

We're going to begin a series this morning that will last three weeks. I've just entitled it "Transitions." It has been my experience that most people don't like constant change. We like things to be set. You can watch this play out on the grand scale of things by just following somebody's life. A kid who does great in high school will find the transition from high school into college difficult. Now that's not all of them, but it is some of them. Some of them do well in high school only to get to college and have a grade point average that begins with a period. So then mom and dad bring them home, stick them in a junior college, pay a ton less money for the kid to learn and then throw them back into the bigger pond later. Upon graduation from college, most young adults find the transition from the activity of collegiate life to early adulthood with a job of mixed peers and an apartment complex to be extremely difficult. From single adulthood, once you get married, that first few years can be difficult. Because you have two sinners who have lived separately and probably selfishly now living in the same house together. That transition is difficult. And then you might have your first kid, and there are points in raising that first kid where you're like, "I don't think we're going to make it. I don't think we're going to survive." But you make the transition and start to operate in it. And then you actually feel like you got it. And then you have your second kid, and that changes everything. You learn by your second kid that having one kid isn't even having a kid. Now you've got two kids, and all the rules changed. All the rules that worked with one don't apply at all to two. I think that's true the third kid as well. By the fourth or fifth kid, you're just playing zone defense and build borders and hope everybody survives. And then, in just a crazy piece of irony, the kids leave the house, and then you lament that it's not noisy and messy anymore. There's this weird thing that happens when they go. Now all of those are legitimate transitions, but they're junior varsity transitions compared to what I want to talk with you about.

What I want to talk with you about for the next three weeks is the inescapable transition out of this life and into the next. So here's what it looks like. This weekend, I'm just going to talk about leaving. I'm going to talk about dying. And I didn't let that out of the bag early, because you wouldn't be here. And then next week, we're going to talk about arriving. We're just simply going to talk about heaven, what heaven is, what it's not and what you believe about it that's probably not biblically true. And then in the third week, I want to talk about what comes after heaven. And here's some encouragement – it's not you wearing a robe and playing a harp. So that will be what we're going to do.

But for now, let's get to work on the theology of death. We'll be in Genesis 3. To catch you up on the first two chapters, God creates the world and he creates it in spectacular fashion. The Scriptures are going to tell us it's in shalom, it's in rhythm. There is no loss, there is no strain on relationships, there are no tears, there isn't a great deal of pain (if any pain at all) and there is no death. It is in rhythm, it is in sync and it is God's design for Him to be glorified in all things. That is creation. Then sin enters into that creation and fractures it all. We pick that up in chapter 3. He curses the serpent, he curses the woman, Eve, and now we're going to read Him cursing the man, Adam. Genesis 3, starting in verse 17, "And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife. . . ." Men, you cannot use that line. You can't go, "Baby, hush. According to Matt, the reason the world is like it is because a man listened to his wife. So hush right now. The Mavericks are on." Let's keep reading. "And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. . . ." What we have before this text is a reality where man has been given work to do. It's called the cultural mandate. If we went back into Genesis 1-2, God creates the world kind of wild and untamed, and then in the middle of that wild and untamed world, He creates Eden. He puts man in Eden and

says, "Make the rest of the world look like this. You're going to need a helper. Here's your wife. You're going to need a lot more help than the two of you can do, so have lots of babies. Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it." And what appears to be true out of this text is that work is not filled with toil, strife, sweat or thorns. But now that sin has entered into the world, all of his work, everything that he was meant to cultivate will now war against him. And then look at this next text. "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Death has entered into the cosmos. There was no death until sin entered into the world. Upon the entrance of sin and to the world, death is now reigning. It is affecting all of God's creation. Death and sin cannot be separated. Ezekiel 18:4 says, "Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die." If you sin, you die. And some people will go, "Man, that's simply talking about spiritual death. Now I would agree with you if it weren't for all the cemeteries. Let's keep reading. Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." So if you sin, you're going to die? Do we have any sinners in here? So the rate on this is 100%. Nobody gets past that sans one guy in the Old Testament and of course Christ Himself. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death."

