



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 50: 1-26

“Joseph’s Last Words”

TRANSCRIPT

Will you turn with me to Genesis chapter 50? This is the last of our studies in the Book of Genesis and with the message today we conclude our exposition of this most wonderful first book of the Bible. Genesis chapter 50, and I am going to read the entire chapter. Now remember in the preceding chapter, Jacob’s death has just been recorded. He breathed his last and he was gathered to his people, and then in chapter 50 verse 1, Moses continues his account by writing,

“Then Joseph fell on his father’s face, and wept over him and kissed him. Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. Now forty days were required for it, for such is the period required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days. When the days of mourning for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, ‘If now I have found favor in your sight, please speak to Pharaoh, saying, ‘My father made me swear, saying, ‘Behold, I am about to die; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.’ Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.” And Pharaoh said, ‘Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.’ So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father’s household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their

herds in the land of Goshen. There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company. When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed seven days mourning for his father. Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, ‘This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians.’ Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond (and that preposition really means in the Hebrew text near or in the region of) the Jordan. Thus his sons did for him as he had charged them; for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father. When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for the wrong which we did to him!’ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father charged before he died, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph, ‘Please forgive, I beg you, the transgressions of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, ‘Behold, we are your servants.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? ‘And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. ‘So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father’s household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim’s sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph’s knees. And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.’ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying,

‘God will surely (visit you or) take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.’ So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

May God bless this reading of his word.

The subject for today in the exposition of the Book of Genesis is the last words of Joseph and of course these are the last words of Lewis on the Book of Genesis and I am really rather sorry to come to the end of the exposition of this great book of the Bible. I feel like now after our two years, I think in time at least of the exposition of this book that I am now in a position to start over again and get a great deal more out of the study of this book. But that is like the study of all of the books of the Bible. When you think that you have exhausted them, then you discover that there is a whole lot more there that you had not realized was there, but this is the last of the series of studies in the Book of Genesis, and I certainly have enjoyed my own personal study of this book.

The subject for this morning is “The Last Words of Joseph. As I said a moment ago, how wonderful it is to die as a believer. What a difference it makes both to the person who dies and to those who remain. The false prophet Balaam reflecting on Israel’s election exclaimed “Let me die the death of the upright and let my end be like his!” In the New Testament, we read blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. It was my sad duty this past week to officiate in the memorial service of one of the members of Believers Chapel who went home to be with the Lord, but it makes a great difference to conduct a memorial service for someone who was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I noticed the difference immediately the difference in the atmosphere, the difference in the ministry of the word, the difference often in the people who are there, and at the gravesite service in Durant, Oklahoma. Several people came up to me afterwards. I am sure there were many more who would have, but it was rather warm out in that cemetery there, but several people came up to me and spoke of the tremendous blessing that Luanda McManus had been to them through her eight years off and on of illness. It is a tremendous difference when a believer dies, and to go home to be with

the Lord is really a time for rejoicing as well as a time for lamentation and mourning because of the loneliness and loss that that means.

What are the marks of a believer’s death? Well there are several I think and some of them are found right here in the context of the death of Jacob and the death of Joseph. There is first of all faith in the promises of God. That characterized Jacob. He was very concerned about being buried in the land of Canaan. He remembered those promises that God had given to Abraham and had confirmed to Isaac, and he wanted to be sure that he was buried in the Promised Land.

In Genesis chapter 47, we read, When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.” And the same thing is said by Joseph. Happy is the deathbed where God is a reality. And I think it's interesting again that of all of the experiences of Joseph that are singled out by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the commemoration of the faith of the great men of the Old Testament, it is Joseph’s word at the time of his death that is singled out as the expression of his faith.

In The Epistle to the Hebrews, instead of choosing any of the other great acts of faith that Joseph accomplished while he was here, he writes by faith, Joseph when he was dying made mention of the Exodus of the sons of Israel and gave orders concerning his bones. That is the incident in Joseph’s life that is singled out as the signal demonstration of his faith. He spoke about the Exodus, that is the promises of God concerning the Exodus and he spoke also about his own bones and demanded of his brethren that they should bury him back in the land of Canaan. So faith in the promises of God is one of the marks of a believer on his deathbed.

