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Genesis

Chapter 24 - God's Comfort in Death

The Comfort of Divine Affirmation (vs. 15-27)

Genesis 24:15-27: Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar." She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking." So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel

and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold, and said, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father’s house?” She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” Again she said to him, “We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in.” Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. He said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”

We've been following the life of Abraham for now over 60 years, not in this church, but in the particular passage that we're looking at. And it is a life that has had its ups and downs, isn't it? The difficulties that come in our lives are oftentimes, as Ecclesiastes would say, “many.” As Abraham, we have disappointments. We have a sense of dealing with our own failures. If you look at the very beginning of Abraham's life, he had to deal with the

failures of him making bad decisions and the ramifications of those bad decisions. And we all have to wrestle through that past that is oftentimes unpleasant. In addition to that, he had to deal with issues such as the disappointments of his nephew Lot, the desires that he had, and perhaps coming into the promised land, coming into a land in which they would work together; they would be in unity together. Soon after they come into the promised land, into the region, they are divided and separated. Not only that, but Lot goes into an area in which, with Sodom and Gomorrah, was just destructive in his families' lives. And in that scenario, he becomes worse, even to the point of actually having to come out of this burning city. As he comes out, the loss of his wife and the horrific things with his daughters that come out of this, and there was great disappointment.

Now, Abraham has to deal with the loss of his wife as we looked in Chapter 23. And so, when we come to this passage, it comes with a sense of disappointment; it comes with a sense of failures; it comes with a sense of great loss. Nevertheless, Abraham is encouraged. And he

comes at his old age and realizes that God is not finished with him, which that's encouraging when you begin to think about that, and that good things await him. This is not all of life, is it? And I guess the question that oftentimes comes is, where are you going to get encouragement if in fact all these things are happening on top of the fact that you're going through these difficult things, you find yourself growing older? At this particular juncture, Abraham's about 137. And so, I would say that would be old. In fact, Scripture actually says it's old.

If you look at the beginning of this chapter, it says, (Genesis 24:1) "Now Abraham was old, advanced in age..."

But the Lord had blessed him. And it's the blessings of the Lord that make rich, no doubt about that. And so, we begin to see how God is encouraging all through this. The encouragement of God comes in different kinds of packages. And as we look at this, we begin to see in this particular chapter how God encourages us.

I would say at the very beginning and the very onset of this, that the greatest encouragement comes from

knowing God personally. Because in knowing God personally, you not only know the sovereign God Who's in control of heaven and earth, as the passage so clearly puts it, but we ultimately begin to understand why we're here, and we know where we're going. And there's great encouragement. And I think one of the things that the world wrestles with is that they don't even know why they're here. I mean, they'll go up, climb up a high mountain and try to meditate, to try to find some kind of answer for life, but they just come up with nothing. But great encouragement. I know why I'm here.

In some ways, and we read this a while back, but I want you to turn again to Psalm 71, because there is a recognition that God has us on a mission. We are on a mission for God. If you ever want to know why you're still here, especially as believers, just be reminded we're on a mission for God.

And Psalm 71 puts it this way,

(Psalm 71:15) "My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And of Your salvation all day long;
For I do not know the sum of them.

(Psalm 71:16) I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone.

(Psalm 71:17) O God, You have taught me from my youth, And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.

(Psalm 71:18) And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come."

We realize that we are on a mission to pass on those things that God has revealed to us, and we have not gone through these things for no reason. The process of our life, the disappointments, and seeing God work through those different areas of our life are the very things that God has called us to use to pass on to future generations. We are, as it were, the bulwark and the foundation. And it is important for us to realize that a lot of our lives should be that we would experience the walk of God in a very real way. It is in that experiencing that we can legitimately pass on the truths of the word of God. In other words, if you haven't lived out these things, then you can't say, "I know it works." But if in fact you've lived out the truths in

an experiential way, then you can say, "I know that my Redeemer lives. I know that He will be beside you." "How do you know?" "He was, and He did, and He worked in my life."

