OPENING SENTENCE/WELCOME – Bobby Schuller

This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Welcome. Who's ready to worship the Lord today on this first Sunday of the year? I just want to affirm that the Holy Spirit is at work in our church, and the thing I'm most excited about in this community is the hunger for the presence of the Lord. I really am excited about that. We are hungry for the Lord. Is that right? We want the Lord. More than anything we want the Lord. We don't want to be a church where people go, oh, that was a great sermon, or, oh, that was such good music. We want people to leave and say, the Lord was there. Amen. Right? The Lord was there.

As we begin, let's give it all. Don't forget to ask yourself; this isn't a ritual. You got up this morning, you got dressed, you drove through the rain. You came here for a reason. Why did you come? Why? And my hope is you came to lift up the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not a show. It's an audience for one. It's for the Lord. Amen?

I'm going to begin with this promise. This is Exodus, chapter 23, verse 25, and I want you to hear what's the first word in this scripture? Worship the Lord your God. What's the first word? Worship. "Worship the Lord your God and His blessing will be on your food and water." Is that good? It keeps going. "I will take away sickness from among you." Is that good? "And none will miscarry or be barren." Is that good? "In your land. And I will give you a full lifespan." What's the first thing at the beginning of that promise? Worship. Worship. There's a promise. There's a fulfilling promise that comes with a people who worship God. Amen?

Let's just begin. Lift your hands with me. Worship team, come on out here. Let's bring it before the Lord. Just begin to pray. Forget about the person to your left and right, unless you're going to pray for them. Don't worry about what they think. Think about what God thinks. Anyone who acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before the Father. Anybody who denies me before men, I will deny before the Father. That's what Jesus said. Amen? So we just acknowledge you, Lord. We acknowledge our hero, our Savior. We'd be nothing without you. We're hungry for the bread of life, who is Jesus Christ, Son of God. Amen. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

PRAYER – Hannah Schuller

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus is here, church. Jesus is in this place. Jesus. Thank you, Lord. The enemy has worked so hard to keep the Christian from knowing and fully understanding the power of the name of Jesus coming out of the mouth of a believer. Thank you, Jesus. Right now, church, if there is anyone here, if there's anyone watching online and you say I am stirred, I declare today I'm going to speak the name of Jesus over my body, any illness you have, any deliverance that you need. If you say that today, if you're watching online, I want you to raise your hand. If you're watching online, you can even raise your hand in your living room.

I want you, church, if you see somebody raising their hand, reach out around them. But I want you, church, to the person who needs this, I want you to speak the name of Jesus. The Bible says you resist Satan and he will flee. So right now, if you need deliverance, if you want to stand for somebody else in your life who needs deliverance, who needs healing, raise your hand, as well.

Church, can you come around? Anybody you see with their hand raised, come around these people. Thank you, Lord. Jesus is here. The powerful name. The powerful name. Anyone with their hands raised right now, can you just repeat after me and say, Satan, I resist you (AUDIENCE – Satan, I resist you). I command all ailments to go (AUDIENCE – I command all ailments to go). I command all oppression to go (AUDIENCE – I command all oppression to go). I am free in the name of Christ Jesus (AUDIENCE – I am free in the name of Christ Jesus). Hallelujah, and who the Son sets free is free indeed. Thank you, Lord. In Jesus name we pray, amen (AUDIENCE – amen).

If you just prayed that, my friend, my brother, my sister, move your body around. Move your body. Whatever you couldn't do before the prayer, do it now in the name, in the name of Christ Jesus. Move it. If you don't see your manifestation yet, continue to know you have spoken the name. The seed has been planted. It is done unto you by the name. Hallelujah. Continue to worship with us.

OFFERING PRAYER – Bobby Schuller

Father, thank you for this offering. This is an act of worship. It's not a church tax. We give freely because we love you, God, and we believe that the resources we give into your community and your kingdom will change lives and change the world.
And so Father, I pray a blessing over everybody who gave today. And I pray that they would see it returned to them financially, but in every way, in every kingdom blessing. Thank you, Lord. We love you, it's in Jesus name we pray, all God's people said (AUDIENCE – amen) amen.
Join us in the singing of the Doxology.

