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Genesis

Chapter 24 - God's Comfort in Death

The Comfort of a Common Destiny (vs. 1-9)

Genesis 24:1-9: Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way.

Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac." The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?" Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there! The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To

your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there." So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

Well, just reading the beginning of this, we would think that this particular chapter was dealing with getting a bride for Isaac. And you're right, it is. Nevertheless, the greater theme is comfort. God is giving comfort to not only Abraham, but also to Isaac.

In fact, if you've read ahead, and we sometimes encourage you to do that, if you'll look with me in Genesis 24:67, this chapter will end this way,

(Genesis 24:67) "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his

wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

The passage actually is telling us where the text is going. It is a passage of comfort.

It is interesting to note that when you look at Adam and Eve and that relationship and you look at Noah and his wife, which is very strange and bizarre to me, but we don't even know her name. And then you come to Abraham; Abraham's relationship seems to be much deeper. In fact, as you look in particular in verse 23, we spend a whole chapter burying Sarah. Something that you're not going to see before or really after. We see great care and we see a great relationship, and obviously what we see is some depth of emotions. Abraham weeps greatly in the beginning of Chapter 23, and there is a great sorrow that follows up. What this particular passage is going to reveal to us is not only was Abraham going through great sorrow, but Isaac as well. Now, we understand that Isaac is probably 37, 38 years old at this particular juncture. That's not a young guy, and he has a close relationship with his mother. In fact, to some

extent, the passage may even be showing the necessity of taking the mother out in order for Isaac to move on with his life. Nevertheless, as we come to this passage, we begin to see how God moves us into the realm of comfort.

I think of a great text in Isaiah 40, if you remember and recall how that particular chapter starts off. It starts off with God crying out, "Comfort, oh comfort My people." God desires to comfort us, and we know, according to 2 Corinthians 1, that He is the God of all comfort, and He comforts us in the times of our afflictions. He is the One that brings us comfort. I guess the question that arises is, how exactly does He comfort us? And in many respects, this particular chapter is going to be revealing that. We understand that relationships are very comforting at times in which we are dis comforted, and there's a realization that we need that kind of close surrounding of brothers and sisters that will encourage us. As the psalmist will say, "He surrounds us with songs of deliverance," and certainly we need that.

But in this particular passage, it's actually pointing to a realization in our lives, things that we should realize and

things that will bring us to a sense of great comfort. Death is a difficult thing in and of itself, isn't it? It's kind of a surreal thing. Connie and I have been talking about the fact that it feels like we've been around death for now quite a few years, and it just seems to be hovering around us. And it's not necessarily something that's always pleasant. However, there are things that God is not only teaching us, but God is comforting us with. And we see that within this particular passage.

If you look with me in Genesis 24, it starts off with reminding us that Abraham's old. Now, we know that Sarah, according to Chapter 23, died at 127 years. That would mean that Abraham is now 137 years, about 10 years older than her. So, he is quite old at this particular juncture. However, just to make mention of this, he's probably going to live another 38 years. He's going to marry another woman, Keturah, and have many children. So, it's very interesting to realize that as the passage actually opens up with him being advanced in age and old. Nevertheless, it's not the end of his life. And God then begins to declare something that I think we

sometimes forget because you get lost in the sorrow; you get lost in the loss. And before long, you almost feel like it's the end of all blessings. But Scripture is wanting us to know that death doesn't end God's blessings.

So, this particular verse is actually going to begin with, (Genesis 24:1) “Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way.”

Wow, that's quite a statement to make when you're following a funeral. But God once again is declaring, “I give blessings and they don't end.”

As we have been following Abraham from the very beginning, Genesis 12:2, the declaration from God was, “I will bless you, Abraham.” By the time you come to Chapter 17, He turns actually to Sarah as He's talking to Abraham and He says, “And I will bless her.” And as He goes on, of course, we see this theme repeated over and over again, Genesis 22:17, “I will greatly bless you.” God is declaring a blessing.

What I like is that sometimes you find these obscure passages in different places, but one of the great

promises of God and one of the great facts about God is found in Ecclesiastes 3:14.

It reads this way,

(Ecclesiastes 3:14) “I know that everything God does will remain forever...”

