

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
www.hourofpower.de

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

IBAN:
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz
Seestr. 8
8594 Güttingen
Tel.: 071 690 07 81
info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch
www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch

Spendenkonto:

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

Hour of Power 10.09.2023

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: And welcome visitors and church family. We are so happy to be with you. The Bible says that God needs us to know that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Keep seeking Him with all your heart, my friends. You are loved.

BS: We're so glad you're here and we know God has a good word for you. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much for your Holy Spirit and the gift of your presence here. We pray that you'd help us to become more like your Son Christ and we pray for everybody that's going through a tough time, Lord, that you'd give them all they need to get through what they're going through and cross the Jordan to get to victory. We thank you, Lord, and we love you, it's in Jesus' name, amen.

HS: Amen.

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

SCRIPTURE – Matthäus 17,1-5 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Matthew 17:1 through 5. After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" Amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Whoever you are, would you stand with us? 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: 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 my neighbor. Thanks, you can be seated.

MESSAGE – You Are God's Beloved

I try to say something every single sermon I give now, and that is that your life can change today. Your life doesn't change when the world around you gets better, actually. Very often we think my life will get better when I get a raise. My life will get better when my spouse is nicer to me or when I get married. Or my life will get better when I make more friends. Or my life will get better when I finally find a good church, or my life will get better when this happens or that happens. My life will finally get better when my party is in power. My life will get better when the schools or my jobs or the.. here's when life gets better – I think you know how I'm going to answer this question. Life gets better when what? When you get better. When you get better, life gets better. And that's the hardest thing to change, but it's the thing that's always available to you, and it's available today. You can have any kind of life you want if you work on you. So, we talk a lot about, in this church, about personal change, about personal progress, but the best way to turn your life around is to be turned around from the inside out. Very often we change from the outside in, and there's nothing wrong with that, but the best way is to change from the inside out. That means that you receive a touch from God where you can't explain it, but somehow it's like your DNA has changed. Something in your soul, the deepest core, the part of you has been transformed, renewed, lit a fire.

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Something like that, and slowly over time everything else in your life begins to change. And we call this salvation in Christianity. It's the belief that your sins can be forgiven because Christ was crucified and raised from the dead, and because of that, God fills you with His Holy Spirit, and you're changed from the inside out. I try to say something every single sermon I give now, and that is that your life can change today. Your life doesn't change when the world around you gets better, actually. Very often we think my life will get better when I get a raise. My life will get better when my spouse is nicer to me or when I get married. Or my life will get better when I make more friends. Or my life will get better when I finally find a good church, or my life will get better when this happens or that happens. My life will finally get better when my party is in power. My life will get better when the schools or my jobs or the.. here's when life gets better – I think you know how I'm going to answer this question. Life gets better when what? When you get better. When you get better, life gets better. And that's the hardest thing to change, but it's the thing that's always available to you, and it's available today. You can have any kind of life you want if you work on you. So, we talk a lot about, in this church, about personal change, about personal progress, but the best way to turn your life around is to be turned around from the inside out. Very often we change from the outside in, and there's nothing wrong with that, but the best way is to change from the inside out. That means that you receive a touch from God where you can't explain it, but somehow it's like your DNA has changed. Something in your soul, the deepest core, the part of you has been transformed, renewed, lit a fire, something like that, and slowly over time everything else in your life begins to change. And we call this salvation in Christianity. It's the belief that your sins can be forgiven because Christ was crucified and raised from the dead, and because of that, God fills you with His Holy Spirit, and you're changed from the inside out. And so, my prayer today is that that would happen to you. So, before I even continue with my sermon, I just want to give you an opportunity today to become a disciple of Jesus. To repent and be baptized. To become a completely new kind of person. Maybe you've tried the world's way and you feel like its confused, or it's made things worse in your life, here's what makes things better – trusting your life to the Lord, following His ways, understanding the scripture, and building a life around the spirit of God inside of you. I want to encourage you today to just make a decision where you are that you're going to follow Christ, and if you do that, I want you to text me the word HOPE to the number on the screen so I can pray for you. I want to begin with a very old and very boring story. Can I start with a boring story? Now there are some.. amen, all right. There have been a lot of boring stories that have been told, but most of them don't make it through time. So when you run into a boring story that's 2,000 years old, that means that there is a reason it made it for 2,000 years. The other stories didn't make it because what? Number one, they were boring, and number two, they didn't add any value. There's something valuable about this story. And it goes like this. Famous rabbi name Rabbi Akiva, who's one of the foundational rabbis in Judaism, was so engrossed in God's word, thinking about it, meditating on it, wondering the deep passages and meanings, and he was so engrossed in this time of meditation and reflection on his way home to Capernaum that he missed his own town, and when he was supposed to go right towards the town of Capernaum, he just kept walking straight. And he kept looking at the scroll and he was repeating the words over and over in his mind, and thinking deeper and deeper, just completely engrossed in this experience until he finally ran into a Roman fortress. And he looked at these gates and looked up and from above there was a roman soldier who looked down and said "who are you!? What are you doing here?!" And Akiva, being a good Jew, looked up and said, "what?!" And the centurion looked down and said again, "who are you?! What are you doing here?!" And being a good Jew, he responded to a question with what? A question. He looks up and he says "how much do they pay you to ask men like me questions like that?!" And being a good roman soldier, he replied with – "what?!" He said how much do they pay you to ask that question of people like me? And the Roman soldier said, "two drachma per day." And he said, Akiva, said "I will pay you double that to stand outside the door of my house every day and ask me those two questions every morning: Who are you? What are you doing here?" That's the end of the story. Now why would a story like that make it 2,000 years to reach us today? Perhaps there's something important and even godly about these two questions: Who are you? What are you doing here? Good question. I believe that what they're asking is what is your identity and what's your life's purpose? And the former question always comes before the latter. However we define ourselves will eventually define our life's purpose. The way we see ourselves will define the choices we make, the words we use, the people we spend time with, the attitudes we have, the energy we have, the way we treat others, the way we drive.

