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Genesis

Chapter 24 - God's Comfort in Death

The Comfort of Divine Connections (vs.61-67)

Genesis 24:61-67: Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed. Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming. Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. She said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master.” Then she took her veil and covered herself. The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 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.

Well, if there was ever a passage that would say there's somebody for everybody, it would probably be this passage. It just shows the sovereign hand of God and connecting souls together and bringing people together. It is that fundamental truth that we know that God is sovereign, that He controls all things absolutely, and in that control, we know that nothing happens by accident for those that He calls.

When you consider passages like Ephesians 1, it actually tells us that God called us before the foundation of the world. So, you couldn't have been an evolutionary Blob or an accident, or part of the "Big Bang," an arbitrary thing that happened in the universe, but you were actually planned before the foundation of the world. Scripture is telling us that we are not an accident.

When you come to Acts 17, Paul's there in Athens, and he comes within the city, in particular the marketplace of the Areopagus; there is a place that they could oftentimes stand. They would actually call these places the *Bema* place. And so, they would stand on these certain places,

and different ones to be allowed to talk. In Acts 17, he has an audience with him, philosophers that are called Epicureans, and those that are called Stoics. Very different in their philosophy. Epicurean would basically be "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." And a Stoic would be just pretty much like the name says, more in the realm of logic, what is logical. In fact, really the Gospel of John in many ways is written to the Stoics because they believed in this great force in the universe that held everything together and put everything in an order. Thus, they used the word "cosmos," and that word will be used in John 3:16, "For God so loved the cosmos." For God so loved order and the order of the world. You see all the things of the world, you can't say that these things just happened. The sun and the moon and stars; these things are just at the right place at the right time. We have seasons. This is no accident. And the Stoics knew this. But they called that which organized that as Logic, and so the name "*logos*". So, when John writes the book, he says, "In the beginning was the *logos*." He begins to tell the Stoics that "You're right, God is a God of order. But here's the great surprise. He loves you." And that would

blow a Stoic's mind because he's not even really familiar with what love is about. He's just talking about what logic is about. And so, John begins to relate those things. Well, Paul stands in Athens and he sees all the gods. There's a god in almost every corner. And he says the obvious, "I perceive you're very religious." And a truer statement was never said. So, he then begins to turn to one particular statute that was to the "Unknown God." And he said, "This God that you don't know, He's the one I want to talk to you about because He's the one that created all things." And he says, "And just like one of your philosophers say, 'In Him we live and breathe and have our existence.'" As he begins to convey this, one of the statements that he makes is that God has appointed boundaries and places and times for every man that he might seek God. Appointed. So, it's not a mistake that you are where you are. It's not a mistake that those who have come into your life have come into your life, for you were seeking, and God was orchestrating these things. There are not accidents. God is orchestrating and God is making things happen.

We come to this passage, and it's very clear from the very beginning of the servant going out to find a wife for Isaac on behalf of his father, on behalf of his master, Abraham. We realize that things just began to happen; things are perfectly falling into place. I mean, how can you travel 700 miles and orchestrate something happening 700 miles away perfectly and in place? The servant goes to this place in which he was told to go, not knowing how it was going to turn out, but coming before the Lord and saying, "If You'll give me this one woman that will at least be thoughtful enough to offer me a drink, and perhaps even beyond, offer the camels a drink." And lo and behold, here she is. And on top of that, she's pretty! And God places them together. But could she be of the household that he was looking for? And there she was, of the very household that he had been searching for. "I am of that household." I mean, you can just imagine how he was taken back by that, but yet still other hoops to jump through. The least to be said that she has to be willing to go. And then you have to hop over, of course, the barrier of Laban, her brother, which in and of itself is a problem; and the mother wanting to keep her. All has lined up. All

had come to the place in which things are working out. This has to be the sovereign hand of God. Only God could do this. And so, now she gets herself up on the camel and gets ready to go. I would say that once you're on the camel, you're pretty well committed. Because you're not going to get off. So, the camel starts taking off.

So, it begins in this particular passage,

(Genesis 24:61) "Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed."

They're off. Now, how in the world is the servant going to find Isaac? I mean, the natural thought is, well, Isaac's where he's supposed to be. Well, we don't know that. We don't know where he is. Has he gone to live with his father? Which according to the end of the one chapter is in Beersheba, which is about, I would say actually in this particular text, about 50 miles away from where Isaac appears to be, or perhaps in Hebron, where Sarah was buried and probably is where her tent resides. Where is he? Well, the passage actually tells us where he had been.

And the way it reads in verse 62 is,

(Genesis 24:62) "Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi..."

