



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 23:1-20

“The Power of The Resurrection”

TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading this morning is from Genesis, chapter 23 and so will you turn to that chapter and listen as I read through the 20 verses. Genesis, chapter 23, verse 1 through verse 20.

“Now Sarah lived a hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron, in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, ‘I am a stranger and a sojourner among you. Give me a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.’ And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, ‘Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.’ So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth, and he spoke with them saying, ‘If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.’ (You will notice that Abraham did not ask for a clergyman’s discount when he asked for this piece

of property. That is one characteristic of the Old Testament saints, the prophets and others: they did not ask for any favors from the world. Verse 10.)

“Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron, the Hittite, answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, ‘No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.’ And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, ‘If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field; accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.’ (Incidentally this is probably a kind of conventional haggling that went on. This is fun for them who are in the East and so when it was offered to him free, it was not really meant that way. If he had taken it, they would have been shocked. [Laughter] But he knows that they want ultimately him to buy it and probably at a good price.)

“Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ‘My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver (That’s the key, that’s the price.) Four hundred shekels of silver; what is that between me and you? So bury your dead. (And Abraham then wrote a prayer letter to his constituents [laughter] enclosing a self-addressed envelope. Well now, I just want to call your attention to the different customs that do exist between the present time and the times of the men of God of the age of the patriarchs.) And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver. (commercial standard)

“So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron)

in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning is “Sarah’s Death and the Power of the Resurrection.” If it depended on the will of the preacher of the word, Genesis 23, like the third stanza of so many of our hymns, would be skipped. That’s really one of the values of the expository preaching of the whole of the books of the Bible. We are forced by expository preaching to study all of the passages of the word of God. We do not just go through the Bible picking those passages that are most appealing to us.

Of course, we could make a point over the inevitability of death, but the subject is really Sarah’s death and burial. We might want to say that it is appointed down to man once to die and after this the judgment and expatiate over the inevitability of the fact that sooner or later, all of us must die. The validity of Benjamin Franklin’s famous observation, “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes,” goes without question. Some may be able to avoid taxes, but no one can hope to escape death, except that group that shall be alive when the Lord Jesus comes.

Sir Walter Scott, in Marmion, put it this way, “and come He slow or come He fast, it is but death who comes at last. But this chapter is I say more important than simply a comment upon the fact that all men and women must ultimately die. There are some important lessons in Genesis, chapter 23 and by avoiding it, we may have escaped some of them and so I am thankful again for the fact that at least in Believers Chapel, we have committed ourselves to the consistent, generally speaking, consistent systematic exposition of the books of the Bible. And so we must take a look at Genesis Chapter 23.

There are some important lessons here I say and I think one of the first one is that we have here an illustration of the mode of life of the men of faith in dealing with the material world. You will notice that Abraham again affirms that he is a stranger and a

sojourner among the Hittites, in Verse 4, and that illustrates again the fact that the Christian man is a visitor in this world. He is one who is traveling through. His main purpose in life is not to accumulate a lot of property and a lovely home, but his main purpose in life is to do the will of God while he is passing through this earthly scene.

And so Abraham’s repeated statement is that he is a stranger and a sojourner, and the New Testament authors pick that up, is an expression of how the man of faith should deal with the material world. It also is revealing in that it gives us a picture of Abraham, this great man of faith, dealing with the immaterial side of life too, and he deals with those that are not part of the covenant people in courtesy, in kindness. He deals with them in gentleness and he also himself gives support for the customs of the times.

He doesn’t hesitate to bow before the sons of Heth more than once here, as he carries on this little work of bargaining over the piece of property. In other words, it illustrates for us that if we are to be good illustrations of Christians, we ought not be battle-axes of women and boors of men. And the very thing that we claim that we are should produce the kind of gentleness and kindness and courtesy manifested in the life of this great man of faith. In the New Testament, we have many texts on this point. I don't have time to cite them for you. They will be in the lesson which we hope to have for you next week, but the apostle warns us more than once that we should walk honestly, properly. It is rendered in the New American Standard Bible “properly towards those that are without.”

