



The Sermon

Dr. Steven J. Lawson

Genesis 21:22-34

"When Swearing is Right"

March 20, 2022

TRANSCRIPT

Well, what a great hymn that was that we just sang. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said that that is the greatest hymn ever been written in the history of the church. So that comes from the prince of preachers himself. It is written by Isaac Watts who was the greatest hymn writer God ever gave to the church. And it is a testimony of the greatness of the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which does demand our heart, our soul, our life.

C. T. Studd, who was a missionary to China in the 19th century, said, "If Jesus Christ be God and gave His life for me, then no sacrifice I could ever make would be too great for Him." And so that is true. Christ has laid down His life for us at the cross. He said, "I have authority to lay My life down, I have authority to take it back up again. This commandment I received from the Father." And Jesus laid down His life for us. His life was not taken, His life was given. He was not a victim, He was a victor in giving His life upon the cross. And so therefore, it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to lay down our lives for the Lord Jesus Christ, to die to self, to deny self, take up a cross and follow after Christ.

And so it is good for us to sing hymns like this. Hymns are really theology set to music. A chorus is wonderful, and they're a few words, and there's a repetition that helps drive it into our mind and it becomes very memorable; but it lacks the depth and the profundity of a hymn, which is really theology that is stated in poetry that is set to music, which is the most beautiful expression of singing music and singing worship to God.

Well, I'm glad you're here if you're new to Trinity Bible Church. We're preaching verse by verse through the book of Genesis, and we find ourselves this day in Genesis chapter 21 and beginning in verse 22; and as is our practice, I want to begin by reading the passage and setting it before you. Then I'll pray, and then we'll look carefully at what this passage means and what it requires of us. So Genesis chapter 21 is where we find ourselves, starting in verse 22. And the title of this message is "When Swearing is Right."

Beginning in verse 22, "Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, 'God is with you in all that you do; now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned.' Abraham said, 'I swear it.' But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. And Abimelech said, 'I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor did I hear of it until today.'

"Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. Abimelech said to Abraham, 'What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?' He said, 'You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.' Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath. So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days." This is the reading of God's word. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, as we have opened the Bible and read from it, I pray in our hearts there is a sense that we have stepped onto holy ground, that we should remove the sandals from our feet and sanctify our heart, because You are speaking. You are speaking to us through the pages of Your written word; and I pray that You would give us ears to hear what You say in Your word, and that Your Holy Spirit would bring this home to our hearts, so that we would not only know the truth, but that we would know how to live the truth. So we ask now for Your help as we look into Your word. I pray that

You would do a work of grace in each and every heart here today. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The title again is "When Swearing is Right." And in these verses, the keyword is "swear," which does not mean to cuss, but it means "to obligate oneself to keep an agreement." The word "swear" is found two times in this passage, once in verse 23 and once in verse 24; but it is also found in verse 31, and it is translated "took an oath"; same word in the Hebrew. Further, the same word for "swear" is found three more times in the proper name "Beersheba," which means "the well of the oath." And so a total of six times in these few verses the word "swear" is found.

It's very apparent in the Hebrew, a little obscure in the English, but it conveys what is the big idea of a passage. Whenever we approach a passage of scripture we want to see what is the central theme, what is the dominant idea in a passage; and very clearly here, it is the word "swear." This speaks to the importance of keeping our word before God and before men, regardless of what the circumstances are.

Our words are very important. In fact, this will be reaffirmed throughout the rest of the Bible, that when we take an oath or when we swear or when we say that we will do something, that we should keep that word. Leviticus 19:12, we read, "You shall not swear falsely in My name, so as to profane the name of God." In other words, to fail to keep your word is to profane the name of God; and it is to take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

In Numbers 30:2, we read, "If a man takes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth." It speaks to how careful we need to be when we say that we will do something.

In fact, the psalmist talks much about this, that those who know God and have fellowship with God are distinguished by those who swear and keep their word. We read in Psalm 15:1, "O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? And who may dwell on Your holy hill? In other words, "To whom does God extend welcome to come into His presence?" Verse 2, "He who speaks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart." Verse 4, "He swears to his own hurt and does not change." In other words, once he has put his word out there, he will not break his word, even if it means he

will suffer loss. He will not change his word, but keep his word. And that is a distinguishing mark of a true believer who has fellowship with God.

