

Hour of Power Deutschland
Steinerne Furt 78
86167 Augsburg

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

E-Mail: info@hoursofpower.de
www.hoursofpower.de

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

BAN:
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz
Poststr. 8
3594 Güttingen
Tel.: 071 690 07 81
info@hoursofpower-schweiz.ch
www.hoursofpower-schweiz.ch

Spendenkonto:

PostFinance AG, 3030 Bern
Konto: 61-18359-6
BAN:
CH1609000000610183596

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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. Good morning.

HS: Hello visitors and church family. It is a joy to be with you. And did you know that God is the only one who can see the big picture of your life? You can trust Him. You really can.

Thank you so much for being here today. You are so loved.

BS: That's right. Let's pray: Father, we thank you so much that you've called us into your house. Lord, we pray that we'd be sensitive to the moves of your Holy Spirit; Lord that as you're calling us to be faithful in our work, in our parenting, in our being a friend, and the things that we do, Lord, that you would continue to show us that it's exactly where we need to be. Help us to be where you are; that's the best place to be, Lord, and we thank you. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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

SCRIPTURE – Isaiah 6:1-8 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Isaiah 6:1:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory."

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and the thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am. Send me!"

Church family, we are allowing God's goodness to spur us to deeper faithfulness. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER – Bruce Cramer

Will you stand with me as we pray? Father, we come to you today, we stand in reverence and awe of you. You truly are holy, God, and we are not. We are people of unclean lips and unclean hearts and unclean actions. We need the purity and the life and the holiness that you bring to us in your Son Jesus. Only He deserves to be our good shepherd, the one who directs our lives and our paths.

Father, we are humbled by your presence today and just ask for your blessing and your anointing. Direct us by your spirit, we pray, in Jesus' name, and all God's people said amen.

You may be seated.

PREP FOR OFFERING – Chad Blake

As we come to our time of offering, I'm taken back to being a little kid when my dad would give me a quarter for the offering. And then I got a little older and I started getting jobs and making some money so he started teaching me what a tithe was, what it is to give ten percent, and that everything we have is from God. And it was great. So when I earned five dollars for a lawn, giving fifty cents was pretty easy.

Building a Vision for Your Life

When I got my first paycheck in like high school and college of a hundred dollars, ten dollars didn't seem like much. But then I got my first real job after college. And it was a ministry job, so I didn't make a lot, but my first check came and I still remember, it was like \$490 and I was all excited. Look at all that money. And then I thought about wait: what is a tithe? Well I can't just give \$49, I have to kind of round up for God. So I have to give him \$50 and I'm like that seems like a lot of money now. But I wrote that check anyway on Saturday night for Sunday and then I started thinking about it: wait, my rent is due here this week. Its \$420. I only have \$20 left for two weeks. Food, gas, \$20. Now it was a long time ago, so you could do a lot with that, but still, my spiritual gift is eating, okay? So I was in trouble.

So I went to church, I gave my offering, I was busy that day and that night so I didn't really think about it till the next morning, I was driving to the office and I started to get concerned again – Lord, how's that \$20 going to stretch for two weeks? I walked into the office and Marcia, the secretary said, oh Bruce, I need to catch you and go over something with you. She said since you're new here to the church, people want to get to know you. They want to have you over for dinner, so I've scheduled you pretty much every night for the next month that ended up being two months for dinners. Not only did the Lord provide for me and feed me, but I had so much leftovers, I had to invite other people over to eat all of that food.

And so today as the ushers come to take up our tithes and offerings, may you feel the bountiful blessing of God as you freely give to Him.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, will you hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving, 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. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Building a Vision for Your Life "

Do you ever feel like you are surviving? Like you're treading water? Very easy in life when we're just trying to obey God, we're just trying to be a good person, we're trying to be faithful, to feel like life is just this cycle or treadmill that we can't seem to get ahead. Very often it's in those times we wonder has God abandoned us? Has God left us? And very often in those times in our fear, in our disappointment, in our anguish, we think maybe God's far from us. And today I want to talk about the importance if that's where God has you, if you truly believe where it is, to trust that God can use that place to make you into the best version of you. Today my recommendation to you is to be faithful to what God has called us to.

