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Hour of Power - 03.10.2021

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. Hello! We're so glad that you're here. Haven and Hannah are in Tulsa at a summer camp, so I brought Cohen today. Say "Hello".

COHEN: Cohen

BS: Cohen, yeah. This is my son Cohen and he's going to be helping me today. We're a family ministry so we love to do this together. And we're so glad that you're here today, wherever you are, we're just so grateful that you're gathering with us and I believe that God's going to do something special in your life today. We got some new lights. I don't know if you can tell but the choir and the orchestra are lit much better. Can you guys see okay? Nice, all right, sounds good. We're so grateful for all of that, and of course really excited to have Voices of Hope in the house today. Can't wait to hear from them. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much for all that you've done in our lives. We thank you, God, that you our Father, that you have gathered us here together as your children, and we thank you that in the midst of our challenges and sometimes squabbles and sometimes real, hard difficulties, we thank you, God, that you love us and forgive us. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen. Turn around to your neighbor and shake their hand or give them a hug or don't do anything and just say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Matthäus 24,5,10-14 – Chad Blake

In preparation of today's message, hear the words of our Lord found in the gospel of Matthew: For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. This is the word of our Lord.

Gebet – Chad Blake

You know some of the best imagery in scripture is.. God talks about being our father, but this is the one that made me a father. You might have heard him screaming in the back and I look a little sweaty today because he's two and a half and he has his own mind. But would you join me and Lewis in prayer?

Father, we come before you and thank you that you are a good, good Father. That you are the best example of a father. Some of us have been blessed with amazing earthly fathers that show your love to us each and every day and each and every moment. And you, you trump all of that. Your love for us is so incredible. So Lord, we declare your goodness. We think about.. we think about you and all that you do in our lives, we thank you for family we thank you for little babies. Lord, you are good. Father, we pray for our church, we pray for all of those who are gathered here, we pray for community, we pray for revival to break forth in this place. We pray for us to put your love on display. Lord, we remember all of those serving your church around the world today. May they be lifted up; may they feel our prayers and our love coming from our direction. And Lord, we pray for Pastor Bobby and the message that you have placed on his heart. May we have ears to hear and hearts that are open to what you are doing in our midst, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

The Crusaders & Misguided Faith

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Would you stand with us? We're going to say this creed together as we always do. Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Holy Spirit. 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. Amen!

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "The Crusaders & Misguided Faith"

Today I am going to talk about how to kill God. Are you a fan of riddles? I am. My favorite riddle that I love to tell people, especially intelligent people, goes a little like this: What's greater than God, worse than evil, the rich require it, the poor have it, and if you eat it, you die. You need me to say it one more time? Listen closely. What's greater than God, worse than evil, the rich require it, the poor have it, and if you eat it, you die. When you say the answer, you'll know it's right. If you're not sure it's right, it's not right. I used to love and still love telling this riddle to my friends, and I would say I went a whole year testing, especially my most intelligent, philosophical friends with this riddle, and the first one to get it right was this guy: my ten-year-old nephew. And he just looked at me and he said "nothing!" See all he had to do was answer the first question. And as a ten-year-old, he understood nothing is greater than God, nothing is worse than evil, the rich require nothing, the poor have nothing, and if you eat nothing, you die. It's our tendency, isn't it, to over think simple messages, simple problems. It's the trappings of the so called intelligent to be sort of lost in the weeds. When I say today we're going to talk about how to kill God, I hope you know obviously no one can kill God, and nobody thinks that. You have to be as dumb as Nietzsche to think you can kill God. But there is something, there is a way that the Hebrew people said that you could, in a way, kill God. When we read the Bible as many of us are westerners, maybe you're watching in a place like Hong Kong or the Middle East and so maybe you don't align as much with what I'm about to say, but for those of you who are American, European, Australian, New Zealand, western thinking people think, speak and in fact read very differently than eastern people do, especially the Jews of the near east in the first century. When we read the Bible, we need to think like these people behind me, this lovely family is a Bedouin family that lives somewhere in the near east, and they are more than likely to think the right way when they read the scriptures. There are some obvious examples but the ones that stand out most to me look a bit like this. I think number one: westerners love the abstract, and easterners or I should say Middle easterners or the authors of the Bible, love what's concrete. The irony here is what we think is concrete is actually abstract. Let me give you an example. The Bible will say something like God is a rock! Or it'll say God is my fortress to where I run when I'm in trouble. Or God is living water! Or the Holy Spirit is a fresh wind and a fire. Right? And so these are all images you can picture concretely. You could draw a picture of it, you could describe it, but we as westerners love to use abstract language. We like to say when an easterner says God is a rock; we love to say oh God is omnipotent. That is a very abstract, philosophical word that isn't even in the Bible. God is omnipresent, omniscient, immutable. These fun words. Nothing really wrong about that, but the irony is that in trying to get clarity, we actually make concrete ideas more abstract. Even an abstract word like love. If I were to say to you describe to me love, or what do you think of when you think of love, which is an abstract word. All of you are going to think something different. You might think of a boyfriend or a girlfriend. You might think of caring for the poor. You might think of a friendly gesture towards a friend you see at the grocery store. So in that way, the word love for you is abstract. But if I, like a middle eastern Jew, say picture a mother holding a baby, well now I'm speaking about something concrete. Yes, its love. But it's not an abstract kind of love, it's a love that all of us can hold onto clearly. As a Bible reader, we must be careful that when we use imagery to convey a point, well we don't get our knickers in a twist, my grandma might say. We don't get all flustered. That we understand that the use of some of these languages is useful and understanding. What the Holy Spirit is trying to reveal to us through the Jewish writers of the Bible. The other thing I notice about the east is that the authors of the Bible love questions in a way that we westerners don't. We love to answer questions. Middle eastern Jews love to answer questions with questions, and respond to those questions with more questions. A great example, Ran Vanderlin who tries to help westerners understand Hebrew side of the Bible, told this great story about a lady from Michigan who went with him to Israel and was trying to convey to her this way that the Bible is very concrete and has a lot of questions, and has a lot of mystery. And she kind of wasn't getting it. And then one day she went into a photo shop in Jerusalem, and there were all of these beautiful pictures in this store.