I want you to think about that in the context of blessing. If God says He will bless you, what does that mean? It's going to remain forever. That's a great truth when you realize, as according to Romans, His gifts and His callings are irrevocable. He doesn't take them back. And so, when God blesses you, it's going to be a great thing.

We oftentimes read that wonderful text in 2 Samuel 12:23 where David loses his newborn son. And his statement literally is, “He cannot come to me, but I shall go to him.” And there is a great hope and a great peace that we have. And it is that great hope and great peace that we realize is part of the blessing of God. Romans 8:28 says that somehow God's going to turn even the bad things in our life into good. Somehow, God's going to do that. We know that to be true.

1 Thessalonians 4 says that we grieve, but we don't grieve as those who have no hope.

So, the question is, quite frankly, what are the blessings that come out of this particular time? And I would say the greatest blessing that really comes out of these times is a kind of transformation as far as our perspective goes. We have a way of looking at things, viewing things before a death; after a death, it begins to change quite radically.

If you look with me in Psalm 39, just to give you an example of this. Actually, there are a couple of passages that I want you to see that make reference to this. The psalmist begins this particular psalm by sharing his heart, and in sharing his heart, he is extremely upset about the evil that lurks around him. You know how you kind of get focused on those things that are just not only irritating, but almost scary; the things that are happening in our world around us. Evil exists and the wicked are there. I think our thoughts are, as we begin to think about these things and they begin to mull around in our head, is, "I don't want to say anything, because if I say anything..." Remember our parents used to say, "If you can't say

anything nice, don't say anything at all.” So, we just go into that kind of mode, “Well, I'm just not going to say anything.” And the thought is, maybe it goes away, but it doesn't.

So, the way this Psalm opens up is,

(Psalm 39:1) “I said, “I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle

While the wicked are in my presence.”

(Psalm 39:2) I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good...”

Yeah, the only problem with closing your mouth and not saying anything is that now you're not even saying anything good. So, nothing good is happening.

“... And my sorrow grew worse.”

“I thought that if I just didn't say anything, that it wouldn't actually cause any problem, but things actually began to get worse.”

(Psalm 39:3) “My heart was hot within me, While I was musing the fire burned; Then I spoke with my tongue:

(Psalm 39:4) LORD, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am.”

Now, what he's bringing in, of course, is the whole aspect of death. Why would he bring that in at this particular juncture? Well, we have a tendency to waste our lives on things that are not productive. And one of the things that is extremely not productive is just thinking how much you hate the wicked. I mean, you can sit around there, and you can kind of rationalize that you are righteous in your indignation. There's no doubt about it. Nevertheless, what have you done good? And your anger is actually holding you back from doing good because you're so fixated on the anger that is a part of this.

So, he says in verse 5,

(Psalm 39:5) “Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.

(Psalm 39:6) Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.”

I mean, it's amazing the things that irritate us and the things that we focus on that really don't matter at all. It's not going to last at all.

He says in verse 7,

(Psalm 39:7) “And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.”

And really, the passage really transforms him, moves him, and redirects his priorities. And that's one of the great things that death does. In fact, if you think about it, it's one of the greatest blessings of death, is that it actually redirects our priorities.

And he says in verse 8, if you look,

(Psalm 39:8) “Deliver me from all my transgressions; Make me not the reproach of the foolish.”

Why is he asking for forgiveness? He's wasted his time. Ephesians says, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Our tendency is to focus on the evil that's around us and then do nothing. And God says, “No, that should be an impetus for you to make the most of your time and to focus on doing that which is good.”

(Psalm 39:9) “I have become mute, I do not open my mouth...”

“You've done it because of these plagues, but Lord, You're using these in my life to cause me to turn to You.” And of course, that's a great psalm.

If you look at me at Ecclesiastes 7, a passage that we've oftentimes quoted. But Ecclesiastes 7 is reminding us that there actually is a great blessing in death.

(Ecclesiastes 7:1) “A good name is better than a good ointment, And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth.”

(Ecclesiastes 7:2) It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart.

(Ecclesiastes 7:3) Sorrow is better than laughter, For when a face is sad a heart may be happy.

(Ecclesiastes 7:4) The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.”

In other words, death makes me think deeply. It actually transforms my thoughts. It brings me into a point of literally changing the way that I see things, and it brings a perspective that I hadn't had.

