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GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION – Bobby & Hannah

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Good morning.

HS: And welcome guests, welcome church family. It always feels so good to be with you. Thank you for being here.

God inhabits the praises of His people. This is exciting. Let's experience God's presence dwelling with us right now, as we worship Him this morning. Thank you for being here. We love you.

BS: That's right. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you in Jesus' name. We're asking, Father, for the move of your Holy Spirit this morning. We thank you, God, that you're here to break chains, to lift up hearts, to touch people, God that are in a tough place, and we thank you 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 – Romans 4,17-24 - Hannah

Would you open your Bibles with me to Romans 4:17. As it is written: "I have made you (talking to Abraham) a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed - the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. Against all hope (so when it was hopeless), Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Would you stand with me? We're going to say this creed together as we do every week. Hold your hands like this. Let's 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 my neighbor. Thanks you can be seated.

MESSAGE/PRAYER – Bobby Schuller "Faith's Alchemy: Transforming Hearts and Minds"

In the ancient world, especially in the Middle East, there was this dream about a thing called "alchemy." What if we could take some iron and convert it into gold. Wow, what a dream that was. What if we could mess around with metal and make it the most precious thing in the world.

And today, very often, we think of alchemy as the idea of taking something that is not very valuable in its substance, and converting it into something that is very valuable. We're going to talk about faith's alchemy right now; about how Christianity and a trust in Jesus Christ transforms a human person through this faith's alchemy, the transforming of our heart and mind.

Here's, in general, what most Christians believe about becoming a new creation, about becoming a different person, about becoming a miracle worker, about getting into heaven, it looks something like this.

Faith's Alchemy: Transforming Hearts and Minds

All of us were born as Adam's children with a fallen spirit, we can say; with original sin, or something like that, and because of this fallen spirit, we have a corrupted mind. And because of the corrupted mind, we become ruled by the flesh. Now these are all Biblical terms and they sound heavy and weighty and not very modern, but it's a great way to understand the problem of the human dilemma. When we hear "ruled by the flesh" we often think about things like sexual sin, right? We think about stuff we shouldn't do, but the flesh can be fear, the flesh can be anger, the flesh can be greed. It can be all the things that cause us to live only for ourselves, only in the moment, never thinking about the future, and Christians believe that this comes from an original problem in our spiritual DNA, and that spiritual DNA needs to be transformed through Christ crucified and raised from the dead. When you confess Christ as your Lord and Savior, when you believe God raised Him from the dead, when you're baptized, you're given a reborn spirit, Jesus says; a spirit that is born from above. This spirit then urges you constantly to have a renewed mind, a different way of thinking. And when you think the other way, you can almost feel your spirit, a conscience pushing you to think a different way. And after you get your renewed mind, Paul teaches us that the flesh comes under submission, under the rule of God. And this means that the body itself is, I believe, healthier, but more than that, it means that your life is not ruled by your emotions all the time. It's not ruled constantly by anger, by fear, by resentment, by bitterness, but it's ruled by grace, and particularly by love, by power through faith. Not by the law, not by rules, not by religiosity, but something has transformed from the inside out. In the same way that a plant first begins as a seed and grows down in invisible places first, only later, sometimes years later does anything come out of the surface that you can visibly see. This is the life of the disciple in Jesus Christ, the transformation that takes place. And this is what Paul is going to talk about in Romans 4 where he's trying to convince people of this transformation by faith, not by law; by the same faith that Abraham had. Remember, for the Jews, Abraham is the father of them all, and he was never given the law. The law was given to Moses many years later. So why was Abraham someone that went to heaven? Why was Abraham considered a good person? Why was Abraham considered a model, a prophet, someone we should follow, someone who knew God? Why? And Paul tells us why. It's because he had.. what's the word? (AUDIENCE – faith) Faith. It was faith that made him righteous. And this is the ground work for the gospel that we are taught to by our brother Paul the apostle. This is a vision, not of laws and rules and religion and feeling stuck all the time, this is a vision for a full life; a vision of provision for your life. A vision for meaningful relationships, a vision for a beautiful life. This is what God wants for us. He doesn't want us to have just a full cup, He wants our cup to run over. God is on your side. God loves you more than you love yourself. God is for you more than any person in the world. God is proud of you in the way that a father is proud of their kids. God sees you through the lens of grace. God's on your side. And so today my job as your brother in Christ is to encourage you in the spirit to trust the character of God to carry you through whatever you're going through. He's going to carry you through. Amen? (AUDIENCE – amen) Romans 4, if you have your Bibles, open with me. Romans 4:13. Paul is writing here, he says "it was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world." You get that, it wasn't from following rules, it wasn't from religion. "But through the righteousness that comes by (AUDIENCE – faith) faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless because the law brings wrath. And where there's no law, there is no transgression." It's interesting, I read a story once, a real legal case, it's probably apocryphal, but we're going to believe it. I read it in the Guardian, but not saying much, to be honest with you. Guardian's.. anyway. Goes like this. There's a guy, an attorney, he bought a box of very expensive, ten thousand dollar cigars. There were 20 in the box, and he insured them against fire. He then goes on to smoke all 20 of the cigars in due time, and files an insurance claim. The insurance company denies the claim, and he sues them, which is free if you're an attorney. They go to court, and based on the letter of the law, the attorney wins. He's paid out a claim for the value of the cigars and got his cigars for free, and boy was he happy. Until he received a summons from the DA and was arrested for destruction of insured property. The insurance company filed a criminal claim. He was sentenced and put on probation, I believe, for two years. Now think about that story. This paints perfectly how experts in the law are experts at breaking the law. Experts in the law are experts at breaking the spirit of the law. How many pastors, how many religious people have you known didn't break any letter in here, but boy, were they sinners. They didn't break a single.. or anything, but they had bitterness in their heart. They were unhappy.