It is also an illustration of the mode of life in meeting death. Christians encounter death just like others. We must meet death. We know that in the present day by virtue of what Christ has done for us, we have the redemption of our souls. And we also have secured, through the work of the Lord Jesus, the hope that our body shall be redeemed as well, but our bodies are not redeemed now and they will not be redeemed until the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. And here we have, in Abraham, an illustration of

how believers meet death. And it's not surprising that Abraham should weep and mourn over this companion of his who had been with him for about four score years.

And then we have, I think probably as a highlight of the chapter, an illustration of the faith of the man of faith in resurrection. You can see how anxious he is that he might have just a little bit of land in Canaan because God had promised him Canaan. It was Canaan that was the object of the promises made to him and he sees in the procuring of just a little burial place, a kind of anticipation of the promises that are ultimately to be his. Later on in the book of Genesis, we will read how Joseph asks that his bones be taken up from Egypt and put in the land buried there because he too believed that those promises that God had given to Abraham would find their ultimate solution and he would be in the land, and he wanted to be there when he was resurrected from the grave. So, in the burial of Sarah, there is a witness to the resurrection and to the promises that had been given to Abraham early in life.

Even John Calvin said, “While they themselves were silent, the sepulcher cried aloud that death formed no obstacle to their entering on the possession of it.” So as far as Abraham was concerned, the fact that Sarah had died did not mean that she was not going to inherit the promises. Now he was certain of that and he wanted her to have a place in that land so that from that spot, there may be the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises.

It is 25 years now since the experience of Mount Moriah when Abraham took Isaac upon top to sacrifice him at the command of God. Life evidently has been serene and untroubled. In the 25 or 30 years since that time, we read of nothing between Genesis 22 and Genesis chapter 23. Evidently, it was a rather monotonous life of a man who had great flocks and who spent a great deal of time out in the pasture. Someone has described it this way, “That the rivers of Abraham’s life had passed the rapids and the narrows of the earlier course and now Abraham and his family were dwelling in the still waters of the pool after those rapids.”

Well something is going to happen now that is going to change things for Abraham. The pastoral life left ample time for leisure and close personal intercourse, and so in the case of Abraham and Sarah, there was a very close relationship no doubt. Their lives had grown together very closely and death will leave a great blank in the life of the patriarch. Listen again to the two verses of the 23rd chapter that open it. “Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.” I have commented about three times already that Sarah is the only woman whose age at death is recorded in the Bible. I have wondered about that, I must confess in the meantime, and I have made these little jokes about it. Of course, women might say it's providential. That means that we shouldn't tell our age all the time.

On the other hand, I was this past week thinking about the passage in 1 Peter chapter 3 and I wonder if there is any connection between that and this passage for in that particular section, Sarah is singled out as an illustration for the women of the faith. Remember she called Abraham, “lord.” I will not make any application of that, just cite the text, but then in the 6th verse after saying that with reference to her, I can see that it is not doing any good. The women in the audience are laughing over it. Men, were in sad shape I guess.

But the text, verse 6, says this. “Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him a lord; and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.” So evidently just as Abraham is the illustration of the man of faith, so Sarah is looked upon as the illustration of the woman of faith and perhaps as a recognition of Sarah's place in the word, she is marked out with special attention and her age is recorded at her death.

What was the death of Sarah? Well, first of all, it was the death of a believer. It's clear from that passage in 1 Peter that she is regarded as a believer. So this was the death of a believer. Now a believer's death is not as sad as it might seem. In the case of Sarah,

it was death of a believer and consequently her future is entirely different from an unbeliever.

Now men die with different degrees of equanimity. John Quincy Adams is reported to have said when he died, “This is the last of earth. I am content.” Well that's a fine way to die, but it's even greater to die as a Christian and to die in Christ, and Sarah died in Christ. It was the death of a believer. It was the death also of a lifelong companion and no doubt, Abraham felt the loss more than anyone else. A tremendous part of his life was gone. Someone has said every man needs a wife because sooner or later, something goes wrong that you just can't blame on the government [laughter], but in Abraham's case, it was a lifelong companion. It's very difficult to put into words what this must have meant to Abraham. I think any of you in the audience who have been married for years or scores of years, you will understand better than I could possibly explain to you what it means to lose a lifelong companion, but in the case of Sarah's death, it was the death of a lifelong companion. We'll say more about that in just a moment.