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The way we pay our bills or don't pay our bills. Your identity eventually affects everything you see as the purpose and values of your life. It becomes you. Your identity becomes the things you do. As an ogre named Shrek famously once said, "an ogre is like an onion." That's right. An ogre is like an onion. People are like onions, too. And what you see on the outside is not necessarily what's on the inside because people have layers. We all have layers. And what Shrek didn't say is as you pull those layers apart, you start to cry. Right? There's something about digging deep into your identity into who you are. What you're seeing in the world around you when you see people is the outer layer. What you're not seeing, usually, is the inner layer. You got to be married to someone to see that thing, right? You got to be your best friend to see those deeper layers. And so I think what happens is in the same way that a little yeast leavens the whole loaf, a word that's been pressed on you can change your whole life, whether it's from the outside or the inside. I've been calling this, is it weird, maybe this is stupid sounding phrase. I've been calling this identity placebo. An identity placebo. We all know what a placebo is, right? Whenever you study a new medicine, for example, you always want to have a control group, and that separate group is just taking salt or a sugar pill or something, something that is nothing. Because many people in that group are going to get well because they think they're taking a medicine and that way you can see the actual effectiveness of the medication. It's called placebo. So just because of the way they're thinking, they actually get well sometimes. Isn't that strange? Did you know there's also a reverse placebo? This happens a lot in medical school. Maybe you have a relative who always says you're sick, and then all of a sudden you start feeling sick. And in medical school this happens. So a medical student is in school and they're reading all of the different things in symptoms that happen when you have really horrible diseases and start thinking oh man, what if I have cancer or what if I have this. You keep hearing oh if you drink Gatorade, you'll get a headache and all of a sudden you get a headache, right? Shawn Achor tells a story about his brother-in-law who was at Yale Medical School, and he called him one day and he said, "Shawn, I'm getting through medical school but I just discovered I'm pretty sure I have leprosy." And Shawn says that's rare even at Yale. And he said I didn't know what to say to him because he'd just gotten over a week of menopause. And so you can see that this happens in life, you hear something enough in your life over and over, and it actually, if you're not careful, it just becomes true in your life. And this is also true with identity. When someone says something over you or you say it over yourself, you'll find that over time, people change because of it. Imagine this – imagine at your workplace you have a guy named John, and John is known to not be very considerate, right? John, maybe he burps sometimes in the kitchen, doesn't say anything to anybody. Maybe he lets the door close on people who are behind him. Maybe you ask him to do something as a favor and he flatly says no. And so over time, John sort of takes on this identity of others, that he's kind of inconsiderate, or maybe he's even rude. Maybe he doesn't even know that, but people kind of see him that way. And one day you're walking into your office, John's a few steps ahead of you, and he looks over his shoulder and he sees you, and he opens the door for you, and you step through the door and you think to yourself, well that was nice, especially for John. John closes the door and you look back and you say 'hey John, you know what, you are such a polite person. Thank you.' Now listen to these words. Not 'that was a polite thing to do,' but 'John, you're such a polite person.' And imagine for a moment that John hears those words, and believes that – I am a polite person. What do you think will happen to John the rest of that day? Do you think John will open more doors or less doors? More doors. Is he more likely or less likely to burp around the other people in the office? Right? He's less likely, right? Because if John hears that word and believes it, something inside of him, a little part of him starts to change because he's now incorporated a layer in his onion, it's an outer layer but it's still layer, 'I'm a polite person.' And soon you'll start to see that his identity changes. Now imagine same John, opens a door for you, 'John, you're such a polite person,' and he burps in your face. Right? He's rejected that, right? He's not going to change his behavior, but if he hears it and believes, you might find that if that keeps getting reinforced by other people or by you, that within a year's a time, John might be a British gentleman with accent and all. Just everything, right? Just the nicest guy, most polite guy in the world. And that is a strange thing about the human condition. The strange thing is this – you live up to what you call yourself. You will live up to what you call yourself. And this is why we as Christians spend so much time talking about what we call ourselves, and even more importantly, what God calls us. And He calls you His beloved. His treasure. The apple of His eye. The pearl of great price. He loves you. He cares for you. And this is where it brings us to Matthew chapter 17. Now I could do a four-hour course on this, but I won't.