DECLARATION/SCRIPTURE – 2 Chronicles 7:14 – Bobby Schuller

All right, stay standing. We're going to say this confession together. Very short one. One of my favorite passages. Interesting thing, in Hebrew, the phrase 'humble yourself' also means fast. Did you know that? So the word to humble yourself or afflict your soul is another way, can also mean to fast.
Let's say this together. Hold your hands like this: If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land.
Stay standing. Repeat after me, Lord (AUDIENCE – Lord), I humble myself (AUDIENCE – I humble myself), I pray (AUDIENCE – I pray) I seek your face (AUDIENCE – I seek your face), I turn from my wicked ways (AUDIENCE – I turn from my wicked ways) in Jesus name (AUDIENCE – in Jesus name), amen (AUDIENCE – amen).
Thanks, you can be seated. Praise God. Not very modern, but we're getting less and less modern every day. Praise the Lord. Who's ready to turn from their wicked ways? I am, too. Praise God.

MESSAGE/PRAYER – Bobby Schuller "Feasting on the Spirit"

We're going to talk about fasting today. I'm coming right out of the gate this year with an exciting sermon on fasting. All joking aside, it is funny, isn't it, how most people are not excited about a sermon on fasting. Like, you might not have come today if you knew. You're like, I'll just fast.
Jesus says in the Bible, when you pray, here's how you do it. And then right after that, He says, when you fast, here's how you do it. Now, it's interesting, every scholar agrees that when Jesus is saying, when you fast, the assumption is we'll be fasting. That there are going to be seasons in our life where we're going to deny ourselves, where we're going to deny food, or we're going to deny other things that are otherwise good for us, but we're going to deny ourselves for a reason.
And who is the person I met who encouraged us to.. I want to acknowledge this lady who encouraged us to fast. You were at the new member class, where are you? I'm looking for you. And we took your suggestion – we're doing it. Well, thank you to you. You might have forgotten you did it, but we're going to fast. We're going to begin a fast today for 21 days. Now, to be clear that fast doesn't mean we're going to go water only for 21 days, but we're going to encourage you, very similar to a Lenten fast, to give up something during this season. And normally I wouldn't tell you this, but because, if it was a private thing, I wouldn't share this, but what I plan on doing is I'm going to give up sugar for 21 days. I like sugar, especially chocolate, especially Swiss chocolate.

But I'm going to give up not only chocolate, but all sugar together. Don't eat sugar free chocolate. Just trust me, you'll thank me. But I'm also going to give up, the last five days, I'm going to do water only. And so I'm going to do sugar free, and then the last five days I'm going to do water only. And I've done things like that before, but consider as we go through the sermon, committing to a fast. Don't feel like you have to, don't feel pressured, but if you see it as a spiritual opportunity for you, I want to encourage you to ask the Lord today what it is that you might give up.

Hannah and I were praying through this and talking about this. I feel like the church, and including Hannah and I, know very little sometimes about fasting. And sometimes fasting can end up being not a good experience. Ironically, fasting can become a type of legalism. You can feel farther from God. And I think the main reason is we always pair fasting; in order for it to be success, you always pair fasting with prayer. So very often we do the fasting part, but we don't pray more.

And if you think about the opportunity that like a water only fast gives you, there's kind of a lot of mental energy that goes into eating two or three times a day. The money, the cost, where are we going to go? Is it a family meal? The prep – if you're cooking at home, the preparation, the shopping. So by fasting you actually create a little more time and you create a little more bandwidth. And our temptation is going to be to commit that bandwidth to upping our 47 hours on the phone recreationally to a solid 50. Is that right?