Every time you see the word "*b^a'ē_r*," it's making reference to a well. And like in Beersheba, it is the well of oaths. In this particular setting, this particular well actually is translated, "This is the well of the living one who sees." It was given that name, if you remember, in Genesis 16. And in Genesis 16, it was when Hagar was really despised by Sarah, her master, and she began to run. She ran to the south, and as she runs to the south, she comes upon this well. God meets her, and He says, "Hagar, go back. Everything's okay. I've got your back. I'm going to bless you and I'm going to bless the son that you will bear and have born. And I'm going to protect you and I'm going to make his name great." And she goes, "God sees everything about me, and He knows what I desire." And so, she names the well that she's by this name.

It's interesting in the fact that why would Isaac be by this well? Because Hagar is not his mother. She's the mother of Ishmael. So, why would Isaac be at this well? Well, once again, the setting is that Isaac's mother has passed

away. He had been with her for 37 years. She was 90 when he was born and she dies at 127 or 128. So, they were close. They seem to be so close that it seems as if he spent most of his life with the mother, and for some strange reason, Abraham seems to live in Beersheba, and his mother, Sarah, seems to live in Hebron. It will be in Hebron that she will be buried. It will be at the cave in Machpelah that she will find her burial place, and Abraham will make sure that she is buried in the place that she loved so much. And the reason that she loved it so much, it was a place in which God had promised her, "You will have a son." And so, it was fulfilled. I can just imagine in those 37 years, I mean, if you consider from the time that Abraham and Sarah were called, Genesis 12, to the time that they have a son is 25 years. I mean, it's one thing to wait for something that God promises, but 25 years really? 25 years they had to wait. And in the middle of the waiting, there was this trying to connive and trying to work it out. It really demonstrates that she really wanted to have a son as much as Abraham did. It was their desire of their heart, but 25 years. Now, she finally has a son. And Abraham takes him to sacrifice him. I'm

not sure if they kind of parted ways at that particular juncture or not. We don't have any passage that makes reference to the fact that he talked to Sarah about it, but I'm sure she found out about it. And here we are. It seems as if Isaac, and of course, the end of this particular passage is relating to us that his mother was very near and dear to him. How do we know that? Because it's not until he has a wife that he's actually comforted by his mother's passing. So, what we know is, during those years, they were very close.

What we're dealing with in this passage is grief. We're dealing with a sense of loss. We're dealing with things that perhaps we find a hard time dealing with in our lives. And on top of that, we're dealing with that whole concept of waiting. When we're going through a time of sorrow, when we're going through a time of grief, when we're dis comforted, it's hard for us to wait for the comfort to come. I can't say that naturally it happens instantly. And obviously, within this particular passage, the comfort to Isaac was not instantaneous. We know that because he's not comforted until the end.

So, what is he doing during that time? Well, strangely enough, he finds himself down by the same well in which Hagar was, in which God met with her, and said, "I see you. I know what you're going through, and I'm going to bring you comfort." And so, He did. It's almost as if he's looking for the same comfort that he heard about that Hagar received on this particular well. And just to let you know, he will end up living here in this particular place. Why is that true? Well, obviously, once again, he's looking for some sort of comfort.

There's an interesting passage in Hebrews 4:13 that reads this way,

"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him..."

We first read that and we go, "Whoa, that's kind of scary. I hope He's not watching right now." He says, "I'm watching. I know everything that's going on." But the verse that follows that, verse 15, is a miraculous verse. For it tells us that we don't have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness. In other words, the God that sees everything is a God Who's sympathetic towards

the things that we're going through. And it's one of the things that Hagar realized, "God saw what was going on in my life. He saw that I was cast out from Sarah. He saw that I'm all alone. I just did what I was told." And God says, "I saw that." It's good to know that somebody sees that. Somebody sees your heart. Somebody sees that you're wanting to do the right thing. In the midst of all the turmoil, the thought is when you're going through the turmoil, "I must have done something wrong." God goes, "No, I see what you're going through and I'm going to make it good." And so, there is a sense of waiting on the Lord and a kind of refreshment at this well in which Hagar actually partook of. Now, Isaac seems to be looking for that same thing. We know that too because he seems to be in a field meditating. How do we know that? Well, it says it.

(Genesis 24:63) "Isaac went out to meditate in the field..."