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This is a transfiguration and it's full of a lot. It's got a lot, but I just want to pull one thing from it, but I will try and give you a broad stroke of what's going on. So it's in Matthew chapter 17. Matthew and the gospel writers are trying to show us that Jesus is a new Moses. And they're trying to show you that the transfiguration is a new Sinai experience. You may remember Moses goes up to Mt. Sinai. He waits for six days and on the seventh day God shows up in a bright cloud, speaks to him, gives him the law, and Moses comes down from the mountain, shining like the sun, and has to cover his face to hide the glory. Now look at the parallels. Matthew chapter 17. "After" how many days? "Six days," just like Moses, "Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them to" what? "A high mountain," just like Sinai, "by themselves, and there he was transfigured," which means he was physically changed into a higher level of himself in the way that he looked. "His face shone like the sun, his clothes became as white as the light," so it's just like Moses, right? "And then there appeared before them actually Moses and Elijah." Remember Elijah is the Bible character who actually doesn't die and he's considered the greatest prophet carried into the sky. So "Moses, Elijah talking with Jesus." So they're chatting it up, Jesus, Moses and Elijah, which is reinforcing this idea that Jesus fulfills both the law and the prophets. Peter, because this is what Peter always does when he's nervous, he just starts talking and it doesn't really make any sense, but Peter just says to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here, and if you wish, I'll put up three shelters" or tabernacles, really, "one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." And none of the three guys even look at Peter and they completely ignore him. "While he was still speaking," that is Jesus, "a bright cloud covered them." Exactly the same thing that Yahweh God does when He appears on Sinai, so you can't see God, right? Because anyone who sees God dies, so God appears in a cloud, but it's a cloud full of energy, right? And it covers them, so this cloud just sort of covers Moses, Elijah and Jesus, and so they're just kind of veiled inside of this cloud. "And then a voice from the cloud says, 'this is my son whom I love. With him, I am well pleased. Listen to him.'" And when the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground terrified. Jesus came and touched them, 'get up,' he said. 'Don't be afraid.' And they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus." Okay, now you might remember there are two times in the gospels that you see God appear and speak to Jesus. So if you ever wonder what it would be like to see the Son and the Father having a conversation, just to be like a fly on the wall and hear what they were saying, you get to do that with this scripture. And both times, this is the point I want you to get. Both times when God speaks aloud to the Son in the presence of other people, the first time is when He was baptized in the Jordan River, you remember what happens? Jesus comes out of the Jordan River and what does God say? "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Now some time passes, they've been doing ministry, it happens again, God shows up again, what's the first thing He says? We just read it. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him." It's amazing to me to think that every time they overhear God the Father speaking to God the Son, every time they hear the Father speaking to the Son, they hear "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And the scriptures over and over are effectively trying to get across to us how great God's love is - through the stories, through the scriptures, and that there is something about experiencing this love that gives us power to overcome the world. That the first thing that happens is the core of the onion changes from an enemy of God to a friend of God. From a forgotten distant son to a son or daughter who's at home. To someone who is broken, to someone who is redeemed and healed and rescued and restored. To being the beloved. You are the beloved. I heard Brennan Manning say.. Brennan Manning passed away a few years ago, but a wonderful Christian author, speaker. And he gave this strange reflection and I don't know if I agree with him, but it really challenged me to hear him say this. He said 'after thousands of hours of studying and memorizing scripture, of preaching, hours of prayer and meditation, I am convinced, utterly convinced that when we come before the throne of God, He will ask us one question, and one question alone. He will ask us did you believe I loved you? Do you believe I love you?' And he said 'the true believers will answer yes, I believed it and I built my whole life in response to that one truth. But there will be others who will say I kind of believed it but not really. I went to church, I read the books, but I never believed it in my heart and so I was always struggling to prove myself.' It's an interesting thought, and this is why Paul even writes in Ephesians, he prays that the Holy Spirit will come into your life so that you can understand how high, how deep and how wide is the love of God for you, the love of Christ, that is incomprehensible. It's beyond understanding. That the only way to get it is if the Holy Spirit does a miracle in your life. That's the only way to get how amazing and how deep and how awesome God's love is. But a lot of Christians, we don't have that attitude towards God. We're like if I've got a B-plus or better then I'm in. If not, I'm out.