It's very hard to do that in our world because, as Americans or wherever it is that you live, it's easy to feel like I'm always comparing myself to other people. I don't know if you do that, but I do that. I compare myself to other pastors and their churches and what they do. And of course we never compare down, we always compare up. That's okay. And moms compare with other moms. Dads compare with other dads. Friends compare with other friends. If you're single, you might compare yourself to your friends that are married. If you're married but don't have children, you might compare yourself to those who have kids. Maybe you want that great job and you're not getting it.

And you know things have gotten even worse because our world continues in its success and affluence to become more prideful and vain. In other words, people don't mind showing it off a little bit. Accidentally, of course.

Someone.. a commentator once said recently that.. he was an older guy, he said 'back in my day, you used to open the newspaper and read it and read about all the horrible things that are happening around the world, and a horrible thing that happened to some guy, and you'd say man, I'm glad I'm not that guy.' And he said 'but today, it's the opposite. You open Facebook and Instagram and all you see is all of these people posting their best life ever. Few people post themselves weeping. Few people post themselves being unable to pay that bill. Few people post them sitting on the couch watching TV feeling lonely.' And so when we get on Instagram and we see all these people in our life, or on Facebook, all these people in our life that seem like they have it all together, it's hard to continue to get up in the morning and do your job. It's hard to be a good mom, a good dad, a good grandparent. You wonder is this where God really has me? Sometimes He doesn't have you there, but sometimes He does. Sometimes He's called you to be faithful right where you are. Sometimes He's called you to the desert. Sometimes He calls you to the fire.

Building a Vision for Your Life

Maybe you're going through suffering, even, right now. Maybe things are harder than they've ever been. You think has God abandoned me? He'll never abandon you and I want you to know that whatever it is you're going through, if you continue to be faithful and trust in the Lord, and just do the next right thing, do what He's called you to do, your fire will become a crucible. You know what a crucible is, right? It's that clay thing that you put metal into, alloys to separate the metal. It's purifying. It's what you use to purify gold; to purify silver so that only the best comes out. Perhaps God is doing that in your life today.

Let me tell you something: God cares more about who you're becoming than where you're going. God cares more about your character than your success. God cares more about making you who you need to be than He does about getting you where you need to go.

The stories tell us this all over the place in the Old Testament. And this is just who God is. And by the way, God is never in a hurry. How old was Abraham before we hear anything about his life. Seventy. How old is Abraham when he receives the promise from God? Seventy. Now seventy today is not that old but in his day, seventy was like really old. If you lived to be seventy.. if you lived to be fifty or sixty in a world of sickness and pestilence and war, you were a lucky, blessed man.

So here is he a seventy-year-old man in the twilight of what he thinks is the twilight of his life, and God makes him this promise that he's going to have kids who are going to bless the whole world. It's crazy. And you know what the Bible says? It says that Abraham believed God and it was accredited to him as faith. He trusted God! I serve the kind of God that will let me do the life I'm having, and just be the person I am, and then at seventy call me to something great. Oh by the way, how long was it before God fulfilled that promise? Anybody know? Thirty years.

So how long was Abraham faithful to God's promise before it was fulfilled? Thirty years. Now thirty years, when you're seventy is a lot scarier than thirty years when you're say twenty.

He was a hundred years old when God fulfilled the promise. Just to let you know, stay faithful to what you're doing. God still does great things in your life. It doesn't matter how old you are, how young you are, be faithful where you are. Trust God. Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and He will get you where you need to go because He will make you who you need to become.

And this is the message of Isaiah 6, which is such a great story. It is the calling of the prophet Isaiah to prophesy against the wickedness of Israel, and Israel truly was wicked at this time. You know Israel is supposed to be God's people called to be a blessing to the whole world. When Israel builds the temple, the temple is supposed to be like a new Eden, a new garden, in fact all this symbolism is garden images to show that the garden is being remade in God's people as they pursue righteousness and goodness and love of God and love of their neighbor.

And by the time Isaiah begins to prophesy, Israel has bowed down to Baal which is this satanic god. They've turned their back on widows and orphans, and the most vulnerable in their communities. And they've even gotten so evil as to offer child sacrifices to these Baal idols and these asherapoles. And God finally says enough. Enough! My people would do this.

