and you go to heaven. Christianity doesn't say that. It says belong and then you'll do it right. Receive grace, and not by your power but by God's power you'll do better. We serve a God of grace. He's the one who does the work. And we're the ones who believe and trust and live every day by faith, even when there's things about ourselves we don't like. You are not what you do, and you're not what you've done. You are what Christ has done for you, and that cannot be taken away. Isn't that good news?

At the heart of that is this belief that shame kills. We sing in our hymns all the time: thank you, Lord, that you took away my shame. And yet we so often reinforce shame in the church as a virtue. It's not. God hates shame. Shame always leads to sin, and grace always leads to goodness. Shame always leads to sin, and grace always leads to goodness. In other words, after being a pastor for nearly 20 years, I can tell you that goodness comes from being emotionally healthy, not from beating yourself up.

Friends, are you hearing me? Righteousness, goodness, holiness, it comes from being emotionally healthy, grounded and secure. It does not come from beating yourself, from bullying yourself, from rotten self-talk, from thinking you're not worthy. None of those things are good for you. That kind of puritan way of describing your life, it's not helping you or anyone else. You can let that go. God loves you just as you are, and we can thank Him that He's made a way through Christ crucified, that we don't have to worry about our salvation or anything like that. It's by faith alone. Amen? By grace, through faith.

So, many of us, we have this thing, and you're like well Bobby, what about, like if you do something wrong, shouldn't you feel guilty? And the answer is yes. Guilt and shame are not the same. Guilt, in a way, can be good if it's true.

If you punched a guy for eating your hamburger (I don't know, I'm just coming up with this off the top of my head) you should feel guilty about that, and you should apologize. But if you punched a guy for eating your hamburger, you shouldn't feel shame.

Here's the difference: shame says I'm rotten, I'm horrible, I'm a sinner, I'm bad, I'm rejectable, I'm unworthy of love and belonging, therefore, of course I would do that because that's who I am. Guilt says I shouldn't have done that because that's not me. I'm better than that. I can be the bigger person. Guilt says no, that's not who I've been trained to be, that's not who I want to be. That was a mistake. I can go and apologize.

In other words, guilt says I did something wrong. Shame says I am someone wrong. Guilt says I made a mistake. Shame says I am a mistake. And much of the language we use in the church, it comes from the medieval era. It does not come from the Bible. And so we have to make sure we recognize the difference between beating ourselves up and saying I've got all this stuff in my life and I need to hide it if I'm going to belong in my church or in my family or my work. We need to move away from that. Become vulnerable and honest about the fact that everybody is messed up. Everybody. Like I said a couple weeks ago, if you think somebody's perfect, you just got to be married to them. You got to get to know them better. You got to become their best friend. You'll find out very quickly that all of the people in a distance that you think are so perfect, they're not. And the people that you do want to emulate, respectable people that really are great people, even they have mistakes but they got better by being emotionally healthy; by being grounded and rooted.

Our faith and our doctrine is rooted in the scriptures, but especially in this passage. It's so important. And it's in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8. Paul is saying, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift from God." Do you believe that? It's by faith, guys. It's by faith. "Not by works so no one can boast." I love that reasoning. "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works." You see that? So the good works come, but the good works, and this is so central to our faith – need to come from a place of grace, not legalism;

## You Are Loved Just as You Are, Not as You Should Be

a place of forgiveness, not judgmentalism. In other words, forgive yourself. God's forgiven you. God loves you. Can you forgive yourself? Can you let it go? Can you trust, by faith, that you can receive God's grace? Grace doesn't mean mercy, by the way, did you know that? Grace means boundless, unlimited, undeserving favor. You're God's favorite. It's unfair. Wow, can you receive that?

Henri Nouwen, when he was writing on the spiritual life, was writing about one of the greatest barriers to knowing God in living a life fully for Jesus, and this is what he says: "Over the years I've come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity and power can indeed present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. The real trap, however, is self-rejection. As soon as someone accuses me or criticizes me. As soon as I am rejected, left alone, or abandoned, I find myself thinking, well that proves once again that I am a nobody. My dark side says I'm no good. I deserve to be pushed aside, forgotten, rejected and abandoned. Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the beloved. Being the beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence."