So, as you look at, in particular, in this passage, it starts off with the blessings of God. And look, there's no doubt that God blessed him in every way. And isn't it bizarre that when we have something happen to us that is difficult, we just focus on that one thing. But God has blessed us in so many different ways. He opens our eyes during that particular time, and we begin to count our blessings. Once again, I believe the greatest blessing during this time is the redirecting of our priorities, which brings the greatest blessing of us. And we begin to have a greater perspective.

The second thing that He does, if you look with me in verses 2 through 4, is that He begins to cause us to realize that we are here and we should be driven to do something. In other words, I think one of the things that we read there in that Psalm 39 is that, "Help me to number my days. Help me to understand that I'm here

for a particular reason.” And you and I have to sit down and begin to ask ourselves, why are we here and how long are we here for, and what should we be doing? God gives us a great purpose. He gives us a great drive. And there's great comfort when you pursue that purpose. If in fact you lay that aside, if in fact you focus on the negative, you're going to find yourself discomforted. But if you will perceive that God has you here for a reason, and it's one of the reasons why we come into this particular chapter in verse 24, and we're immediately finding a wife for Isaac. It's like we're jumping from a funeral to now a wedding. And why is that? We have something to do. And what is the purpose?

Well, if you look with me in verse 2, it says,

(Genesis 24:2) “Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned...”

Let me just stop there. I think it is interesting that this focus is now on getting his son a wife. It's on the heritage. It's on the relationship. Here you have an individual that he calls a servant, and he's in charge of everything that he owned. Now, you would think that Abraham's thinking to

himself, “Well, I'm getting kind of old, so this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to sit him down, and I'm going to tell him, ‘Now, take care of all my stuff.’” But that's not the focus of what he's going to be talking about. The focus is that he's going to be talking about preserving the heritage. And you and I ought to be driven to do this because we know that we're transient. We know that we're not going to last forever. What does God want us to do while we're here? He's left us here. What does He want us to do? And the answer is very clear, preserve the heritage.

If you look in the passage, Abraham says this,

“Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, “Please place your hand under my thigh.””

Now, this is kind of a first in Scripture. Up to this point, we haven't seen this kind of thing going on, which I don't know, I'd almost have to say that Abraham kind of invented it, because we don't see necessarily the Chaldeans doing it or whatever, history-making designation of it. However, what seems to be directly

connected with his thigh is that it demonstrates the greatest part of a person's strength. They say that that's your strongest muscle, by the way, is in that particular area. It's oftentimes where the swords were worn, and Scripture will make reference to that specifically. It is above all of this, though, the seat of procreation. And so, the focus of Abraham at this particular juncture is on the heritage and procreation. And on that blessing that God had given him specifically through this. It's very interesting because the word itself, “*yārēk*,” in the Hebrew, makes mention to the thigh; it actually comes from a root word which refers to softness, which is probably your softest place and your strongest place; which is kind of an interesting dichotomy of sorts in which we have these two things parallel, almost a paradox of sorts. And what we see is kind of a strength and a vulnerability that come together with this particular muscle.

In fact, you'll see this particular muscle being made reference to in Genesis 32 again. And in that particular chapter, it would be Jacob, and he'll wrestle with the

angel, and the angel will touch this particular muscle, and he won't be able to walk as well. In fact, I think the way that the Greeks put it is that there's a nerve that goes from your spinal cord, goes through your hip, and it goes down to what the Greeks called the Achilles' heel. And so, Jacob's inability to walk is fundamentally God keeping him from running. If you realize that it's at this time that he stands and fights against the angel, and his point of fighting against the angel is that he's not going to let him go till he gets the blessing. In other words, he finally stood up and fought. Now, up to this point, Jacob had been running. He ran from his bad decisions. He ran from his brother trying to kill him. And he runs from Laban. But God says, "We're done running." How do you know? You can't run anymore. So, the very next chapter, if you remember, Genesis 33, is where his brother comes and he looked down and he could see his brother coming with his army. And God goes, "He can't run." So, he had to face his enemy.

The point is that you have this, once again, dichotomy of strength and vulnerability coming together. The emphasis

seems to be within the passage is that he wants this man to swear according to all that is near and dear to him, that is to say, his heritage. And so, he is asking him to make a promise to preserve this heritage.

(Genesis 24: 3) “And I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth...”

I like the way that's put. He controls everything. There's no doubt about it.