When you consider in the New Testament, it writes this in 1 Corinthians 10, that these things were written for our example. What he's talking about, of course, is the Old Testament. And what he is saying in that particular passage is that they were written for the purpose of warning us not to do certain things. So, there'll be certain things in your life that you'll go through and you'll go, "Man, I'm not going to do that again." And God will use that greatly to minister to those around you. And then there are other things in which you will demonstrate by perseverance and by the encouragement of continuing in something. As Romans 15 says, these things were written for the purpose of encouraging perseverance in our lives, that we will begin to tell people, "You can wait on the Lord. He's faithful. He's going to come through for you. But trust in Him, wait on Him."

So, as we look at this passage, we realize that God is helping us live through the lives of these that have gone before us. And we see testimony; we see real experience in the lives of these individuals. There is great comfort in knowing where we are going. There is great comfort in knowing what God wants us to do. One of the things that is so valuable when you read a scripture is you open up the word of God, you know exactly what God wants you to do. You're not living in a world of ambiguity going, "Gee, I don't know where to go. I don't know what He actually likes." Scripture says that we should try to learn what is pleasing to God, but God's written it all out. And the point is that He's told you what he wants you to do. What is required of you, man? What does God want you to do? Open up the word of God. He tells you, "I have a plan for you. This is what you do, and this is what pleases Me." One of the themes that's repeated over and over again in 1 Peter is, "This finds favor in the eyes of God." If for the sake of righteousness, you go through trials and tribulations, but you do this and you endure it, this finds favor with God. And he continually repeats that particular phrase. What we know is that there are specific things

that finds favor in the eyes of God. Of course, without faith, it's impossible to please Him. So, what pleases Him most is you putting your trust in Him. There is great confidence and there is great comfort in knowing what God is looking for and what He wants us to do. And when you and I begin to walk in this, we go with confident expectation, we go with a sense of purpose, and we are actually prepared for success in our lives if in fact we are abiding by those things that we know He wants us to do. If we're walking in a way in which it's sort of hit and miss and we're going according to whatever we feel like doing on a particular day, there's no real confidence in that, is there? There's no real security, and ultimately there is no real comfort. As we set our affections on the right things and on what God tells us to do, there is great confidence and there's great favor of God. That is tremendous comfort. But probably one of the greatest comforts that comes to us is the comfort of divine affirmation. That is to say, as you begin to walk in the way that God tells you to do, which in and of itself, as Peter will say, the glory of God rests upon you. And if you've never felt that, do it. Start doing the things that you know God wants you to do

and just feel the presence of God going, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But beyond that, there's a great affirmation of God in the way that He begins to lead in your life, the way that He begins to direct in your life.

Interestingly enough, as we come to this passage, it is a passage not only about Abraham, but about his servant that is going in his name. And one of the phrases that is repeated continually is, "I'm doing this for my master. It's my master's camels. It's my master's possessions. It's my master's things. This is what my master wants to do." And what we find is a servant on a mission for the master. This is actually what's going to be referring us to the greatest of comforts. And that is, as we begin to walk on the mission that our Master has given us, we will find the greatest of comfort, and that is the affirmation of God's presence and God's work in our lives. Think about this. You're actually going to see God work in your life personally. In this particular setting, the servant will see it. Up to this point, he's been talking about the fact that God has worked in the God of his master. But at the end, he will say, "But God of my master directed me." And it's

as we begin to serve Him according to what He tells us to do and work according to His mission that we begin to see great things happen.

This chapter, Genesis 24, is an interesting chapter because we know that there has been the loss of Abram's wife. And from what we understand at this particular juncture, Isaac is now probably in the neighborhood of 37 years old and is not married. Up to this point, he has had a very close relationship with the mother, only son. And so, I'm not going to go into any detail, but there's probably been a little bit of coddling. And now, he's 37 years old. It's time to let go. I don't know if in fact God did it for this reason, but Sarah is taken out of the picture. And it will be at the end of this chapter that we come and Isaac finally goes into the tent of his mother with his new wife at now 37, 38 years old. And it says that he was comforted, which is telling us that he lived in the tent with his mother and he lived in this particular area and they had a close relationship. And it was so close that he needed some kind of comfort that would supersede all of his sorrow of the loss of his mother. And so, in the

comfort that God gives him, He will give him a wife, and there will be great comfort in that. In this process, the servant is sent out, and Abraham says, "Now, you need to go to my family members," because what's the mission? The mission is to preserve the heritage. That's what the whole mission is. We're going to preserve the heritage of God. If you want to know what the mission is that you have, it's to preserve the heritage. You and I are to proclaim the truth. We're to tell those that we proclaim, those that God has placed under us for the purpose of shoring them up for the future. We give them truth, and it should be in the package of experience. We should be able to say, "Look, I've been there, I've done this, I know what God can do, and I know what He will do."