My best friend growing up, his name was Brennan and we were attached at the hip. The guy was like my brother. We went to church together, and his mom was almost like a second mom to me. I mean we were always together. I remember once when we took the dingy.. the dingy is like a little inflatable rowboat. We took it out into the harbor and we had a couple of fishing poles and these little like fly.. it's a bait thing, it's made almost like fly fish. And we took it out close to the mooring where you fill up the boat with gas, and we started fishing and we started catching these little halibut. And it was like every time you threw the line into the water, we were catching these fish. It was amazing. And we've never seen anything like it. We filled the boat full of these little halibut from the harbor. We must have had over a hundred, and it was like we won the lottery. We were over the moon and we were so thrilled.

And so as we took the dingy back to where my dad was, we hadn't really thought this through, but we just assumed he would want the fish. And when we got there, he said what are we supposed to do with that. And I said what do you mean? He said don't you know if you kill a creature you've got to eat it? And then he said, all right. He made us clean, us - we were like ten - he made us clean like over a hundred halibut to get these little fillets that we ended up making popcorn fish with.

And for like a lot of my childhood, Brennan and I have.. but we were still thrilled, you know. But we had all these amazing memories together. And he was so tender-hearted. I remember like all the time, he would do stuff like you know, we're just kids, he'd throw his arm around me and he'd point at me and say you're my best friend. You know? Like such a sweet guy.

When we were probably around twelve, something like that, his parents started having problems in their marriage, and it was really bugging him, but we decided to ignore it. And I could tell his mom was trying to be strong. She's like one of the greatest people I've ever known in my life. And ultimately, his parents got a divorce. And I watched, as for whatever reason, not as much for his siblings, but for Brennan, it just tore him apart. He just loved his family so much and he couldn't reconcile it. And more and more, as we became teenagers, I watched as his behavior changed. He became more angry, got in a lot of fights. And eventually, when I moved to Oklahoma, we parted ways. And as things go, we just didn't hear much from him or talk much. But we really were like brothers when we grew up.

When I moved back to California now as a married man, the first person I called was Brennan, and we met at a bar where he was working. And he looked different; he had a shaved head and he was super buff. But still full of joy and so kind and sweet and we talked at length, and that was about twelve years ago. After that time when we talked, I just didn't hear much from him, until a few months ago.

I got a direct message on Instagram from his sister. 'Bobby, Brennan died yesterday. Our family is broken up. Please pray for us.' Over the years, he began to struggle with substance, and he was still a terrific dad; he had two girls, and a great friend, and a great guy, he just struggled with this thing and tried to sort of handle it himself.

And it was at his funeral, I went, his family invited me to sit up at the front, and I just cried the whole time. Even though I hadn't seen the guy in like twelve years, I just couldn't stop crying. And I was beating myself up, I really was. I thought what kind of a friend am I? I don't even know his kids names, I've never met them before. I never met their mom.

## You Are Loved Just as You Are, Not as You Should Be

I don't know what he's been up with. Could I have helped him? And I'm just seeing these pictures at the funeral, lots of them, with just Brennan and I together because we were attached at the hip.

And it was this one line that I heard from his sister at the end. She said so sweetly to me, she said 'you know Brennan always wanted to reconnect with you and be best friends again, but he just wanted to get his life right. He wanted to like beat the substance thing and he would say that once he beat that, he was going to come back and hang out with you again and see you.'

And I remember that line. That line kills me because I would have loved to be friends with Brennan, substance and all. It wouldn't have mattered to me. I would have loved him just as he was. And I, too, felt guilty that we didn't keep that friendship up.

