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Genesis

Chapter 23 - God's Promise Beyond the Grave

The Cost of Hope (vs. 14-20)

Genesis 23:14-20: Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, “My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.” 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. 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.

This is a wonderful passage about an individual who loved his wife and wanted her remembered. Death comes into our lives and it's almost unimaginable. I mean, one moment you're talking to somebody and the next moment they're no longer here. It just is so surreal and almost impossible to comprehend something like that taking place. And I think one of the reasons why is there's something inside of all of us that says, "This can't be it. There has to be something more." And of course, Ecclesiastes, so aptly puts it, God has actually placed that eternity thought in your heart so that you might realize that there is something more. In Ecclesiastes, he says, "I know that there's injustice in the world, but I know that there will be a day when final justice will be meted out." And of course, Job, the contemporary of Abraham at that time, says, "I know that my Redeemer lives. I know that I'm going to see him again." There's just something inside, even though there was yet no evidence of anything such

as that. Abraham will actually believe that if he placed his son on the altar, that somehow God will raise him from the dead, as Hebrews 11 states. So, there is something inside of all of us that says, "This can't be it." And we as believers, our focus is not on the death. Our focus is on the everlasting life. And we're focused on the promises of God. We sing the song, "*Standing on the Promises*". And that's where we have our hope. "Hope," as you see in Scripture, is really literally defined as confident expectation. So, it's not something that you do like crossing your fingers. It's something that we actually believe and are assured that will happen. We have what is called that blessed hope. We have a confident expectation that God will not leave us, He will not forsake us, He will not abandon our soul. And so, there's that great hope that keeps us ever facing life.

And so, as you come to this passage, it is actually revealed within this. And probably one of the first places in all of Scripture, as we've been going through the Book of Genesis, that we really see the care of the death of somebody and the burial of that person. We've gone

through quite a few individuals throughout the Old Testament, and up to this point, up to these 22, 23 chapters, we haven't seen this happen before. But we see a great care that is taken and a concern that Sarah be buried where she is. The very fact that Sarah finds herself in Hebron, the very fact that she finds herself in this particular region of Mamre, is telling us that she, with resolve, wanted to go there for these final days. And here she dies now at 127. From what we understand, Abraham has now been with her clearly for over 52 years. We pick Abraham up at age 75, and so, we know that he probably got married before that time. So, however long they'd been together; they'd been together for a long time, and there was a great love between them and among them.

In this passage, we also read of the fact that he's mourning over her and weeping. Once again, probably one of the first places that we see somebody really mourning and weeping over the death of somebody in the Book of Genesis and in the Bible.

So, the passage reads,

(Genesis 23:3) “Then Abraham rose from before his dead...”

And if you look in verse 2,

“... and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.”

You see the great sorrow that he felt for her.

And from this, the passage reads,

(Genesis 23:3) “Then Abraham rose from before his dead...”

If you hadn't underlined that before, just once again by way of reminder, it is the word “*qûm*” for him rising, more specifically, and it's making reference to the fact that there was a sense of stability in this and a resolve. So, from the sorrow, he raises himself and gets up from the dead and realizes that there's something greater. And it's a great picture that is painted for us within this.

The passage then reminds us, and Abraham wants to remind those around him, that he's a stranger and an alien in this area. And it is that which really drives us, because we know that this is not our home. Hebrews,

once again in Chapter 11, will make reference to this and will also shore this point up in the sense that it would declare that he declared and all those saints before declared that they were strangers and aliens. Once again, it's virtually the name "Hebrew," which means that you lived on the other side of the waters, which was an interesting picture of a stranger or an alien on the other side of the waters of Euphrates. So, Hebar, or Hebrew, is where we get that name. And then from this point on, Abraham is referred to as a Hebrew, a stranger, an alien. We're Hebrews, we're strangers, as Peter will say, "We're strangers and aliens, but God has called us out to be a royal priesthood of a holy nation, a people for His own possession." So, it is this sense of, "I don't belong here. This isn't where I live. I have a greater place." And once again, as Hebrews 11 will say, he was looking to that heavenly place. He was looking to the heavenly home. So, it is in this passage that it just really has permeated this sense of hope that God has not forgotten us. He will not forget us. And when you go into the Book of Hebrews in Chapter 11, it mentions those by faith. It gives a list of