In fact, this is so important it is actually repeated in Psalm 24:3, "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?" Who may ascend Mount Zion and be welcomed into the presence of God? "And who may stand in His holy hill?" Answer: "He who does not swear deceitfully." In other words, "He who does not enter into an agreement knowing he will not keep it, or hide some part of the truth that will provide a loophole for him."

We should also note that God Himself swears. He swears by Himself, for there is no name higher than God. It is as though God puts His hand on His own heart and swears by His own holiness that He will keep every promise. In Psalm 89:3, God says, "I've made a covenant with My chosen"; referring to David, "I have sworn to David My servant." God swears. He pledges that He will fulfill His word.

In Psalm 89:35, God said, "Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie." God keeps His word.

In Psalm 95:11, the Bible says, "Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest." God will not change His word; and when He says those who fail to put their trust in Him, they will never enter into the rest of His salvation; and God says, "I will never change that word."

In Psalm 110:4, the Bible says, "God has sworn and will not change His mind." Once God has said something, it is unalterable, it is immutable, it is forever fixed. God cannot say something and then alter what He has said.

In fact, in Isaiah 14:24 we read, "The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.'" And what this means is, "What God has said from all eternity past from before the foundation of the world, what God has spoken to be His sovereign will will never be changed." Once God has spoken to Himself before time began, it is unalterable within time. There is no Plan B. There is no Plan C. God will never change His eternal purpose and plan because He has sworn that He will execute all His sovereign will.

When we come to the New Testament we read much the same. Jesus said in the greatest sermon He ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:37, "He said, "Let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond this is evil." In other words, "Don't ever say yes and then change it to a no, or do not ever say no and then change it to a yes. Let your yes be yes, let your no be no, and anything beyond this," Jesus said, "is evil."

When we come to the book of James we are reminded again of how important it is that we keep our word. In James 5:12, James writes, "Do not swear, either by heaven or earth or by any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you do not fall under judgment." What that is saying is, if we say yes but alter it to a no, we place ourselves under the judgment of God and under the discipline of God and under the chastisement of God, because our words should be true. And when he says, "Do not swear either by heaven or earth," it's an echo of what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, "Do not swear by heaven or earth."

It is not saying that we are not to take an oath, such as in a courtroom or in a marriage ceremony or something like that; what it is saying is, "Do not say, 'Well, I swear by heaven or earth or Jerusalem,' in a way to escape using God's name." In this day and time people would take an oath; but if they did not intend to keep it, rather than say, "I swear to God," they would say, "I swear to heaven, I swear to the earth, I swear to Jerusalem," as a way to get around saying, "I swear to God." It'd be like saying something to another person, but have your fingers crossed behind your back, indicating that you really do not mean what you are saying.

And so, we live in a world of covenant breakers. We live in a world in which we are surrounded by people who make promises, yet break their word, whether in business, whether in marriage, whether in financial obligations, whether in relationships; and as believers in Jesus Christ, we must be different. Our word must be our bond, and we must be known as those whose yes is yes and whose no is no, and there is not alteration. To do so is to be like God, who keeps His word. To let your yes be yes and your no to be no is to be godly or to be like God. So this should cause all of us to give careful thought to our words and what we say, and that we stand by what we say.

So all that is by way of introduction as we now want to look at Abraham who swears by God's name in a covenant agreement with Abimelech. So as we look at this passage. I want you to note, first, "the agreement initiated." It starts in verse 22: "Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham." When he says, "It came about at that time," he wants us to know that there is a continuing sequence of events and these narratives, and this comes closely after what we've read in the previous part of this chapter.

Now Abimelech we've already been introduced to, we saw him in chapter 20. Abimelech is the king of Gerar, and his name means "my father is king." There will be other Abimelechs later in the Bible; and Abimelech may well be a title as opposed to a proper name. And he is accompanied by Phicol, which is his acting general; and that too may well be a title as opposed to a proper name; and they take the initiative to come to Abraham.