He's musing over these things. He's communing in some way. He's maybe talking out loud to himself. An interesting picture, isn't it? Actually, this word is only used in this particular text. There he is walking around, talking

to himself, "So, you see God, really?" He walks by the well. "You see everything. You see my heart. You see what's going on in my heart. You're really interested?" We are drawn to the passage in Psalm 37, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He'll give you the desires of your heart." How does He know my desires? Well, Psalm 139 would say He's intimately acquainted with all your ways. He knows you better than you know yourself. As the psalmist will go on to say, He actually knows the very things and is interested in the things that concern you. Hagar realized that. And I think in many respects, Isaac is wrestling with that. But Isaac is longing for the God who sees and the God who cares and the God who is interested in the things that concern him. And what is the thing that concerns him? Some kind of comfort.

The passage reads this way,

(Genesis 24:62) "Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev."

That is the South country, and that would be as Hagar was heading towards the south towards Egypt. He was living

in this particular region, and once again, will end up living in this place. Isaac went out to meditate in the field.

Now, watch the passage. When was it? It was in the evening. It was at dusk; literally, the term there, at sunset. There are times in our life when things begin to happen, and I guess the best description would be it is at the sunset of our lives. When the sun is going down, when the hope is going down. Usually, when you think of morning, you think of the hope coming; the sunset, the hope leaving. Did he know everything that the servant was doing? Was he even at the right place in order to be in contact with Rebekah? I mean, the passage is particularly ambiguous in the sense that it's not showing us that he knows any meeting place that has been orchestrated. He just, how can we best put it, is meandering. He's wandering around. Now, how in the world can God take a meanderer and connect him to somebody that's been going 700 miles one way and then coming back and somehow they've got to make a connection? How could that happen? God's orchestrating. And it's wonderful how God places people in our lives just when we need them

the most. It is at a time in which the greatest of needs is with Isaac and God knows that. And with simplicity of Scripture, God just says "And there they saw each other." She just pops up.

The passage reads this way,

(Genesis 24:63) "Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming."

Whose camels? It doesn't say. It doesn't say, "Hey, I know those are the camels. I recognize the camels."

(Genesis 24:64) "Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel.

(Genesis 24:65) She said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?" ..."

She didn't know who it was.

"... And the servant said, "He is my master." Then she took her veil and covered herself.

(Genesis 24:66) The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done."

You could just imagine the conversation, "Man, the Lord just opened the door here. The Lord just opened the door here. I mean, God was faithful and God is just connecting all the dots, wasn't He? He was bringing you together with this woman, Rebekah. This was not an accident, Isaac. This was God connecting you at a time when you need Him most."

(Genesis 24:67) "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent..."

So, somehow, I believe they found their way, went 80 miles. Somewhere he had been wandering. So, he's like 80 miles away. He finds himself now in Hebron, which would be where the mother's tent is; where she is buried in Machpelah Cave.

"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."

It's clear that he was dealing with an issue. It's clear that he's dealing with a problem. The timing of God is seen so wonderfully within the passage. But what's also interesting is there seems to be a time in which Isaac is

thinking about these things, probably wrestling with these things. You know, recently, we've been in Luke and in second service we will continue in that passage. But in Luke 12, Jesus begins to talk about the time in which great things are going to happen and the fire is going to break out and the purification is going to happen. And He makes this interesting statement, "And how I wish it were already done." It's hard for us to believe and to fathom that Christ was wishing for something to already happen. But it's something that all of us desire. We have these desires, we have these voids, we have these, this emptiness inside and how I wish that it were fulfilled in some way today. Unfortunately, instead of waiting on the Lord, we look for ways to try to fill that ourselves.

One of the main themes of the Book of 1 Thessalonians is that they had no hope. So, what does a person do when they have no hope? Well, fundamentally, the Book of Thessalonians says you do 2 things. One is you try to seek immediate gratification. So, he warns him, "Don't try to go back into your sins." Because sin has an immediate gratification moment, right? You get this buzz, whatever.

You're looking for something that will somehow relieve the pain and the suffering that you're feeling. And the other is that you will have a tendency to become apathetic. That is to say, you just throw up your arms, and you go, "Who cares? It doesn't matter anyway." And that produces a kind of hardening, and it produces an undisciplined lifestyle, sort of like the Epicureans, "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." See, we have no hope, so we just throw our hands up. And of course, Paul writes a second letter to the Thessalonians, and he says, "Look, you need to go to work because you just stopped working. You stop caring about anything. If you don't work, you don't eat. Start working." And he starts getting them back on track because they're just throwing their hands up in the air. But he would make the statement in 1 Thessalonians 4, "We are not as those who have no hope." And what he's conveying is that once a person has no hope, we usually go to these two particular areas: a sense of immediate gratification or apathy, "Who cares what's going on? I just give up." Or you can walk by **faith**. You can wait on the Lord. That's an interesting option.