those that have gone before us and you're going, "God remembered them. They're remembered." And the very top one on the list was Abel. Of course, as far as Cain was concerned, he was a nobody. And his name actually makes reference to that. "*Hebel*" is the very same word that we see in Ecclesiastes as vanity or futility. So, it basically means breath. You're just a breath. You're just taking up air, so to speak. And so, Abel wasn't seen as anyone great, but God says, "You know what? Abel, though he is dead, still speaks." And He'll actually state that within that Hebrews 11. He'll then go on to mention Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, these all died in faith and they are remembered. Why? "Because they believed, they trusted in Me, they hoped in Me." I mean, if you take this all the way to Luke 23, to the guy on the cross, we even have a criminal going, "Will You remember me?" And Jesus will say, "You're remembered because you put your trust in Me." So, really what we're talking about is that belief and faith that God loves you. Our salvation is not a complicated thing. God just wants you to believe that He loves you. If you truly believe that, you'll do whatever He says. You'll follow Him. You'll emulate Him. If

you really believe He loves you, because you'll believe that everything that He does for you, everything He tells you to do is good because He loves you. And it's that faith that He loves us; it also reminds us that He's not going to forget us. We've oftentimes read the passage in Isaiah 49 where God says, "I know that you think I'm going to forget you. Look, a mother may even forget her own child that might nurse from her, but I will never forget you. I've actually placed you in the palms of My hands. I've carved you into My hands. I'll remember you. I won't forget you." And once again, the very word "remember" makes reference to a cutting. You get a bad enough cut, you're going to remember it. You get around a bunch of guys and they start pulling up their pant legs, "I've got something here, I got something here." And things that they remember, things that happened in their lives, and it is that remembrance. We believe in the promise of the resurrection. We believe that we're not going to be forgotten. We believe that we're going to be remembered. We believe that our soul will not be forgotten. But we not only believe that our soul will not be forgotten, and here's the interesting point, we believe

that our body will be resurrected. And this is what's so interesting to me about this whole burial thing. Because it ultimately comes up from time to time, "Should we bury or what?" Yeah, because what we're doing in the burial is declaring we believe this body will resurrect, that God will not abandon this body.

The way it's put in Romans 8:11,

"... He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies..."

I'll put it another way, to your dead bodies, He will give life to those.

1 Corinthians 15 says, as Christ is resurrected, so we are resurrected. Well, when Christ is resurrected, how is He resurrected? So, just as that happened, so we too.

And in 1 Corinthians 15:42, it reads that you and I are so imperishable body, but, and this is probably good news to all of us because we're basically fundamentally wondering, "Okay, so we're resurrected. Am I still going to look as ugly as I do now?" Some of us don't have to worry about that, but others do. But God says, "No, you were

sown a perishable body, but you'll be raised an imperishable body. You were sold in dishonor; you will be raised in glory. You were sown in weakness; you'll be raised in power." In other words, the way that He explains it in 1 Corinthians 15, you take the seed, you plant it in the ground, the seed's dead. You plant it in the ground. When it comes up, it doesn't come up a big seed, does it? It comes up as something magnificent, but it comes up from that seed. And so, what you have is not only the remembrance, but you have the glory that God has promised us. And we look forward to that.

In fact, Paul will write specifically to this in 2 Corinthians 5, where he says, our whole body longs for this, to be set free. This is the hope that we have. It's a confident expectation. And it's this confident expectation that causes Abraham to do the things that he does in this text. He believes that he's going to see his wife again, and she's going to be remembered. And this thought, this hope, will continue.

Now, let me just once again define hope for you in maybe a clearer way. If you turn with me to Romans 4, it'll give

clearly an example of Abraham in this particular chapter. In some ways, you can call this the chapter of Abraham in Romans 4. Romans 4, of course, starts off with Abraham, our forefather, and begins to talk about clearly that his righteousness was because he believed in God, he trusted God.

But if you drop on down, it says this,

(Romans 4:18) “In hope against hope he believed...”

That's a great text, isn't it?

“... so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, “SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.”

(Romans 4:19) Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb.”

