

# The Life of Abraham - Part 10

by W.F. Anderson

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*The sermon explores Abraham's life as a reflection of our own journeys as pilgrims, emphasizing the importance of mourning and the hope of eternal life.*

**Scripture:** Malachi 4:5

**Topics:** "Intertestamental Period", "Resurrection Hope"

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## Description

In this sermon, Dr. Ironside discusses the 'Four Hundred Silent Years,' which refers to the intertestamental period between the Old and New Testaments. He explains that during this time, there was a significant cultural and religious shift that Jesus had to navigate when he began his ministry. The sermon provides a brief account of the developments and changes that occurred during those four hundred years, helping to understand the context in which Jesus lived and preached. The sermon also emphasizes the hope and assurance that Christians have in the resurrection and the victory over death that Jesus achieved.

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## Transcript

I'm glad that she'd be with me this year. It's made such a difference, and not only for you, but for her. She needed to get away, and it's been a good week for her.

I can tell the difference, and I'm so glad that you had both of us during this week. And we're grateful to all those who made the week possible. All of you who treated us like Thanksgiving turkeys just before Thanksgiving.

Thanks to you. But it was really, you're just too much, just too much. And thanks for all the staff, too.

I don't know how we visitors would get along without those dear ladies who take care of the rooms, and those excellent meals that we have, the folks who work back in the kitchen, the dining room, those who take care of the ground. And we owe you a great deal. I don't know what kind of a conference we would have if nobody worked in the kitchen, and nobody took care of the rooms.

Wouldn't matter what preacher you had, would it? Wouldn't even matter if his wife was with him. Wouldn't help a bit. So, we've had a good week.

We want to thank all of you for this week together. It's difficult for me to determine just what kind of books you're interested in. The books I'm interested in, especially those a little more expensive, you won't buy.

So, I don't know what to do. But let me mention three paperbacks. Maybe I can interest you in one of those.

The whole area of the occult has been in the forefront of the thinking and practice of a good number of people for several years. One of the clearest and most helpful books that I found is J. Stafford Wright's Christianity and the Occult. He wrote a book, some of the material in this book was in a book that he wrote several years ago called Man in the Process of Time, that I found to be exceedingly helpful in a biblical view of man, and of the potential of man, particularly his mind.

And this is a helpful book in the area of the occult. Christianity and the Occult by J. Stafford Wright. And if you know somebody that could use that, if you're not interested in it yourself, it would be a very helpful book to give away.

One of the books coming out in the whole area of the church, not quite as far out and in fact far from left field as some that I've read, is Gary Ingrig's Life in His Body, and its attempt to have a fresh look at the biblical principles in which so many of us believe, but have difficulty practicing. You know, it's one thing to profess these principles, it's another thing to see how they ought to be put into practice in the local church. And I think Gary Ingrig helps us look at those principles and see how we can put them into practice in our local assemblies.

And then here is one of them, dear Dr. Ironside's book, very helpful little book, The 400 Silent Years, the Intertestamental Period, the bridge between our Old and New Testament. We come to a whole new culture and so much that's new when you open the pages of Matthew that doesn't correspond with what was going on when you close the pages of Malachi. What in the world happened in those 400 years? And here is a very simple, brief account of what was going on, what developed in those 400 years, so you understand a great deal that our Lord had to face in the culture and religion of his own day as he began his public ministry.

Very helpful in tying the two Testaments together, particularly in understanding what was going on in the Gospels. The 400 Silent Years by Harry Ironside. I think you'll get real help from him.

Now let's turn again tonight to the book of Genesis and tonight, chapter 23. We've been trying to get some help from the life of Abraham, just to see him as a human being under the call of God, going through various experiences, his faith developing, being tested, his failures, and trying to relate that to our own Christian lives as believers in Jesus Christ. 23rd chapter of Genesis.

Sarah lived 127 years. These were the years of the life of Sarah. Sarah died at Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan.

And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, I am a stranger and a sojourner among you. Give me property among you for a burying place that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

The Hittites answered Abraham, Hear us, my Lord. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our sepulchres.

None of us will withhold from you his sepulchre or hinder you from burying your dead. Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. And he said to them, If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave

of Machpelah, which he owns.

It is at the end of his field. For the full price, let him give it to me in your presence as a possession for a burying place. Let's drop down to verse 17.