The fact that Abimelech comes with his commanding general and, no doubt, other soldiers, speaks to the importance and the influence of Abraham, that this king and his premier general initiate this agreement with Abraham; it speaks to how God has raised up Abraham to have great influence here in this region. "And Abimelech says to Abraham," - you see it in verse 22 - 'God is with you in all that you do.'"

Even this unconverted Pagan king recognizes that the hand of God is upon Abraham, and that there is no explanation for the success of Abraham except that God is with him. He sees that God has given success to him, and that God has blessed him and is protecting him. And so he begins by saying, "God is with you in all that you do; now therefore, swear to me here by God." To swear means to take an oath, and to do it by God means to obligate yourself as in the presence of God, as though God is watching on from heaven, and that if I break my word and break this agreement, may the curse of God and the chastisement of God and the discipline of God come down upon my head. That is what he is saying.

"So now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity." To deal falsely with Abimelech would be to break the oath; and he desires that Abraham would establish this agreement. This covenant, it would be long-lasting; that it would not only be between Abraham and Abimelech, but it would also extend to Abimelech's offspring, his children; but further than that, it would

extend to his posterity, which would be his children's children, and on down the generational line. What he is wanting is a long-term commitment from Abraham that he will keep his word in this agreement. In other words, that Abraham would not enter into this agreement and then soon depart from it.

He adds in verse 23, "but according to the kindness that I have shown to you." Now this kindness that Abimelech has shown to Abraham we saw in chapter 20, which is the invitation for Abraham to come into this region and to be able to have his flocks graze on the land, and to dwell in peace where Abimelech is king and where Abimelech has his show of force through his general.

He says, "you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned." So what Abimelech wants is for there to be an agreement where, "I will let Abraham graze in this area." But at the same time, Abraham has dug a well. And Abraham has found what is very rare in this land, water, which is desperately needed, not just for Abraham and Abimelech, but also for their servants and soldiers, but also for their flocks and for their sheep and for their oxen; and so he desires to have this agreement with Abraham. And so, though Abimelech was militarily superior to Abraham, Abimelech nevertheless realizes that God is with Abraham, and that Abraham's God is far greater than his soldiers and his forces; and so he must have this amiable treaty, almost like a peace treaty, that they can live together in this land, and the reason is because God is with Abraham.

Before we go any further, you and I must know that God is with us as we live in this world. The fact that God is with us means that all that God is is with us. Wherever the Lord will send us, that there will never be anything that will happen to our lives but that God is not with us, to either protect us or preserve us, to empower us, to equip us, but that we will never be separated from the Lord. You need to know that. Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." And in Hebrews 13:5, the writer of Hebrews says – these are the words of God, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." This is very important for us to know.

I remember the first sermon that I ever preached in my entire life I was 18 years old, and through the various set of circumstances I found myself in a church in Fluvanna, Texas; and it was told, the pastor, that I would give the prayer. I had not been told that, and I had never prayed in public before in

my life; and so when I walked in the front door of the church, the pastor greeted me and said he was so excited that I was there to bring the morning sermon. I said, "I've never preached a sermon in my life." He said, "Well, the people will be very disappointed, because I have said that a football player from Texas Tech will be bringing the morning sermon." I said, "I've never even prayed publicly before." He said, "Well, you must at least pray."

So we sat down in this tiny little Baptist church in the middle of nowhere. There were two churches in town: one was a Methodist, one was a Baptist, and they only had one pastor. So one week they would meet in the Methodist church, and the other week they would meet in the Baptist church. And I was there on Baptist Sunday, and it came time in the service for me to give the prayer. And so as I was seated there, the pastor said, "Steve Lawson now, from Texas Tech, will," so I got up out of my pew and began to walk forward; and about the time I hit the stairs to go up on the platform, he said, "Steve Lawson will now bring the morning sermon." So I was just thrown into the middle of this not knowing that I was going to give a sermon.