Now sin enters into and fractures the cosmos, now you have death now reigning over man and over nature and now you've got a God who is not willing to stand still and just watch this. Look with me in Hebrews 2:14-15. "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood. . ." Now you might not like this but you and I are the children. You and I are flesh and blood. We share in flesh and blood. So you've got this cosmos of all created things, but you and I are flesh and blood. "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things. . ." So if we just stopped there, we're now reading about the incarnation of God the Son into the flesh. So watching death reign and rule over the cosmos, God Himself enters into creation wearing flesh and blood like the children, like you and me. In order to do what? Let's look at the rest of it. ". . .that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." Basically, death is reigning and ruling over the cosmos, God in the flesh says, "I'm going to solve this problem," and He dies a death in order to change what death is. That's what we just read in Hebrews. Now, Jesus' perfect life that is available to those of us who will put our trust in Him, Jesus' death on the cross that absorbs the wrath towards those of us who put our trust in Him and Jesus' resurrection, His victory over death available to those who trust in Him changes the perspective on death for those who believe and trust Him. So the Bible would then begin to speak about death in a way that is different than how it's perceived before this issue is solved.

There are three perspectives you'll see in the Scriptures about how we as believers in Christ are to view death. Number one is simply God pulling back to Himself the gift that He granted us in breath. Let me read you a couple of texts. Psalm 104:29, "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust." Ecclesiastes 12:7, ". . .and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." Let me make this simpler. If you're alive (and you are), it's not because God owes you that. He doesn't owe you that. The fact that you're breathing is a gift from God. You didn't decide to be here. Now I'll give you that maybe your daddy was smooth. Maybe he had some flowers, some poems and some chocolates. I'll give you that. But the Bible tells us that you're here because God gave you life. And it's the Christian understanding that I'm alive today because God has gifted to me life. On Thursday, Bill and Kathleen found out the diagnosis and prognosis of his brain tumor. Anytime there's a prognosis to diagnosis, it's a scary moment. And Bill just, as resolved and sturdy as I've seen him, went, "If it's nine months, if it's ten years, these are a gift." This is the Christian perspective of death and dying.

The second way the Scriptures unpack the ceasing of breath is that we are finished with our toil or work. Let me just give you a couple of these. Paul, who is about to be beheaded, says this to his favorite disciple Timothy. 2 Timothy 4:6-7, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the

good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." He's saying here, "I am done. I'm about to be beheaded, and that is evidence that my race, my toil, what I was put here to do is accomplished. I get to go home. I'm done. I have run my race. I have fought the fight. It's time for me to go home." Paul, in other texts, will compare this world to living in a tent. This is not home; this is a tent. And we see it again in Revelation 14:13. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" There are times that being obedient to what God has commanded us to be obedient to, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is still exhausting. To love your wife like Christ loved the church can in seasons be extremely difficult. Women, to respect your husband on certain days is difficult. To have the diligence to unpack the things of God to your children, to have the diligence to remain pure, to have the diligence to have open hands when it comes to your carnal desires and give those things to the Lord, when it comes to those things, it can grow wearisome. And this says that there will be a day where you don't have to fight that anymore. There will be a day when that wrestle is gone, that longing is removed and that fight is over. There will be a day you throw down your sword and you're done. There will be a day you cross the finish line. Isn't this Paul all over again? Paul loves this idea. "To live is Christ, but to die is gain." And if you know the rest of that text, he goes on to say, "It's better to depart. I love you guys, but it's better to get out of here. But since He's got me here, there is work to do." I want you to hear me say this, because this should start to build confidence in you. Nobody dies early. I have this joke with my wife, but it's not really a joke and she doesn't think it's funny. I travel a lot, and she always tells me to be safe. Normally when I travel, I'm flying. So one of the things I always tell Lauren is, "Boo, I'm untouchable until it's time. And then upon that time, I want to go." If my work for the kingdom is over, then why would I want to be here? "What about your wife? What about your kids?" To me, my wife and my kids are about the kingdom. If it was just about them, how surface and empty is that? When I look at my beautiful eight-year-old daughter, my five-year-old son and my two-year-old daughter, those three gifts are about the kingdom of God. My beautiful wife is about the kingdom of God. That's what those things are about. If my role is up, then get me out. Let me go to where all the devastation of sin isn't.