And so Isaiah begins to prophesy against the people of Israel, and the message is this theme purifying fire. Everybody say purifying fire. You see it all through Isaiah, this idea of this crucible type fire. Not a fire that kills, but a fire that purifies. A fire that burns, that hurts, that's hot, that you don't like, but a fire that makes you who you're supposed to be. And this is the theme that Isaiah is saying, this fire is going to come, and actually, the fire is God Himself, that God Himself is going to be among them, and that His holiness and His love and compassion will be so illuminating and hot and powerful, that it will, in a burning way, burn away the sins of Israel.

Fire is always a symbol for God in the Old Testament, almost always. You think of Abraham who walks in a covenant with a fire, you think of the pillar of fire in the wilderness, and the fire on Sinai, and the chariot of fire, and the fire that comes down with Elijah. You go on and on, a million examples, but fire is God. It's the real presence of God. And so this idea for Isaiah is that God, as fire, will be among us and it will hurt, but it will not destroy us. It will bring us life. It'll make us who we're supposed to be.

And so this all comes to the calling of Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6. Now in Isaiah 6, he begins by saying in the year King Uzziah died. Any of his contemporaries reading this, they know who King Uzziah was. King Uzziah was the one who led Israel for fifty years and brought fifty years of peace, righteousness, goodness. He was one of the few really good kings. He did not turn his back on the widow and the orphan. He did not bow down to idols. And he loved the Lord with all of his heart, and God blessed his people because of the leadership of their king.

Building a Vision for Your Life

He's known as the leper king because though he was a good king, he was certainly flawed, and his great flaw was that he saw himself as super righteous. And so one day he wanted to go into the temple to burn incense and this is something that only the priests are allowed to do. But I think.. this is me talking.. that maybe he thought he was so holy and so righteous that he himself could make this offering even though he wasn't a priest. And just as he's about to lay the incense on the altar, there's this earthquake and a crack breaks in the temple, and a little bit of light comes through, and the beam of light that goes across the middle his face, becomes leprosy. It's a symbol of him being unclean. And so for the rest of his life, King Uzziah rules from his home because to be kosher, you're not allowed to be in the temple, you're not allowed to be in these different places.

Okay. So the year King Uzziah dies is just right when Israel begins to turn its back on God, and five years after his death, Assyria begins to invade. Okay. So he says the year King Uzziah died, he says I was in the temple. Now picture this temple. It's not a lot larger, the actual temple part, than the sanctuary we're in now, made of stone, cubic kind of a shape, and dark on the inside. Some windows, but they're small and they have curtains over them, so picture a dark space with oil lamps and candles so there's dim light going against the thing, and there's people in there, and they're worshipping and they're having some kind of a maybe temple sacrifice or something like that. And it's a normal day. They're worshipping. And Isaiah is a normal guy.

And all of a sudden, I picture that there begins to be a trembling and that a dark scary feeling comes over the place. Maybe some of the candles flicker out. And then all of a sudden there's smoke, it begins to fill the temple. The word for holy in Hebrew is Kadosh. Everybody say Kadosh. And all of a sudden you start to hear Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh. And then out of the smoke, BOOM! This big bright light with beams coming through the smoke comes and the whole temple is filled with the train that comes off of the robe of a king, and glory fills the whole temple.

And then as Isaiah looks up and all the people look up, above this thing that is God, this fiery light in smoke, there are these angels called seraphim. Everybody say seraphim. Hebrew in seraphim, it literally means "the burning ones." Tradition says that their wings or their whole bodies were on fire, that purifying fire, right? And they're flying around these beams of fire in this dark space, light shooting out, and they say holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory. In Hebrew its Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh.

And it says that every time they say this word Kadosh, the pillars tremble, dust comes from the ceiling, cracks form, everything is trembling as he goes Kadosh! Kadosh! Kadosh Adonai-Elohim, tzevaot. That word, tzevaot is armies. God of armies, God of war, God of fire, God of wrath, right? So there's this BOOM, BOOM, and everybody is scared out of their mind. All I'm trying to say is it was very freaky. It's a theophany. It's a theophany, not a vision. It's a total revelation of God's presence and everybody is terrified. Imagine what you would do. What would you do?