And I say happy is the deathbed where God and his promises are a reality. Love toward the saints. Happy is the deathbed where alienations are absent. And in the case of Joseph and in the case of Jacob, those family alienations are largely gone and happy is the deathbed in which the hope of reunion with ones who have gone on before is present. That was true of Jacob who spoke of

lying down with his fathers or having fellowship with his fathers or being gathered together with his fathers and also of Joseph as well.

In the New Testament, it is the hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection of the body, and the comforting assurance that there is a reunion of those who have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Isn’t it interesting too that in these last chapters of the Book of Genesis, there is a great deal of prominence placed upon the patriarchal sepulchers. Jacob makes special mention of the fact that he is to be buried in a certain place. Joseph makes special mention of the fact that he is to be buried in a certain place. Special mention is made concerning Isaac’s burial. Special mention is made concerning Abraham’s and Sarah’s. Evidently they thought that burial was a rather important thing and you will notice too that there is no cremation in the burial of these individuals.

Now let me hasten to say that if you have some loved ones who have been cremated, but who nevertheless were believers, God of course is able to give them a resurrection body like unto the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and able to give them their own resurrection body. But the Bible lays a great deal of stress upon the resurrection of the body. In fact, the Bible lays stress upon the fact that the resurrected body that we shall have is a body in which there is continuity between the present body and that body. It's different, it's glorified, but there is continuity. It is the same body. Just as a seed planted in the ground may be quite different from the plant that grows, but is nevertheless the same essential thing. So the body of the believer that he shall have in his resurrection glory is a glorified body, but it is the same body. There is continuity.

The writers of the New Testament make that very plain. So burial is a rather important thing. It's a doctrinally important thing and consequently cremation is not found in Scripture because cremation seems to suggest that that body has no further use in the divine program or the divine plan. I think it's rather interesting that so much is said about the body. It shows that the people of the Old Testament even though their views of biblical doctrine may not have been quite as plain as enlightened believers in the present age, nevertheless they had the essence of the faith that has come to full bloom in the New Testament.

The opening part of Genesis chapter 50 is a record of the burial of Jacob. As God had promised Jacob a long time before this, it is Joseph who closes Jacob’s eyes in death. Joseph was fifty-six years of age when Jacob died and we read of the embalming of Jacob in verses 1 through 3. The Egyptians incidentally wept seventy days for Jacob. We know from literature that they wept seventy-two days for their own Pharaohs and so for Jacob, the Egyptians weep only two days less than they do for a king. These proud titled magnates, members of the most exclusive society of the day, the Egyptian society, weep for and honor this old Jewish shepherd almost as they weep for and honor a king.

That’s remarkable, for it's almost as if God is saying in the death of Jacob and in the weeping for him, he is important to me and of course for the Egyptians it may have seemed something entirely aside to them, but nevertheless they wept for him because of the reputation of Joseph, the prime minister, and what they had seen of Jacob in the years that he spent among them, seventeen years. He was embalmed.

Now that's a rather interesting thing because usually in mummification, there were certain pagan religious rites involved in it. We have no indication that that was true here. In fact, Joseph is the one who commands the physicians to embalm his father. Usually the physicians did not do it, but they did it in this case and it may have been because Joseph oversaw this. Now it might be since embalming has been thought at times to be a means of preserving the body so that the resurrection would be more easily accomplished by God since he could more easily resurrect a body that had been embalmed and one that had not, it might have seemed a rather pagan kind of ceremony and you will notice that Jacob is embalmed and then later Joseph himself is embalmed. Well, after the message this morning one of the doctors in the congregation came to me and said I think I know exactly why Jacob was embalmed and particularly why Joseph was embalmed because after all, they wanted to go back to the land of Canaan and if Joseph had been buried in the land after several hundred years, his bones could never have been taken back into the land and so the embalming, the use of this pagan procedure, the mummification, served the purpose of God in accomplishing Joseph’s burial in the

land, so that later on as they made their way out in the Exodus, they carried that old mummy case with Joseph’s bones in it back into the land and buried Joseph there. So even the pagan embalming procedure is used by the Lord God.

Well, after Jacob dies, Joseph entreats the family of Pharaoh for the privilege to go back to the land in order to bury his father and he is given that privilege, and not only that but he is given a large entourage who went with him for the internment. It's almost a rehearsal in miniature and in minor key of the ultimate homecoming of the children of Israel as they make their way out at the Exodus into the land of promise.