Now, here again, you have to ask yourself, “They were basically living in the region of the Philistines. So, why did she find herself back at the oaks of Mamre? Why did she find herself back in Hebron? Why did she find herself back

there?” And there's only one answer to that. Because in Genesis 18, that's where she met God. And that's where God gave her the promise, “Your dead womb will bring forth life.” So, what is she thinking about? She's thinking about life out of death. And that was the place where she met it. By the way, the term “Hebron” makes reference to association, or more specifically, you could literally translate it “connected”. And so, I would say that's where she connected with God. And not only did she connect to God, but you remember, it was where Abraham was, by the oaks of Mamre. And what's interesting about the passage that we read here in Genesis is that she had to be buried in the cave, which faced Mamre. And that's very interesting. We're going to talk about that in just a minute. But anyway, remind me to talk about that in case I forget.

But in Romans 4, it says, “In hope against hope he believed”. See? And it was that hope that, in fact, his faith grew stronger.

(Romans 4:20) “Yet, with respect to the promise of God...”

And this is the point in verse 20, that the hope was in the promise of God. Hope is not something you see. Hope is what you don't see. You can't have hope and see it. It wouldn't be hope. I'll show you a passage for that.

“Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

(Romans 4:21) and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.”

And in a way, what you see, even with Sarah and this whole, I would say, business dealings with Ephron, is, both Abraham and Sarah, Sarah by moving there, Abraham by the way that he buys this cave and makes sure that it's a place that's facing Mamre, are declaring, “We believe in the promise of God, that He's not going to abandon us”. And this promise continued to be the hope of Israel.

But if you look with me in Romans 8, I like the way that it's put here in verse 18, for Paul begins to share that because of our hope, we consider the sufferings that we go through for the sake of God to be nothing, right? I

mean, if you have a hope and an assurance, as Hebrews 12 so aptly puts it, “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross.” If you have this hope and assurance that this confident expectation, not only that all is going to be well, but God is going to use this to the glory of all of us.

(Romans 8:18) “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

He actually has a hope, a confident expectation that there's going to be a greater glory to come, not comparable to any suffering we could go through.

(Romans 8:19) “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

(Romans 8:20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

(Romans 8:21) that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

(Romans 8:22) For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

(Romans 8:23) And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan..."

And here again, some of us groan a little bit louder than others.

"... within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."

It's interesting that he used the word "body," isn't it?

(Romans 8:24) "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope..."

I think your pastor had said that earlier. In all fairness, I was just quoting the passage.

"... for who hopes for what he already sees?"

(Romans 8:25) But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

But that has to be the Spirit that does this. See, the Spirit causes the groanings, but He has placed the spirit of

confident expectation that He's coming again and that He's not going to abandon us, He's not going to leave us, He's not going to forsake us. Nothing is going to separate us from His love, and there's that confident faith that we have, that hope and that assurance. "*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.*" And that's the faith that we have. What's interesting is that this whole process of burial is that which God was establishing to cause us to focus on that. It was the caring of the body, even though, how bizarre it is when you think about it. I mean, Abraham will care for that which is destined to decay. Why would you care for something like that? Because that was the vision of hope going to be fulfilled. And here again, it was carried all the way through.

In fact, if you look with me in Genesis 50, the time comes when Joseph turns to his brothers, and he goes, "You know, as we buried dad in the same cave that we buried Abraham and Isaac and Leah and of course, all the family at this juncture..." Joseph then comes to his brothers who have now come into Egypt because once again he was

sold into slavery, but God raised him up to take care of his brothers.

But he writes this,

(Genesis 50:22) “Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father’s household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.

(Genesis 50:23) Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim’s sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph’s knees.

(Genesis 50:24) Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you...”

Now, watch, here's the point. Here's the promise.

“... and bring you up from this land...”

What land? From Egypt. They're in Egypt now.

“... from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.”

(Genesis 50:25) Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.””

Why would he do that? See, the care of the bones was the evidence that they believed in the promise that God would not abandon them; that they would see their loved ones again. In fact, we don't have time, but if you turn to Exodus 13:19, Moses, about 300-400 years later, would take the bones. He'll take them with him and as you read in Joshua 24, Joshua will bury him, so they'll be taken care of this whole time. You're going, "Why are they spending so much time on stuff that is destined to decay?" Not decay; raise. And so, it's the great hope that we have, and it's Abraham within the passage that is revealing this as he will actually purchase land for this purpose, for the caring of a loved one, for the remembering of a loved one.