In this particular passage, we have the servant going according to his master. He goes to the place that his master tells him, some 700 miles distance, which is not an easy trek. He comes to a place in which he knows nothing about. Nevertheless, his master told him to go there, so he goes. And as he goes and as he obeys, he turns to God and he goes, "You're going to have to show me the girl

that I'm supposed to choose because I have no idea, but I know You do, and I know Your plan is right." And so, he puts his trust in God.

If you look with me in Chapter 24, it reads this way, as he begins to stand before the spring, waiting for the daughters of men to come from the city and to draw water. Of course, this is the place where he hopes to find a wife for Isaac. He is coming by virtue of a command. He comes to Abraham's brother, and it's his brother that he finds out that he has many children. Abraham only has the one [child].

And now, we come into the passage in verse 14, and the cry of the servant is,

(Genesis 24:14) "now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also' — may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

(Genesis 24:15) Before he had finished speaking..."

He was praying, right?

We actually saw this earlier as we looked with Abraham in particular in Chapter 18, where he's praying specifically before God. He's talking with God in the text and he's trying to intercede for Lot. And as he is coming to God for intercession for Lot, God has already sent the two angels on behalf of him.

There's a great passage in Daniel. If you look with me in Daniel, it emphasizes this as well. Sometimes we perceive, "God's just being slow. He just wanted to make me wait." Isaiah reminds us that He waits on high to be gracious. He longs to do this. But if you look with me in Daniel 9, we see Daniel realizing that the time of his nation, of the captivity should be over, he begins to read through the Book of Jeremiah. He realizes these things and he begins to pray. As he begins to pray with supplications and fasting and sackcloth, he begins to confess the sins of not only his nation, but even of himself within the passage. And he humbles himself before God. He turns to God and he goes, "For Your sake, You've got to rescue us. For Your sake, this has to happen." And he begins to, once again in

verse 18, present his supplication before the Lord, and he reminds God, "I'm not coming to You because of anything that I merit."

If you look at the end of verse 18,

(Daniel 9:18) "... for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion."

"That's how I'm appealing to You."

So, he cries out,

(Daniel 9:19) "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

(Daniel 9:20) Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God,

(Daniel 9:21) while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously,

came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

(Daniel 9:22) He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.

(Daniel 9:23) At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you..."

What Scripture is telling us is that God not only hears your prayer, He's anxious to grant your prayer.

And it's at the time in Genesis 24:15... I mean, you can look at a passage like this and you can call it fortuitous; you can call it serendipitous; you can call it lucky. You know, "That's lucky that this girl just happened to go..." No, it was the divine hand of God that comes into play.

(Genesis 24:15) "Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder."

Now, I just want to stop there. The servant doesn't know who she is. He doesn't know that she came from the

family of Nahor. He just knows that this woman comes out and he's going, "Maybe she's the one, but I don't even know who she is." But Scripture has given us a little insight, and God is saying, "Behold, this is the girl that I've chosen. So, this is not luck. This is My divine act in this particular situation."

(Genesis 24:16) "The girl was very beautiful..."

That's kind of the icing on the cake.

"... a virgin, and no man had had relations with her..."

She was miraculously kept. There's no doubt about this, that this would take place. The question, I think, would be, how is it that he might perceive that she was a virgin? I would have to say that, especially with the Aramean group of people, i.e. those from Syria, which is this particular layout, they had, for those young girls that had not yet married, a guardianship. And they were oftentimes surrounded by people that were watching to make sure that they would maintain pure until they got married. And they were not only guarding their purity, but they were also guarding their proper lineage in this.

And so, the passage says,

"The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up."