We want to move on and hasten to the reassurance of the brethren, for in this next section which begins with the 14th verse and concludes with the 21st verse, we have one of the great statements on divine providence. Well after Jacob has gone, perhaps it's understandable that the brethren, the ones who had been responsible for Joseph being put in the pit and sold into slavery, might have been a little worried about what is going to happen to them because now that Jacob is no longer there, they thought that perhaps Joseph had been treating them nicely for Jacob’s sake. Perhaps it was difficult too for them to believe in the nobility of Joseph.

Now let me hasten to say there is no truly noble man. The Bible says that all men are sinners and all men are depraved. The Bible says as a matter of fact that all men are totally depraved. Not that they are as bad as there can be, that’s not the meaning of the theological doctrine of total depravity, what it simply means is that sin has touched all of their faculties. It has touched their mind, it has touched their emotions, it has touched their wills, so that we are men who have been totally touched by sin. That’s the meaning of total depravity. We don't mean that a man may not do some noble work in the eyes of men, but we do mean when we say total depravity that men do not do their works, their good works for the glory of God and they do not do their good works out of faith in the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So in that sense, men are totally depraved.

So men are depraved. But there are some men who do manifest a nobility of character and Joseph is one of those, and perhaps they found it difficult to believe in Joseph’s nobility. At any rate,

they send a message to him and they say that Jacob had said that certain things were to be true. They said this “Your father charged before he died, saying, “Thus you shall say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.””

And they add, “Now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” So they decided to remind Joseph of Jacob’s words or as some commentators say since there is no record that Jacob actually said these things, they really lied. They just said that Jacob said these words in order to be protected by Joseph or to gain his protection.

Now if these words were true when we read that Joseph wept, then of course he wept over the fact that Jacob had asked him to do this, but if they lied then he wept out of pity for their mistrust of him. But the forgiveness that he gives them is full and complete and reminds us of the forgiveness of his antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the great things about the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ is that it is permanent and when that forgiveness takes place, it takes place permanently and we are forgiven for the penalty of our sins forever. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross and bore the sins of sinners, he satisfied the divine justice for those for whom he died and consequently Heaven can bring no further charge against those for whom our Lord died since he has paid the debt. And God does not require that he pay the debt twice, and so those for whom he died are safe and secure because of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joseph’s forgiveness is a full and complete forgiveness of his brethren. Now he responds to them in words that are very significant and in fact one of the commentators Derek Kidner who has written an excellent little book on Genesis. I have read every word in it. Some of the words I have read half a dozen times in this book. It's a little small commentary on Genesis, but it is worth it's weight in silver, not gold, but worth it's weight in silver, but now in this particular commentary, Mr. Kidner says that these words that Joseph responds to the brethren with are words that contain the pinnacle of the Old Testament and the New Testament faith. They are found in verses 19, 20, and 21 and I will just single them out and say just a word about them.

The first thing that he says as his brothers came and fell down before him and said behold, we are your servants, he said to them in the 19th verse, do not be afraid for am I in God’s place. He reminds them that God is the ultimate judge of men and that all rights or wrongs are to be righted by him. Vengeance is mine, I will repay said the Lord. That right of judgment rests with the Lord God, it does not rest with us and so Joseph reminds them of that.

The next thing that he says in the 20th verse is that God is the ultimate governor of the universe. He said “And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” Now that is a classical statement, but the classic statement on the doctrine of providence in the Book of Genesis is the one that is found in the 5th verse of the 45th chapter and Joseph also speaks this one. And it's very closely related to the words that he uses in Genesis chapter 50, and I am going to remind you of it, although it was just a few Sundays back that we looked at it. In Genesis 45 and verse 5, now he is speaking to his brothers and here at the time of the reconciliation with them, we read, Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here for God sent me before you to preserve life. Verse 7, “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and verse 8 “Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God;” but they did send him, he said that, but it was not really you, it was God.

In other words, the person who stood behind the brothers as they put Joseph in the pit and then sold him into the hands of the Midianites was really the Lord God. That's the classic statement on divine providence. You sold me, but it was God who sent me. Now the Bible is full of this and it's only to me amazing that individuals can read the Bible, so they say, and not find out what the Bible says about God and evil. Now God is not the author of evil. He is a holy being and therefore no unholiness proceeds from him. But once we have said that, we have not said all that the Bible says about God and you must deal with these passages of Scripture. You can say all you want to, God is not the author of evil, but God does determine that evil exists in his universe, and he

determines that evil exists in his universe in order to accomplish a greater good than would exist if he had not determined that evil should exist.