So what we want to do is during this fasting time, we want to pray. We want to pray. We want to feast. Feast. Fasting - Dallas Willard said, fasting is feasting. And if we don't see it that way, the danger of fasting is actually we're going to fall farther from God because we're going to fall on ritual and religion rather than being fed by the Holy Spirit.

And so this is something Hannah and I, and I think a lot of us are concerned about with the church, is that we'll take it as, like, a challenge, like a YouTube challenge or a TikTok challenge versus what it really is, setting things aside in my life to pray more.

Fasting is not legalism. And if you're doing water only, fasting is not a food strike. It's not like saying, hey, God, unless I get an answer to my prayer, I'm not going to eat, right? No, fasting is feasting. It's prayer. It's humbling yourself. As I already mentioned in Hebrew, to humble yourself or to afflict your soul, those phrases can be translated also as fasting. It brings new meaning to when Jesus says, anyone who wants to be my disciple has to humble themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. Okay?

And often we're fasting, too, because we want to hear from God. We want to hear from the Spirit. We want more spirit, less flesh. The scripture famously says that God will finish in you.. how does it go? He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's about 90% right. But we know the verse. What we learn from that verse is God is only committed to finish what He started. What He started, Hannah. Right?

And so this is why we need to hear from the Lord. If we start doing something that God didn't start, that might be a good thing, He's not committed to help us finish that task. He's committed to help us finish what He's commanded us to do. Amen? So we need to hear from the Lord. We need to have our eyes and our ears fixed on the Lord. So fasting is fixating on spiritual things and turning away from chocolate or whatever it is. Okay.

So this is my goal for the church during this next 21 days. We're going to start, and if you're watching online, we'd love for you to join us during this time. And I want you to ask this question. Number one, first, before you say what I want to give up, first ask the question, what do I want to receive? What do I want to receive? Do I want to receive revelation about something in my work or ministry? Am I praying for some of my unsaved kids? Am I praying for the nations? Praying for my city, praying for the church? And this should be a big part of what's driving you. Like, for me, for sure, during this time, I want our church to be jumping into the presence of the Lord.

And I want to, as one of the pastors here, I want to be totally in the spirit to hear from God because I can't pull some lever or make that happen. Only the Lord can do it. Amen? And then what do I want to let go of? What is kind of keeping me in a fleshy place? For a lot of us, it could be a million things, right? Anybody want to shout out something you're thinking about giving up? (AUDIENCE – red meat) Red meat. That's a good one. What else? I'm doing sugar. (AUDIENCE – television) Television. You said media. Anybody else? You'll think of something. If you're watching on YouTube, put it in the comments because we need more ideas. That's only four things. What did you say? (AUDIENCE – negativity) Negativity. I met a guy who fasted negative words for 40 days and he said it changed his life. So you can fast something like that too, can't you? Can your words be coming from the flesh, negative words? Absolutely, absolutely. And then I would really encourage you too, to work into that 21 days, a one, three or five day water only fast, depending. Talk to your doctor first.

All right, declare with me: I have food (AUDIENCE – I have food) the world doesn't know about (AUDIENCE – the world doesn't know about). My food (AUDIENCE – my food) is to do the will (AUDIENCE – is to do the will) of Him who sent me (AUDIENCE – of Him who sent me) and to accomplish His work (AUDIENCE – and to accomplish His work).

One more. I have water (AUDIENCE – I have water) that springs to eternal life (AUDIENCE – that springs to eternal life) and I will never thirst again (AUDIENCE – and I will never thirst again). In Jesus name (AUDIENCE – in Jesus name), amen (AUDIENCE – amen).

We are, all of us in here are in a spiritual war. We are never warring against a human being, ever. There's never an actual human being we're fighting against. It's always a spirit. And the world we live in is a spiritual world with natural results. Many of us, because we live in the flesh so much, are totally not connected to that world that's having a major impact on our lives. And just to be clear, I'm talking about demons, I'm talking about angels, I'm talking about unclean spirits, principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness, and especially the Holy Spirit. That we're just not dialed in to this invisible world that's having a very real impact because all of our attention is fixed on the material world and how it affects us physically, typically; our appetites, in particular. Is that okay with you? You're in a war right now, and you're on either one side or the other, actually. There are going to be probably many people in this room that are on the wrong side and don't even know it. They're actually doing things for the enemy and they don't know it.