The reason that it's worded the way that it is, is that there were steps to go into the springs. So, you'd have to go down into this cistern area and ever how many steps would be how deep the well was, but oftentimes you'd have to go pretty deep. So, the fact is that when she was drawing water from this well, she had to go down and then she had to come back up with the water. Now, we were talking about this last week, but you have 10 camels that are drinking about 50 gallons each. That's a lot of going down and going up. What would cause a beautiful girl to do all this work? You know, if I was a beautiful girl, I'd go, "Get somebody else to do it." (One of the reasons why I'm not a beautiful girl.)

(Genesis 24:17) "Then the servant ran to meet her..."

And at this particular juncture, everything begins to happen pretty quickly in the sense of you begin to see almost an excitement building. The servant is running.

The girl begins to act quickly. She acts quickly once. She acts quickly twice. She continues to do what she does. And there's an excitement that's going on in the passage. It says this in verse 17,

"Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar.""

Now, once again, his prayer was,

(Genesis 24:14) "Now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also' — may she be the one..."

(Genesis 24:18) "She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink.

(Genesis 24:19) Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking.""

Wow, that must be the girl.

(Genesis 24:20) "So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.

(Genesis 24:21) Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence..."

I could just see him with his mouth open, "Is this the girl? Obviously." I can imagine things happening so perfectly, if you think about it, so perfectly. I mean, she's taking initiative. She's looking for opportunities. She's not really taking any credit or any thought of how laborious it is. If you think about it, I mean, after the second or third camel, I'd be going, "Could I have some help here?" But she's not doing any of that. And let me just remind you of this: A good servant knows what a good servant looks like. And so, it's as if God had sent this servant who was a good servant of Abraham to qualify who is a good servant. And I'm reminded that good servants never look for thanks. That's a pretty interesting thought, isn't it?

One of the great passages found in Luke 17, if you'd look there with me. Jesus gives this example, and we've read it before. I guess I could say that about most of Scripture.

Jesus makes a statement in verse 7,

(Luke 17:7) "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'?"

I mean, he's a slave. It's not for him to do that.

(Luke 17:8) "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?"

(Luke 17:9) He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?"

In other words, the passage is talking about the fact that this individual serves because that's who he is. He's a servant. And he's not looking for thanks. So many of us in the name of God, you know, we do things, and then we go, "Where's my thanks?" God goes, "You're My servant. You shouldn't be looking for thanks. This is what you do. You serve." And I know it's easy to get upset about the fact that people aren't recognizing us or noticing the things that we do, as Martha seems to convey that in the Mary and Martha's scene. But the passage is clear that servants don't draw attention to themselves. They do the

work that they're called to do, and it's who they are. They're servants.

So, she fills up, and she quickly empties the jar for all the camels.

(Genesis 24:21) "Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not."

In other words, could this be the girl? And you go, "Sure, it's got to be the girl. It's got to be the girl, because she did exactly what you thought she was going to do." It's not the girl until we hear where her family is. Now, Scripture has already introduced what her family was, but he doesn't know it yet.

So, he asked the question, if you look at verse 23,

(Gen 24:23) "and said, "Whose daughter are you? ..."

I mean, quite frankly, at this particular juncture, wouldn't it be wise not to even go there? I mean, we've got all these good signs. Let's not set ourselves up for failure. Let's not take it too far, because that's pressing our luck. But we don't believe in pressing our luck. We believe in

obeying God completely. And this is one of the things that I believe this lesson teaches so adequately, and that is to say that when we wait upon the Lord, when we obey every single word that He tells us to do, and we refuse to compromise God's standards in any way, God will bless. We believe that it's God who orchestrates all these things, and if in fact we're not trusting in Him, then we'll have a tendency to compromise, we'll have a tendency to "fudge," we'll have a tendency to make things look the way they should and maybe leave certain things out, but he's not going to do that.

The passage reads this way in verse 23,

(Genesis 24:23) "and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?"

(Genesis 24:24) She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.""

Abraham's brother, his wife, and not only his wife, but his brother had a concubine, but this girl has not been born under the concubine; she's been born under the wife. And

so, if you think about it, everything about the setting is perfect.

(Genesis 24:25) "Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in."

(Genesis 24:26) Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD.

(Genesis 24:27) He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers.""