It was the death of a mother as well. Isaac was now between the ages, probably of 35 and 40, and Isaac and Sarah evidently had a very close relationship. I know you might wonder about that, where do you get that in the Bible. Well, of course, you might expect it because after all, he was the promised child. She had been barren all of these years and had borne the reproach of never having children, and that was quite a reproach in the East. And now finally there had come the promised son Isaac, and no doubt, she really doted on that little child, that little boy.

If ever a child was spoilt or had occasion to be spoilt, perhaps Isaac was the one, except remember that the Bible said that God said that Abraham was his father because God knew that he would train him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But there was a close relationship between Isaac and Sarah and I am not just speaking out of my imagination for at the conclusion of the next chapter, it is stated, “Then Isaac brought

Rebekah 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.”

And so evidently, Isaac was very disturbed over the death of Sarah and felt the loss of his mother. And he was a young man of, well hate to say it, middle age, 35 or so. Middle age, you know. So here is a young man who was very close to his mother and when Sarah died, it was the death of a mother who was loved by a son and who needed his mother and of course, it was the death of a homemaker. We all know what a homemaker is and Sarah was not only the homemaker for her family, but for all of the retinue of servants and others that Abraham had. It was a place that hardly anyone could be expected to fill.

Well the consequences of Sarah’s death are described in the phrases and clauses that follow. We read in the last part of Genesis, chapter 23, verse 2, “And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.” One might ask why did he have to go in or come in. Some have said he must have been away. Perhaps he was out in the fields with the flocks. And Sarah’s death may have been a sudden kind of death and so he was called in and thus he came in.

The Targum of Jonathan, one of the Jewish paraphrases, the Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament, says at this point, Abraham came from the mount of worship, Moriah, and found that she was dead and he sat down to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. That account, it's only a traditional account, but it is that while he was gone, Sarah had died, while he had gone to offer up Isaac on Mount Moriah. And still others have said traditionally that what happened was that she learned that Abraham was going to offer up Isaac on Mount Moriah and she swooned and died from the shock of hearing that Abraham was going to offer up Isaac.

Now, as far as the text is concerned, we do not have anything in it that suggests that these explanations are correct. Back in chapter 24 and verse 67 again, we read, “Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent” and probably the safest explanation

of this is that Sarah had her tent and Abraham had his tent and when Sarah died and we read Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her, he left his tent and went into her tent, and that probably is the meaning of that expression.

But now notice, what he did when he went in that tent. Here is the great patriarch, the great man of faith, and he went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. One of these words is a word that speaks of very strong expressions of mourning, the kind of outward weeping and wailing that the Easterners do and did, and the other, well the quieter kind of weeping and crying that is familiar to us in the West. I want you to notice this. It's not unmanly for a man to cry. It's not an idle activity for a man to weep. It's not a morbid activity for a man to weep.

Now, of course, the occasion is different. This is the first time that we read of Abraham weeping. He didn't weep when they left Ur of the Chaldees, and he may have been thinking that this is the last time I'll ever see my home. He did not weep then. He did not weep when tidings came to him that his nephew Lot had been carried into captivity. He didn't weep when he took Isaac to Mount Moriah. We do not read that as they rode for those three days that he was weeping over what must be done. But now that Sarah is lying dead before him, the fountains of his grief are broken up and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

Now I want to draw two or three lessons from this because I do think it's important. Spirituality is not against the natural instincts. The Bible does not, in any way, suggest that we should deny our feelings or that we should restrain our feelings. It's not bad to weep and cry as a Christian. When the occasion calls for it, it's perfectly normal and natural. There are people who incline to think that if we believe that there is a resurrection that there is no place for weeping. That's not biblical. That kind of pious stoicism that bids us to meet the most agitating experiences of life with rigid and tearless countenance is not biblical teaching.