And so we want to know, right? When the U.S. went to war with Germany in the Second World War, every German and every American was caught up in that war, whether they wanted to be or not. True or false? (AUDIENCE – true) And as an American, if you were alive during that time, some of you were, it wasn't just the soldiers that were involved in that war. Every factory worker, there were bonds being issued. There were times, I believe, when there were all sorts of things were impacting our daily life because of a war. And if you were a German national citizen, not good to stay here. Is that right or wrong? And vice versa. If you were a German that loved Jews, if you're a German that is totally against Nazis or whatever, you're still caught up in that war. You still might be recruited to fight for the Nazis. You still might be recruited to make ammunition. True or false?

Every single one of us is caught up in this war, whether you like it or not. You're caught up in it. It is better to suit up and fight than to be just a passive recipient of what's happening in the world of principalities and powers and all of that.

So to be dialed in, there are certain patterns and things that we need to incorporate in our life, and there's certain things we ought not indulge in, lest we become spiritually deaf and spiritually blind. Amen? Fasting. Fasting is a big part of this, and it's a big part of power. There is a verse in the King James which is based on the Textus Receptus. It says, talking of a demon, when they can't cast out a demon, they go back to Jesus and they say, why couldn't we cast it out? Do you remember what Jesus says in the King James?

This kind only comes out how? Through prayer and fasting. That's a huge revelation. We need to think about that for a second. If it's true, if there's some demons that only come out through prayer and fasting, we need to understand why. What else is affected by prayer and fasting?
Now, to be clear, does fasting increase God's power? (AUDIENCE – no) Thank you. I'm so glad Hannah was leading the charge on that one. Does fasting increase God's power? (AUDIENCE – no) Does fasting increase God's authority? (AUDIENCE – no) Does fasting improve what Christ accomplished for us on the cross? (AUDIENCE – no) No. What does it do? Yes, it does something to us, right? It's doing something in us.
How many of you know that when it comes to deliverance, casting out demons, when it comes to healing the sick, when it comes to being spiritually led in your business, or in your family, we also play a big part in that, don't we? It's not just God doing the work, but there's a part of us that has to change to receive the revelation, the power. Amen? There's a sort of resistance, I think, that comes naturally to every person to the things of the spirit. Just this constant resistance that even I and all of.. not even I.. like, I'm some spiritual hero, but like all of us, we have this thing, this resistance that's always going on, and a big part of us is to train ourselves to not have that same resistance. So it changes us.
Let me just say it plainly. When you yield to the flesh, you become more aware of the flesh. As a principle, let this guide your discipleship in the Lord. When you yield to the flesh, you become more aware of the flesh.
So Thanksgiving, a couple months ago, pounded it down, right? If you're like me, you left turkey a long time ago and you upgraded to steak. You don't need to commit to turkey. It's not a law. We all know it's not that great. You can do better. No, but yes, maybe you had a bunch of food, you ate a bunch of food, right? Were you more aware of your body or less aware after you gratified the flesh in that way? You're more aware. Sleepy, rubbing your belly, undoing the top button. Yes, that's right.
And this is also true of.. forgive me, Mom. I remember there was a time when my mom created.. she liked cinnamon rolls so much, she was like, I'm just going to make so many cinnamon rolls - this is in Burbank - I'm going to make so many cinnamon rolls that we don't want them anymore and we'd get sick of them. Do you think that worked? Did not work. I'm still addicted to cinnamon rolls to this day. See, when you gratify the flesh, you give more attention to the flesh, and it has more power over you.
The more obvious ways that this plays out in our lives are like overindulging in sugar, alcohol, lust, anger, which is from the flesh. When you lash out at someone, do you really feel like that gets it off your chest and now you're not angry anymore? No, it gets it on your chest, right? It doesn't get out of you, it gets in you. And this is true of envy. Huge major thing. We like to soften it up and call it comparison. Comparison is the thief of joy. No, envy is the thief of joy. What we call comparison is really envy. I wish I had that. I wish I had that. I wish I had more. I wish I had a bigger house. See, this is the flesh. You get a bigger house, you still want a bigger one. I promise. It keeps getting bigger, my house, and I keep wanting it bigger. You too or no? No?
So again, what we're saying is when you yield to the flesh, you become more aware of the flesh. It doesn't mean we don't want a nice house and we have good meals and we have the good things that God gives to us, it just means that when you just let it fly, it gets ahold of you. Amen. It's like scratching a mosquito bite. It sounds good, sounds like a good idea, you keep scratching it, it's going to get worse and worse. So we need to say no to the flesh.
When you yield to the spirit in the same way, you become more aware of the spirit. Amen. Jesus went into the desert to be tempted for 40 days. What did He do before He was tempted? What did He do? He fasted. Did the devil make Him fast? It was a choice, right? He decided to fast as He was led by the Spirit before His temptation.