The reason I raise that story is that I think that's something we all struggle with, that one line: I'll reach out to my friends when I get it better. I'll reach out to my kids that I've fallen, when I get my life together. I'll reach out to God when I get my life together. You know the number one reason people leave church is because they have some sin or mistake in their life? But that's the number one time we need to be in church is when we're struggling with those things. It's so important when we look in the mirror that we don't do what my friend was doing where we say I'm only worthy of love and belonging when. I only deserve a friend when I kick this bad habit. I only deserve to be a Christian, or deserve to go to church, or deserve to know God, or deserve to pray when my behavior is like a B+ or better. Can I tell you that most of the Bible heroes did way worse than a B+? I mean you just look at example after example. Abraham gave his wife away to Pharaoh saying she was his sister because he didn't want to get killed. What a coward! And you look at list after list. Jacob tricking his way into his inheritance, and King David killing a guy so he could have like a thousandth wife. I mean it's crazy, it wasn't that many, but you just look and you see in the scriptures that God loves imperfect people who have this one thing and this one thing alone: faith. That despite all my imperfections, all the things I don't like about myself, all of my shortcomings, I believe that God can get me to my destiny. Not by my power, and not by my will, but by His grace. And we certainly have that grace. We see it in Christ crucified. Amen?

We can believe in all our heart that God's not going to turn His back on you when you make a mistake. That's what the scripture says. There's this one passage I love so much. Paul says, this is a good saying, and it ends with "even when we are faithless, God remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself." Isn't that a good word?

Even when we make mistakes, even when we fall, as long as we continue to turn our eyes to Him, our life will get better. God's not rejecting you. He's not angry at you. He loves you just as you are.

Yes, God wants us to do better. He wants us to be moral people, that's important. It's super important but that only comes, ironically, when let go of trying to find our identity in what we do.

Reminds me of a story about this foster girl. Apparently she was, as a child, bounced around a lot of different homes, and her behavior would get bad and she would be sent back to the foster care program, and she just kept bouncing back and forth. Every place she went, she wasn't truly a family member, she was just a well behaved guest. But the second she stopped being so well behaved, if she got out of hand, or got too emotional, or made a mistake, or painted the cat purple, she'd go back to the foster care home.

And finally one day a family adopted her, and they said no matter what you do, you're not a well behaved guest, you're our daughter. We want to make a promise to you that no matter how bad you get, you will always be our daughter. We're adopting you. We want you to know that if you mess up, yes you might get punished, you're going to be disciplined, you're going to get time outs and whatever, but they had her actually sign a contract. They pulled it out and they signed it and she signed it. And then you know what the first thing she did was? She started testing it. I don't believe it. I don't believe this one bit. Started doing all sorts of naughty things and she got disciplined, and she got grounded, but she never was abandoned. Never. And eventually she came around and her behavior got better. Why? Because her behavior wasn't about being a daughter, her behavior wasn't about having a home, about trying to earn her way into her house, her behavior came from a place of love and belonging. And no matter what she did, yes there would be consequences and things like that, but she would never be cast out. They would always be her parents.

Friends, this is what the Lord did with you. He signed a contract in the blood of Jesus Christ with your life. If you believe in that, there's nothing you can do to un-belong. We must become the kind of people who learn and know the love of God so deeply and so richly that our life becomes a response to that love, rather than trying to earn it. Does that make sense? We want to build our life as a response to His love.

## You Are Loved Just as You Are, Not as You Should Be

It's like dating. I mean imagine like two kids in high school that are dating and like going up to that girl and saying hey, I really feel like you need to talk more about your boyfriend. I really feel like you need to go on more dates with him and call him and text him more. Or going to the boy and saying, hey I really need you to talk more about how pretty your girlfriend is, right? It's silly. All they do is talk about each other, they can't hang up the phone. It comes from a place of love; it comes from a place of intimacy. When you have two teenagers that love each other as an example of the passion that comes from a place of love. You don't have to tell them to go on dates. You have to tell them to like chill out, right? You have to tell them to take a break, to hang up.

Shouldn't that be what our faith should be like, in part? Our passion and our love from God should be natural. People shouldn't have to tell us to do things; that it would just naturally come from who we are because we know we're loved? That's the kind of life we want to live.

I want you to know that holiness is rooted in intimacy not will power. Holiness doesn't come from white knuckling and trying harder, holiness comes from a deep, awesome relationship with God where you know with all your heart He loves you.

Friends, He does love you. He'll never turn His back on you. He'll never, ever turn His back on you. Isn't that good news? And I talk about this a lot, but it's worth bringing up in this message again, but before I finish with this word, I want to acknowledge that it is good to confess our sins from time to time. In fact whenever we do an altar call, I always ask people to confess their sins; confess it to a neighbor. But then I also ask them to confess their righteousness.