Now, the transaction is closed and Abraham is allowed to purchase this part of the field with a cave in it to use as a burying site. So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Marmaray, the field with the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field throughout its whole area was made over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites before all who went in at the gate of his city. After this, Abraham buried Sarah, his wife, in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Marmaray, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan.

The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as a possession for a burying place by the Hittites. In chapter 23, Abraham is seen as a pilgrim and a mourner. And all of us, of course, as Abraham was, are pilgrims.

Our journey as his began with the call of God, and short of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, our journey as his would eventually, as Sarah's did, will end with death. And we too are pilgrims. We have no continuing city.

We are not here except for a short period of time, and all of us who know our Lord Jesus Christ have learned that our home is elsewhere, from this particular country or from this world at all. But first of all, Abraham was a pilgrim, and he describes himself as that. He talks about himself in two terms, a pilgrim, a stranger, and a sojourner, as this translation has it.

And the idea briefly is this. Not only is the man on a journey, but he is a temporary dweller in the country through which he is passing. And in the culture of Abraham's day, a man in that category was not allowed to own any land.

The people of the land who already possessed it would be very reluctant to sell him any, and as you read through this transaction between Abraham and the people living there, it's obvious that they would rather not sell him any piece of land. That would give this powerful prince a foothold in their community, and that's the last thing they want. Finally, they will sell him a burial point, but they do not want this man possessing any of the land.

He does not belong to their clan, their tribe, their nation. This is their land. They do not want a foreigner possessing any of it.

That's the position of this stranger and sojourner. As you come over to the books of the law, God has special care for the sojourner in Israel. Largely in the culture of the Near East, the sojourner would be defenseless, and God warns the Israelites there not to take advantage of the sojourner, the man who doesn't own any of that land.

He does not belong to the nation of Israel. He is living temporarily there in a residence, but he owns not one square foot of their territory. And they are not to take advantage of him.

He can have a place to live, but he cannot own the land on which the tent is pitched or the house is built. And that's Abraham's confession about himself. The man to whom God had promised the whole land to him and to his descendants owns not one square inch of it.

He is a pilgrim. He is a stranger and a sojourner in that land of promise. And so are we, aren't we? We're on a journey.

And wherever we live here, it's only temporary. This really isn't our home. The writer of the Hebrews builds on that about the patriarchs.

Abraham was looking for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. All of them were there temporarily without owning very much of it. And we are like that.

Sometimes because of the solidity of the physical world around us, and we are so dependent upon our sense perceptions, this world seems far more real than that other world. It's hard for us to realize that our world is mortal in one sense, and we are immortal. It is not our world that's immortal.

It's not our country. It's not our civilization. The day is going to come when there will be no United States of America.

The day will never come when there is no us. We are going to live forever. Our country, our civilization, our whole world, as we know it, will be totally gone, and we shall live forever.

It's not really that we are temporary. That's true. But this whole world is temporary, and we are here for only a short time.

We are pilgrims and strangers. We don't belong here. Ever since the call of God, we have belonged somewhere else.

C.S. Lewis, in some of his writings, talks about those great longings, unnamed longings that human beings have that somehow are never fulfilled. Did you ever notice that the expectation of a pleasure is usually greater than the fulfillment of it? That somehow the fulfillment of it never really lives up to the expectation, no matter what it is. The delight of going home, once you have been there a day or two, somehow all that you were expecting isn't there.

And the longer you live, the more you discover that there isn't anything in this life that lives up to your expectations. And C.S. Lewis calls that the longing for Eden, when man was at home with God, and nothing will ever satisfy us until we are there again. It's the longing for that old home of Eden, and we are not going to be satisfied until we are in God's paradise.

Here we are pilgrims and strangers. And Peter tells us, therefore, that the way we live should be different, not in the superficial and the external primarily, but fundamentally different, not in the things that are easy to handle, and those are the externals and the physical things, but in the things that are much more difficult to handle. In our attitudes, and in our goals, and in our value structures, we are to live as pilgrims and strangers.

I think as I read the scriptures, the outstanding difference, moral difference, not the only one of course, but the outstanding moral difference between the Christian and the non-Christian world around him, is in the word love. A non-Christian society can be moved to great acts of charity when tragedy occurs. They can give generously, spontaneously, to meet a tragedy.

That's the way the Christian lives every day. Not just when a tragedy arises, he has learned to give of himself to meet the needs of other people. When Christmas passes, our non-Christian society reverts to

its normal selfishness.