As you go back to Genesis 23, we pick up in verse 14, in which Ephron, which once again is a Hittite and probably just working a deal here, you know? You figure out what the person thinks, how he thinks, and you begin to work in that realm. And "Gee, I mean, 400 shekels, no big deal to us, right? I mean, we're friends." Well, 400 shekels was a lot of money. Just to remind you, Joseph was sold into

slavery for 20. So, Ephron goes, "Okay, no big deal, 400." And I don't know, I can't help but feel, and I don't want to put too much into what Abraham was feeling. But to me, it was interesting that when he went into the region of the Philistines and Abimelech, remember when he tried to pass off Sarah as his sister? And then, of course, God revealed himself in a dream to Abimelech and goes, "Don't you mess with her." And it kind of scares the bejeebies out of Abimelech. And he goes, "No, you guys stay around, I'll give you anything." So, he gives them cattle and stuff like that. You know what Abimelech also gives them? 1,000 shekels of silver. Now, he's only paying 400 for this. I can't help but feel that Abraham was thinking, "Whatever it cost." Because, perhaps, there was some residue of guilt that he sold his wife out. And Abimelech just kind of adds to the fuel, he says, "Tell your brother, 'Here's money for you.'" But Abraham's here, and he's not going to hold back. He just says, "Whatever it costs, it doesn't matter." And I'm sure at this juncture, the world is going, "Why are you willing to pay for hope?" But we are. I mean, hope really is a willingness to sacrifice today for the greater treasure tomorrow. I mean, that's

what hope is about, right? So, we'll gladly pay today. It is going to cost you something, hope. There is going to be a sacrifice of the worldly things here, for the greater things tomorrow.

The way the passage reads is,

(Genesis 23:14) “Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,

(Genesis 23:15) “My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.”

(Genesis 23:16) Abraham listened to Ephron...”

And I guess the best way to put this is, Abraham knew what he was intending and what he wanted, and so therefore he gave him the 400 shekels of silver.

“... and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the [fn]hearing of the sons of Heth...”

Once again, there was a reason why Ephron was saying it with everybody there in the room, so that they would know that it was 400 shekels of silver, the commercial

standard that he was looking for. And Abraham doesn't flinch; he just gives him the money.

And so, the passage reads in verse 17,

(Genesis 23:17) “So Ephron’s field, which was in Machpelah...”

Which gives a reference to a double portion. These aren't mistakes, are they? These names, “Machpelah”. It gives the reference to something happening again, like life again, born again, so Machpelah.

“So Ephron’s field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre...”

Remember, he was at the Oaks of Mamre when they were visited by God, right? For some reason, God so ordained that this cave would face the Oaks of Mamre. We'll go on because I have to fill this in.

“... the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field...”

Why would Scripture say this? Now, we know that he was under a tree when Christophanes, Christ, met him under the tree. L-O-R-D, all capital. God was there. He walked

among them in human form. It was the Christ, right? And He meets him under the oak. Why would He meet him at the tree? Well, it's the place where He met Abraham. It's the place where He met Adam. It'll be the place He meets Adam. It'll be the place that He meets Abraham. It'll be the place that He meets you, under the tree. It'll be the place of His sacrifice. It'll be the place in which we'll literally see the tree of the knowledge of good and evil right before us, and we'll also see the tree of life. It shines before us.

It is interesting when you read the Gospel of John, in John 1, that you have Nathaniel, and where was he? Under the tree. And this was not an unusual thing for a Hebrew to study under the tree because they believe this is where you meet God. So, why would the passage make reference to the fact, "and all the trees"? That's where she met God. That's where she heard the promise that "Your dead womb is going to have life in it." This is where she knew hope was. This cave must face Mamre.