And let me tell you it was interesting for me to find out that with all the confessing of our sins that we do in the church, the apostle Paul never once tells the church to confess their sins. Did you know that? The Apostle Paul, who wrote almost the majority of the New Testament, he tells us yes, that sin separates us from God, that sin kills, that sin can harm us, that sin is bad for society or whatever, but he never says to confess our sins. Neither does Jesus. Paul, in fact, tells us to confess our righteousness, our justification. He tells us to confess the Lordship of Jesus but never our sins.

In fact there are only two places in the Bible where it says to confess your sin. One is in James and the other is in 1st John. Those are both books that were written towards the end on a timeline of the Bible.

So it almost feels that the confession of sins was not a normative practice in the liturgy of the early church but that in fact confessing ones righteousness, or confessing the Lordship of Jesus truly was. The reason I say this is not to say stop confessing your sins as much as start confessing good stuff, too. Confess good stuff over your life the way the scriptures tell us to. You say over yourself I'm a dirty rotten sinner, I'm a horrible person. You're not supposed to be doing that because by faith what you believe becomes true. If you believe you're a dirty, rotten, rejectable sinner, you will live like a dirty, rotten, rejectable sinner. But if you believe you're justified, saved, loved, called, and you believe it with all your heart, watch as your life and even your behavior changes.

Paul says, "He who knew no sin became sin that we could be called" dirty rotten filthy sinners. No! Paul says, "He who knew no sin became sin that we could be called" what? "The righteousness of God in Christ Jesus." You are the righteousness of God. The Bible says you are the righteousness of God. Believe it, confess it, proclaim it because holiness does not come from shame, holiness comes from grace. Amen.

So, yes, we confess our sins, but we confess our calling, and we confess our righteousness, and we confess our salvation as a good work of Jesus Christ, not something that we can do but something He did for us.

This like self-emulation that happens so much in religion reminds me very much of like what I picture as a courthouse of heaven. Imagine you're in a courthouse and everybody's looking at the judge, and you're on trial, and the prosecutor is the devil, the mangy old devil. Right? That's what the Bible calls him. He is what? The persecutor of the brethren, he's the prosecutor. He is the district attorney, and he's pointing at you, and he says your honor, she is addicted to pain pills and she's really jealous of that lady at her job, and she's mean to her kids, oh and by the way, did you hear what she said to her sister?

And then the Bible says, Jesus is our advocate, so then you have Jesus as your attorney, and He stands up before the judge and He says no your honor, she's forgiven, she's chosen, she's justified, she is the righteousness of God, the price has been paid, this is a done deal. And then you interrupt Him and you're like, no your honor, he's right. He's right.

Very often, we do that, we undermine our attorney Jesus. We try and like undo the good that He's trying to do in our life by bullying ourselves and beating ourselves up, and that is not the gospel. The

## You Are Loved Just as You Are, Not as You Should Be

gospel is that not by our works. That when we were lost in our sin, when we were totally outside of the kingdom of God, He made a way and that way can't be undone. You are God's beloved sons and daughters. He loves you. You're not alone. You're not abandoned. You're not unwanted. You are worthy of love and belonging just as you are and not as you should be. And believing this is at the heart of becoming emotionally healthy and bonding deeper with other people.

I want to encourage you as the weeks go on, to say this confession, especially the first bit: I'm not what I do, I'm not what I have, I'm not what people say about me. I'm the beloved of God. I want to encourage you in your prayers to say these things over your life and watch as it can heal your soul, if you believe it.

And so Lord, we come before you in Jesus' name, and we thank you, God that you love us; that you've called us and chosen us. And that, yes, Lord you want us to be good people, you want us to do what's right, but most of all, the same way we want our kids to know we love them, you want us, Lord to know you love us and we do. We believe it. So we just proclaim today that we are the righteousness of God. We proclaim today that we are justified. We proclaim today that we are worthy of love and belonging. We proclaim today that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Not height, not depth, not anything, not angels or demons, nothing can separate us from the love of God. We thank you, Lord, and we trust in you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

### BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

May the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you and upon all whom you hold dear here and everywhere, this day and forevermore. Amen.