Now the reason for this is very simple. He desired to manifest his grace and he cannot manifest his grace if there is not sin, and since he controls everything in his universe, he determines that sin exist in the universe in order that he may manifest his grace and also in order that he may manifest his justice. So we may say God is not the author of evil. He is however the one who determines that evil exists in the universe. Now that is so plainly taught in Scripture that I am only amazed when people say that God is not the one who determines that evil exist. It's so many times expressed in the Word of God. If someone says that around me, I just have to say within my mind either they have not read the Bible or when they come to something that they do not like, they pass over it as one passes by a cemetery.

Now in John chapter 18 in verse 11, the Lord Jesus therefore said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” It was the father who gave our Lord to his death. Turn over to Chapter 2 and Verse 23 of the Book of Acts. Now in verse 22 of Acts chapter 2, Peter is preaching and he says “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” Godless men, wicked men put our Lord to death. That is the greatest evil ever committed in the history of the universe. There should be no question about that. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and yet, Peter says in verse 23 that he was delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. It was God who planned the death of Jesus Christ, the most wicked act in the history of mankind. It is God who is responsible for the death of Christ in the ultimate sense. It's the cup that the father hath given him, shall he not bear it?

Scriptures make this so plain, I could spend the next five or ten minutes citing texts that bear on that point. Let's turn over to the fourth chapter and the 28th verse. In the fourth chapter in the

28th verse, I will read verse 27 while you are turning to it, “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.” Now there is no question about the responsibility of man. The Bible says they were wicked men who put our Lord to death. They are responsible for their act, but at the same time God predetermined that certain things should take place, that that wickedness should take place. And many other passages of the Scripture speak the same thing. So what we have in the Bible then is a plain statement of God’s providence over everything, even over evil. And evil is used by him for good, although it does not proceed from his being, for he is a holy God.

Now then that raises the question of the doctrine of providence, divine providence. What does divine providence include? Well, it includes preservation; that is it includes the preservation of all persons and of all things in God’s universe. It includes also government. He is the one who makes or moves all things toward the certain conclusion of his plan. In other words, God’s attention is concentrated everywhere in this universe. He is not just a person who sits at home and/or in his office and when someone comes running in and says well there is some trouble over there in Dallas, Texas, he rushes out and fixes the machine at that point. He is not like that. His attention is concentrated everywhere.

There was a preacher who was one time preaching on the fact that God’s attention was concentrated everywhere and he referred to the text in which the Lord Jesus said the very hairs on your head are all numbered and he said while some of you might hear us, do not believe that even your heads are all numbered, but God has numbered even the hairs of our head. Everything in this universe is under his control. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will, the Bible says.

Now you cannot evade these words from the Apostle Paul and the other authors of Holy Scripture. Divine providence includes preservation. It includes government. His attention is concentrated everywhere. It is a providence that has to do with all things, all creatures, and especially

with all men. Professor Bury whose books on ancient history I studied when I was in college, had given some rather rigid interpretations of history, but later on he wrote that he had been too rigid in his initial scientific assumptions, and he came to the conclusion that the shape of Cleopatra’s nose altered the course of history. Even such little things as that alter the course of our Western world.

Why you know that if a virus were to hit Washington and a half a dozen of our leading statesmen should come down with this virus, that might change the course of the western world of which we are a part. God controls all of his universe. His attention is concentrated everywhere.

Two or three years ago, we were sitting in the tape room on Monday morning and one of the ladies told us that week in our little prayer meeting that the termites had been discovered in a house. She regarded this as a form of divine chastisement. We all tried to persuade her that God often sent trials to educate us and not simply to chastise us, but she said yes, but termites that must be chastisement. Well, now I have a great deal of respect for termites. I don't want the little beasts anywhere near any house that I am living in, but still they might come for our education, but I know this that God controls even the termites. He works all things according to the counsel of His own will and they may come for education, they may come for chastisement too. He does control things that minutely.

Now Joseph also in the 41st verse speaks of evil repaid with forgiveness and with affection. And he promises his own personal aid for the brethren and these anticipations of the New Testament characterizes words, but I want to move on in the closing few moments to the account of the death of Joseph. Well this is the climax of Joseph’s life. It's the climax of his faith and it's also the climax of the Book of Genesis. Fifty-four years intervenes between Verse 21 and what follows we read in Verse 22. “Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father’s household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.”