Faith's Alchemy: Transforming Hearts and Minds

They woke up every day blaming the world. They couldn't achieve anything. People kept their distance from them. And every day, their life would shrink. Why? Because they lived by the letter of the law rather than by the spirit of the law. We know people like that, like this attorney. And so I want to encourage you that the law, when it's only about the law, it brings death, but the spirit, the Holy Spirit, brings life, and that's what we're trying to get today. And Paul knew this personally. Paul was a Pharisee. He knew this game. He knew that it brought death, he'd experienced death from it, and he rejected it. Let's keep reading in Romans. He goes on to say in verse 16, "Therefore, the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace and may be," everybody say guaranteed (AUDIENCE - guaranteed) its "guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He's the father of us all! As it is written I have made you a father of many nations. He's our father in the sight of God in whom he believed. The God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not." What a great line! I love that line. "Calls things that be not as though they were and they become true." That's what John chapter 1 is. He just says "universe" and it begins. Wow, that's the God we serve. There was no universe, and then He says "universe" and it begins. There was no "you" and He said "you" and (POOF) here you came. See? You thought it was luck. It was not. He knew you before you were born. He calls things first, and then they become, and He commands us in the same way to call things first and then they become. You call things first and then they become. Be careful what you call something. Don't say "unlucky." Be careful. Be careful to say that you hate something, even if you hate whatever – vegetables. Don't even use the word "hate". Faith worketh by love. Be careful to say the word "I'm a big old dummy" when you're embarrassed, or "I'm a klutz" when you mess up. When you write down your goals.. I was taught this a long time ago, and it does work better, it really does. When you write down your goals, write it down in the present tense. This is a great way to write goals. A lot of people write down 'I want this.' 'I'm shooting for this.' 'I'm aiming for this.' But there's something that even happens in your spirit and in your mind when you write down the goal as though it's already happened. I know it seems weird, but it is a good hack. When I write down my goals, you all know I have many goals I write down. One of my biggest goals is to be full of God's life, but I don't say I want to be full of God's life, I write down 'I am full of God's life.' I want to be the world's greatest husband and dad. But I don't write I want to be the world's greatest husband and dad, I write 'I am the world's greatest husband and dad.' And by golly, I have a coffee cup to prove it. When you have a goal, write down.. if you have a money goal, write it down. Don't say I want to make this much, write I make this much. See the authority there? If you want something in your life, friends, a job, an achievement, a place to be, a conversation to have, whatever, a house, you write it down. I have this. I have this. Write it down. Say it aloud. Now you can't say it to your neighbor because they'll think you're crazy, but you can say it to yourself. You want to feel a certain way? Don't write I want to feel good. I want to feel terrific in the morning. Just write down I feel terrific in the morning. I feel positive. And I know this sounds strange, some of you might think I'm a psycho, but it really works because it begins to change your mind. What it does is it causes you to create a new picture of yourself in your mind. When you say I want to be the world's greatest dad, what you're saying is I'm not. It actually can push you to a place of shame and embarrassment. But when you say I am the world's greatest dad, you begin to picture what the world's greatest dad would do; what the world's greatest husband would do; what the world's greatest boss would do; what the world's greatest business person would do. What would they do when they get up in the morning? How would they spend their money? How would they talk to their team? Who would they hire? What would it be like to be around them? And when you say it in the present tense, it begins to change here, and when this changes, my friend, everything changes. Our son Cohen; Hannah asked me a long time ago, and we've agreed to do this, we stopped saying he has special needs. He has a brain disease. He has a disorder. And now we say, when we're talking to people, he's recovering from a brain disorder. He's recovering from a brain disease. Boy, did that make a difference. It's such a small thing, and it's true, though. He's recovering from a brain injury. You can still tell people that he's got a challenge; that they need to have grace with him, but what you're saying aloud is he's recovering from a brain injury, and he is. When you don't have a job, don't tell people I'm unemployed. Don't tell people I don't have a job. Say I don't have a job and there's one word you can add to the end of that sentence that makes it so much better. I don't have a job - yet. Yes! Think about how that changes. Do you want to have children? You don't say I don't have children, you say I don't have children - yet. You want to be an author? I'm not an author - yet. You want to go to Jerusalem? I haven't been to Jerusalem - yet. We'll go, don't worry. We had to cancel the trip recently. We'll go.