So here's a really good question: do you think the fasting helped Jesus or hurt Jesus in the temptation? It's a really important answer. Now most of us are going to think it hurt, like it made it harder. Did it make it easier or harder? And those of you who have done long term fasts, you probably know the answer. It made it easier. It made it easier. Not at first. Probably not day one, two or three, but by day 40.

See, one of the things that happens when you do a long term fast, like four or five days, Hannah said it perfectly. She's like, I feel like I'm spirit. And something really weird like that happens, like around day three, unless a Taco Bell commercial comes on, you're not really hungry anymore. It does happen, by the way. You don't feel hungry and you feel like a spirit. And the reason that's important is because you've just said no to your flesh for so long, the spiritual antenna gets bigger.

And I think an important part of Jesus being tempted into the wilderness was recognizing that those thoughts that were coming to Him were not from Jesus. They were from the enemy. Jump off this building. Bow down and worship me. Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't go, oh, man, why am I wanting to jump off a building? Why am I wanting to kneel down and worship the devil? Right? At no point did He say that. He had perfect discernment. And the scripture doesn't say this, I just believe that the fasting helped Jesus in that season of discernment. It gave Him more spiritual power. Less physical power. Right? If He had to run a marathon, it would have been hard. But spiritually, it was better. Those who have ears, let them hear.

If you want to say yes to the Spirit, sometimes you have to say no to the flesh. To win the battle, we need to walk in the Spirit. Think of who God chose. Esau was the natural pick in line, but God chose Jacob. Why? Because Esau was the man of the flesh. It should have been Abraham, Isaac, and Esau. And the whole nation should be called the nation of Esau. But something happened. Do you remember what happened? Esau got hungry. That's literally all that happened. He went out hunting.

Here's the story. Twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, the sons of Isaac. Jacob is kind of a.. today, we'd think of him as like an academic or maybe like, he liked to be intense, it says, like, maybe a gamer nerd. Nothing wrong with that. And Esau was kind of like a jock. Think of Gaston or something like that. He's out there hunting and he comes back. He probably had not been hunting for more than a day or two at most. Every hunter knows you can go many, many days without food. You can go three, four days without water. You can go up to 40 days without food.

So Esau comes back and he's starving, but not literally. He's just very, very hungry. And he's willing to sacrifice his bekorah, which is the.. what is bekorah in English? Birthright. Birthright. And that birthright, that bekorah means you get a double portion of your inheritance. It means that you become the leader of the family, and it means you become the spiritual leader of the whole household. It's a big, big deal. It's like the crown.

And he comes home and he smells tomato soup. And he says, give me some tomato soup. I'm famished. I'm so hungry. And Jacob says, give me your birthright. Now, the audience, if they'd never heard that story in those days when they heard that, would roll their eyes and laugh. And then he says, what's a birthright to me if I'm starving? He takes the tomato soup. And every single person would have gone (GASPS) what?