And then the third way we see and view death is a simple surrendering of our spirit back to the Lord. Luke 23:46, "Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last." Now I know some of you are going, "I'm not Jesus. You can't do that." Okay, Acts 7:59, "And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." You see, there's this real confidence that we should have in God's ownership of the days of our lives. And we see death simply as returning to God what God has given, and not a moment too early, not a moment too late. Now what do you do then with babies who die or young children who die? Let me be very honest. I don't know. I know that in some way, for that kid's joy and for the glory of God, God is accomplishing and governing as He sees fit and that the world is broken and fallen. So I don't want to make something up to make you feel better about the fallenness of the world. So we just have to put our hope and trust in the Lord, that He sovereignly knows and that one day we'll look back on all the tears and morning we experienced and it will make sense to us in light of all that God accomplished and did.

Now there's this unique twist that occurs on this subject. Because you've got the Bible saying, "Here's the perspective of those of us who are in Jesus Christ. Our days are set by the Lord, the days that we live are a gift and upon our death we simply give back unto the Lord what He gave to us." But then in the middle of that perspective, we have this permission in the Scriptures, "It's okay to mourn loss. It's okay to hurt. It's okay to weep. It's okay to cry." I have never been comfortable with cold theology that won't let someone mourn when it's time to mourn. Let me show you the best place for this. There are tons of texts, but my favorite is going to be in John 11. Starting in verse 1, "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." So externally, on their end of things, they're saying, "Jesus loves our brother." That's significant. This isn't an acquaintance. This isn't the centurion. Think of this in regards to Jesus' humanity and not necessarily Jesus' divinity. This

isn't all-knowing Jesus, outside of time, looking down on this guy he loves. He knew this family, He had walked with this family, He had seen God work powerfully in this family and He loved Lazarus. They knew it, He knew it and the author of this text, John, is going to continue to talk to us about this love. Look at verse 4 then. "But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. "So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus is going to answer them, but I don't have time to get into his response. So let's skip down to verse 11. "After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Now when we started praying for Bill early on, this is what I was talking about. Jesus just said, "I'm not saying he's napping. He's dead. And I'm glad he's dead because I've been healing all these sick people and you still won't trust in Me. So maybe when I raise him from the dead, you'll trust." That's what just happened in this text. Did you ever feel bad about your inability to trust and believe in Christ? Just flip to this text. Because He loves His disciples, and they can be clueless. And then look in verse 16. "So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Do you think Jesus doing a facepalm here? He's God so He knows what the Holy Spirit is going to do in such incompetent men. And then Jesus and the disciples are going to set out towards the village of Bethany. By the time they get to the outskirts of town, Martha runs out to Jesus, falls on the ground and says to Him, "If You would have been here, You could have healed my brother, but I know You can do greater things than even these." And then Jesus begins this great dialogue with her with some very popular verses about Jesus being the resurrection and the life. And then Jesus goes on to say, "I'm going to raise your brother from the dead. Do you believe that?" And Martha says, "I do believe that. I believe that You are God. I believe that You are the coming Messiah. I believe You are the Christ who is coming into the world. Yes, I believe."

And at that, Jesus asks for Mary. And that's where we're going to pick it up in verse 28. "When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled." I don't know if you've been in this room yet, but it's describing exactly how this happens. When someone dies prematurely in the view of our hearts and minds, the initial group who finds out grieves, they cry, they weep and they experience the shock. And when that simmers, they begin to tell stories about going to lunch last week, having this experience with them or this trip that they took. And then someone new shows up, a family member, a friend, someone else who loved the one who died. And do you know what happens? All that mourning, weeping and crying explodes again. And then it simmers down into memories of the deceased, and it calms down only for someone else to show up. And then it blows up again. This goes on sometimes for days and goes on well beyond what most of us experience unless it has been our family member. For most of us, the funeral's over and we go to the grave site. There's not a lot of mourning that takes place after that. But for the family, this can get ongoing. And what we just read was exactly what happens. Jesus is on the outskirts of town, and Mary comes with this group of Jews who are mourning with her. She sees Jesus and collapses at His feet. She begins to sob and says, "If You were here, You could have healed him." She's wailing, all the men and women behind her are wailing and there's this scene of great sorrow. And Jesus enters into it. He doesn't rebuke them. He doesn't remind them, "Hey, I'm God. Martha, tell them what I'm going to do." He doesn't rebuke or condemn them. He enters into the sorrow, despite the fact that He knew Lazarus was going to die and that He was going to raise Lazarus