Faith's Alchemy: Transforming Hearts and Minds

When you do things like this, it builds up your mind, it builds up your faith, it build up your character. And you also become allergic to negative words, and that's a good thing. You want to get allergic to being around people that are constantly spewing out that stuff. You want to distance yourself from that kind of a thing because it gets in here and it gets in here. However your thoughts go, your life goes. However your thoughts go, your life goes. However your thoughts go, your life goes. Change your thinking, you'll change your world. That's what Norman Vincent Peale said, and he was right. Do you believe it? Do you believe it? Romans chapter 4, we keep reading, Paul goes on to say in verse 18, "against all hope." Now a man who's 75 and is told that his, what 65-year-old wife or 60-year-old wife is going to have a baby, and it takes 25 years. Can we say that's against all hope? Can we say the chances are zero? "Against all hope, Abraham in hope," that's also expectation, "believed and so became the father of many nations just as it had been said to him. So shall your offspring be without weakening in his faith." Can we say without weakening in his faith? Let's not doubt the word of God. Let's not weaken our faith in God's word. "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as death, since he was about a hundred years old, and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet, he did not waver through" what? "Unbelief." We're going to believe. "He didn't waver though unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith. He gave glory to God being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness." Keep it there. Look at what it says. Go back a slide. Look at what this says. "He was fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He promised!" That's why he was saved. He just believed. He just believed. It made no sense. He looked like an insane person. A hundred-year-old man with a 90-year-old wife saying God's going to bear through me, not just a child, but so many children that it will outnumber the sands in the seashore. How do you know? How can you believe something like that? Because God said it. He said it to me, that's all I need! Wow. God looks at that and says that is a righteous man. Amen. I said Amen, church. (AUDIENCE – amen) That's right. Where were we? Next slide. "The words it was credited to him were also written not for him alone, but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness. For us who believe in Him who raised Jesus, our Lord from the dead, He was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification." Wow. What a powerful line, fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He promised. This is about God's character. Do you believe God is good? Do you believe He's the kind of person that says one thing and then later says oops I meant it this way. No. Here's what Corrie ten Boom said, "If you have the faith, God has the power." If you have the faith, God has the power. Do you believe it? Do you believe He can heal you even when the doctor said.. the doctors give you six months. God gives you what, 60 years? Do you believe it? They have a bad report, He has a good report. Do you believe He'll open the door? Do you believe He'll make the way? Do you believe He'll give you the cure? Do you believe He'll give you the friend, He'll give you the vision, He'll give you what you need right when you need it? Do you believe that if you step out in faith in the dream that God put before you that you may not have what you need now but you'll have it when you need it. If you believe it, say amen. (AUDIENCE – amen) This is where faith begins. It begins in trusting in God's word and God's character. It's hard to do. It's hard to do. Why? Because we love people. And when we love people, we worry about them. You know, I, very often in my team and people that know me, I hope sometimes see me as a little bit of a tough guy: resilient and tenacious, but can I tell you, I'm a big old softy. Don't tell anybody. I really love people. And because of that, I worry about them. I employ over a hundred people and I worry about every single one of them. And I worry about who's going to take care of them. And I have family members and I worry about them. And I have friends and I worry about them. And here's the way I resolve that, and maybe it's an eight thing; maybe it's a Bobby Schuller thing, I don't know. But maybe I go I'll take care of them. Take care of who? All of them. All of them? Yep. I'm going to take care of all of them. And I remember our good friends Nate and Rebekah, who are also our families, my brother and sister-in-law, great friends and I remember being with them one time and my friend Rebekah who has a similar personality to me, I was talking about how I worry about these people and how I'm the only one who can take care of them. And she says to me if you don't take care of them, who will? And I go nobody! She goes hey Bobby, if you don't take care of them, who will? And it was like literally nobody. She goes Bobby, one more time, if you don't take care of them, who will? And I said oh. Maybe God will take care of them. Maybe the Lord will take care of them. Maybe it's not my job to take care of everybody. You see that's what love does. Most people in here I don't think are worried about themselves. You worry about someone you love. You can trust the Lord with the people you love. He's going to heal them. He's going to provide for them. He's going to save them. He's going to touch them.