The spirit of the gospel, the spirit of the word of God has little sympathy with that. We do not have morbid sentimentality taught in the scriptures, but I think it's fair to say that we may well question whether the man who cannot weep can really love because in the final analysis, what is sorrow? Well sorrow is love that has been widowed and bereaved and consequently, it is perfectly natural for individuals who love to weep when the occasion calls for it. It was the most natural expression of the love of Abraham’s heart for him to weep. So, we say that Christianity does not come to us to make us unnatural and inhuman.

It comes to purify us and ennoble us and to raise all of the true emotions of life to their proper perspective. Jesus wept. Peter wept. The Ephesian disciples fell on the neck of the Apostle Paul when they thought that was his last visit to them and they wept over him. And so the Lord Jesus stands by all of the mourners of life and encourages them as they weep with the illustration of his own weeping. Now Sarah had been the partner of Abraham for 70 or 80 years, and so it's not surprising that this great man of God wept and mourned over the loss of his wife.

As a matter of fact, I imagine that in Abraham’s mind he went over all of the experiences that they had enjoyed together. She alone was left from those early days whenever he spoke of Nahor or Terah or Ur of the Chaldees or even of the experience with Pharaoh in Egypt, it was Sarah who would most understand; the hopes, the fears, the plans, the purposes that they had formed in their own minds, these were things that Sarah was able to share, others were not.

He remembered her as a beautiful young woman. He remembered her when she was 127 years of age. I am sure he enjoyed the fact that she was a beautiful young woman. I think I read this to you once before, but you pardon me if I read it again. I like it every time I read it. Someone has said, “Justice is when he chooses an incredibly homely woman with a profoundly beautiful soul over an incredibly beautiful woman with a profoundly shallow soul. There is no justice!” Now in Abraham’s case, he was a man

who evidently appreciated beauty and he remembered Sarah as a beautiful woman, but there was more to Sarah than a shallow soul and a beautiful face and he remembered all of that and when her body was finally lifeless and the spirit had gone to be with the Lord; it was, we shall say, very precious thing to him.

So spirituality, Christianity is not against the natural instincts. We don't deny our feelings as Christians. But the Christian does not mourn as the world mourns. The apostle reminds the Thessalonians of that. In the 4th chapter in the 13th verse of his book, when he speaks to them concerning the coming again of the Lord Jesus, he says in I Thessalonians, chapter 4 and Verse 13, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” So Christians grieve, but they do not grieve as those who have no hope.

We grieve over the loss of our loved ones. But we do not grieve as the world does because we know there is reunion and reunion on the plane of life that we shall enjoy throughout all eternity. When there shall be an ennobling of everything, the resurrection body, the relationship that we bear to each other will be a relationship that we enjoy with the whole of the body of Christ, and so we look forward to the restoration of fellowship with friends and loved ones. What a wonderful thing it is to be a member of the family of God and have such a great hope as this!

Samuel Johnson used to say, “Christianity teaches us to die well, but not eagerly.” That too is human. We are not all going to rush out and try to die in the next few moments because it's so great, because the Lord has certain things that He wants us to do. Another thing you will notice here that Christian mourning does not interfere with the grand duties of life. The experience of suffering, the experience of the loss of Sarah is designed to purify and ennoble Abraham to make him into the kind person God wants to make him, and he felt that the loss of Sarah was important for that. John Keats has said that this life is a “veil of soul-making” and that’s what God is doing with Abraham. He is fitting him for the future and consequently, he experiences this but he is not to just give

up at this point. He has duties to perform and so he must get about the business of burying Sarah and get on with the things that God intends for him to do in the remaining years of his life.

Now, the next thing to do is to buy a burial spot. There is a time to weep; there is a time to refrain from weeping. And so Abraham will now deal with Ephron. This is two heads of covenant people; Abraham, the head of the covenant people of God; Ephron, the head of the Hittites, a Gentile kind of non-covenantal people, and so these two must deal now with the burial site and so Abraham in testimony to his innate feelings, he wants a place in that land because he believes those promises are going to be his and he believes therefore that there will be a resurrection and an enjoyment of them and so he wants to place Sarah in that land that has been promised to him.