Let's see the story together. It's from Genesis, chapter 25. "Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank it and then got up and left." And listen to how the author of Genesis finishes this story. "So Esau despised his birthright." It's a very Jewish way of saying it. To give up something so precious, so valuable, because you're so led by your stomach, by your flesh, means that he despised his birthright. He really had no claim on that. God is never going to pick a person like that to lead His people, ever. They may be in positions temporarily. I have been in ministry for 20 years now. I can tell you many men and women who I've seen lead what seemed like incredible ministries fell because they were led by the flesh. And it grieves my heart.

It's not something I'm happy about. But I'm just telling you, young men, young women of the Lord, everybody, don't be Esau. You can say no to your stomach. You can say no to sleep sometimes. You can say no to anger. You can say no to envy. You can say no to lashing out at your spouse. You can say no to freaking out. You can say no to your flesh. We are spirit led. Amen? Spirit led. We don't want to be anywhere the spirit isn't. Amen. Don't let pride get in the way. We're not accomplishing anything. God is the one doing all of this. Amen.

So Jacob is flesh led, not spirit led. He's not hope led. He's not promise led. He's not scripture led. He's flesh led. He's stomach led. Amen. This is why Paul's criticism of many Christians in the city of Philippi, he says their destiny is destruction. Their God is what? Their stomach.

Now again, I'm not picking on people that overeat. I'm picking on all of us. The stomach is a symbol for any giving into the flesh in general, especially envy, lust, anger. These are the big ones, and overeating and giving into self-gratification, sloth. And their glory is their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. They're just not going to inherit the kingdom of God. If their mind is fixed on earthly things, they're going to inherit earthly things. If their mind is fixed on spiritual things, they're going to inherit spiritual things. Amen?

Again, flesh is not bad. What's David Diga call it? He calls it an earth suit. This is our earth suit. We need it, right? We need to take care of it. But the flesh is not altogether bad, but it cannot lead us into a life of victory. It needs to be crucified. Amen? It's got to be crucified. You guys tracking with me so far? Good, easy sermon for the beginning of the year?

You got to bring the flesh under the spirit. You got to break it, break it. Amen? And it's a gift. When you do it, you'll be like, oh, my gosh, I'm so glad I'm not led by my emotions. I'm so glad I'm not led by being hungry. I'm not led by what I feel like doing right now. I don't need to be constantly entertained. Amen. I'm a spirit. I'm led by the spirit.

And fasting is a big part that can do this. Some kind of fasting. Saying no to social media, saying no to media in general, TV, saying no to negative words. Those are all really good ones that are not food based that also can have a really great impact. Just listen to the Lord. He'll tell you what it is. He'll convict you. Anybody here want to be convicted by the Lord?

Hold your hands like this: Say Lord, reveal to me (AUDIENCE – Lord, reveal to me) what has a hold of me (AUDIENCE – what has a hold of me). It may be a good thing (AUDIENCE – it may be a good thing) that's become a bad thing (AUDIENCE – that's become a bad thing). I let it go (AUDIENCE – I let it go) in Jesus name (AUDIENCE – in Jesus name), amen (AUDIENCE – amen). So 21 days, you can do it.

One more issue that fasting really deals with and why it has so much positive power in our lives if we do it the way Jesus told us to do it, which is to not tell everybody, but to make it a spiritual thing is it really helps us with our pride. I'm convinced that pride is the sin we're all constantly wrestling with. God is still.. like two days ago, Hannah was like, are you okay? I'm like, yes. God's just dealing with me on pride again. It's a big one. It's like this onion. You just keep pulling away and you're like, oh, man.