Somehow at Christmastime there is an air of goodwill, and people are courteous, and generous, and considerate of others, at least to some degree. But once Christmas Day has happened, the normal pattern of behavior resumes. The Christian lives as though it is Christmas every day.

That's the great moral difference. He does not live to get, he lives to give, as his Lord did. So we are pilgrims and strangers as Abram was.

We're just on our way through, and one day if our Lord does not come, our journey will end. Well of course that's obvious in the idea of being a pilgrim. If you're going to be a pilgrim, you have to start a journey, and if you start it, you have to end it.

It shouldn't be anything that takes us by surprise, and so the second way we see Abram in chapter 23 of Genesis is as a mourner. And we come across the death of Sarah, and Abraham's response to the death of Sarah. Death of course is natural now to our human race, but not native to it.

Death is something that has come in because of sin. God did not create a dying Adam, and the only perfect human being, outside of our Lord Jesus, the only perfect human being, did not have the force of death working in him. But now death is universal because sin is universal.

And death now is natural to all of us, because sin is natural to all of us. But one of the reasons I want to talk about this is, as most of us are aware, and we have become increasingly aware when it's been drawn to our attention in the last few years, we talk about this area of existence that comes to all of us with a great deal of difficulty because we have grown up in what is largely a death-denying culture. Sociologists have contrasted our culture with the culture of the Victorian age in our western world.

The Victorian age was a sex-denying age, and an age that was obsessed with death. Our society is just the reverse. It's a death-denying age, and it's obsessed with sex.

But we have grown up in a death-denying culture. There are all sorts of evidences of it, and I hate to keep bringing the changes on this particular area, but the whole youth emphasis in our country is one of the evidences of our death-denial. We magnify youth.

We worship youth. And I think one of the reasons for it is because we're afraid of the whole subject of death, and if you keep looking and thinking about young people, you don't have to look and think of death. And so we are a culture that worships youth.

Maybe I have asked you before, I don't know, but could you imagine a Miss America contest for single women who are 80 years and older? Who would attend? Who would enter? We worship youth because we are afraid of death. If you look at our advertisements, whether they are in newspapers, magazines, on TV, particularly the slick magazines, people are always young, handsome, healthy, and have everything of a good life. The only middle-aged and older people you see in ads are those who are using Grecian formula or taking Geritol.

But we don't feature old people. We're afraid to look at them. We don't use them in our ads because we are part of a death-denying culture.

One of the second evidences of that in our own culture, and we're coming to Abraham, don't get excited, we're coming to Abraham. One of the second evidences of that is our willingness to isolate the old people from the stream of society. And I'm not talking about the choices you have made.

I am talking about the desire on the part of the rest of us to make sure that you get into some sort of a retirement community. And there isn't any question that it's part of our society that we want that. Numerous reasons for it.

We are a materialistic society, and you folks are retired, and you can no longer produce commercially. You don't contribute to the gross national product, and therefore in the thinking of our society you're useless. A person in our society has value only by what he can produce materially.

And what a contrast to biblical society, where aged people were valued for their wisdom. In biblical society, they thought it was far more important to learn how to live for God, and how to order one's life so that it had God's blessing on it. And the older people who had learned that by experience were the valued people in the community.

They were the ones who had the secret to it. They had the key. But in our society, the keys turn the machine.

And when you're no longer turning the machine, you're no longer valuable. And so it's our desire to shunt the old people aside. There are other evidences of it.

We like people to die in hospitals if at all possible. There isn't any question there are times when that is absolutely necessary. But I rather think there are many times when it isn't necessary.

Maybe I told you my experience as a boy. A dear old lady who showed up at our door with her suitcase one day. She had lived in our community and then moved away.

She and her husband for a short time. And she showed up at our door one morning, taxicab standing out at the curb. And I was just getting ready to go off to school.

And she announced that she'd come to stay with us. We only had two bedrooms, and there were four of us there. But she got one of those bedrooms.

But we discovered in a few days that she'd come to our house to die. She didn't want to die in the place where they had moved. She wanted to die in our house.

And that's where she died. In many ways I'm glad of that. Because as a boy in grade school, I came face to face with death in our own house.

And it was something because it was a loved old woman in whose home as a boy I had been welcomed. Her husband had baptized me, and I had sat at their table many times. And she was a loved old woman.