It really kind of becomes a theme if you look with me in Isaiah 8. For some of us, we went through the Book of Isaiah a while back. But in Isaiah 8, what you'll see is, in many respects, that which Isaiah is having to go through as God has showing him the prophecy and God is showing him the disturbance of the land.

Isaiah 8 reads this way,

(Isaiah 8:16) "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

(Isaiah 8:17) And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face..."

You ever have those moments where you go, "Where is God? He seems to not be here at this time, but I'll wait for Him." Well, that kind of becomes the theme of the book.

Let me show you how it does. We'll skip into Chapter 25, and in particular, verse 9, as you come to Isaiah. And the prophecy will be given to Isaiah to comfort him. The prophecy is fundamentally, "But God is coming. Difficult times, yes, you're in, but God is coming." And that's the great prophecy.

In fact, the way that it's worded here, in verse 6,
(Isaiah 25:6) "The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, And refined, aged wine.

(Isaiah 25:7) And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.

(Isaiah 25:8) He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.

(Isaiah 25:9) And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.""

This is the One. Wait on Him. Hang in there.

Chapter 26 will emphasize this as well, in verse 8,

(Isaiah 26:8) “Indeed, while following the way of Your judgments, O LORD, We have waited for You eagerly; Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of our souls.

(Isaiah 26:9) At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently...”

There's actually a reason for your waiting. There are things in our lives that we're waiting for, but God wants us to long for Him. It's not that He's withholding those things from us because no good thing will He withhold. But He wants the relationship with Him first. And so, He says, "Wait for Me." And it is in that waiting that we display a love for God. It's probably, I would say, one of the greatest ways that we demonstrate love for God. And it's one of the greatest ways that He demonstrates love to us.

If you look with me in Isaiah 30, it reads this way,

(Isaiah 30:18) “Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.”

God is wanting you to long for Him. He's wanting you to trust in Him. He's wanting you to wait on Him.

My grandfather told a story a number of years ago in which he and his wife went to China for missions. They actually took a slow boat to China. It was called the *Empress of Asia*. From what I understand, that particular ship was built around 1912, and it was actually an armed merchant carrier. On this particular ship, they had a certain group that had first class, second class, and of course, third class seats. I think up to 800, maybe 300 or so in second class and 100 in first class, as well as a merchant, and ultimately was sunk in '42 by Japanese planes. But he had taken this particular ship over. He makes mention of the fact that before they took off, they gathered around for this prayer time. And the prayer largely focused on "Lord, help us to have a safe trip. Help the trip to go smooth. Help everything to go fine." And then they cast off. He tells me, "That was the roughest trip I've ever been on. The waves were terrible." He said, "There were times that we didn't think we were going to make it." The ship was actually held back and the timing

just seemed so far off. Because in order for them to get where they needed to go, they had to land at a certain time in order to catch a train to go inland. That's where they were going. Well, they were set back 2, 3, 5 days at best, and there was just no way that they were going to catch the train and no hope of when it was going to come again. But they land. They later find out that this particular train was held up by robbers that killed most of the passengers on the train. The thought oftentimes is, "God has delayed His comfort to me." And God says, "No, I'm working good for you." We don't see it because our main objective is to live a comfortable life. But it is in that discomfort that God is teaching us. Well, I would say in that particular setting, it was in that discomfort that God was training missionaries. He was training missionaries to wait on Him. He was training missionaries to go through hardship for the sake of the gospel. He was going to bring them safely through, but God never promised His disciples that they would be free from hardship, that it would always be smooth sailing. In fact, in many times, in the waters, Jesus would deal with the disciples in which the waves were very tumultuous. And there are times

where it seems like God is delaying His comfort to us, but He's not. He's just wanting you to want His will and to trust in Him. And it is a time in which you turn to the Lord, and you say, "I trust You."

God is orchestrating things in our life. He's bringing people into our lives. I mean, you can't help but read John 1, and you go, "Okay, so, Jesus just accidentally, serendipitously met Andrew on the way. He just happened to be walking by." At the same time, John the Baptist is there baptizing the disciples, Andrew and John. They see Him; they go with Him. "Where are You going?" "I'm heading home." "Can we go with You?" And then there's Philip and He comes, and He says, "Hey Philip, follow Me." You think these guys just accidentally came into His path? And "Nathaniel, I saw you sitting under the tree." And He brings him along. You see the orchestration of God, but let me just say this, it's not just the orchestration of God. God's doing the best for us in that He brings people in our lives at the perfect time to comfort us, to draw us to Himself. I don't believe it's an accident that we're here together. I don't believe it's an

accident at all. I believe that there somewhere along the line with a hungry heart, but God was still orchestrating us to come together for a particular purpose, for a time, for an encouragement. I sometimes hear people come up to me, and they go, "Have you been in my house? Have you been listening to the things that I've been saying?" But here I am just preaching whatever the next text is. And it's God saying, "That's My timing. That's My appointment. I'm doing that."