Well I'll tell you what Isaiah did. He freaked out. And I imagine him on his knees in total submission, says out loud, woe is me! For I am what? Ruined! I'm going to die! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the king, the Lord Almighty. Nobody sees God and lives. He is scared out of his mind, and one of these fiery beings that has six wings, six over its eyes so that they won't see the glory of the Lord, six on its back and six on its feet. And totally aflame like a ball of fire, goes and takes tongs and pulls a coal out of the fire, holds it in his hand, and this seraph starts flying right at Isaiah, this thing hissing in its hand.

And Isaiah's like I'm going to die! And this angel comes up to him and takes this coal and presses it. Think of it as like a light, like just goes right on his mouth. Do you think it hurt? I think it did. I don't think he was fire proof. Do you? That wasn't a heavenly coal, that was a coal from the actual temple altar that was used to burn and melt things. And this angel presses it on his mouth. Do you think it scarred his mouth? I hope it did.

I remember once talking with my buddies about the.. we were joking and talking about the difference between like embarrassing scars and cool scars. And we'd created this whole scale. I forget, there was one that was really bad, but like at the bottom, like the ones that are most embarrassing, maybe acne scars. I've got some of those. And then we had like medium scars, surgery scars, things like that. And at the top was shark bite. We couldn't think of anything cooler than a shark bite scar. One guy suggested maybe a gun wound from like a veteran. And we're like oh, that's probably tied. And then I think of this. Imagine how cool a scarred face from a seraphim who's pressed a coal on your face. That would be very cool. Anyway. So this angel presses a coal on his lips, and then throws the coal aside, and he looks at him and he says, by doing this, your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for. What do you think happens in his mind there? Whoa, what?

Building a Vision for Your Life

What does unclean lips mean, by the way. We often think cussing. Really in the Jewish mind, that's not it. Unclean lips is going to be something like lying, abolishing the law, maybe bearing false witness or dishonoring his parents. He probably did something that was really harmful to someone through speaking. And it was something that he carried a lot, a weight, a shame. Maybe it's something that he couldn't fix. Maybe it was something that was done to someone who already died, and he couldn't say he was sorry.

For whatever reason, Isaiah had carried around this guilt, and he knew that to be in the presence of the God of fire, that he would be consumed. He would be the chaff that would be burned away. He would not remain. But God revealed Himself, not as a fire that destroys, but a purifying fire. Isaiah was the first one to receive that purifying cleansing fire. Yes it hurt, yes it burned, maybe it scarred, but it took away his sin, it took away his shame, and in that moment he was a new man. I believe that angel looked at him with love; the love that comes from the heart of the Father. He didn't say it's okay what you did. He said it's been atoned for through pain.

And then Isaiah goes from I'm going to die, to I've been totally redeemed and forgiven. That's an amazing feeling. If you've never been forgiven of something horrible, there's nothing quite like it. Like Jesus once tells a story when He's ministering to teachers of the law, and religious leaders in His community and a prostitute comes in and begins to wash His feet. He basically ignores her, and He does it as a teaching element, and people say if Jesus knew who this woman was, and He was a prophet, He would not let her wash His feet.

And they begin snickering, and then knowing all of this is happening, Jesus asks Peter a question. He says Peter, there was a man who was owed five denari, and another man who was owed five hundred denari, and he forgave both men. Who do you think loved Him more?

And Peter looks at Jesus and he says the one who was forgiven of the great sum. And He says that's right. He who has been forgiven of little loves little. He who has been forgiven of much loves much.

I think when Isaiah's mouth, when his sin was atoned for by the purifying fire that he will prophesy about later, his heart is full of love for God and I believe he goes from absolute terror to absolute adoration of the throne of God. He goes from I'm going to die, to I'm redeemed, I'm forgiven, I'm saved. Maybe he begins to say Kadosh! Kadosh! Kadosh! Adonai-Elohim, adonai, tzevaot.