And I'm glad she came to our house to die. If at all possible, that's where I want to die, surrounded by loved ones, people who know me and love me, not surrounded by strangers. But in our society, we prefer the clinical approach where people medically are prepared to handle the whole thing.

And so we prefer, even in instances where it is not necessary, we prefer that people die in hospitals rather than at home. And by the way, I've already given strict orders that my funeral is to be in the chapel. I've got

far more connections there than I do with a funeral home.

I don't care how much that funeral director yells and screams. I want the funeral in the chapel. That's my spiritual home.

I've got no spiritual home at his place, but this is my spiritual home, and that's where I want it. But there are other evidences, our funeral customs, for instance, that have changed even in my own lifetime. And of course, as you know, I'm a very young man.

But even in my lifetime, the funeral customs have changed so drastically. We are doing everything we can to make sure that we really don't realize someone is dead. And all of this is part of our death-denying culture, and we live in a society that's just like that.

There are all sorts of reasons for that, but there's probably no profit tonight in talking about those reasons. So I want to come to Abraham himself. And I want to look first at the sorrow of Abraham, because I think sometimes we Christians become death-denying in our own approach to the whole subject.

There are two terms that are used of Abraham's sorrow here. One is expressive of beating the breast and the outward wailing of an individual who is in deep sorrow. Let me suggest that it's both natural and necessary that that expression be given.

It is the expression of a sense of great loss. That, by the way, is the price we pay for being able to love. If we were not able to love, we would not miss each other.

But our sorrow is not unchristian. It is the price we pay, and I hope gladly pay, for the ability to love. And Abraham bewailed Sarah, because he missed her, and he felt very keenly the loss.

I remember when our Lord Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus, he did not say, praise God. He wept. And there's language in that 11th chapter of John that speaks of our Lord's deep anger, stirring deeply within him at what sin had done to his creation, and the great sorrow that it had brought to those whom he loved.

After all, this is the God who created Adam perfect. And if I didn't suggest it last year, and if I haven't suggested it this year, please get hold of C.S. Lewis's book, *The Problem of Pain*. And while, again, one may not agree with everything he writes, in one of those chapters he has a magnificent description of what Adam must have been like.

Not physically, but spiritually and morally. What Adam must have been like when he came from the hand of his Creator. And as you read what man must have been like, based on what the Scripture says about what God is making us, and about the instructions and the commands that God gives us, that a man who had never sinned would already be doing, as you read that magnificent creation, if you had seen him you're aware that you would have fallen down and worshipped him.

And now the Creator of Adam is standing at a tomb where the body of a descendant of Adam has been moldering for four days. And everything within him shakes in anger at what sin has done to his creation. And as he sees what it has done to the loved ones, he weeps.

And it's not because of its shortness that that verse is one of our favorites. It's because of its meaning, Jesus wept. And he still does.

Touched with our infirmities, he still does. And so may we. We may have been taught as we grew up, particularly us men, that it's unmanly to do that.

It isn't. None of our Lord wept. None of Abraham mourned the loss of Sarah.

Sometimes we are taught that as Christians. The Christian is always victorious. Therefore that means somehow that you don't sorrow.

Which of course isn't true. And I remember hearing Joe Bailey, who buried three sons, lecturing on the whole subject of the Christian and a Christian view of death. And he told the incident of having lectured on that subject in a church.

And a well-meaning lady came to him afterwards and said, Oh, Mr. Bailey, my husband died six months ago and it's been victory all the way. And Joe said his response was, Well, when I die, I hope my wife misses me a little bit. Any emotion that is natural and not perverted is good.

And it is right for the Christian to mourn and to weep at the loss of a loved one. He does not mourn as those who have no hope, but he does mourn as Abraham did. To think of it in another way, what help can we be to those who are in that condition? Let me make a few suggestions.

I know I'm ranging wide a field from Abraham, but that's all right. I'm throwing all this in free. What help can we be to people in that condition? I'd like to make a few suggestions anyhow.

Please don't leave them alone. I know we're all embarrassed. We all feel, but what can I do? Well, you're not supposed to do anything.

You're not supposed to have the answers to those problems. You're not going there as a person with the answers. Who has the answers to that problem? None but our victorious Lord, and that won't be until his second advent.

We do not go to see our friends in that position as having answers. We go as people who love them, not as people who have the answers. Let me make another suggestion that when you go, you go as a peer of the powerless.

