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Genesis

Chapter 24 - God's Comfort in Death

The Comfort of Divine Favor (vs. 10-14)

Genesis 24:10-14: Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; 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."

Well, this is a passage about a servant finding a wife for Abraham's son. He's going to take quite a journey. He's going to go all the way into Mesopotamia from the region of Hebron. And if you were to go as a crow flies, it would be about 450 miles. If you go according to the journey, it would probably be close to 700 miles. It is not a short trip. It is what Abraham asked of his servant, and his servant now willingly goes. In many respects, the passage is making references to not only servitude, but humility and a willingness to believe. And that's what we're going to be talking about. We're going to be talking about faith. What is faith about? What does it mean to believe? What does it mean to put your trust in somebody? And in many respects, this particular passage makes reference to that and those qualities that are being shared.

When we come into Chapter 24, we're really coming on the aftermath of Abraham's wife passing away. And we're not to take that lightly because of the fact that Scripture gives it quite a setting. The whole Chapter 23 before is about the burial of Sarah. And so, Scripture is wanting us

to know that this was quite a relationship. In fact, both Abraham and his wife will be called father and mother of those of faith, which is telling us in many respects they are paragons or examples to us. However, one of the things that I appreciate so much about Scripture is it reveals both the downside and the upside. And we can clearly say that Abraham was not always the best husband, and Sarah was not always the best wife. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that they loved each other. And we see that especially as we come to the time of death of his wife Sarah. It is in that this Scripture wants us to understand that God is going to give comfort to Abraham in the midst of death.

We oftentimes think, and especially when we consider funerals, of that passage in Psalm 23 that tells us, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for the Lord is with us. What's wonderful about the passage is, of course, it starts off that the Lord is our shepherd, that we don't have to want anything, and that He takes us to green pastures, and He leads us beside the still waters, and He restores our soul. I mean, He gives

us all these wonderful blessings, that God cares for us, and Scripture is wanting us to know that.

The way that it ends, though, is extremely encouraging, because the way that it ends is, "Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death," at the very end, you're not only in the presence of your enemy and God is spreading the table and saying, "You're free to do whatever you want to, they're not going to hurt you." But He comes to the end and he says, "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life..."

(Psalm 23:6)

And it doesn't end there.

"... And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

That's why death is just a shadow for us, because we know that death is not the end. Death is just the beginning of being with our Lord and Savior. And so, we have that blessed hope, and it is that blessed hope that really comes throughout this.

And in many respects, as you come into Chapter 24, we start off with it saying that God blessed Abraham

exceedingly. So, here again, death is not the end of blessings. God blesses you and He continues to bless you. And though death comes in the life of a believer, it doesn't end. The blessings still continue because as Ecclesiastes says, what the Lord gives you always lasts forever. And if God gives you something, which is a blessing, that blessing is going to last forever. He then goes into the passage in which we move on in life. And we as believers are not those that sit in the past. In fact, once again, Ecclesiastes will remind you, it's not a good thing to go into the past. The best thing to do is to press on. Forgetting those things which are past, we press on towards the mark of the calling, because once again, we know that that's not it. So, we can press on. God has us here for a reason. There is a purpose, and He gives us that purpose. And so, it is this purpose that we see in this particular passage in which Abraham is looking at future generations. Now, we're talking about his son getting married and having children, and we're looking beyond this realm. We are not those that stay in the past. We are forward-looking. We have a hope. Scripture tells us that hope is confident expectation, and we're looking forward

to greater things that are coming. But we also know that we have a purpose. And if, in fact, there has been a death and we're now left, God has left us for what? A reason. And that reason is to pass on these things. So, once again, this heritage was all about passing on that walk of faith. And this is why we're here. I mean, we read Psalm 71, which says, even when I'm old, I can pass on this faith to somebody else. And that's why the Lord has us here.

Ultimately, we come to the point, and I would say that one of the great benefits of death is it sobers us up. Death takes you from stupid to sober. Because really up to that point, you're thinking very superficially and you're thinking only about the pleasure of that day. But it causes you to think, "There's got to be something more. And if there's something more, why am I wasting my time doing this stuff that's really not beneficial, has no lasting effect?" And so, it literally turns us from the realm of that superficial mindset and takes us into the realm of going to something that's far more important. That's a good thing, isn't it? Because otherwise we'd be stuck in that position. So, as we come to the passage, we begin to see this.