“... that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live.”

It is interesting to note that Canaan makes reference to low ground. So, I kind of think in my head, you don't want to marry low-lives. But anyway, that's fundamentally what he's making reference to and the preservation of his heritage.

(Genesis 24:4) “But you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

Once again, driven to preserve this heritage, now living with a sense of purpose; now living with a sense of something that goes beyond you today. You're looking for

that which is forever. So, you're actually investing in eternal. You're investing in the lives of people.

And more specifically, if you look with me in Psalm 71, you know, us old people, you kind of get the feeling that time is slipping away, and we're watching people die around us. I don't know why people are dying more frequently now that I'm older, but certainly they seem to be doing that, the people around me. But if you look with me in Psalm 71, you kind of see that and get that feel that this whole passage is about that.

In fact, if you look in verse 9, the cry is,

(Psalm 71:9) “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails.”

Interesting way of putting it, isn't it?

Then it says this in verse 17,

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

In other words, “Though I'm old, I'm still declaring.”

(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...”

I.e., “Until I pass this on.”

I think one thing that death does is it makes us acutely aware of not only our transientness, but the fact that we need to invest in something more than the superficial of life. So, what is that? And the bottom line is, according to this particular passage, we're investing in the heritage that lasts. Galatians says, let us do good to all men, especially those of the household of God. Why? Because at that point, you're actually investing in forever. Those are the ones that will live forever with God. And God is asking us to use our time wisely.

(Psalm 71:19) “For Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens, You who have done great things...”

And this is going to be actually great comfort to this particular individual, because if you look in verse 21,

(Psalm 71:21) “May You increase my greatness And turn to comfort me.”

Comfort comes when you and I begin to realize that there is a purpose while we're here.

2 Timothy 2 reminds us that in the process of even teaching people, our goal is to teach faithful men who would teach others also. What we're doing is we're carrying on the heritage. And if you've ever read 2 Timothy in particular, and when you get to chapter 4, you can just literally see Paul passing the baton to Timothy. He's just saying, "I finished the course. Now, you finish your course." And he just hands over that. Well, that's what we're supposed to be doing. If you're not handing over, if you're not building that heritage, you're going to be discomforted. Because there's something about building a heritage that says, "I'm here for a reason, there's a purpose. And how wonderful it is to realize this. Paul said there in 2 Timothy 4, "I know the Lord will bring me safely home." So, he wasn't worried about leaving; he was just concerned about finishing. And he knew that if he finished what God had called him to do, that he had passed on, and in this particular setting there in 2 Timothy, he could leave the church of Ephesus in the

hands of Timothy, knowing that he would carry on that tradition; he would carry on that truth in his life. And so, God is calling us to do that.

Now, let me just emphasize this particular point, that when we're talking about preserving the heritage, we're emphasizing there's only one heritage worth preserving. The way that Ephesians 4 puts it is that there's one body, there is one Spirit, there's one calling, there's one hope, there's one Lord, there's one faith, there's one baptism. What Scripture is telling us is there's only one. And it is that body that we're investing in because it is that which is real. And so, the investment into that body is that which will last.

If you look in Genesis 24:5, He actually takes us to another place. And that is to a sense of determination. So, really, when you consider that God is wanting you to realize that you are destined for blessing, that will bring you great comfort. We're not destined to be at loss. These things are not over. Death does not end it for us. We have a great hope that is sure and steadfast, an anchor for our soul. That's comforting to me. It's always comforting to

know it's not over, and that God has greater things for us, and that God has blessed us and will continue to bless us because He called us for that very purpose. It is extremely comforting when you and I realize that we're here for a particular reason. And when you begin to invest yourself in that reason, you will find great comfort. I find great comfort when I focus on ministering the word of God, when I focus on discipling others. Because I say, I may be gone, but the word of God is being carried on. It's exactly what God has called me to do. We know that we're just here for a short time, but God has called us for that purpose. And there's great comfort in that.