It's a wonderful passage because what we begin to see is that there is an experiencing of God's direction in his life. So, here's the point. The point is that we oftentimes wonder, "So, why is it that I need to wait on the Lord? Why do I need to obey every single command that He gives me? Why do I need to refuse to compromise the things of God?" And the answer is, because you want His perfect will. When God begins to work, He works perfectly; He works completely. It's whole. There's no loose ends in any of it. And I think we oftentimes repeat

that wonderful passage in Proverbs 10, when God answers, He doesn't answer halfway. It is the blessings of the Lord that make rich, and what? He adds no sorrow to it. Let me just emphasize this in that particular passage. The word "sorrow" is making mention of something of toil and labor. And what it's talking about specifically is that when God blesses, we don't have to work to make it work. You ever tried one of those things, kind of a halfway blessing? We think God is kind of working. Instead of waiting for Him to work all the way, and instead of trusting Him to do all of the work, believing that He's going to do it, we begin to try to, like Jacob, orchestrate and try to make it happen. If in fact you would wait upon the Lord, or like Saul, who tries to give the sacrifice before Samuel comes, because he's just trying to help God out. You ever try to do that? And you wonder why things were so difficult? "Why is it so hard? Why is it so hard to get God's..." Look, if God is working, it's not hard. God begins to bless in a way that it's almost inexplicable. And the bottom line is that when you go, you need to go on a mission for your Master, and when you go on a mission for your Master, He'll direct your paths.

There's a Psalm, Psalm 32, if you look there with me, that reveals this heart's attitude.

Of course, Psalm 32 starts off with,

(Psalm 32:1) “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!”

Who confesses their weaknesses. And clearly, this is what God is calling upon us to do.

If you look in Psalm 32:6, though, it reads this way,

“Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

(Psalm 32:7) You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance.

(Psalm 32:8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

(Psalm 32:9) Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.

(Psalm 32:10) Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him."

In other words, you've got to trust in His leading, His directing. He will direct your paths, right? You're putting your trust in Him. Very interesting how Scripture gives us examples of this.

Let me give you a couple of them. One found in Luke 19. Very simple. I like the simple ones because you don't get lost in the quagmire of the details. But if you look in Luke 19, we have Jesus with His disciples and He's approaching Jerusalem ultimately as He's coming to the Mount of Olives.

But it says,

(Luke 19:29) "When He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples.

(Luke 19:30) saying, "Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here."

Now, that's an interesting request, but how would I know which one it is?

(Luke 19:31) "If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say, 'The Lord has need of it.'"

(Luke 19:32) So those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them.

(Luke 19:33) As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

(Luke 19:34) They said, "The Lord has need of it."

(Luke 19:35) They brought it to Jesus..."

Do you hear the simplicity of that? I mean, where did that colt come from? How did God supply that? They were on their Master's mission. They were doing what God told them to do. And God supplied. He said, "I would supply. I'd take care of your needs." I think one of the big problems is we're not on our Master's mission, first of all. We're doing our own thing. We're going after our own desires. We're pursuing our own things. And we're going, "Why is it so difficult?" And He goes, "You're not on My mission. I prepared you for a reason. The greatest comfort

is going to be when you begin to see Me work in your life." And can you imagine how the disciples begin to feel when they go, "Everything is just exactly like He said." God's affirming you at that particular moment. If you've never gone through a moment like that, you can't share it with somebody else. But I can tell you it's one of the greatest moments of comfort that you'll ever have in your life when you say, "God worked in my life to such a degree that every single detail of my life was... I mean, I saw His hand work." I mean, we tell people that God is real, but have we experienced the realness of God in our lives? You're not going to experience that until you start walking in His will, until you start doing what He tells you to do.

There's another interesting passage in Luke 22, if you'll look there with me.

(Luke 22:7) "Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed."

(Luke 22:8) And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it."

(Luke 22:9) They said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?"

Good question.

(Luke 22:10) "And He said to them, "When you have entered the city..."

This is bizarre when you think about it. "You go into the city." "When?" "Just go now."

"And He said to them, "When you have entered the city, a man will meet you..."

How is it possible to get that timing? "What man? We're in the city. Do you know how many men there are in the city?"

"... "When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters.

(Luke 22:11) And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"

(Luke 22:12) "And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there."