Now, the key really throughout all of this is that God is looking for faith. God is looking for us to put our trust in Him. And we walk by faith, not by sight. In other words, the one thing that's going to be eternal is our trust in Him. And as we trust in Him, Psalm 23 says, He guides us in the path of righteousness. In other words, what is eternal? What is lasting? What does really matter? Well, I don't always know. Proverbs says there is a way that seems right to a man, but I don't always know what is right. I don't know what lasts. But God does. So, He begins to direct our paths, but you have to start with faith. And we're kind of talking about this with the men this morning, that there are quite a few paths of Scripture that when you first read, you go, "Okay, I'm not sure I need to do that. I don't really understand why God wants me to do that." And faith really begins by saying, "Do it anyway." Not that you understand. Of course, Hebrews 11 says, faith is the substance of things not seen. So, I don't have to understand to obey. Jesus put it simply, "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." And much of what God tells us to do, the blessing doesn't come till you do it. I mean, you can sit around trying to

analyze it all your life, but until you start doing it, you won't understand why He tells you to do it. And so, the great blessing is in that obedience.

We see this in some way with this servant. The servant's going to go, and we know that he has questions. Abraham is going to tell him, "I want you to go up north to my brother's house," once again, 700 miles. I mean, there are women probably next door. But 700 miles, that's almost on the ridiculous level. "But I want you to go and I want you to find a woman there." And my first question would be, as a servant, "Okay, what does she look like? And who is she?" And Abraham goes, "Well, we don't know." He had received information, "All I know is that my brother Nahor has had eight sons, and with his eight sons, they've had children, and I don't know what the children are like." "Well, do you think the woman's going to want to go back?" "I don't know." So, you're going on a bunch of ifs. You're going on a trail of maybe disappointment. And so, the servant says, "What if she doesn't want to come?" And Abraham goes, "We're not going to deal with what ifs. We're not going to deal with suppose. Just go." And

that's where really faith begins, isn't it? We don't deal with the suppositions. We don't deal with the possibilities. We just do what God says. We know that God is working good and He controls all things. That's faith, right? So, if God tells me to do something, He obviously wants and will empower me.

So, there's an interesting passage, if you look with me. I don't know why I'm thinking about Luke, but if you turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke, in Luke 18, there's this great passage in which it starts off with this widow who is praying, and she is tenacious in her prayer. Let's say she goes before the judge, and she's tenacious in her demanding before the judge; she doesn't let up, and she literally wears the judge down, and he goes, "Okay, this woman's going to wear me down. I'm going to give her whatever she wants." Jesus then goes into, "You need to continue to believe." And this is His point of the parable. It then states this, and I want you to look at the passage in verse 8,

(Luke 18:8) "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Now, the passage is actually telling us what God is looking for. What God is looking for is believe. You say, "Believe what?" Believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11 says, "Without faith it's impossible to please God. You must believe that He is." He is what? Well, sovereign. He controls everything. Do you believe that? Yes. Well, John says He's love. So, you must believe that He's love. So, if He tells you to do something, why is He telling you to do that? Because He loves you, right? So, you need to believe that He's sovereign, all-powerful, that He loves you, that there's nothing that He can't do, that He's all wise; He knows exactly what is right. In other words, believe that He's God. And God is looking for that. "Do you trust Me?" I mean, when you think of John 3:16, it's just the simplicity of the gospel that says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that you shouldn't perish but have everlasting life." The question

is, do you believe that? Do you believe that He loves you that much? That's the foundation.

Now, what's interesting is, in Luke 18, He goes on and He shows us what faith looks like. And the very first thing that He does, and I'm not going to go into a dissertation of the passage, or an exegete. But if you look in Luke 18:9-17, He tells this interesting story. They have this man that is a tax collector, a tax gatherer, and a Pharisee, and they're both praying in the temple. The Pharisee stands up and he says, "I thank God that I'm not like this guy." And the tax collector just falls on his face and says, "Have mercy on me. I'm a sinner." And Jesus goes, "Which prayer do you think I heard?" And so, He begins to demonstrate, what does faith look like? It looks like humility. Because faith is a realization that God is great and you're not. God is perfect and you're not. God is good and you're not. And it is that realization of acceptance of the truth that God is looking for. God's not looking for you to be perfect. He's looking for you to admit what is true. And that's the fundamental point of this beginning of explanation of what Christ is looking for.