There are two great blessings mentioned in Joseph’s life. He lived a hundred and ten years of age, to be hundred and ten years of age. Now that’s interesting too because I think I read in one of the commentaries that in ancient times, in the literature of ancient times, 27 times it is stated that

the ideal age was one hundred and ten years. So Joseph here is given the age that was regarded as the ideally desirable lifespan in the land of Egypt. It was God’s gesture of approval upon the activities of Joseph.

And then that other great blessing, he was allowed to see his grandchildren. Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim’s sons, also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh who were born on Joseph’s knees. Did you know the Bible speaks about that as one of the blessings that God gives to men? Grandchildren are the glory of the father and one of the blessings of an individual is the privilege of seeing one’s grandchildren. And I have seen my grandchildren, and it looks like I have seen all of my grandchildren too so far as I can tell. And I am grateful to God for the privilege of seeing my grandchildren and I know exactly what this means. In the proverbs, it is stated that that’s one of the blessings of God. In the Psalms it is stated that that is one of the blessings of God. It was one of those little blessings that God bestowed upon Joseph. He was able to see his grandchildren.

Now the last words remind us of the fact that even the best of men must die. “It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment,” the writer of Hebrew says. But in his last words Joseph says I am about to die but God will surely take care of you. He will visit you. Now that’s an assurance of his unchanging presence and his unfailing purpose. God will visit you. Don't worry, God’s going to be with you and furthermore, he will visit you and he will accomplish his purpose. Notice he says that God will visit you, and he will bring you up from the land to the land that he promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Do you know what that means my dear Christian friend? That means that when God promises to do something, he will do it. Now he is not an Arminian God who makes promises conditioned upon man’s faithfulness. He doesn’t do things like that. He makes his promises and then in wonderful grace, he gives men faith. He works in the hearts of his believers and brings them to faith in his promises. It's true we are blessed through faith, but his promises are unconditional

promises. We do not worship a frustrated deity. He accomplishes his purposes, and that's one of the reasons that Joseph was able to keep so restful amid the trials of life.

And it's the reason that many of you sitting out in this audience are able to keep restful amid the trials and troubles of life and we all have them. It's because you are convinced that God who makes his promises fulfils those promises. He is no frustrated deity. He will visit his people, and he will do exactly what he says that he is going to do and Joseph's faith was not disappointed. Scripture goes out of its way to point out that Moses thought about these words. They germinated in his mind and as the leader of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt and into the land, who went along? Joseph's bones. The old mummy case in which Joseph's bones had been placed went along with the children of Israel and every time they took a look at the mummy case for the hundreds of years between the death of Joseph and the Exodus, it was a reminder to them of the fact that God is going to honor his word. So Joseph says carry my bones up.

These two words I think, God will visit you, carry my bones up, epitomize the hope of the Old Testament and the hope of the New. That is, each of the testaments ends in hope with reference to the future. In the Old Testament, it is the hope of the coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament, it is the hope of the second coming of the Messiah. Behold, I come quickly. The embalming of Joseph is described in the last verse and we read he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. From Canaan down to Egypt, from Eden the masterpiece of God's creative hand to a coffin, and of course what intervenes between God's great masterpiece of creation and the coffin is the sin and consequent depravity of man in the Garden of Eden. So the greatest of God's servants must die, but God and they go on.

God buries his workmen we say but God carries on his work. He raises up new workmen to accomplish his work. If the Lord doesn't come, God will bury this workman and he will raise up others in my place and carry on his work. One of the most remarkable things I think in the Bible is the way in which the death of believers is described. And strikingly, it's not something that is absolutely unique because even the heathen recognize that there was a remarkable likeness between

sleep and death, but you will remember that in the Bible, there are three words that particularly describe the death of a believer and one that stands out is the word sleep.

The reason for that is simple. When a man sleeps, he is living. When a man sleeps, he is resting. When a man sleeps, he expects to wake up. That’s true of every believer in Christ who dies. When he sleeps, he is living. His body is placed in the grave. The Bible doesn’t teach soul sleeps. The Bible teaches body sleeps. The body is placed in the grave. The spirit goes to be with the Lord. So he is alive. Second, he is resting. He is resting from his labors and third, he shall have an awakening. That is, the body shall be raised from the dead, shall be made like unto the Lord Jesus Christ’s own glorious body, shall rejoin the spirit and thus ever with the Lord, so that there is life, there is rest, there is resurrection. This is why the Bible uses the term sleep, believer’s sleep used only of believers in the New Testament. They sleep in death, others die, but they sleep.