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So what God's asking us to do is to recklessly, in just a crazy way, just believe that despite my setbacks and my sin and my mistakes and everything else, that the cross was good enough and more than enough to rescue me. And that in a weird way, this is what Paul teaches us, you sort of trade places with Jesus, that He becomes sin and you become the righteousness of God. And that's how God sees you. Not because you earned it, but because Christ earned it for you. So that there's this amazing experience where despite all of your mistakes and setbacks and flaws, you can look in the mirror with confidence and faith on this because this is the contract that I am the beloved daughter or son of God. I am the beloved child of God. And to say it with faith and to say it with confidence because it's true. It's true. And the reason this is so important that we identify first and foremost not with our achievements or our mistakes, but first with the fact that we're God's beloved is because you live up to what you call yourself. You just do. Whatever you truly think you are, whatever you call yourself to others, to yourself in the mirror, you will live up to it eventually. You can see it time and time again. I'll give you a few examples of how this works out. What you call yourself is who you become. I remember when I was a kid, there was a member of my family, not either of my parents; they always think it's them. A lady in our family, every time I saw her, she would call me clumsy. And I was not a clumsy kid, I mean I was a kid, but I was not clumsy. But whenever I got around this woman, she would say, and laugh, and lighthearted – 'Bobby's so clumsy.' And what would happen? I would become clumsy. And every time I saw her, even before she'd say anything, I'd think she thinks I'm clumsy. And then I become clumsy and then she'd reinforce and be like 'Bobby's so clumsy, ha, ha, ha,' and everybody would laugh. That's a negative version. Positive version. When I was in high school, just kind of committed my life to Christ and I was involved in this new youth group at 180, which was this big youth.. I think there was like 2,000 students, and they would have this amazing facility with like a DJ and basketball courts and arcade games and pool tables and pretty girls, which was really the draw. That's where I met my wife Hannah. And I remember being a 15 or 16-year-old they had outreaches to all the big schools except the school I went to, Broken Arrow. And I met somebody in this thing, and they go, you are the answer to our prayers. We have been asking that God would send somebody to be an outreach person to this school, to bring kids on buses. And I heard that, and I believed it. Was it true? Did God really send me to them? Was I the answer to their prayer? At the time, I believed it, and it became true. Within one year we had like two buses going from our house – my mom would make the cookies – to the church every Wednesday. So I believed it, my behavior changed, it became true. In high school, there was a guy we used to play basketball with, and his dad bought him three shares of Nike, so about \$100 at the time. And we just thought that was the coolest thing ever. And because we were his wingmen and we wanted to help him get girls, we used to tell the cute girls 'hey, our friend here owns Nike' which was technically true! Technically true. How did he get Nike? His dad bought it for him. Just saying. And it did work. And because of that, he got the nickname Wall Street. In fact, I still remember to this day Wall Street, Wall Street.. I don't know his real name anymore. I just picture his face perfectly in my mind, his name is Wall Street. If you know me, if you're watching, Wall Street, we are a charitable organization that will receive your tax-deductible donations. The reason I'm saying that is because Wall Street went on to be an investment banker. So he's called Wall Street in high school, they put it in the yearbook, he becomes an investment banker. In fact, I often wonder if like me being a pastor has something to do with that. Yes, I grew up and people would talk about it sometimes, but I've often thought that my dad actually, who is a pastor, didn't want me to be a pastor. I didn't get any pressure from my mom to be a pastor. I think my dad was that way because his dad for sure pressured him to be a pastor, big time, that my dad almost did the opposite. And so for me, in early high school, but then I was a part of this group, I led this group called Christian Student Union, and we came SALT – Students as Living Testimonies – and it grew to 300 people. It was bigger than the football program at our high school, which in Oklahoma that's a huge deal. And people used to call me Pastor. Now I always rejected that. I said don't call me.. I'm not a pastor, I'm just a kid, I'm just organizing this group. But it sure felt like a church, and they sure did call me pastor. And you get called pastor or Wall Street or clumsy or stupid or smart or rich or poor or ugly or handsome or good looking or not good looking or outgoing or introverted enough times, you start to act that way. You become what you think you are. You live up to what you call yourself. I remember my sweet cousin, she's like a little sister to me, this one time, and I was like 21, 22, I want to say she was 19 at the time, and we were serving with the youth. I hadn't seen her forever, and I didn't know she'd gotten into some trouble, but I just recruited her to help me with the youth group in the church.