As it goes on through the chapter, He begins to demonstrate that faith looks like somebody that's unattached to the value system of the world. So, if He says, "Give it up," then you're willing to give it up. That's simple, isn't it? Why would I not be attached to things of the world? Because you know the things of the world are fading. You just went through death. Death just told you things don't last forever. See, that's one of the sobering things about death, right? You go, "Well, I guess that doesn't last forever." And He goes, "Okay, now you're getting the picture." Now, why are you so attached to the things of the world? And faith walks in a way that is not attached to things in the world.

He goes on in the next paragraph, and He begins to reveal the fact that He's going to die on the cross, and He's going to be despised and rejected of men. And you go, "What does it have to do with faith?" Well, faith literally is not afraid to be despised and rejected by men, because the One that we're pleasing is God. We're not worried about what everybody else thinks. We just want to please Him. And so, there's going to be a time in your walk in which

you're going to have to say, "It doesn't matter what man thinks." Once again, I think that's one of the great themes of Galatians 1 and 2. Paul will say in Galatians 2, "That men are reputable and have reputations, it makes no difference to me. I need to obey God." And so, you have that foundation of faith that is literally willing to be rejected and despised by men. The very ending of this is you see the tenacity of somebody that cries out and actually believes God can do the impossible. And if you have these qualities, you please God. In other words, the chapter is saying, what is Christ looking for? He's looking for these qualities; that you believe in this way.

When we come to this passage, we come to a servant doing something for his master. It's a forward-looking event in the sense that we believe that God is doing something greater. We're pressing on towards the mark of the high calling. We're not sitting and resting on our laurels. We continue to move forward because we know that there is something more to expect. This passage begins to describe that.

If you look with me in Genesis 24:10, we begin to see just how this servant begins to handle this, I guess you could call it a request. His master has asked him to do it. And though the servant's going, "Suppose this might happen," he still puts that aside, and he just starts planning. Now, the very fundamental of faith in this particular passage is telling us that faith will go wherever it's sent. In other words, whatever God tells us to do, we do. And we do that not because we understand it. We do that because God said it. There are so many things in Scripture that once again, on the surface, you're just not going to understand. You're not going to understand how it works out. You're not going to understand how it's going to come together. You don't understand anything about it. If you look at the passage,

(Genesis 24:10) "Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master..."

Now, I would think if you're thinking that it's not going to work out, maybe you take 2 camels or 3 camels, whatever you need just for yourself, but taking 10 camels, it almost sounds like he has a plan here. And he actually seems to

be planning, which is very interesting, for success. 1 Corinthians 13 says that love hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things. What that's talking about is that when we're walking in the love of God, we can trust that the best is ahead. We believe that. We have a confident expectation. We're not walking around waiting for the other shoe to drop. We actually believe that God's going to do something good. And we prepare for success.

So, the passage starts off,

(Genesis 24:10) "Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor."

700 mile track.

Now, what's interesting is you look at verse 10 and then you go into verse 11, and the camels are kneeling down by the well at the city of Nahor. Between verses 10 and 11 he went 700 miles. But Scripture goes, so what? Not an issue. To me it would be an issue, to them it's not an issue.

So, verse 11 reads,

(Genesis 24:11) "He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water."

It's very interesting. I think sometimes when we perceive faith, we think of it, okay, you put your mind on hold. You don't use wisdom, but that's not true. Now, he's going on a journey to find a wife for his master's son. Okay, where do you find a wife in this particular region? Well, we know that the women come to the well in the evening. So, when are we going to be at the well? In the evening, looking for the women to come. Now, that's just using wisdom, right? God's not telling you to not use your head. But He's telling you, "Trust Me. Expect good things. Prepare for good things. Prepare for success." Ultimately, this is what he's looking for. We know that because he actually states that within the passage.

In fact, verse 12 reads,

(Genesis 24:12) "He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today...""

That's what he's looking for. But faith believes that. It prepares for that. It actually knows that this is going to come.

You know, when I think about some of the commands that the Lord gives us, some of us are probably sitting down going, "I don't even have a camel. I don't know how this matches my life." But if you were to go to a passage like Ephesians 6, let me just give you an example, just so we don't get so way down. If you look at Ephesians 6, it begins to talk about servants. And you could kind of put it in the realm of being an employee, maybe your boss tells you to do something.

It states this in verse 5,

(Ephesians 6:5) "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

(Ephesians 6:6) not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

(Ephesians 6:7) With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

(Ephesians 6:8) knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord..."