So I stood there in the pulpit and looked out at the people. All I had was a New Testament with pictures in it; it was a living Bible, which is barely a translation; and I had to think of something quick. And I had been laying in my dorm room. I was a thousand miles away from home. I did not know one person on campus; there were over 20,000 students there. There were no cell phones, there was just a pay phone at the end of the hall. And I was all by myself for the very first time as a mama's boy; and I kept reading my Bible again and again and again, and I came across this text, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And for me, that was a lifeline, that God was with me no matter where I went, and that even out here in West Texas where it seemed to me to be in the middle of nowhere, having grown up in Memphis, Tennessee with things like trees and grass, that that was a precious verse. So all I knew to do was to turn to Hebrews 13:5 and to read, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

I'd never heard an expository sermon in my life, I'd never heard a Bible sermon in my life, and all it seemed right for me to do was to explain the passage and try to apply the passage. And so I just explained the passage that, "No matter where you go," and try to contextualize it, "whether you're out in your field, whether you're in your barn, whether you're down a dusty road, God is with you."



And I remember a couple of the men in the congregation said, "Amen. Amen." I'd never been in a church where anybody said, "Amen. Amen." And so I thought they were upset with me. So I took a step back and tried that again, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Amen! Amen!" And I finally realized they liked what I was saying, and proceeded with what was for me the first sermon I ever preached. And I remember after it was over the feeling that just swept over me, that what pleasure there is in serving the Lord; but beyond that, the truth that God is with you.

And so, you may be a single here today and living by yourself. I want you to know God is with you, as if you were in the middle of a football stadium with 60,000 people. You may be a widow or a widower; I want you to know God is with you with the fullness of all that He is, and He brings to your life all of the resources of heaven. You may be married and feel separated emotionally, relationally from your spouse; I want you to know that the Lord is with you; and that when you go to work, when you go to school, no matter where you go, God is with you, and His grace is upon your life, and He is able to empower you to do everything within His will. There is nothing in the will of God but that God has the power to enable you to do it. And this pagan king realized that with Abraham, there is no explanation for his success, other than the fact that God is with him. And I trust that others will be able to see your life and come to the conclusion that the only explanation for your life is that God is with you.

I want you to note, second, "the agreement accepted, the agreement accepted," in verse 24: "Abraham said, 'I swear it. I swear an oath to you by the name of God. I will share the water with you from the well that I have dug in return for allowing me to dwell in peace in this region over which you have jurisdiction.'" And so Abraham sought to live peaceably with his unsaved neighbor as best he could and to live in peace.

Now this raises a very practical question; and the issue is, "Can a believer ever enter into an agreement with an unbeliever?" because 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?" So, can you as a Christian enter into a contractual agreement with an unbeliever? That is the question.

Abraham has, and the answer to this is, yes, you may. What 2 Corinthians 6 is referring to is gospel ministry. And you may not enter into gospel

ministry with unbelievers, because they're your mission field, not your supporters; and it sends a mixed signal to unbelievers that you're trying to reach, that you are working in league with someone who doesn't even believe the message that that you bring. So 2 Corinthians 6:14 and following has nothing to do with business arrangements, has nothing to do with financial obligations, has everything to do with ministry in the name of the Lord. That is why we could never as a church work with another group that denies the fundamentals of the faith. Again, they're our mission field, not our partners in ministry.

However, when it comes time for me to have surgery, I want the best surgeon there is. I can have you pray for me. I want the best surgeon there is whether he's a believer or an unbeliever. And when I go to the bank to borrow money, I don't have to have his testimony, because I'm not engaging in gospel ministry with him. And so this shows by Abraham's example that, yes, we can enter into contractual agreement with an unbeliever if it does not involve the ministry of the word of God. That's a very important distinction that you need to make. And it would be legalism to say that you could not have a binding agreement with an unbeliever if it pertains to the things of this world.

This leads us, third, to "the agreement broken." No sooner was it made, then it was broken. And in verse 25, we read, "But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized." And so once Abraham has agreed to allow Abimelech servants to draw water out of his well, they have now taken control of the well. They now have taken it by force, and no doubt preventing even Abraham's flocks from being able to come to this well to drink from it, and Abraham's servants; and so Abraham complained, and rightly. To there's been a breach of the agreement here, and there is every right that Abraham has to come to Abimelech and to present this to him.