When you come into the Book of Acts in Acts 16, 17, and 18 in particular, you have Paul, and he's been sent on a journey. In that journey, he picks up a young man by the name of Timothy. And you could just see no accident there. This young man, in fact, is probably one of the most encouraging individuals to Paul because it was at the same area where Timothy lived that they had stoned Paul. And from the best of our knowledge, he died and was raised up at that particular juncture. But I can just imagine that hostility, and then here out of that hostility a man comes that will be a great comforter, will be like a son to him. And he pulls him along. But within this

interesting passage as it goes, he finds himself in Thessalonica. And in Thessalonica, he is really drawn to these people. They love the Lord and they long, but there are others that come in and they try to kill Paul because he's there. In fact, he has to run to Berea, and they chase him in Berea. So, they keep following him and they finally have to get him in a boat and push him in a boat and they go, "You need to go off." And that's when he sets sail for Athens. He finds himself in Athens alone, and Timothy and Silas remain behind. Paul's concern begins to really multiply for, in particular, the Thessalonians because it was only a very short time that he was with them, but the attachment was very strong. And so, in that time, his longing was that they would be okay, that they would continue in the faith. I mean, you just have a short time with somebody, you lead somebody to the Lord, and then you know something horrible is happening. People are attacking them. You go, "Will they make it through this?" So, Paul writes this letter, 1 Thessalonians. And in the letter, he goes, "Man, I really need to see you." And he makes a statement, "But Satan has prevented me from coming." We go, "Wow, what bad timing." God says, "No,

I'm using Satan to keep you from going, Paul." Paul's initial thought is, "I've got to be there. If I'm not there, they're not going to be okay." And God goes, "They're going to be okay because I'm there." And Paul ultimately comes to that conclusion in that passage. In fact, he states, "When I came to this point in which I just couldn't stand it anymore, I had to hear from you; God sent Timothy and Timothy showed up." Timothy showed up when he was in Corinth, which he ultimately goes from Athens to Corinth. And there he is. And God not only sends Timothy, but before he sends Timothy, he sends Aquila and Prisca. And here are these people. He has to make tents because he doesn't have any money. And he feels all alone, but God sent somebody to comfort him. And then Timothy comes, and it says, and then he just engrossed himself in the ministry 100%. The passage is saying that Timothy came just at the right time. And that's what he says in Thessalonians. He says, "You know, I was beside myself. I was full of anxiety until Timothy showed up, and he told me everything was okay." And he ends that particular chapter by saying, "And you know what, God will be with you. You can trust Him."

There are times that God delays things; He keeps us from places. There are times in which it seems like it's not happening according to the way that it should, but God is orchestrating, and He's orchestrating the right people for the right time, and He's connecting all these people together. He knows what you need. He knows what I need. He knows what is needed in the hearts and the lives of people. He knows who will comfort you most. I don't know if Isaac was thinking, "I don't even know what the girl's going to look like. I don't even know if she's going to show up. I don't even know if she said yes." There he is musing and finally he goes, "But I know this: You're the God who sees and You're the God who cares. And I know somehow, You'll take care of this." And God goes, "That's what I've been waiting to hear, son." And then the camels show up. That's what God's waiting to hear from you. There's going to be times of waiting. The greatest gift that you could give God is, "I trust You. I trust You." And that can only really be demonstrated in times of waiting. You can't say that in a moment and then have gratification. It has to be in the time of waiting that really displays, "I

really do trust You." In fact, the longer you wait, the more depth you convey to your trust.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we say with all of our heart, we trust You. There are things in our lives that happen, things of sorrow, things of grief. We look for comfort oftentimes in all the wrong places. But You are the God of all comfort, and comfort comes from You. We know this to be true. You take us out in the open field, and You say, "Why don't you think about this: I'm the God who sees you. And I'm the High Priest that sympathizes with the things that you're going through. I am concerned for those things that concern you, and I long to give you the desires of your heart. I see what's going on in your life. Do you believe Me?" And as you walk that road, you say, "I will trust in You with all of my heart. I will not lean on my own understanding. In all my ways, I'll acknowledge You. I'll let You send the camels."

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. Wait on the Lord.

There is one other passage in Isaiah that I have to add, too. It is Isaiah 40.

(Isaiah 40:31) “Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles...”