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And she said to the Jewish owner of the shop, 'these are beautiful pictures. Which one is your favorite?' And the man who was maybe smoking a cigarette and put it out and looked at her for a moment, asked her a question in response to her question. He said 'madam, are you married?' And she said 'yes, why?' And then he asks another question. 'Do you have children?' She said 'yes, but why do you ask?' He looked at her and said, 'which one is your favorite?' You see there's just a different way of thinking and talking in the eastern mindset that is exactly how the Bible is written. Too often we try and make this fit our very Socratic, Greek, western way of thinking, when in fact it's good to just learn the language, and start asking more questions, start thinking more like early church Christians who were mostly Jewish, and understanding that this Bible was written by a people who thought about the world in concrete terms, comfortable with what is mysterious, and people who asked a lot of questions. One question they would ask is what's the greatest sin? Now if you're a western Christian, there's like 30% of you who are immediately going to reject this question. You're going to say something like all sins are equal in the eyes of God, which is absolute hogwash. There is no way you can reconcile that statement with scripture, or even with your own conviction. You don't think all sin is equal in the eyes of God, and the Bible doesn't say that. This is not a criticism of you, this is something that we inherited from many of our reformed writers whom I love, by the way. I mean I enjoy. This is something I just disagree on because it's just not located in the Bible. What you do find in the Bible is all sin is bad, all sin separates us from God, and the only way to overcome your sin is Christ crucified and resurrected. That we all agree on. But there is no way you can say in the Bible that at any point the Bible teaches that stealing your neighbor's newspaper is the same as killing a guy. I hope not because I've done that before, and he still doesn't know. It was an accident, okay! How do you accidentally steal someone's newspaper, I'll tell you. You think they're out of town and then you go outside and see that they're home but you're too embarrassed to tell them that you stole the newspaper, and so you decide to just move on with your life, and hope you can make it up to them. It happened like ten years ago. None of us really think that, and the Bible doesn't teach that, right? Jesus says even stuff like anyone who causes a child to sin ought to have a millstone tied around his neck and be thrown and drown in the sea. He doesn't say that about the woman caught in adultery. And so for Jewish people, even today of course, and for a majority of Christians but not all, if you ask what is the worst sin, that's a completely reasonable question to ask. And many of us would jump to something like harming or murdering a child, for example, and that's terrible. But the Jews, the most common answer to this comes from the Ten Commandments, and most Jews would answer with the worst sin in the Bible is taking the Lord's name in vain. Did you know that? Taking the Lord's name in vain. There are a couple reasons for it. The first is that when the Ten Commandments are mentioned, of all the Ten Commandments, that is the only one that the Bible says God will not forgive this sin. He'll forgive murder, He'll forgive not honoring the Sabbath, He'll even forgive you not honoring your parents. I guess that's not funny. I'm looking at you, Haven. Just kidding, my daughter's amazing. But He won't forgive this: taking the Lord's name in vain. But what does that mean? Again, many of us, we think taking the Lord's name in vain means saying oh my God, that was amazing. Like I just did it, right? Just now I did it. And although we want to be careful about using God's name, Yahweh, God's name isn't God, remember. That when we use God's name, that we do it in a sacred way according to our traditions. The true understanding by most Jewish people of taking the Lord's name in vain, actually means doing evil in God's name. If you've gone to church here for a while, or gone to a good Bible preaching church you probably already know this. But that to take the Lord's name in vain means to do something evil and to say it was part of 'God wanted me to do this.' To do something evil and to claim that God wanted you to do it. To steal your neighbor's newspaper and say God told me to steal your newspaper, or whatever. And the Jews said that taking the Lord's name in vain, or actually the word is carry, to carry the Lord's name in vain. All of us, the idea is that all of us, when we were baptized or when we came into covenant with God, we carry this stamp on our chest or whatever, right? This idea that people know I'm a Christian. So when I do evil, and I say it's good, I'm carrying God's name in vain. So the Jews would say, and the first person I ever heard say this was Dennis Prager, and it's a great point. The Jews would say when you kill in God's name, you kill God, as well. Now read this like an easterner. When you kill in God's name, you kill God as well. When you do evil in God's name. When you harm others in God's name. When you under the symbol of a church or a clerical robe or even just holding a Bible in your hand, you do what is evil and you call it good, you sort of kill the idea of God in the person's life whom it's done to, and you kill it in the lives of those who are watching. Can I get an amen? Maybe not.