And so, in verse 26, "And Abimelech said, 'I do not know who has done this thing,'" and I think he's telling the truth. We can't tell from the narrative; but in all probability, Abimelech did not know it was his servants under the leadership of the general that had seized control of this well.

"And Abimelech said, 'You did not tell me,' - referring to earlier - 'nor did I hear of it until today.'" He's only just now learning of this. And this is sad, this is a sad tragedy. Anytime anyone, even an unbeliever, breaks their

word, it is a breach of trust. "I can't trust you when you break your word. It is a breach of your character, a violation of your character, and it is the harming of other people. So let your yes be yes and your no be no." But that's not what we see here. And so we do have the right of appeal when an agreement has been broken. And of course, in our advanced culture there are courts and lawyers and the opportunity to appeal, and mediation, and to settle out of court, to settle in court, and we have that right.

This leads now to "the agreement reaffirmed" in verse 27, "the agreement reaffirmed." Abraham, who is the offended party, takes the high road and seeks to reaffirm the agreement. So we read in verse 27, "Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech." It really should have been the other way around; it really should have been Abimelech who took the initiative, and to have, even in a worldly sense, repented and tried to make reparations and restitution; and it should have been Abimelech who took the high road to bring his sheep and his oxen to repay the wrong that had been done to Abraham. But here, Abraham, who knows the Lord, Abraham who walks with God, Abraham who has a sharper conscience and a sense of right and wrong, and Abraham who wants to be a peacemaker. You remember even earlier he let Lot choose first which way he wanted to go, and he would take the leftovers. This is so much like Abraham, and this is so much like a true believer, to be willing to suffer unjustly, and to take the initiative to be a peacemaker.

And so, we read in verse 27, "Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech," – which was to signify his good intentions to reestablish this relationship; he's trying to build a bridge back to Abimelech – "and the two of them made a covenant." In other words, it was more than just a verbal agreement that they had previous. Now they have entered into a formal, binding, contractual agreement, and it would be for Abraham to be able to dwell in the land peaceably, and it would be for Abimelech to be able to use the well that Abraham has dug.

Verse 28, "Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves." He singles out seven ewe lambs, really as somewhat of a peace offering. And probably these seven lambs will be slain and cut in half, and probably Abraham and Abimelech will walk through the middle, signifying their joint agreement to keep this covenant. The text does not say that, but it's reasonable to assume it from Genesis chapter 15, what God did with Abraham earlier.

And so again, Abraham takes the initiative to be the peacemaker here – it should have been the other way around – and he takes from his own herd seven ewe lambs and sets them apart, wanting to meet Abimelech more than halfway. Verse 29, "Abimelech said to Abraham, 'What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?' In other words, "Explain the meaning of this." Abimelech was not present when God initiated the covenant with Abraham by sacrificing animals.

So, verse 30, "Abraham said, 'You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.'" In other words, "This is to signify before you and to me that I am the one who dug this well, and I have right to access the water from this well; and it also means that this well is in your region and in your territory, and that I may sojourn in this area."

So, verse 31, "Therefore he" – Abraham – "called the place Beersheba, because the two of them took an oath." "Beer" means "well," and "sheba" really has a double meaning: it means "oath, and it also means "seven," and it could have the double meaning of "it was through this oath that these seven ewe lambs were sacrificed." It's most probably the primary meaning is "oath." Beersheba: it is the well of an oath.

"And so" – verse 32 – "they made a covenant at Beersheba," a covenant, meaning "an alliance, a pledge, a promise." And Beersheba is 45 miles southwest of Jerusalem, and it really is well-known as the southern boundary of Israel. "And Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines," which is the southwest coastal regions of Canaan. And so Abraham was successful in initiating this peace, he was successful in by being the one who took the lead, as we would say today, to extend the hand of friendship, to try to patch back up this broken relationship. And this is really how a believer is to function in this world.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." How will you identify the one who is truly converted? How will you identify a genuine, authentic, born-again son of God? They're the peacemakers; they're not the ones causing the trouble, they are the one mending the trouble. The believer is not to be the problem, the believer is to be the solution to the problem. Jesus said in Mark 9:50, "Be at peace with one another." How highly God values peace.