So he says, “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you.” He has lived there for years. It reminds me of Charleston and in Charleston, it's reported that there is a tombstone there in honor of one man that reads something like this: “He was 50 years in our midst and though a stranger among us.” Well anyone who has lived in a place with a lot of tradition knows that people like to think that you are not really one of them unless you've been there for a number of generations. Abraham says, “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you, but give me a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight,” and notice the familiar way in which he speaks of the body of Sarah, “my dead.”

You know I think there is another thing that we can learn from this. We have some interesting funeral customs in the United States. If you will compare our funeral customs in the United States with the funerals that are referred to in the Bible, you will notice an amazing difference particularly in recent years. What characterizes the funerals and the burials of the Bible? I think you can say this; simplicity, dignity, respect. What characterizes so often the funerals of today? Not simplicity; they are elaborate and they are costly. It is very difficult to have anyone buried even in Dallas, Texas for anything

less than say \$1,500-\$2,500. Now that may be very simple for some of you, but it's not simple for many people.

The places of burial are characterized by euphemistic types of things that, in the final analysis, are denials often of the biblical truth. There is a mausoleum in Nashville that's twenty stories high. It contains a 130,000 crypts. The higher you are, the lower it costs. You can get a special coffin for only about \$500 there. That of course is not the cost of the funeral. And that coffin is available in Early American, French Provincial or Mediterranean style. Now that is the truth. You see when the concept of resurrection is lost, death is masked and hidden, and so the euphemisms are multiplied and the illusions and superficialities abound. And when you go and engage in the haggling that takes place over our dead loved ones, you will notice the ways in which we have sought, in our society, to cover over the fact of death and its awful reality and also the great Christian hope of the resurrection of the body.

Incidentally, you will notice that Abraham buried Sarah. Now I am going to say something. It might offend some of you and I don't intend to offend you and I want to say right at the beginning before I say it, that God is able in his almighty power to restore the bodies of the saints and to resurrect them but it appears to me, this is my opinion, it's not stated in the Bible, it's just my opinion. It appears to me therefore that cremation is contrary to the spirit of the Bible, because in cremation, we, in effect, are paying no attention to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. In the destruction of the body, we affirm that it is not essential, but the Christian doctrine of the resurrection is not that we shall have a resurrection body. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body is that our body, this particular body, shall be resurrected and that there is a continuity between this body, yes I know it's difficult to believe, this body that you see in front of you and the resurrection body.

In other words, my resurrection body will be distinct, peculiar [laughter] but distinct, distinct so that you and I will know each other, no doubt, and we will not be

precisely the same. There will not be a lot of people walking around with the same countenance, but we will be distinct individuals, each possessed of a body like his own glorious body so the Christian doctrine of the resurrection is the resurrection of this particular body. That’s why burial is a significant thing. We are placing in the ground the body that is to be resurrected uniquely kept by God and then restored and glorified, and I think we find that expressed here in the burial of Sarah as carried out by Abraham.

Well, it’s not necessary to go over the account of the haggling that took place between Ephron and Abraham. It was on the level of the courtesy of the times. For Abraham’s part, he wanted a piece of that ground. He wanted an admission that he was an owner of land in Canaan because he had been promised by God, Canaan, and he was not going to take anything from Ephron. He did not want anyone to say, “You have made me rich, you Gentiles,” and I have a hunch that that four hundred pieces of silver was an exorbitant price.

In this case, Ephron Gentiled this Jew out of some of his cash and Abraham accepted the price without any haggling. He didn’t say that he thought the land was only worth 350 pieces of silver, but he accepted the price because to him, it was a priceless piece of land and it was so priceless as you know that later on, Isaac is buried there, Jacob is buried there, Rebekah is buried there, Leah is buried there, and there is tradition that Adam had been buried there, but that’s pure tradition and, of course, so far as we know, it’s not true, but this was priceless for Abraham. It was the way in which he expressed his faith that there was coming a time when he would have that land and that there would be a city that God had promised. Well the burial is described in the last few verses, 17 through 20, and the details are given, the witnesses are there, which indicate that this was a fully secured contract.