And then God finally speaks for the first time, and in the temple, remember, there's a bunch of people there. They're all standing around witnessing this amazing thing, and God says aloud – who will go for us? Whom shall we send? Doesn't say where they're going. Doesn't say why. Doesn't say when. He's just asking for obedience. He's asking for a hero. He's asking for someone that will do whatever this thing is. And I believe nobody said anything because they were scared out of their mind. But Isaiah, whose heart had been changed through this act from this angel, full of joy and love for God, says I will do anything for you. And he just raises his hand, maybe he stands up, and he says here I am! Send me! Send me, I'll go!

And then God says to him, I'm sending you to your people Israel, and they're not going to listen to you. You're going to preach to them about the poor, and they're going to shut their ears. You're going to preach to them about the orphans and the widows, and they're going to calcify and harden their hearts. You're going to preach to them against idolatry, and against child sacrifice, and they're going to hate you, and not one person is going to listen to you, and not one person is going to repent ever. I don't know about you, but to me, that sounds like a call to failure. If God called me to plant a church no one would attend, to preach sermons no one would listen to, to go on missionary trips where no one would be saved, would I really want to do that? Could I do that? Would you? If God called you to fail, would you obey? Some of us say yes, but why? Why?

I can tell you why Isaiah did it – because he loved God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength, he loved God and trusted God, and it was accredited to him his righteousness.

And so Isaiah says okay, I'll go, I'll preach to people and no one will listen. And then he asks a question with chutzpah, which is this great Hebrew word that's taken on a weird thing today. But its faith. And he says how long? And God basically says forever. Until the Babylonian exile. And Isaiah says all right, I'm going.

And this is Isaiah's call. It is a call to be faithful, to trust, that if I am going somewhere where people are going to hate me, where no one's going to listen to me, where according to the world standard I'm going to achieve nothing, I'm going to trust that it's okay because my life is for an audience of one. I don't want the applause of anyone else. I just want His applause. And I trust that if I live for Him, that in the end, I will know it was worth it.

Building a Vision for Your Life

And I'll be glad that I didn't pursue all the vain, lifeless things that promise so much and deliver so little. There's nothing like following the Lord in the desert. There's nothing like being with God in the fire. There's nothing like being totally isolated and feeling completely alone, but right there, Jesus Christ meets you and puts His arm around you, and says I'm your brother. You're never alone when you're with me. I'll protect you, my sister. I'll protect you, my brother. I love you.

See that's what God does when we go through tough times. You know in the Old Testament, Egypt is rarely called Egypt. It's always called Pharaoh's land. Everybody say Pharaoh's land. And then the lush part of Israel, Galilee, you'd think that would be called God's land, right? No, it's called Israel's land. Everybody say Israel's land. Guess what the desert is called? Guess what the desert is called? God's land! The desert is God's land. The place where without Him you'll die. This is where the law is given. This is where Jesus goes when He's tempted.

And some of you are in the desert right now. You're there right now. And you want to get out of there. You're hot, you're dying, you're in danger. There are scorpions. You're completely alone. You're out of water. You don't know what's coming next. And God is telling you stay faithful. Let the sun in this desert be unto you as a purifying fire. Let it bring something to you that you can only get here in this place. Don't endure all this suffering and return back to Judea or Galilee empty-handed. Wait long enough for me to fulfill my promise.

And so that's my encouragement to you, friends, is that whatever you're going through it's in those times of difficulty that we recognize God is with us. You might think that everything you're doing with your kids is a failure.

You might think everything you're doing in your business or your ministry, or all these things, you're like I've just been on this treadmill for so long, God is saying stay faithful, my daughter, stay faithful, my son. Do what I've called you to do. Become who I've called you to become and I will get you where you need to be.

So Lord we ask it in Jesus' name. You say when we lack faith, ask for it, so we ask for it, Lord. Give us faith. Help us, Lord, to be like Abraham that at the age of seventy, for thirty years in the desert, he endured difficulty. Help us to be like Isaiah when he's called to fail, almost. And we see Isaiah with such a great success, actually, that even now, we look at his words and we're inspired, and he's maybe the most quoted prophet by Jesus; he changed the whole world because he knew you didn't call him to failure by world standards, but he knows, Lord, that you always call us, even though it doesn't look like it, to greatness. Lord, we thank you and we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.