In Romans 12:18, Paul writes, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Some people simply will not let you be at peace with them; that's on them, that's their problem. But we are to do all that is within our power to establish peace with others. And in 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul writes to Timothy, "Pursue peace," referring to your relationships. And in Hebrews 12:14, the writer writes, "Pursue peace and sanctification without which no man shall see God," that the one distinguishing mark of personal holiness that is singled out in Hebrews 12:14 is being a peacemaker towards others; and not just towards other brothers and sisters in Christ, which, of course, is prioritized, but even with unbelievers, with your neighbors, with work associates, with people with whom you go to school. We are to be marked as those who pursue peace.

And so think about your life. Think about the situations in which you find yourself. Think about your relationships. Think about where there may be friction or where there may be tension. Rather than retreat, you should take the initiative like Abraham did to try to repair the breach and to build the bridge back to that person and to offer whatever would be necessary for there to be peace. God honors the one who seeks to establish peace. I mean, we cannot be the frozen chosen and just be off to ourselves, we must have a meltdown, and we must reach out and establish peace.

So this leads us, finally, to "the agreement marked," verse 33. And in order to set a landmark at this very place at Beersheba, where this breach was reestablished, it was repaired, and now this covenant made, Abraham plants a tree as a remembrance. And so it says in verse 33, "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba," - it's a small shrub, it's a small tree, but it thrives in arid, dry conditions; and it was the right kind of tree to plant there to mark the place where the agreement had been made - "and there he called on the name of the LORD." He called on the name of the LORD because he knew what you and I must know, that we cannot keep our agreements in our own strength, but that we need God's help, we need God's fortitude, we need God's resolve, we need God's grace to pour concrete, cement into the commitments that we make so that they remain strong and solid.

"So he called on the name of the LORD." Why? In order that he would find the help that he needs to uphold his end of this agreement. And what I want you to see here, as we come to the end of this message, is the three names for God that we see here. God is so immense and God is so transcendent,

that no one name for God can encompass the whole of who God is. And I even took out a page of my notes with all the other names of God mentioned in Genesis and Exodus; I just want to limit myself to these three names of God. And maybe this will be a reentry point for you even mentally as we bring this to conclusion. These three names of God say so much about who God is.

And the first is the name "LORD." Do you see it there in your Bible, "LORD" in the New American Standard. It is in all capital letters to signify that this name for "God" is "Yahweh, Jehovah." And as I've told you many times before, this name means "the self-existent One," that God is not dependent upon anything outside of Himself for His existence, that everyone and everything outside of God is dependent upon God for its existence, but that God Himself is self-existent. He is autonomous, He is independent, He is fully sufficient within Himself, that God has no needs within Himself. He did not create us because there was something lacking in Himself. God is completely self-sufficient, and therefore we need to call upon His name, because you and I are dependent upon God for everything.

There is nothing in your life that is functioning but that God is the one in whom you live and move and have your being. You are dependent upon God for your health. You're dependent upon God for your spiritual walk with Him. You're dependent upon God for the circumstances around your life. You are dependent upon God for the number of days that you have remaining here upon the earth. You are dependent upon God for your eternal destiny. You are dependent upon God for your emotional health. You are dependent upon God for everything in your life. There is nothing in your life in which you are not totally completely dependent upon God for everything. You are not independent, you are dependent upon the independent God: Yahweh. And so no wonder he calls on the name of Yahweh, the LORD, because he knows he cannot keep this agreement any more than you and I can keep any agreement except Yahweh enable us and empower us to move forward, to be faithful, to be steadfast, to have endurance.