That's a very interesting passage. What he's saying is, and Peter will go on to say in 1 Peter 2, even if you have an unreasonable boss, do what he says. And you go, "Why would I do that? I don't even like the guy." And the Scripture says, it has nothing to do with the guy. It has to do with God told you to. Now, you do that, you do it as unto God, you please God and watch Him reward you. So, this literally takes you out of the picture and takes your boss out of the picture because you don't have to walk up to Him and say, "I want a raise and I want this and I want this." You don't have to do that. You just know you have to please God and God will take care of you. Scripture says, "Seek first the kingdom of God, His righteousness, and all these things will be taken care of." You walk by faith, not by sight. And so, faith is actually expecting. I mean, when I do everything to serve the Lord, I actually expect Him to take care of me. That's not presumptuous.

That's faith. I believe that He's going to take care of me if I'll do the right thing. I'll tell you, if I do the wrong thing, I'm not feeling too good about the future. I know that who the Lord loves, He disciplines and He scourges. And just like a son, you know that God is not going to let you get away with doing something wrong. So, as a son who had his moments of rebellion, I know that's not a good feeling. I know that my father never stopped loving me, but actually sometimes I wish he hadn't loved me so much. But the point is that I know that while I'm doing what is right, I have good to look forward to. And this is fundamentally what the servant is doing. He knows that success is on its way. He knows that God's going to do good.

And it states in Genesis 24:11,

"He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water."

Then it states this in verse 12, that he then goes and he appeals to God. Now, here again, you're doing what God wants you to do. You're preparing for success. You're

walking by faith. You were sent to go to this particular place. This is a place that you end up. And now, you're believing for the best, but you're also pursuing something which is very interesting within the passage that we oftentimes don't do. If you look at the passage, he begins to appeal to the Lord. And I would say this prayer alone is telling us that faith banks on God's kindness but realizing that kindness has to come from Him. Favor has to come from Him. Grace has to come from Him.

(Genesis 24:12) "He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham."

Now, the initial question is, why wouldn't he be saying, "Oh God, I want You to grant me success"? Because he's not the one that had the relationship with God. And so, what he knows is that by virtue of having a relationship with God, the kindness of God is upon you. Which is telling us, how do you get the kindness of God upon you? Have a relationship with God.

Psalms 37 (verse 4), we oftentimes quote, which tells us that not only do you need to have that relationship, but

that you need to be really drawn to Him. And it is in that drawing to Him that He'll work out the things, the desires of your heart. And it's God working on your behalf.

So, as you look at the passage, he starts off and he begins to beckon according to the relationship. You ever read James 4, which really emphasizes that God jealously desires this relationship with you? Wouldn't it be wonderful to say, "I talk with God. We talk all day long. And as we talk all day long, I just know He's going to do good for me because He's my friend." Scripture will actually say Abraham was a friend of God. What a marvelous title that is to have that. "Oh Lord, I know that You'll grant mercy and loving kindness. Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me." Actually, the word "mercy" there, Psalm 23, is the same word, "lovingkindness".

(Genesis 24:13) "Behold, I am standing by the spring..."

I can just see him talking to God, "Here I am. I'm standing by the spring where the well is, at evening when the women come, and the daughters of men, wait, I see them coming." Is that what he says? Yeah, I think that's what he says.

"Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water."

Now, Lord, You've got to show me which girl's the girl. You know, I don't know which one to pick." But what's interesting in the passage is the way faith operates. See, faith will operate in the realm of putting character over cosmetics. Man looks at the outward appearance; God looks at the heart. We know what God is looking for. Therefore, we begin to look for the same things because we are sons of God. Our desires are equal with His in the sense of Thy will be done. We want what You want. You oftentimes read that passage in 1 Peter 3 where it reminds us that the outward appearance, the woman putting on the braiding of hair and the jewelry, he says, "This is not important. It's the hidden treasure, hidden person of the heart." When looking for relationships, you should never allow the cosmetics to delegate the relationship. It should always be the character first. He doesn't know what she looks like, but he does give a test that will reveal her character.

The passage will read this way,

(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."

This is a woman that's not only going to be merciful, but she's also going to be gracious. She's going to be one that literally steps out to give, so you see a sense of generosity. In other words, her character shows; we don't even know at this juncture what she looks like. Now, the passage will go on to say she was a beautiful girl. But this is not the issue right now. The issue is, is her heart right? And God says, "Now, I'll reward you with beauty, but you need to be looking for the right things."