Now one of the most remarkable things it seems to me about the Bible is the way in which this is stressed that death is something that occurs to all of us, but in a very special way it is the Lord Jesus who is with us when we die. Now all the books that men are writing today about life after life are nonsense. Not that there is not something that is good in the book, but no one knows anything about life after death except the man who has come from that place and who has told us about it, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now he has told us some interesting things and the Bible tells us some interesting things. Have you ever read Psalm 23 in the light of this? Did you know that Psalm which all of us know or have heard begins with the third person? The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His namesake.

But now notice when he begins to talk about death what happens. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” So when believers come to the time when they pass from this earthly

existence into the existence beyond this grave, beyond the grave the Lord Jesus in a special way escorts his own into his own presence. A remarkable thing.

Have you ever noticed too about people who sleep? Well, you know if you sleep, you can sleep through lightening, thunder, the noise of children, the noise of the neighbors next door. I used to live in one place where the Cotton Belt railroad came out through north Dallas. It was just a few hundred feet away and the whole house would shake every night at about 3 o’clock. The first couple of nights I heard it. After that, I never heard it. The train was there every night, but I didn’t hear it. Have you ever noticed a lot of people that sleep just that soundly if you go over to them and say John, they’ll jump right up. That’s the way our Lord speaks and speaks in death. The personal touch. God’s servants die, but he carries them on into his presence.

Well shall God’s work end in one poor mummy case? Joseph’s words of faith were contrary to natural vision, incidentally, because there was Israel down in the land of Egypt, they were getting wealthy. Who wants to go back to the land of Canaan when you are doing so well down in the land of Egypt, and furthermore, it wouldn’t be long before Pharaoh would arise and he wouldn’t be very happy about them leaving and so it appeared as if his words of faith were contrary to natural vision, but that old mummy case over there with those moldering remains, the bones of Joseph, was a constant encouragement to the children of Israel who were spiritually minded of the fact that one day God would raise up and deliver and they would go back into the land.

Now wouldn’t it be nice if we had some bones? Wouldn’t it be nice if we just had the bones of the Lord Jesus like Mohammed’s bones in Medina? That seems to give the Moslem quite a bit of encouragement. They go to Medina and there they worship the bones of Mohammed. That would remind us that the Lord Jesus Christ did live sometime.

However the Bible doesn’t give us any bones. The thing that encourages the believer is the empty tomb. That’s the thing that encourages us. The assurance that our Lord Jesus Christ has come forth from the grave and now lives at the right hand of God the father ever living to make it a session for the saints and able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him. We have a

living Savior and we have the assurance of a savior who comes to us in all of the experiences of life and cares for us. Now what a great thing it is to be a Christian! What a great thing it is to be a Christian when death comes and what a great thing it is to be Christian and at the death of a loved one know that that loved one is a Christian and that there is reunion with the Lord and with them!

If you are here this morning and you are not a believer, oh what you are missing! We invite you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ who has offered the once and for all sacrifice for sinners. It's available and that blood will cover all of your sin. Come to him. Put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. May God the Holy Spirit convince you of your sin and depravity and come to Him and receive forgiveness of sins freely, not by joining the church, not by doing good works, not by praying through, not by being baptized, not by sitting at the Lord's Table, not by culture, not by education. Through faith come and receive as a free gift, the Lord Jesus. May God in his wonderful grace urge you to come. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] How wonderful Lord it is to be a Christian and to have the hope that is signaled by the empty tomb of [a] living Savior. We thank Thee that we don't have any mummy case filled with bones. We thank Thee for the living Savior who ever lives to make intercession for us.

And we pray O God that if there are some in this auditorium, we sense that there are who have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ that they may come. May in their own inmost being, there be the confession of their sin to Thee and the reception as a free gift of eternal life. At this very moment Lord, move them to confess their sin to Thee and deep down within to say I thank Thee Lord for the gift of everlasting life through the blood that we shed, I receive it as a free gift. May grace, mercy, and peace go with us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.