The second name that we see here is "Everlasting": "the Everlasting God." And the word "everlasting" in the Hebrew means "secret, hidden, concealed, unknown." And there is the element of the incomprehensibility of God, that He far exceeds our comprehension. But there's more to it here, and it is that there is this incomprehensible future that God has already ordained; that God has this unending future, an eternity that is unknown to us, that is incalculable to us.

Psalm 90:2 says, "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God." He is without beginning, He is without end, and He will endure forever. He will never cease to be God, He will never be impeached, He will never be put out of office, He will never be removed from his throne; He is the Everlasting God.

And the third word is "God," which is "El." Usually it appears as "Elohim," which is in the plural, not meaning more than one, gods, but it's referred to as a majestic plural which intensifies the name of God; and "El" means "mighty, powerful." And when you combine "Everlasting" with "God," the Everlasting God, it means that God will be, forever throughout all the ages to come, all-powerful, that He will never diminish in His strength. He will never grow weary, He will never grow weak; He is forever immutable in His power and in His strength. He will never gain any strength because He already has all strength; He will never lose any strength because He is the everlasting Elohim, He is the Everlasting God.

Nothing is ever hard for God. No prayer request that you will ever bring to God will ever be hard for Him to answer; God has all power. And it is God who will create a new heavens and a new earth in which we will live forever and ever; and God will snuff out the sun, and His own glory will illumine the universe. But God will uphold all created matter forever and ever and ever. He will sustain hell, He will sustain heaven, He will sustain the new heavens and the new earth, He will sustain the new Jerusalem, because He is Everlasting God.

And so the relationship that we have begun with this God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ is but a beginning. It is a relationship that will never be broken with this God. We will dwell with Him forever and ever, we will see His face, we will serve Him, we will praise Him and adore Him throughout all eternity future, and never grow tired and never go weary of magnifying His name. He is the LORD, the Everlasting God.

Finally, verse 34, "And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days." Abraham lived as a nomad, intense, moving from one location to another depending upon the season and the greenness of the grass, always being able to access this well that he has dug at Beersheba; and he lived this way for a long time, "for many days," because God was the source of

his strength. God was the one who continued to give him life. God was the one who cared for him and gave him many blessings.

The same is true for you and me. God is with you. When this service is over, you will go to your car and drive back to where you live; God will go with you. When you get out of your car and walk into your apartment or your house, God will be there with you. When you go to work tomorrow, God will be with you. There will be no place to which you will ever go but that God is with you, whether it's to the hospital, to the doctor's office, whether to work; God is with you, and he is with you for many days. He is with you forever and ever.

The last thing I want to say is, "Do you know this God? Do you have a relationship with this God?" There's only one way to know this God, and that is through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. God sent His Son into this world on a mission of salvation, and God has sworn that all who believe in His Son will have the forgiveness of all their sins. And every one of us in this room has great need of the forgiveness of our sins; and there's only one who can remove the guilt and the pollution and the penalty of sin, and that is the greater son of Abraham: the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you've never committed your life to Christ, I appeal to you, I urge you, I plead with you, do not procrastinate any longer committing your life to Christ. This may not be the first time that you've ever heard the name of Christ; and perhaps you have been procrastinating and putting off making this commitment. I urge you not to put it off any longer, you need to close the deal with God.

And so I'm going to close in a word of prayer; and as I close in a word of prayer, if these words I have just spoken have found you out, I urge you to do business with God in your heart. You don't have to walk forward, raise a hand, do anything like that. If you walked forward, I'd send you back to your seat. Right there where you sit, in the quietness and the privacy of your own heart, if you have never prayed and committed your life to Jesus Christ, you need to do so this very moment. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, thank You that You never lie to us, that Your word is cemented, it is eternal, it's immutable; and You are the executor of Your own word and will; and You're the one who brings all things to pass. Father, I do pray for anyone here today who is without Jesus Christ, that this would be their moment with You, that this would be the time when they would come face-to-face with You within their own heart and confess their



sin and embrace the Savior, who came to die for sinners. Lord, I pray that they would repent and entrust their soul, their life, their all to You, right now. And so God, do this work within hearts. And thank You that You will never break Your word to us, in Jesus' name. Amen.