(Luke 22:13) And they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover."

Just like he told them. Why? Because they were on a mission. And what was the mission? The mission was for God. They were doing His will. They were seeking His will. This is fundamentally what Paul is stating in 2 Corinthians 9, if you turn there. Because there are often times you feel the Spirit nudging you and telling you, "You need to do this," and you go, "How is that going to happen?" I mean, Jesus has the 5,000 before His disciples, and He goes, "You've got to feed them." And of course, Philip goes, "We don't have enough money to feed all these people." And Jesus goes, "Let's start doing it. Just start doing it." And we all want to work in the realm of, "If I can see it, I'll do it, but if I don't see it..." But we walk by faith, not by sight. And when God tells you to do something, just obey Him. I don't know how it's going to pan out, but I do know this, that He's going to provide the way.

In this particular passage, Paul is talking about the whole concept of giving, and he gives an interesting example in 2 Corinthians 9 of the church at Macedonia, which was a

very impoverished church, but they gave out of their poverty. And so, he gives that example to the Corinthians, and he goes, "Now, if the Lord is telling you to give, you need to give. But don't give because I told you to, give because the Spirit of God is leading you to."

The way he puts it is this,

(2 Corinthians 9:6) "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

(2 Corinthians 9:7) Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

(2 Corinthians 9:8) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."

In other words, God's not going to supply for you to do bad things, but He is going to supply for you to do His work. And you and I can go in confidence and do the things that God tells us to do, knowing that He's going to

supply. Just start walking in that faith. Just start doing the things. Scripture tells us that we need to build up one another. We need to encourage one another. You need to use your spiritual gifts. Start doing it and watch Him just begin to supply. You're going to see affirmation after affirmation. There are going to be times when you're going to feel compelled, "God just sent me to go talk to this person." You're going to talk to them, and God's just going to open doors and you're going to say, "I now know why He sent me." God is able to make this grace abound.

And it says this in verse 9,

(2 Corinthians 9:9) “as it is written, “HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.”

(2 Corinthians 9:10) Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

(2 Corinthians 9:11) you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

(2 Corinthians 9:12) For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God."

In other words, it's uniting your hearts; it's bringing you together. God is doing multiple things as you begin to obey what He tells you to do. This servant just did what he was told to do. And he told God, "Look, You're going to have to show me the one that You want, but that's the only one I want." And he took it to the degree that "I'm only going to do everything You tell me to do. I'm not going to compromise at all. And even though she might meet all these standards, if she doesn't meet this last one, she's not the girl. But if she does, that's You." And we need to walk in that way. I mean, if we're not walking in that kind of faith, then we'll never really experience the great affirmation of God in which, I mean, you're going to have to say, "That had to be God, that wasn't me." And you'll feel the presence of God. I think that's the greatest reward. I think that's the greatest source of comfort when we actually experience God's presence in everything that we do. You can walk with confidence.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for the way that You work in our lives. Lord, we know that You are bringing us comfort. As we come to times of disappointment and death, we realize that it's not over. You have a purpose for us, and You have a calling for us. And You have a mission that we should be on. It is on this mission that we find the greatest comfort. Not only do we find that You are pleased with that which we are pursuing, but we realize that You are present as You affirm that which we have done. And we see Your hand, and we see Your handiwork in everything that happens within our life. Lord, we want to walk by faith. We don't want to walk by sight. We don't want to trust in our own ability, nor do we want to trust in the things that we perceive are important. But we do want to pursue that which You have called us to do, so that we might see You; so that we might know You; so that we might experience the hand of God in our life; so that we might legitimately

share it with other people and pass on the great heritage that You have given us.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what we're asking you to do is to embrace the calling. God has called you to a particular work. He's not only saved you by His Son, but He has also called you to walk in the footsteps of His Son. We are called to be like Him. Imitate God, therefore, and walk in love just as Christ loved you. As you begin to do the things that God tells you to do, to listen to the Spirit of God, open up God's Word and it tells you to do things, do it exactly the way it says. Don't compromise. Don't fudge. Do exactly what He tells you to do. And as you begin to do what He tells you to do, watch. Watch Him work in your life. Watch reality begin to set in of the very presence of God in your midst.