I think a great barrier to unanswered prayer is pride. Big time, big time. I saw a sermon from Brother Prince, who's my all-time favorite preacher, a big influence on my life, and the thumbnail said the sin that God hates the most. What do you think the sin was? Pride is the sin that God hates the most. I was really surprised by that. And the more I study the scripture, the more I see that is just absolutely true. And the reason there's wisdom in this is because before all those really horrible visible sins happen, this invisible sin happens first. And if you cut pride out, all those other sins go away. In fact, in the seven deadly sins, the very first sin, do you know what it is? It's pride.

Here are some examples. What is the first sin that is ever committed, not on earth, but in the universe, that we know of. Lucifer. And what sin was that? Absolutely. It was pride. It's the very first sin. I'm going to ascend above the throne of God. What?

(HANNAH – and look at the results) And look at the results. Yes, we're still suffering from that decision.
Proverbs 16 says, “Every proud heart is an abomination to the Lord.” Psalm 138:6 said, “The Lord knows the proud from afar.” Think about that. He knows you, but you are not getting close. Do you think there are proud pastors out there? I used to be one. I probably still am one. I'm working on it every day. I do not want to be known by God from afar. I want to be close to the Lord. He draws the humble near to Him.
And the Bible never says that God will humble you, not once. It always says, humble yourself. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves. You got to choose to do it. He might humiliate you. He might take away, but I can tell you, people that have been humiliated are still not humbled. They're shaking their fist at God. Is that right? A humble is a personal decision.
And when we're full.. oh, here's another one. Hannah, don't answer this. Pride comes before what? What is it? Wrong! Pride does not come before the fall. Simon also got it. It doesn't say that. It says pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall. Pride comes before destruction. Not to be messed with. Amen?
Declare with me: I humble myself (AUDIENCE – I humble myself) before the throne of God (AUDIENCE – before the throne of God), Rock of ages (AUDIENCE – Rock of ages), eternal judge (AUDIENCE – eternal judge) I repent (AUDIENCE – I repent) and I thank you (AUDIENCE – and I thank you) that even in the pit (AUDIENCE – that even in the pit), you loved me (AUDIENCE – you loved me) and you still love me (AUDIENCE – and you still love me) in Jesus name (AUDIENCE – in Jesus name).
Can I have five more minutes? I still really want to convince you that pride is bad. Okay. Who do you think is the most evil king in the Old Testament? Anybody want to take a guess? It starts with an A. It's Ahab, almost for sure. Everybody agrees Ahab - all time worst. Ahab is the epitome of pride and evil. Super evil guy. And the prophet Elijah judges Ahab, gives him a word from the Lord, and here's Ahab's response, in First Kings 21:27. It says, “When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and” what? “Fasted. And he lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, the Tishbite. Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house and in the days of his son.” Did you catch that? By the way, don’t feel bad for his son. He's evil too. I know it seems not fair, but his son is really evil.
But did you catch that? The most evil king, when he humbled himself and he fasted, God relented from His judgment immediately. What? If God will do that for Ahab, what will He do for blood bought sons and daughters of God? Amen.
You remember what happened to Nineveh? Was Nineveh evil? The Akkadian Assyrian empire lasted over 2000 years; the most evil empire in the world. Horrible. And when Jonah goes and prophesies against them, look what the Bible says. Jonah chapter 3 verse 7. They heard it and they made a change. It says “This proclamation he issued in Nineveh.” That's the king. “By decree of the king and his nobles, do not let people or animals, herds or flocks taste anything.” What is that? It’s fasting. Right? “Don't let them taste anything. Do not let them eat or drink, but let people and animals be covered in sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently unto God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows, God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”
“When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction that he had threatened.” The evil of Nineveh. Killing. The destruction, the burning, the torturing. One day they fasted. God relented. If God did that for Nineveh, what will He do for Shepherd's Grove? Amen! (AUDIENCE – amen) If fasting and humbling ourselves has that big of an impact on the Lord, should we do it? We should do it. Amen?