from the dead. He knows all of that and yet enters into their sorrow. In fact, He enters in so completely, look at what happens in verse 34. "And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" So in this moment, God is not flexing His, "Why don't you trust My sovereign will?" Although our perspective on death is that God is exercising His sovereign will, God is saying, "It hurts. There is a loss. Mourn it. It's okay to weep." In fact, later on the author of Hebrews would say that we have an empathetic high priest. Our high priest knows. You lost a loved one? He knows. Jesus, in the heavens, at the right hand of God making intercession for you, can go, "I've been there. I've walked into that room. I've felt that loss." With all the perspective of the divine, He enters into their sorrow. So our perspective is that God is managing, controlling, good, gracious and can be trusted, but in the same vein, the Bible goes, "But mourn, weep and cry. It's okay."

And I know some of you are going, "I still don't feel any better about this topic." So let's do a little bit more work. Flip back to John 8. I want to show you something that is quite spectacular. I don't believe you will find a more aggressive, uncomfortable conversation in the Bible than the one we're about to read. We're going to pick it up in verse 48. "The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Now that's not an answerable question. Six centuries before then, when the Jews began to occupy the Promised Land, a group of Jews intermarried with some of the other nations. They produced a race of people called the Samaritans. The Jews, who considered themselves very pure, considered the Samaritans half-breeds and they despised them. They would pray in their temple for God to judge and be wrathful toward the Samaritans. They would literally praise God that they weren't born a Samaritan. There is an unreal amount of hatred. It also carried the connotation that He didn't know who His daddy was. So these rulers just said to Jesus, "Is it not true that you are a fatherless half-breed who has a demon?" That's a bit aggressive, huh? Look at Jesus' response. Verse 49, "Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge." So this thing just got combative. There are so many people who want to paint Jesus as meek and weak with feathered hair. But here's what He just said, "No, I don't have a demon. Not only that, but I'm not even seeking My own glory. God is seeking My glory, not Me. And just for the record, He judges all men, so keep flapping your mouth. You want to mouth off? You want to accuse Me of these things? Just keep in mind, My Father, who is at work glorifying Me, will judge you." It just gets more hostile. Now look at what happens because it's this next verse that I think is so spectacular. Verse 51, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'" First of all, they just changed the wording, didn't they? Jesus said "see." He didn't say "taste." They changed it to "taste," but Jesus does not correct them. It's like He'll give them that. Verse 53, "Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word." So this keeps getting elevated. Look at what He says next, because verse 56 is where we'll hang our hat. "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad. So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Now this is not an argument for pre-existence. This is not an argument on the eternity of Christ. He's not saying, "I have always been." He could have said, "Before Abraham was, I was." That would be an argument on eternity. He chose instead to say, "Before Abraham was, I AM." That's the Old Testament word for God, Yahweh. Jesus just said, "Do you know why you're not going to see death? Because I'm God. I'm able to accomplish what I promise."

So now we have some practicalities. What does it mean then to not see or taste death? I have to speculate here. The only way I can make this text make sense in regards to how life and death function is that somehow in those moments before your eyes close unto death, someone, something, Jesus, the Spirit, an angel comes and gets you so that you actually never see death. So in those moments right before death, Jesus, an angel or somebody shows up and goes,

"Let's get out of here." And you don't see it, you don't taste it and you don't experience it. You get rescued from it. There are a couple of reasons I land there. I have been in the room about five times now when someone has passed. To the man and woman who believed in Christ, there was a smile, a breath and they were gone. So I believe that that's what happens. I know that that's speculative, and if it goes down another way, it goes down another way. But that's what I think is happening. I can't think of any other way we don't see or taste death. I was teaching in San Jose on Friday, which was awesome because it was 60°F and sunny. So we were trying to fly back in, and they delayed our flight because both of the navigation computers had crashed, which you always love to hear while you're sitting out there. "We're going to see if we can make this plane work." So they came back in, rebooted the navigation computers and they thought it would be fine. So we all get on board. About an hour and a half into the flight, the seat belt light came on and we started smelling smoke. Everybody is just looking at each other, and everybody knows, "That's smoke." If you've ever watched a television show on how an airplane crashes, it always begins with the pilots calling the tower and reporting smoke. I know I'm preaching this, and so I just start looking for a flight attendant I haven't seen before. I'm like, "Hey, get me out of here before the free fall. If what I'm preaching this weekend is correct, I'd rather not experience that five minute drop. Just come go, 'Follow me, sir' And we'll go on to glory, and then the plane can drop." So in the end, the captain comes on and is just like, "I know some of you are smelling smoke. Don't panic. There's a forest fire about fifty miles from here, and we're sucking up some of those fumes. That's what you're smelling. We're absolutely fine. The computers are working great." He was great and gracious to explain all that to us, because people were starting to order drinks. That's what I think happens in that moment.