But the last thing, verse 5 and 6 and 7, as we begin to end this particular paragraph, you begin to see that he is talking about a sense of determination that comes within our life. And it's this determination that will actually bring the greatest source of comfort to us. The determination that he's going to reveal within the passage is a sense of taking God at His word, no longer doubting. One of the great things about death is that it has a way of getting you off the fence. A lot of your life, you're going, "Well, maybe

I'm going to do this; maybe I'm going to go this way." So, you have kind of suppositions, you have what ifs, plan Bs. You kind of think in those kind of terms. But death, it brings a reality that you wouldn't normally perceive. And in that sense of reality, what it causes you to do is it causes you to say, "I'm either all in or I'm not." Because death is so final, isn't it? I mean, it's that sense of someone was living and now they're not. They had a time to do a work. Jesus would say, "Look, work while it's still day. The night is coming when you're not going to work anymore." You have these opportunities and you realize, "What have I done with my life?" So, it brings you that point of determination. It is that determination to follow God all the way that will bring you the greatest comfort. No more compromises, no more plan Bs, no more suppositions.

So, what's interesting is the way this starts off in verse 5, (Genesis 24:5) "The servant said to him, "Suppose..."

Oh, we love doing that, don't we? "Well, what if this doesn't work? And, you know, you're sending me to a place and they don't even know I'm coming. You know, I

haven't been able to phone them yet. They're not answering. So, what happens if she won't come?" It's a good question.

"The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?""

There's kind of two issues in this. One is, if she doesn't come, then we have a problem. So, does he go?

(Genesis 24:6) "Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there!"

(Genesis 24:7) The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there."

That's an interesting confidence, isn't it? "It's going to happen." How do you know that, Abraham? "Because God told me." Now, what's interesting is that up to this point, we have been watching Abraham work through

these things. You know, God says, "I'm going to bless you." And then the famine hits the land and he goes, "Okay, God's going to bless me, but what about the famine?" So then, he goes to Egypt. He's been dealing with what ifs all along, but not anymore, because death has brought him to this sense of finality, and "I'm going to be all in with this, and no, we're not going to compromise." The guy goes, "What if this happens?" He goes, "It doesn't matter."

And it says this in verse 8,

(Genesis 24:8) "But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath..."

In other words, I'm sure his servant is thinking, "Yeah, but I mean, I took an oath to you. I promised that I would get this done. You know, what happens if I can't fulfill this?" He goes, "Don't worry about that. I free you from the oath."

Now, watch the end of the verse.

"... only do not take my son back there.""

What actually begins to happen is that something is greater than him finding his son a wife, and that is keeping the heritage pure. Did you notice that? “Don't let him go back there.” You go, “Well, yeah, but that's where he's going to get the wife.” I know. But he's going to get the wife. He's going to take her. She's going to come under his authority. He's going to then reign. If he stays up there, they'll influence him. So, we want to protect the word of God; we want to protect the promises of God; we want to protect the heritage of God; we will not assimilate into that culture.

As well as, if you look in the passage, as it ends in verse 9, (Genesis 24:9) “So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.”

He must lead his household. The son can't be dissuaded in any way. And that fundamentally is what Scripture continues to reveal to us.

Let me just show you the passage that's very familiar to you in 2 Corinthians 6; a very familiar passage that makes reference to the separation of God's people. In 2

Corinthians 6, he quotes quite extensively out of the Old Testament there in verse 16, 17, and 18.

(2 Corinthians 6:14) “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

(2 Corinthians 6:15) Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

(2 Corinthians 6:16) Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

(2 Corinthians 6:17) Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

(2 Corinthians 6:18) And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”
Says the Lord Almighty.”

What is He doing? Protecting His heritage. Now, the thought is, "If I am sort of sequestered as a body and I separate myself from the world, how can I witness to them?" Well, first of all, Scripture tells the church, "Let your light so shine before men that they might see your good works and glorify God in heaven." So, by virtue of the way that we live, we become a testimony. For example, we just saw Abraham with Abimelech. Scripture doesn't tell him don't associate with him at all in any respect, because he has relationships with the outside. What he's fundamentally saying is, don't mix the body; in other words, as the New Testament will make reference to, fellowship. Don't fellowship, don't seek the camaraderie with, because we're a companion of all those who fear God and seek His commandments.