Let me just mention this too; this whole deal with camels. From what I understand, when a camel's been on a journey and it begins to recuperate with the water, this camel will drink in one sitting within a matter of minutes, 30 to 53 gallons. Now, if you figure 30 to 53 gallons and you multiply that by 10, this girl volunteered to bring all

this water up for this one moment. And she's not expecting anything. Is she expecting to get any reward? Does she even know that he's here to find a wife for the son? She has no idea. But her character begins to shine. And I would say that in this passage, this servant is banking on God's kindness, he's banking on the relationship, and by faith he will always align with the will of God. It'd be one thing for him to say, "Well, I can find a woman some other place," and on his way up, maybe a woman passed him, maybe a woman did something, but God says, "No, I want you to go up there." There are always ways in which we can maybe shortcut it, but faith doesn't do the shortcut thing. It is always looking for the best, and it's never willing to compromise. When Scripture says don't be unequally yoked with non-believers, people oftentimes say, "Well, I think they believe." And the person ought to be thinking in terms of, do they believe," but beyond, are they following Christ, beyond, do they love Him to the point of being willing to sacrifice for Him? What kind of character are you looking for? If you're looking for the bare minimum, then you're not walking by faith because you're trying to work it out.

But if you're setting the standards according to God's standards, you trust and you believe that God will do what He says if you do what He says. And it is in that obedience that God begins to work.

The faith that we see within these passages is the same faith that we see within the Gospel of Luke. It is a sense of humility. It is a sense of somebody just simply being willing to come and let go of what they think. This is a very confusing moment, perhaps, in the servant's life, but he knows that he needs to do what he's told to do, and he does it. I've oftentimes thought about the relationship that I have with the Lord and how oftentimes I doubt what He tells me to do, how oftentimes I try to compromise the things that He tells me to do. But that's not walking by faith, is it? Faith is the substance of things not seen; the evidence, the conviction of things hoped for. We actually believe that God's going to do a work. Walk by faith, not by sight. Believe. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. You must first believe that He is, that He's going to reward you if you diligently seek

Him, that He's the one that you're actually looking for the reward from.

Colossians will talk about this, if you look with me in the Book of Colossians as well. In this particular passage, we see that whatever you do, you need to do as, what? Unto the Lord. It actually declares that. And we would do well to begin to think in those terms because of the fact that oftentimes the things that we do are not unto the Lord. But faith is always thinking about that. Paul will say to the Philippians, "You know, I really appreciate the fact that you didn't just do what you did when I was present, but you did what you did even when I wasn't." Now, that's a faith that actually believes that God's everywhere. It's strange that there are certain places that we actually think God's not. But if you actually believe that He is who He says He is and that He's ever present, He's omnipresent, then you're actually going to do the right thing everywhere. Colossians 3 will give reference to this, and once again, it will put it in the context of slaves and servants.

(Colossians 3:22) "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service..."

A lot of times we can put on the show, right?

"... as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord."

I remember working at the brake shop with this guy and one of the guys that was hired, and he would just laze around, not do anything. And then when he sees the boss come in, he just works really hard and looks like he's doing the work, and his boss goes, "Wow, he's such a hard worker." And I'm going, "No, he's not a hard worker."

The Scripture says not by way of eye service, not external service, who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord, which means that you would do it all the time, right? You actually believe God exists.

(Colossians 3:23) "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

(Colossians 3:24) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

(Colossians 3:25) For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality."

We actually believe God rewards. We actually believe God's the one that controls the outcome of all things. And little does this servant know that God will not only bring this gracious woman into his presence, but she'll be beautiful too. Scripture says beyond what we are able to ask or think, God will give. The question is, do you believe this? Do you believe that if you die, you will rise again, if you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Do you believe this? Simple question, isn't it? Faith is what God has called us to.

Closing Prayer:

Well, Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to work within our hearts. We realize our tendency to do

things for all kinds of different reasons. And we realize our tendency to try to figure out how things are going to work out. Instead of asking ourselves, "What would please God? What does God want? What's the right thing to do?" Instead, we know that we need to do what You tell us.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what we're asking you to do is get real with God. Get real with your faith. Don't just talk about believing. James would say, "Faith without works is dead." It's non-existent. But begin to live by this faith. Make your decisions based on this faith. I mean, see if He doesn't open up the windows of heaven to bless you. Test Him. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Believe.