Now here's the question that I think we have to answer. Jesus says, "Those who keep My word will not see/taste death." What is the word that we must keep if we are not to see/taste death? Here's what we know. That can't be a list of commands. Because we cannot, in obedience to commands, make ourselves righteous enough to climb the chasm. So it can't be a list of commands. I can't be, "Let me obey the Ten Commandments, and I don't get to see/taste death." That's not what is happening here. So let me try to explain what is. Flip over to John 1. What is the word that we must keep in order for us to not see/taste death? John 1, starting in verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." So remember Hebrews 2. Jesus, the Word, puts on flesh and blood like His children in order to destroy death through death, that we might not be slaves any longer. Verse 4 again, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Now look down at verse 12, because Hebrews 2 talked about us being children. "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Do you see what's happening here? Who are those who don't see/taste death? Who is it that doesn't experience the weight and darkness of death? Those who believe in, cling to and trust the Son. And just so you can feel the full weight of what is happening here, He's saying, "Those who trust My word will not see/taste death." The insinuation is that those who do not heed that word, the word that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who reconciles us to God, the word that you are righteous by Christ's righteousness alone, the word that you are saved because of Christ's cross and His wrathabsorbing work on the cross for you, will see/ taste death. So who is it who doesn't taste/see death? Those who have put their trust in Him. Who is it who gets yanked out that moment before? Those who have put their trust in the Word, those who trust in, believe in and put their hope in Jesus Christ. So as breathing becomes laborious and before things begin to fade, they simply get brighter, brighter and brighter into a greater reality than the one we're in now. But that's next week.

I know there are some of you in here who have experienced serious loss recently or maybe a while back that is still very fresh on your soul. My hope is that you would be encouraged by these things today. But really in regards to how I was prepping and praying, my heart continually went out for the group of men and women in here who are so mortified by the idea of death that you try to control everything around you. You manipulate, control and live in such fear of death

and life that you're paralyzed to the joy of the gift of life that you've been given by God. So my hope in teaching through some of this today was to set some of you free from that slavery and that fear. Some of you are just so mortified about the fact that you're going to die that you will manipulate every scenario imaginable and hardly venture out into the world. You don't want to fly anywhere, you're nervous about driving and you know that you're going to find out at any moment that you have cancer or somebody in your family has cancer. You just know that's coming at any moment. I have two things to tell you. I don't know that you'll like the first one. One, part of that is true. It could very well come for you. But the lenses by which we see those things is this. Nothing comes into our life that doesn't pass through the hands of God, and all the days that we have are clearly marked out. You will not leave this place early, and you will not stay here late. My hope is that would free you up to live. I'm not trying to carpe diem you here. I'm just trying to free you up to dare big, beautiful things for the kingdom of God. I'm trying to free you up to labor valiantly till your days are up. I want you to be free, when your days are up, when your toil is done, to move on to what is next in the peace and assurance of God's love for you in Christ. If you live in fear, you need to repent. You need to repent, because what you're saying is essence is that you think you're smarter than God and you think you know better how life should function than God does. Now you would never say that with your mouth, but you're saying it with your life, you're saying it with your heart, aren't you? Meditate on some of these things. Read the Scriptures on some of these things. Wrestle the untruth from your heart with the truth of God's Word so you might be free, unencumbered and that you might enjoy what was purchased so beautifully for you on the cross.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. It is no accident that they are here today. You are preparing some, You are ministering to others and You are still healing others. So I thank You for these truths. I thank You for the confidence that we can walk in as Your children. I thank You for the confidence that we can walk in when it comes to our children and our spouses. I thank You for the freedom You have granted to us if we'll simply believe. I thank You that there will be a day that death is mocked openly, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15. There will be a day that we all can say, 'Where is your sting? Where is your victory, O death?' There is this day coming where death is not an enemy or opponent at all, but it simply ceases to be. So in the time being, thank You and praise You that we will not see it nor taste it. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."