Now, I made mention of the fact that I've got to make reference to what Mamre is about. It's a very interesting

word, and oftentimes you find great understanding through very obscure passages. One of the more obscure passages found in Scripture is found in Job 39. You don't need to turn there. But in that particular passage, God is making reference to the power of the horse. He's making reference to the power of an ostrich. And what's so strange is He uses this particular word, the root word of Mamre, which oftentimes is translated as strength, because the oak trees of Mamre are strong oak trees. But actually, it has more to do with vitality. And so, the word "Mamre" has a connotation of "rising up." It's very interesting. Well, in the particular passage in Job 39, you have this picture of the ostrich. And it makes reference to the ostrich as "she". So, specifically, it's wanting us to know that it's the female ostrich. And in the passage, it makes reference to the fact of how fast the ostrich is. It actually uses this term, "She rises up, and runs." And it gives an interesting picture of one rising up, of one demonstrating power, of one revealing a kind of resurrection; that you have this bird that can't fly, flying, rising up. And so, how appropriate it is that she would face the oaks of "rising up", a place in which God would

reveal Himself. And this field and this cave and the trees and everything is pointing to this.

And it says in verse 18,

(Genesis 23:18) “to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.”

It’s obviously a business transaction that is occurring.

(Genesis 23:19) “After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre...”

So, in a field of a double portion, facing a rising up.

“... (that is, Hebron) ...”

The place where she connected with God.

“... in the land of Canaan.

(Genesis 23:20) So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over...”

Same word, “*qûm*,” if you back up into verse 3, “Then Abraham rose,” is the same word “*qûm*” within the text, which makes reference to the fact that there is a sense of stability or firmness. And you see that Abraham was firm

in his faith, as we see the deed of the promise is firm from God.

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

Abraham will care for that which was destined to decay. Abraham will declare himself unattached to things of this world. And you'll see him do this throughout. You'll see him with Lot, turn to Lot and go, “You choose. You choose. Whatever piece of land you want, you choose.” And he will actually refuse the reward of the king of Sodom. The king of Sodom says, “I'll give you some money.” He goes, “I don't want to take money from you.” Because his hope is telling him to pay for something. His hope is energizing him to give of what he has today so that he might have the greater tomorrow. There is a greater truth that he is anchoring in and he will refuse so many things. In fact, he'll be willing to look foolish. This guy will pay top dollar for what seems to be worthless real estate. You say, “Well, that's an anomaly. That's the only place that actually takes place.” Actually not.

Turn with me to Jeremiah 32. Just want to let you know, just a heads up, verse 2,

(Jeremiah 32:2) “Now at that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem...”

Okay, so all of that was being taken by the enemy, Babylon. In fact, this is not just something that somebody says is going to happen. This is something that the Lord says is going to happen.

It states in verse 3,

(Jeremiah 32:3) “... ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will take it.””

We know what's going to happen then. He is besieging the city right at this very time. He's surrounding the city of Jerusalem. They can look out their windows, they'll see him. And God tells them that he's going to take it. So, it's a sure thing, right? Sure deal.

And he goes on, it says in verse 5,

(Jeremiah 32:5) “and he will take Zedekiah to Babylon...”

He says at the end of verse 5,

“... “If you fight against the Chaldeans, you will not succeed””?””

And then you pick up at verse 6,

(Jeremiah 32:6) “And Jeremiah said, “The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

(Jeremiah 32:7) ‘Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, “Buy for yourself my field which is at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it.””’

Now, who in their right mind would think about selling and buying real estate? I mean, the whole region is being surrounded by the enemy, and you go, “This might be a good time to sell real estate.” I don't know. But anyway, it seems like his cousin is thinking that way.

And it says in verse 8,

(Jeremiah 32:8) “Then Hanamel my uncle’s son came to me in the court of the guard according to the word of the LORD and said to me, ‘Buy my field, please, that is at Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin; for you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours; buy it

for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

(Jeremiah 32:9) I bought the field which was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle’s son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver.”

Which kind of gives you an idea of how much more Abraham paid, 400.

(Jeremiah 32:10) “I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales.

(Jeremiah 32:11) Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions and the open copy.”

And you're going, “Maybe you could dicker with this guy because he knows he's not going to own this stuff before long. Why don't you get him down to at least a shekel, you know?”

But it says in verse 14,

(Jeremiah 32:14) “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase

and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time.””