When we first moved into our neighborhood, I don't even know where it came from, but we got this sign, basically kind of a hate sign. I guess somebody found out that I was a pastor or something like that. And I know that the people to our right, the mother was an atheist. She was pretty vocal about that. What was interesting is that as

time went on, something happened. I remember it was about a year after we had moved there, and something had happened that spooked her. And her husband had gone on a business trip or something like that. We were the first house she ran to. And we kept her there for a while, made sure that she was calm, and let her know that we would be there. But the point of the matter is she knew where to go. Now, the world doesn't necessarily like us. but they know they can trust us. And we need to live in such a way that they would see this. And we care for them, but we don't want to fellowship with them because the way that they fellowship is contrary to the way that we live. Can 2 men walk together unless they be agreed? So, we're there if they need us, but we're not there to fellowship with them. We come out; we remain separate, and we preserve that. And we preserve that in our relationships. And if you'll preserve that in your relationships, then that will not only solidify, but it will keep that heritage pure. It's one of the things that I would say families can do; obviously, it's what a church should do. We as a church should not mingle with the things of the world. Once we begin to do that, then we begin to

acquiesce to the way that they think. Can we help those that are in need, that are in the world? Absolutely, that's exactly what we do. And that's when we begin to shine, really. But God has not called us to be a part of that. And really, if you think about it, the great comfort is that we're determined to please God above anything else. And I would say this, this is going to bring the most comfort to you, that determination, "I'm just going to please God. I'm going to put Him first. I'm going to put His family first. I'm going to focus on doing that."

The psalmist puts it best when he says this,

(Psalm 73:28) "... the nearness of God is my good..."

And according to this particular passage, if you look at this,

(2 Corinthians 6:17) "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.

"AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

(2 Corinthians 6:18) And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"
Says the Lord Almighty."

Come out; be separate. Don't let them influence you. Don't assimilate into a culture. Don't let that culture come into your life. This is a difficult thing. Any nation that you're in is going to try to assimilate you in the way that they think. I know for a number of years, many of the churches had kind of brought in the kind of ruling as a democracy within the church. So, for so many years, and I think it still is, I think there are congregational churches. I think they've kind of done some changing. However, fads come and go, don't they? But it's easy for the world to kind of come in and begin to tell the church what to do. And before long, I was watching the church, and they would vote on certain things. Then you would find the people in the pews, they'd get angry about this, they'd get angry at that. My dad had things thrown at him and cursed out in "business meetings". But hey, it was democracy, right? The only problem with democracy is that oftentimes you have a lot of ungodly people making

rules. You don't want to do that. Scripture is very clear. You have elders and deacons. These are righteous men. These are seeking the will of God, and these are the ones that make the decision for the church. But here again, it's very easy to allow the world to come in and begin to make the decisions. It was a great problem, of course, with Solomon, in which he married many wives, and those wives began to turn his heart away. When you're determined only to please God, when your determination is to keep yourself holy unto Him, God's called us to be a holy nation, right? 1 Peter 2. Which means separate, which means distinct, which means as unto God. So, He's the one that we seek to please. The world has all kinds of agendas, and it's very strange how they can infiltrate. But if we'll keep ourselves separate, there is great comfort in that because we realize that the nearness of God is our good. And you'll feel the presence of God. You'll feel His comfort. If God is for us, who can be against us? So, great messages as we begin to realize that comfort comes from the realization that our destiny is for blessings, that God has driven us to preserve this wonderful heritage, and God has given us a sense of determination from now on.

This death has sort of taken me off this fence, and I now am determined no longer to linger.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we just ask that You would change our hearts, that we would be wholehearted to You. And in that, Lord, give us the comfort as we survive from many that have gone before us. And how wonderful it is to know that we're going to see them again. This is the blessed hope in which we are destined to see them again. This is not a hope or a “pie in the sky” in which we are just “crossing our fingers” and “wishing upon a star.” This is something that we know. We know whom we have believed in. We're persuaded about this, that You're able to literally raise from the dead; You will bring us back together. To be absent from the body is to be present with You. There is this hope that we have and a peace that we have and a comfort that You have given us in this. Lord, we know that You have left us here for a purpose, and it is in that purpose that we find great comfort. We ask that You would cause Your Spirit to

be that determining factor within our lives and that our desire would only be to please You, because we know that You'll keep us in perfect peace if our mind is stayed on You, because we completely trust in You.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed. What we're asking you to do is find comfort in God. You could see the wonderful things that God has in store for you, and we're here for a reason. You might even be saying to yourself, "Well, I'm getting kind of old." Yeah, but the blessings keep coming. And will come. Claim these promises today.