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And she was just growing like crazy and doing great and showing up to everything, helping out, positive attitude, loved the Lord, and everything was great. One day I went outside when we were serving the church, and she was smoking a cigarette, and she saw me and it looked like her whole world had shattered, and she took the cigarette, threw it on the ground and snuffed it out, and she said 'oh no!' Like this. And I said 'I don't care if you're smoking. You're an adult. That's fine. Do what you want. I don't care if you're smoking. Who cares.' And she said 'well I didn't want YOU to see me smoking.' And I weirdly got what she was saying, and I did not care at all, but after that, she just kind of fizzled out, it's like she stopped coming. I think about that a lot. And she did great later in life, but I just remember this moment when you're switching that weird period from being a teen to an adult, something about.. I think she thought I saw her different, and I didn't. But somehow that caused her to see herself different in a way, maybe. And so she just stopped coming. That is the number one reason, by the way, most people stop going to church. The number one reason people go to church is because they have something in their life they're embarrassed about, or a sin, or the divorce, or bad, whatever. Something. It's weird. Studies have been shown this is the main reason people stop going, but the funny thing is like if you're going to stop going, like that's the main reason you should go, right? Is when you're at your lowest. Whenever you have your worst day, come to church. Let me give you a hug. Whenever you're having a worst day, turn Hour of Power on and watch us. That's the best time to draw close to the Lord is when you feel the farthest from Him. When you feel like you don't believe in Him, when you have the biggest doubts, when you fall off the wagon, whatever it is. If that ever happens, you just come here. We love you just as you are and so does God. That's the best time to be in church. There is so much power in this room. Unbelievable. Unbelievable power in this room to change the world. But it's our gloom, our fear, our religiosity and legalism, our propriety, and a host of other things that keep us from really living out this idea that we are God's beloved creatures full of His power, full of miracle working power, full of the ability to convince people to lead, to transform. So I want you to cancel those assignments in your life. There are assignments over you. Just cancel them. You don't have to agree with or believe the things that people have said over you, including what you've said over yourself. Just cancel it. People have called you sickly, cancel that. People have said that you're in an indignant, offended, angry person, cancel it. People say that you're stupid, or you're a drunk, or you're going nowhere, or you're a dreamer, cancel it! Cancel it. You decide for yourself who you are, and you decide for yourself based on the scripture who God says you are. You are beloved, you're the favored, you're above and not beneath, the head and not the tail. You can make of your life anything you want to do with your life. Don't let other people decide who you're going to be. You decide for yourself based on this word, and you'll live a great life. You got to believe and you got to get out of the boat. You got to get an identity that's from God, and act as though it's true. When you get this image of who you believe God sees you to be and wants you to be, act as though it's true. Read the books you would read if you were really that person. Listen to the music. Dress the way. Use the language. Use the body posture that the person you want to be would use. Hannah, my wife, every morning, when she gets up in the morning, the first thing she does before she brushes her teeth or goes to the restroom or anything, boom, hands go in the air and she just thanks the Lord for another day of being alive. That's not a bad thing to do. That's a good posture, don't you think? What kind of posture would you have if you really were a living embodiment of God's power, life and love. You are! You are. You got to let it loose. What kind of friends would you have? How would you spend your time? And just start doing it that way, and your life will never be the same. Because you live up to what you call yourself. You live up to what you call yourself. And you know what you can call yourself? What I call you and what God calls you? You're an unceasing, spiritual being with a divine destiny in God's great universe. Full of power, full of life, full of possibilities. You are His beloved. Let that be your identity. Amen? So we thank you, Lord. We bless your name. We bless the name of the Lord. Thank you that you saved us, and rescued us. Thank you that we can live for you. We pray in Jesus' name for total transformation. We pray that your word would be a light unto our path, and a lamp unto our feet. Would show us where to go and who to be. We trust it and we thank you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, all God's people said, amen. Would you stand with me?

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.