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If someone has ever killed God in your life, you know why some Jews might say this is the worst sin. I can get through any violence done to me, I can get through any harm done to me, I can get through any challenge in life if I have the Lord by my side. But when I don't believe in God because I don't believe in the people who do evil in His name, no longer do I have the ability to get through the murder of a friend, the betrayal, the stuff that we go through in life. And I want to say to you, if you have had God killed in your life by someone, maybe you were a kid or some pastor or priest or awful person that you just can't bring yourself to call Christ king, I want to say to you the best revenge you can have is to become the kind of Christian you want to see in the world. There's an old saying often attributed to Gandhi – become the kind of person you want to see in the world. So many times I have seen non-believers who look at the history of parts of the church, and say stuff like I love Jesus, but I don't love Christians. And I always want to say to them then become the kind of Christian that's like Jesus! Become the kind of Christian you want to see in the world. In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus says when He's talking about the end times and the end of the world, Jesus answered "watch out that no one deceives you for many will come in my name claiming I am the Messiah and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen but the end is still to come. Nation will rise up against nation. Kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these things are the beginning of birth pains." Just a pause – so often when you read this right now, doesn't it just feel like oh my goodness, the end is nigh. It's strange. "Then you will be handed over and be persecuted and put to death," this is the apostles He's talking to, "and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time, many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." It's interesting how the beginning of that is how many will come in the name of Jesus, or come even claiming to be Jesus, but also coming in His name, claiming to do work in His name, but what they're doing is evil. Let me get to what I really wanted to say. In life you cannot rely on other people to follow Jesus for you. No one can make a decision, no one can be a disciple, no one can commit their lives to Christ on your behalf. God wants you to follow Him just as much as He wants the president, kings, He wants YOU! When God sees you, He sees His child and no one can replace your personal decision to be a disciple, to drop your nets, to drop your old life, to drop everything that you thought and follow Him with all your heart. And a huge danger comes when we convolute our heroes of the faith, and there are many and they're great people, with Christ Himself. No one can be Christ to you except Christ. My challenge for you today is to ask you to follow Christ before you follow any man or woman of faith. To believe that when you pray, God hears your prayer just as much as He would Billy Graham's, if he were still alive, or the Pope, or whatever great hero or great religious miracle worker, or great writer that you have, that your prayers are the same! You're following Him is just as exciting. The Bible says that all the angels in heaven rejoice when one lost person decides to follow Jesus and come home. When we think about the evil that was done in God's name, I think very often it was done because people looked to others: preachers, popes, bishops for what is right and wrong, rather than listening to the Holy Spirit in the word of God that was given to them. The Crusades is a great example. I have to be careful here because one, I want you to know that I love our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters and I think they're wonderful Christians and in grace, so I'm not criticizing Catholicism here, but for me when I start talking about history, it's a bit like putting cheese on pizza. I remember when I.. I'm already wasting time talking about.. not wasting time, but when I learned to make a pizza, I remember the guy was like you got to control yourself, Bobby, just put a little bit of cheese, and I was like (MAKES SWISHING NOISES) you know! I can't see any red sauce through this, and of course it was a gobble of goop. This is a period I love so much. I'm going to try and say this in four minutes. Are you ready? I'm going to do my best. The church, when it was nascent, when it was new and fresh, it was all about, hopefully, ideally, living according to the teachings of Jesus, the Holy Spirit as a branch of Judaism. It believed in non-violence, for example. Believed in sharing with your neighbor and giving to those in need. And something happened when Constantine conquered Rome, I think, this is just Bobby's opinion of history, okay. This is maybe you can reject this, but conquered Rome in the name of Christ. Before he crossed, I think it was the Rubicon, to march on Rome, he said he saw a sign in the sky, a chi-rho, which a lot of times we say the cross, it's an old religious Christian symbol, and to him that was the sign that he was supposed to march on Rome. That was God telling him be Caesar and go to war.