Satan wants to keep this amazing key out of the hands of God's people. No longer.
All right, worship team, come on up. Here's some practical things. Hopefully you figured out. Maybe you didn't have one earlier, for those of you on YouTube, but if you want to put something below, be interested to see what you're going to do. Maybe you have something in mind, but the fast begins today, right now. Okay?
So I'm going to ask you here in a bit to see who wants to make that commitment. I know not all of us are going to do it, but my hope is that at least ten of you will do it. Ten is a minion. But practically what that's going to look like is over the next 21 days, you give up something in order to gain something else. And then we'll come back and you can break your fast. Saturday night is what I'm doing. Or you can hold out till the next Sunday morning, which is three weeks from today, but we'll come back and celebrate together. Amen?
Okay, just close your eyes. Let's hear from the Lord. I don't want this church to be deceived. God is a dangerous God. He's loving and He's full of grace and mercy, but He's also very dangerous, and He has wrath for evil. We need to rid ourselves of the reign of Satan in our lives. We can't have both Satan and God in our lives. And when we yield to the flesh, we yield to Satan's kingdom. And hear me, Satan's kingdom will be destroyed. We need to take this seriously. And we'll be overjoyed when we experience the freedom of being totally set free from the way that Satan has a hold on you through fear, through anger, through lust, through sloth, through envy and comparison, through gossip or lashing out, through dissensions. People like that will have no part in God's kingdom.
So I just sense the Holy Spirit's moving right now, not in condemnation, but in grace, to just say to you, sons and daughters of God, be set free today. Right now you can reach out to the Holy Spirit and be completely set free. Hallelujah.
Repeat after me: Satan (AUDIENCE – Satan) has no hold (AUDIENCE – has no hold) of me (AUDIENCE – of me) anymore (AUDIENCE – anymore) because of Jesus (AUDIENCE – because of Jesus). Amen (AUDIENCE – amen).
So I'm going to ask you now to make a commitment to yield something to the Lord. It might even be a good thing over the next 21 days so you can receive something else. If you want to do that, would you just stand so we can pray for you? Praise God. I think we got ten. And maybe you can't stand, but you want to do it. You could also just raise your hand and say, I'm doing it, too.
All right, I'm going to pray for you guys. Let's pray. Right now, just kind of hold whatever the thing is in your hands. I'm holding sugar. What are you holding? Just hold it before the Lord and just say, Lord, let this be like an act of worship, even. Not just me getting rid of some of it, but something I'm taking out of my life to give to you, the same way I would give money or service. I'm taking this thing from my life and I'm giving it as a sacrifice to you. Will you receive this as an incense, as a fresh offering from me to you? I commit, Father, not to be prideful in my fasting, but to humble myself.
And then, Lord, there's something else we're asking for. Maybe just bring that in your own mind and heart before the Lord. Just bring it before the Lord and just ask the Lord to impart it to you over these next weeks. Maybe you don't know what it is yet. You're willing to give up something but you don't know. Ask the Lord today to speak to you. Set aside some time this afternoon to pray and hear from the spirit about what it is you're hoping to receive.
I'm hoping to receive a revival in this church. Maybe you can just come in agreement with that prayer with me. If nothing else, just to pray for our church and to pray for all the churches in Orange County, not just ours. There's one church. We pray revival to come to Orange County. Many souls. Pray for the lost. Amen? Amen.
All right, let's worship together.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

Amen. Lord, we thank you Father. We just thank you God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for all you're doing and all you've done. Amen? Praise God.

Before we go, I just want to encourage you as you leave, I know it's raining, actually, but the sanctuary is dry. So go slow. If you got to get going to lunch or meeting somebody, fine, but take your time. Meet some people, hang about. If you need prayer, we'll be praying with people after service. We'll pray with you. And remember, the church is also what happens after we leave, so I really encourage you to just say hi to someone, give somebody a hug or pray for somebody. Don't hug them in a weird way. Just to..

And then what else? Men's breakfast on Friday. We really would love to see you guys there. It's in the Fellowship Hall. Eight o'clock. I guess that's it.

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 His peace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Happy New Year!