I mean, it was in Dr. Kubler-Ross's book on death and dying that she talked about the first experiences in the University of Chicago hospital, when she and other doctors went around to talk to people who were terminally ill. Those people clammed up. They would not talk.

And these doctors were frustrated to discover that these same patients were pouring out their hearts to a black cleaning woman who came around with a mop every day in their room. And Dr. Kubler-Ross began to think, why is that? Why would these patients not talk to us, and they'll pour their hearts out to this black cleaning woman? And the reason was quite simple. Many of those people in the University of Chicago hospital were great corporation people, presidents and executives who were used to having maybe thousands of people under their command, directing the fortunes of millions of dollars.

And now they lay helpless in a bed, not able to function normally, not able even to go to the bathroom by themselves, dependent on someone else for everything and all their dignity and power stripped from them. They were now totally powerless. And the only person in that hospital that approached their condition was a black orderly.

She too was powerless. And there was a kinship between the two of them. And out of that kinship was born trust.

And they felt she would understand because she too in our society was a powerless individual. Let me suggest you go to visit your friends that way. Not as someone with the answers, but as a peer of the powerless, without the answers, but one who is willing to listen.

Second suggestion I'd like to make is that you do listen. Again, don't give answers. What people want are not answers.

As someone has said, the world is dying of cold more than of the dark. And what they want is the warmth of love rather than the light of answers. So we're not going with answers.

We're going to listen. In Joe Bailey's book, *The View from a Hearse*, he tells the time when the death of one of his three sons who died, a pastor whom he knew very well came to visit him, sat with him for half an hour, read various scriptures, gave all sorts of reasons why God had permitted this and what God was going to do through it. And Joe, as honest as he is in his writings, said, all the while I was wishing he would leave.

Another friend came, sat with him, said nothing, laid a hand on his shoulder, prayed and left. Joe said, I wish he'd stayed all night. We don't go with answers.

We go to listen and to love for people like that. I would suggest that in listening, you encourage, you allow. I don't mean to push, but that you allow that individual's honest reaction.

If that is suppressed, there are going to be psychological problems down the road. And you allow the honest reaction. I remember my initial reaction at the death of my father was anger.

I was very, very angry. And I remember stripping the get well cards off the screen around his bed and hurling them into the wastebasket. And the frightened nurse came to me and said, shall I call a minister? And I said, no, I am a minister.

And that really shocked her. Of course I would get over it. But it's the way I felt at the moment.

And allow your friends the honesty of their own feelings. Far better that and that they work their way through them than that you force them to keep them quiet. And I'm going to suggest another thing.

Again, it's not part of our culture. It may be a little more than it used to be. And maybe in some of our Christian circles, it's more than it used to be.

And that is that you touch people. Honestly, of course. I think I learned the value of that a number of years ago, visiting in a hospital where a man was in an oxygen tent and not expected to get well.

And I wasn't sure he could hear me at all. A man whom I had known for quite some time. And just before I left, I wanted to pray with him.

And I reached up under that oxygen tent and grabbed his hand. And that other hand went over and grabbed mine like a vice. And there was something in that human touch, that communication between us that he wanted.

It bridged the gap. And very often just that touch of a hand, that human touch. Do you remember when our Lord Jesus healed the leper? In Mark's account, he reached out and touched him.

He didn't have to do that. A word would have been enough, but he reached out and touched him. But I will come back to Abraham before we're through here.

There was a natural sorrow of Abraham, which was good. And there was the burial. There was no death denial for Abraham.

He talked about my dead and wanting to bury my dead. There was the whole process of arranging for this burial site. There was no death denial.

He faced the whole reality of it. And in that culture, of course, burial occurred one day after death. And he faced the whole thing squarely.

There was no denying what had happened. And it's good for us that we are able to do the same thing. But since I don't want to go over time, where does that leave us as we face it ourselves? I want to get to that.

It is not a burial without hope. This particular burying ground for Abraham was a rallying point of hope in the fulfillment of God's promises. He buried Sarah there.

He was buried there. Jacob was buried there. Leah was buried there.

When Jacob died in Egypt, his sons carried his body back to the promised land, and he was buried there. And Joseph, before his death, made his brothers swear that when God delivered them out of Egypt, they would carry his bones and bury them in the land of promise. They were staking their claim, though dead, they were staking their claim to the fulfillment of God's promises.