Faith's Alchemy: Transforming Hearts and Minds

And when you pray for them, you help them. So just do your best and trust God with the rest. Your life gets better with faith. Not legalism, not religiosity, not perfectionism, but grace through faith. This is how Paul's life was changed. Paul was this religious guy. Here's how Paul was changed. Here's the first thing that happened – Paul was touched by Jesus. He actually thought he was the hero of his story before he was touched by Jesus. The man was putting innocent people, fathers and sisters and children in chains. Why? Because they weren't religious enough. Because they believed in this guy Jesus, and he put them in prison and persecute them. And he thought he was the hero, even though he was killing and beating and putting in chains innocent people until Jesus Christ appeared to him and made him blind. And a man named Ananias came and prayed and laid his hands on him, and he was full of the Holy Spirit, and he realized whoa, I'm the villain of the story. We all know a lot of villains who think they're heroes. Most villains think they're heroes. They all do. I'm yet to find a villain who doesn't think they're at least misunderstood, let alone a hero. And so the prayer I have to have is Lord, when I'm messed up, won't you touch my heart? When he was blind, he didn't know if he'd ever see again. And so when he saw again, what a relief and a joy he was given. So Paul was touched by Jesus. The second thing that happened to Paul was Paul went to work on himself. He said I have some things I got to unlearn. I got to unlearn some things about Sabbath. I got to unlearn some things about dietary law. I got to learn some things about who needs to be circumcised. Look, to echo Ronald Reagan, he wasn't ignorant, he just knew a lot that wasn't so. Remember that line? What are some things you need to unlearn? Lord, help me know what I need to unlearn. It seems so much easier to just learn something, isn't it, than to unlearn something. Oh man, unlearning, but I spent so much time learning. Paul literally spent his whole life learning this stuff he had to unlearn. Who knows when you dump years and years and hours and hours into something and it's wrong, it's pretty hard to let go. What are some things you need to unlearn about relationships? Do you say things to yourself like all men are trash? Or all women are evil. Or stuff like I'm not loveable. Or it just won't work for me in a relationship. Or maybe you define your life by trauma, or by some horrible thing, and you can't undo it. Here's another way of thinking that we have to unlearn that messes up our relationships. We go into relationships, especially romantic ones saying I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine. Tit for tat. You do stuff for me, and I'll do stuff for you. No, no. Here's some good advice. I learned this from Jim Rohn. Here's a better way to think. I'll work on me for you. You work on you for me. That's how you have a great marriage. That's how you have a great friendship, a great partnership. It's not about blaming the other person, it's about looking in the mirror and working on yourself. Maybe you have some things you need to unlearn about provision and about money. You just can't seem to get ahead in the world. You're going to hate hearing this, but to make more money, you need to change how you think up here. Maybe you heard something growing up like all rich people are evil. All rich people are greedy. The system only favors the rich. Most rich people in America started with nothing. Like almost 80% right now. And very typically, people who inherit their wealth, lose it by the next generation. Very common in America. It may not be true in a country that you're from, but that's how it is here. Or maybe you need to reverse that. Maybe you grew up in a family where it was only about money. And we can't be happy until we get money, and just give up everything just to get money. No, no, that's also wrong. As Victor Frankl said, "how many people we have in this world that have means but no meaning." How you think about money is a major indicator of how much you'll make. There was a study that was done, old study back in the 80's that showed that the average man makes about the same amount of money, factored for inflation, that his father did. Now there's lots of.. you can all jump to wonder why that is, but I believe it's because of fear. That's the limit. So we have to unlearn some things about money, we have to unlearn some things about relationships, we have to learn some things about substance. Some of us need to unlearn things about food. Unlearn things about sex or alcohol or substance, and we need to unlearn some things about God. Many people are here and they think God hates them. Many people are here and they hold their hands and say I'm not what I do, I'm not what I have, etc., etc., but in their heart, they say nobody in this building knows the real me, but God does and boy is He angry. I don't know if I'm going to go to heaven. I don't know, He's angry. No. Receive grace now. God loves you just as you are, not as you should be. And until we get that, we won't really change. That's the irony. Or some people believe that God doesn't do miracles anymore. God won't heal anymore. That went away with the apostles. Hogwash. Hogwash. Happens in this church every week! God's still doing it today. The Bible says a thousand years to us is one day to God. You know how long ago Jesus was raised from the dead? It was two days ago! In God's view, that was two days ago. I heard that the scripture says something like He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He healed them all.