There are going to be things that God is going to tell you to do because you have a hope and it's going to cost you. In fact, in Luke, Jesus will say, “You need to calculate the cost. It's going to cost you.” Now, it's not going to cost you because you're paying for your salvation. You're not paying for your salvation. It's going to cost you to reveal how you value what God has given you. God is going to ask you, “Do you value this? Do you believe Me?” And so, faith and hope will jettison you into a realm of saying, “You know, none of this is important.” Paul will say in Philippians 3, “Whatever is gain for me, I count as loss for the sake of Christ, because my hope is in those treasures, not in this one.” And he'll be willing to give up. In this particular passage, Jeremiah kind of reminds himself, I like the way that it goes through as you go through the chapter, he goes, “Okay, I just want to remember, you're the God that had signs and wonders in Egypt, and you're the God that took us out of Egypt, and you're the God that brought us into our possession, and you're the God

that helped us take our possession, right?” And God says, “Yeah, I'm the God.”

(Jeremiah 32:27) “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?”

And so, Jeremiah goes, “Okay, I made a good investment.” Now, he may not see the investment, but that's not what hope is about. Hope is about doing what you don't see, because the hope is what's ruling your life. And you're investing in things that people would say, “Why are you doing that?” And here again, the whole burial scene, people are going, “What does it matter? The body's going to decay.” It matters, because the signal that you're sending is, “I believe in the resurrection. I'm willing to pay.” I think one of the reasons why people don't want to bury is because it costs more. Hope will cost you. But God is calling upon you to hope.

I got to have you turn to Zechariah 11, if you would. One of my favorite passages. There's a lot of great prophecy if you've ever been in the Book of Zechariah. It'll actually make reference to the fact that every eye will look upon the One whom they crucified, and they'll weep over Him.

And so, you realize certainly God's grace even in that. That's found in Chapter 12, by the way, in which God says, "I'm going to pour out on the house of David, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, supplication, so they'll look on Me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns an only son." It's an interesting picture, isn't it? But in Zechariah 11, there's an interesting question that is asked. And the question is, "How much do you value Me?"

And so, the way it reads, if you pick up with me in Chapter 11,

(Zechariah 11:12) "I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages."

Do you see that? Yeah, that's the exact amount of Judas, by the way, in Matthew 16.

(Zechariah 11:13) "Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD."

Scripture is asking you to hope, to have confident expectation. God is asking you to live that way. Let me just emphasize something. That's going to cost you. If in fact you say you hope in something greater than this place, it's going to cost you. God's going to give you opportunity to give up something. And once again, it's of your own volition. It's of your own desire. Not something He didn't command any more than He commanded David when he was going to buy the threshing floor for the sacrifice to God in 2 Samuel 24, in which David comes before Araunah, the Jebusite, and Araunah goes, "I'll give you the land. You're the king. I'll give you the land." David says, "I'm not going to give God that which costs me nothing." And you realize that's the way hope thinks. Hope sees the things of this world as literally insignificant. Even the sufferings are not to be compared with the glory that is to follow. The magnificence of our investment is that we believe that there is something far greater in store for us. And it is a magnificent and wonderful thing. This is not the purchase of salvation, nor it is a command from God, but it's an act of one's own volition. It's an act of one's own will and a desire to give. And that's why the

way that Romans 12 is written at the very beginning of the chapter, "I beseech you," now listen to the phrase, "by the mercies of God, because of what God has done for you, that you value that; that you live according to hope, and that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God." See what he's saying? Because hope will pay top dollar for worthless stuff. Because we know this is all going, but we are investing in a message to God that literally declares, "You're worth it. You're worth it to us." And I see that all the way through the Old Testament. I see God calling out those that will actually give up all that they have. He will ultimately call these guys that were fishermen. And at the time when they catch the most fish, not at the time when they have no fish, they'll give it up.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for the opportunity that we have to give to You, not because You need anything, not because even You demand us to give, but because You're worth it to us. And we believe that if You have promised

us everlasting life, that we're willing to demonstrate that we are confident in this promise, even if it costs us.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. What we're asking you to do is be willing to pay the price. As Jesus would say, calculate the cost. You say you believe. Do you? You are no fool to give up that which you cannot keep to gain that which you cannot lose.