To you and to your seed will I give this land. And that little burying ground was the seed plot for the whole land of Canaan. Now, when Paul talks about death and burial in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, he uses the figure of seed going into a ground.

And the farmer puts seed into the ground not to get rid of the seed, but because there's going to be a harvest. And Paul says of the bodies of Christians, it is sown, it is sown, it is sown. Why? Just to dispose of the body? No, because there's going to be a harvest.

And Abraham on the other side of Calvary in the empty tomb, is planting seed in that little burial plot in Canaan, because God had promised something to him and he took God at his word. And I said this morning, I thought Abraham's faith reached its peak in the offering of Isaac. I'm not sure.

Maybe it reached its peak in the burial of Sarah. Not back in Mesopotamia. Not back in the old site of Ur of the Chaldees.

Not in Haran. Those were not his homeland. This was his homeland, though he didn't own a square inch of it.

And in confidence in the promise of God, he buried Sarah in Canaan. And maybe after all, that was the height of his faith. And not the offering up of Isaac.

But to come back to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. We bury our Christian dead as seed in the ground, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. We do not say now, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? That is not written about our experience now.

Death and the grave have gained a victory now. But it's a temporary one. I do not understand how a person with a broken heart stands at the grave of a loved one and says, O grave, where is thy death? Where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The grave has won a victory.

That is not the way God made man, to moulder in the ground. Death has won a victory. But it's a temporary one.

Paul tells us that it's when our Lord Jesus Christ returns, then shall be brought to pass that saying, O death, where is thy victory? That's when it'll come to pass. Not now. But we bury our dead in the sure and certain hope of that victory.

That Jesus Christ will return, and the harvest time will have come, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. So we face death as real, and it does not mean that every Christian is going to have an easy death. There's no promise of that.

John Bunyan realized that when he wrote Pilgrim's Progress. There are all different experiences of different pilgrims across the river. But what he has promised us is resurrection, and his own is the guarantee of it.

Do you remember Corrie Ten Boone's statement? She has said it in some of her public meetings, that whenever she reads a novel or a book, she always reads the end to see how it's going to turn out. And then she can stand to go through the rest of it. But if she doesn't know how it's going to turn out, she gets all depressed over the problems that are in the middle of it.

But as she's reading through all the problems in the middle, and she knows how it's going to turn out, she can stand the problems in the middle. And she holds up her Bible and says, I've read the last chapter, and it turns out just fine. The book of the Revelation.

Sure. I remember again Joe Bailey saying that one day up in living outside of Chicago, near Elgin, bitter cold winter day in February, snow on the ground, below zero temperature, the mailman came. And he lives out in the country, and his mailbox was 100 yards down at the road.

And when he saw the mailman deposit the mail in the box, Joe forgot what he was doing and ran out of the house in his shirt sleeves, below zero. And he said as soon as he stepped out the door, that icy blast of an Illinois winter hit him. But he decided to keep on going.

And he got down to the mailbox and opened it, and right on the top was a Burpee seed catalog. You ever seen those? Sure. He said on the front cover was a gorgeous zinnia picture.

He said I could almost feel the texture of the leaves and the smell of the flower. And on the back was a picture of a nice big green luscious cucumber. He said I could feel the crunch of it as I bit into it.

And he says for one minute I forgot all about the cold, and I was standing in a summer garden smelling the flowers and tasting the cucumbers. And then all of a sudden the Illinois winter hit me again, and I ran back into the house. But for that minute I was in summertime.

And he held up his New Testament, and he said this is our seed catalog. And as you read of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his promises of our own resurrection, you're transported to the harvest, the summertime. And one day we shall not read about it.

We shall be there. We shall be there. And that's the way the Christian faces death.

Death is still a temporary victory of sin, but Christ won the decisive battle, and one day the war will be over, and we shall be with him. Abraham looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Let's pray.

Our Father, we rejoice in that hope. Our Lord Jesus Christ lives, and so shall we. His resurrection is the foretaste of our own, and we shall be with him forever.

Oh, for that we thank you, and we pray tonight that day by day we ourselves may live in the reality of that resurrection. We pray that this temporal world around us may lose its hold on us, and we may be genuine strangers and pilgrims on our way to another country. We pray that that hope may guard and keep us in the days and nights of our pilgrimage.

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Audio: [http://archive.org/download/SERMONINDEX\\_SID7984/SID7984.mp3](http://archive.org/download/SERMONINDEX_SID7984/SID7984.mp3)  
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