Faith's Alchemy: Transforming Hearts and Minds

So we got to unlearn. We got to work on ourselves. We got to work on ourselves, especially on our thinking. That's what Paul did. If you work on yourself, work on yourself, especially of your thinking, and if you change your thoughts you will change everything. Everything you have or don't have in life is the result of your thinking and the person you've become. All right, finally Paul changed his environment, this is the last one. So Paul had to unlearn - let me see, what was the second one? Oh yes, he had to work on himself, and he had to change his environment. He had to get away from those nasty Pharisees, and he had to get around some believers. I had a good friend, her brother was clean and sober from heroin for ten years. He lived on the east coast and he'd become a sponsor, even held groups at his church, had a great faith, and a love for God and was clean and sober. And one day he came back to California to visit some of those old friends, the ones that used to do heroin, and that weekend they were somehow able to talk him in.. after ten years of being clean and sober, to do heroin. His body wasn't used to it anymore. He od'd and he died. Think about that. All it took was those old friends, the wrong environment. When I first became a believer, one of the best things my parents did was get me plugged into a good church. As a 15/16-year-old going to 180, I got around a different type of teenager. I got to see what's it like for a teenager to share their faith. What's it like for a teenager not to cuss and drink and fight all the time. What's it like for a teenager to live a holy life and to live for God and to be a loving person. And I modeled that. Very hard not to become like the people you're around. Your future looks like your friends. Just think about that. If you like your friends, if you want to be like your friends, stay with them. If you don't want to be like your friends, get some new friends. Can't pick your family, you can pick your friends. Hebrews tells us to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. How? By gathering together! That's why we gather. That's why we do it. As iron sharpens iron, so does one person sharpen another. If I was iron and I had to get sharpened, I don't think I would feel very good, what do you think? I think I'd be like ow. Ouch! Sometimes you got to get around people that sharpen us. Amen? Final thought - some of you here are not at peace with God. You're not at peace with yourself. You're not at peace with life. You're not at peace with the universe. You're not at peace with your past, and you're not at peace with your future. You need to be at peace with God. Hey, when you're at peace with God, everything begins to go right in your life. It doesn't all get better overnight, it doesn't change instantly, but it's like walking on a path in the wrong direction, and it's getting worse and worse, you turn, you're still in that same bad place, but now you have a new direction. Won't you change your direction today? Won't you become a believer? We never know when that time comes when we're going to die. We're all going to face that time in our life. It is so important that we know when that comes that we know what is going to happen to us. I want you to be touched by Jesus today. I want you to believe that He gave His life for you so you could be at peace with God. And my goal for you today is to believe in Jesus as your Lord. Won't you believe in Him? I want to invite you right now, right where you're sitting, to quietly say to yourself, to invite Christ into your heart. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and to give you eternal life and He will. If you do that, text me to the number on the screen and your life will be changed. We'll pray for you. Jesus Christ, son of God, author of our faith, champion of our victory, writer of our scripture, maker of the promise, keeper of the covenant, thank you God that you're here in this room right now. We trust in you. We have faith in you and we thank you for your word. We walk by faith and not by sight. We trust in what you've done and what you've said you'll do. We believe in it and we thank you and we love you, and all God's people said, amen. Would you stand with me?

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. Let 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.