Let me close by making a few comments. I think from this incident, it’s a very difficult chapter in many ways. We learn behavior in bereavement. It’s natural to have the sorrow of love. It’s also natural that there should be the service of duty and so

Abraham carries on with his life which prevents the idle kind of regret that means uselessness following the death but most of all in our bereavement, there should be the expression and anticipation of the sure hope of the resurrection. We meet death, we Christians, we must meet death, but we do not meet it as the pagans do.

The grave does not hold us captive forever. Death is the boundary of Satan’s power and when death has taken the body, then God takes over. Our spirits go to be with the Lord and we await the day when the Lord Jesus shall come from heaven, shall bring with him those who have died, shall quicken our mortal bodies, raise them up, transform them so that we are united to them, and so we shall ever be with the Lord and with our fellow believing Christians. How important it is, my dear Christian friends in Believers Chapel that we live the profession that we make. We live really as those who anticipate the resurrection. This is our hope. This is that to which we look forward and anticipate.

And, you know, there is one other thing that I want to mention to you because I think it is so appropriate in an audience like this because I know that in this audience, we have some individuals who are not Christians at all. You may think because you are a member of a church that you are a Christian. Perhaps you are a member of a very lovely church, but that does not make you a Christian. No doubt you have heard someone say that the only way in which you become a Christian is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Apostle told the Philippian jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

We do not become Christians by joining the church, by praying, by sitting at the Lord’s Table, by being baptized, by doing good works, by being a good citizen in the community, by coming from a lovely cultured family with a great history, by having money and influence, by being benevolent benefactors of the community. We do not become Christians by works for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest anyone should boast.

Do you know when Abraham was carrying on all of this bargaining, this conventional fiction of talking with Ephron in the presence of the others, he is thinking about the promises that have been made to him? He speaks out of his relationship to the Lord, he speaks out of knowing the true God, but here is Ephron over here, one of the sons of Heth, head of the sons of Heth. And the sons of Heth know nothing of any of this while they are dealing with Abraham, the great man of faith.

Think down through the ages of eternity. What shall Ephron be thinking? I am the man who dealt with Abraham, the great man of faith, and I didn’t know anything about the salvation provided by God. Abraham’s thoughts were entirely foreign to this man with whom he was dealing. “The world knoweth us not,” the Apostle John says, “because it knoweth Him not.” They don’t recognize us. When I walk down the streets of Dallas, they don’t say there’s a son of God. They don’t realize that. They don’t say there is a man who has been forgiven by God. There is a great sinner and he has been justified. They don’t know us because they don’t know Him. It is possible to be that close to the things of Christ and not have the Lord Jesus Himself. How wonderful it is to have the faith given by God that enables us to approach grave times like this with the courage that comes from personal salvation through the Lord Jesus!

When the doctor told Lord Palmerston of the severity of his situation and that he would soon probably die, he said, “Die! my dear doctor, that’s the last thing that I shall do.” Well he was correct. It was the last thing that he did. [Laughter] He huffily said that. The facts are of course that that’s the last thing that all of us probably will do. Oh, that we might die in the faith, in the assurance that we have the forgiveness of sins! We invite you by virtue of the saving work of the Lord Jesus to come to him.

The sacrifice has been offered. The blood has been shed. God offers the redemption from sins to all who come to Christ. It’s very simple. You know it’s simply an acknowledgement within our inmost being, something like this. Lord I do thank Thee, but Thou hast to reveal to me that I am a sinner and that the wages of sin is death. I am

on the road to perishing eternally. I know I stand condemned, but I see that Christ has died for sinners and salvation is offered through him. I turn from my trust in myself, my good works, all of the other crutches and I flee to him and I trust only in Christ, I plead only the finished work of the Lord Jesus with thee. May God help you by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, to come to that decision.

May we stand for the benediction!

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful pictures of the life that is true to life. We thank Thee for Abraham. We thank Thee for the way that grace worked in his spirit. We thank Thee for his tears and we thank Thee for his hope of the resurrection and we pray O God, that Thou would give us the tenderness and the love and the true emotional appreciation of the things of life together with that sure hope that our future is sure and certain because it is in the hands of our great sovereign God.

Lord if there are some in this audience who have never believed in the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, bring them to trust in Christ. May grace, mercy, and peace go with us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.