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Constantine then chaired the council of Nicaea. Apparently dressed up like an angel. He was dressed all in gold with wings, and I think the church sort of liked this moving from like this what others called a sort of outside group, cult like people who met in houses or theaters or sometimes were persecuted and had to be in hiding, to now being acceptable. And Cardinals and bishops now had more positions of power. And you see through European history in particular the way that the Roman Catholic church, in particular, continues to meld more and more with the government, and you see how various kings, rulers, empires, and their union between the Pope became this thing where whether it be Clovis or Charles Martel, or Pippen who established the Papal states. I've already put too much cheese on it, haven't I? We get to the Crusades and the Crusades were fought, and hear me out, okay? The Crusades were for sure bad, but if in those days you saw the Crusades when they first started, you might think well maybe it was just. When the Crusades were started, they began, the very first one, to go and defend the Byzantine Empire from invasion. And many Christians in the first century looked at the map of Europe, Africa and Asia, and said in their view, the Muslims have taken over two thirds of the Christian world. When are they going to stop? We have to rise up in arms and defend our people. And what in fact happened is when Pope Urban the second declared these crusades, he went, I think, completely against what the scriptures teach, and this little snowball which seemed like the right thing to do at first to defend a city, became let's conquer Jerusalem. Let's conquer Antioch. Let's conquer Africa. Let's conquer Spain. Let's begin inquisitions. Let's weed out those Jews and those Muslims so you had millions of Muslim and Jewish innocent people, children, women murdered! Burned, hung, impaled because of, and this is Bobby Schuller, okay, all right? This is just Bobby.. this is a history from Bobby Schuller, it's worth the price of admission which was zero dollars, all right? That it's looking at one guy, whether it be a Pope or a bishop or a preacher, and there were preachers who led crusades, or a king to tell me what God thinks, rather than going straight to the source itself. What does the word say? The evil, the taking of God's name in vain that happened so often throughout history, was done because people didn't believe in their own ability to hear from the Lord directly, I think. No one can follow Jesus for you. Maybe you're waiting to make a decision in your life. Today is an awesome time to look at your life and say I cannot live my life anymore without the presence of the Lord, and without the word in my life. I want you to know, Jesus said that there are two paths laid before you, one that leads to life and one that leads to death, and sometimes we confuse this with heaven and hell, it might be that. I don't think it is. I think Jesus is actually teaching us that if we follow Him as disciples, we get eternal life today! A kind of life that is so vibrant, so powerful, so impassioned that when we die, we continue to live. We're just so full of God's life. And I want to offer that to you today. I want to encourage you this morning to not look at people and say 'those Christians,' or 'that lady back in the day,' or 'that preacher' or 'that priest', I want you to know Christ is looking at you today and He's smiling, and He's saying come follow me. You don't have to be perfect, you don't have to have everything right, but start, today, make a decision that you will completely commit your life to following Him, to discipleship. And if you do that, and if you ignore all of the people that took the Lord's name in vain, and you can ignore these things that totally went against what Jesus was all about, you will find that there is so much life in coming to the house of God, and being in His presence and following His way. Do it today, you won't regret it. Father, we love you and we thank you for all you've given to us. We ask in Jesus' name that you would forgive us of our sins and that you would renew us and make us a new creation. Many of us who are here today, Lord, we don't need a new kind of philosophy. We need to be completely made into a new creation. We need the old version of ourselves to die and we need a new version crafted by your loving hands, inspired by your spirit, rained on by your living water. We need to be new creatures. Do that to us, Lord! Do that now in this moment, I pray, that you would radically transform us into the people you've called us to be. We will leave this place and we will never be the same again, and we pray it in Jesus' name, 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 peace in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen.