

## Death Is Certain...but God - Psalm 49 - Skip Heitzig

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Would you please turn in your Bibles to the book of Psalms? Psalm 49. Not a well-known Psalm, but after today, that will change, I hope, with us. Psalm 49. We're continuing the series called But God, as we'll see represented here in a moment.

There was an elderly man who was feeling his age and complaining. He said, I sure've gotten old. I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees, I've fought prostate cancer and diabetes, I'm half blind, I can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine take off. I take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts. I have bouts with dementia, I have poor circulation, I can hardly feel my hands and feet anymore. I can't remember if I'm 85 or 92. I've lost all my friends, but thank God, I still have my driver's license.

[LAUGHTER]

Uh-oh. Look out. You know? At some point, we all have to face our own mortality, that we're not going to live in these physical bodies on this planet forever. In fact, wouldn't you agree that the most basic thing about life is death? Psalm 49 addresses that. It's one of the most practical psalms in all of the Book of Psalms. And you could even title this Psalm, The Brevity of Life and the Certainty of Death. The Brevity of Life and the Certainty of Death. That is its theme.

Years ago, when Dr. Billy Graham was still alive, he was at a university. And a student asked him a question. Dr. Graham, what is the most surprising thing you have discovered about life? And he quickly quipped back, "its brevity." And all of us who are getting older have the experience that time seems to accelerate the older you get, right? You look back, where did that time go?

And even James in the New Testament said, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes." If you're around these parts in the Fall of the year, down in the valley, on cold mornings, when it's just a little bit moist-- that's really about all it is, a little bit moist-- you get a morning fog that settles in the valley. But stand around and wait 10 minutes because as soon as the sun comes out, that vapor quickly dissipates.

But God has a solution to that for us. And it's suggested here in this Psalm. Let's get a sneak peek by going to a couple of verses that we'll look at in just a little bit, verse 14. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them, the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave far from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me."

Just a little background on Psalms. Did you know Psalms is the longest book in scripture? That is, it has more chapters, 150 chapters, psalms, are written in this book. The longest chapter in the Bible is found in Psalms, Psalm 119. The shortest chapter in the Bible is also found in this book, Psalm 117. Only two verses.

But the Book of Psalms was used in ancient times in Israel as sort of like a song book, the hymn book for temple worship. To this day, Jews will sing or recite the psalms in their liturgy of worship throughout the year. And it was thus used in ancient times in the temple. But Psalm 49, in particular, gives us the basic reality of life. In fact, you could sum up the entire Psalm this way. We live precariously, we die certainly, we must plan accordingly. That sums up the entire message of Psalm 49.

Do you ever think about your own death? Most people don't. Most people get creeped out by it or somebody brings it up like a parent or grandparent, and somebody in the family goes, no, don't even talk about that, I don't want to discuss it. That's been the trend. In fact, a CBS poll said that most Americans, 54%, don't spend much time or any time thinking, thinking, about their own death. But that number used to be much higher. There is a growing trend-- and it's a good trend-- where people are saying, you know? We should at least think and talk about the inevitable. That trend, as I said, is growing, where people are confronting death in more than just abstract terms.

So, for example, there is a phenomenon called death dinners. Oh, boy. Come to my house for a death dinner. Yeah, we're going to sit around and eat, we're going to talk about dying. But they have become popular. People gather to talk about the inevitability of the end of their life.

Then, there is something called death salons, where you sit around and talk over death, dying, end of life issues, over craft beer. I can only imagine that conversation gets more interesting as the night goes on.

Then there are a little over 100 cities in America that have death cafes, same principle, where you sit around over tea, coffee, cookies, something sweet, to talk about a sour subject. And then I discovered a YouTube series on social-- not on social media, on YouTube-- called Ask a Mortician. And it's interesting. It's this young gal, who is a mortician, professionally trained, that's what she does for a living. And she brings up these unsavory topics and talks about them in a series of videos called Ask a Mortician. And her idea is to help people accept their own mortality.

So it's becoming more popular. I think it's good to think about death. I think it's good to talk about death, but it's even better to prepare for death. To get ready for it. Some years ago, I buried a dear lady from this congregation. She was struck by a disease that took her very quickly. I had talked to her and her family. I prayed with her, she went into the hospital, she deteriorated rapidly. And I was asked to come by the family to her room because they said she's not going to be around much longer, would you just come in one last time and pray for her?

So I came in. It was in the night. The room was dark. She was lying down quietly in repose. The family was gathered around, and I anticipated a very solemn affair. I walked in the room. Her husband whispered in her ear that I had come. As soon as she heard that I was in the room, she opened her eyes, sat up in bed, raised her arm to heaven, and she said, I'm ready to go. And I left that room thinking, I want to die like that. It was inspiring to me.

So let's look at this Psalm a little more carefully. And let me give you what are some bottom line realities about life and death and about being prepared for it. First of all, life is unstable. Life is unstable. Look at verse 1. Hear this. "All peoples, give here all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor, together. My mouth shall speak wisdom and the meditation of my heart shall give understanding. I will incline my ear to a proverb. I will disclose my dark saying on a harp." So think of a musician picking up the instrument and he says, I'm going to disclose a riddle, I'm going to talk about an unsavory topic, and I'm going to set it to music. That's the idea of this.

Verse 5. "Why should I fear in the days of evil when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?" Now, in those five verses that we just read there's some language used. We could easily skip over it, but we should notice it. For example, in verse 1, notice the contrast between high and low, speaking of one's status in life. Also, the words rich and poor. You know what that is. In verse 5, he mentions days of evil, bad days, where iniquity is at my heels.

So this poetic Psalm points to life's instability and uncertainty in talking about these common experiences. Somebody might be high, that is, powerful, somebody might be low, that is, not so influential, in fact, even beggarly. One might be rich one might be poor. And then, we all have good days and we all have bad days, what the Psalmist call the evil days. And then, some days even feel like you're being chased and you can barely keep up. That would be summed up by the phrase, "iniquity is at my heels." You just feel like you can't get ahead of it.

It's funny. Malcolm Muggeridge once said, I have one foot in heaven and one foot on Earth, and the foot on Earth is on a banana peel. It's very slippery around here. And it's this kind of instability in life that really bummed out Solomon. When he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, he looked around, he observed life, and he used the words vain, vanity. It's all emptiness. And in fact, it turned him into a fatalist.

In Ecclesiastes Chapter 6, verse 12, Solomon writes "For who knows what is good for a man in life, all the days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow. Who can tell a man what's going to happen after him under the sun?" You don't want that guy as your counselor. But he's discovered the truth of this Psalm, life is unstable.

Now, in the New Testament-- we're dealing with the old-- but in the New Testament, there are three different Greek words that are used that are all translated into one English word, "life." It's always fascinated me that Greek can be so detailed and English is sort of so sparse. So we call life-- we use that term, but in Greek, there were three different experiences all translated in English "life."

The first two are unstable, the third is stable. Let me explain. The first word, the most basic word in Greek for the word life is the word "bios." We might see it and spell it or pronounce it "bi-as" it's where we get our word "biology" from. It is physical life, it's life on the external plane, the physical plane only. It's focusing on externals.

And this is where most people spend most of their time, energy, effort, attention, money, how do I look? How is my hair? I'm trying to lose weight. We spend most of our thought processes on bios, biological life. But I think you'll agree that physical life is very unstable, why? Because a sudden illness can happen. A virus, a bug, a test, a single diagnosis from a physician and everything changes. Or an auto accident and everything changes.

I had a friend once, part of our flock, young, healthy, hardworking. But then, one day he didn't feel good. He went to the doctor. The doctor announced to him he had an advanced stage of brain cancer. He died very quickly thereafter, leaving a wife, children, very difficult time. To compound that, that widow, several months later was

in an auto accident and she died. It was like sorrow upon sorrow because of the instability of physical life.

There's a second word the Greek New Testament uses, translated in English "life" and it's the word "psyche." "Psyche" is where we get the word "psyche" or "psychology" or "psychological," it means your inward life, your personality, how you process thoughts. It speaks of the inner person and what you think. But life is also unstable because you can have peace one day and be filled with anxiety the next day. You can be happy one day, sad the next. And many people are alive physically, but they are tormented mentally. They have absolutely no peace of mind.

So those are two types of life that are unstable. There is a third type, illustrated by a third word, and that is stable. It is the word "zoe." "Zoe" is the word for "life" in Greek, but it is usually translated, "eternal life" or "everlasting life." It's life on a spiritual plane.

It is a theological term that shows up 143 times in the New Testament. It describes a quality-- not just a quantity of life, but quality of life. That is, it's not speaking about life in the then and there, far in the future, it's about life in the here and now that will follow you into the future. Jesus said, "Whoever hears my word and believes has--" not will have, has right now-- present tense, has-- "--everlasting life."

Now, that new life comes from the new birth. Jesus said you must be born again. And when you are born again, and you're not just living biological or psychological, but spiritual life, now you have a sense of stability. Other than that, life is unstable.

Second, bottom line reality about life and death this Psalm uncovers, not only is life unstable, but death is universal. We already read this, but look in verse 1 again, and notice how the Psalm kind of cuts across all different categories of geography. Hear this. All peoples. Not just my people, not just my Jewish people, not just my neighbors in Jerusalem. He's addressing a message to all people. "Give here all inhabitants of the world, both high and low, rich and poor" together. So it crosses all social strata, as well as geographical areas. He has a message for everyone.

And what is that message? Simple. We're all going to die. That's the message. We're all going to die. No one gets out of this alive, and it's time we ought to think that through. That death is the great leveler for all of us. Verse 6. Those who trust in their wealth, materialism, and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their souls is costly. And it shall cease forever that he should continue to live eternally and not see the pit. For he sees wise men die likewise the fool, and the senseless person perish and they leave their wealth to others.

Now, you're reading this and may be thinking, this guy is like a bummer of a worship leader. If this is the song he's singing that day in the temple, if this is a musician setting this to a tune, this guy's fatalistic. But he's not fatalistic, he's realistic. He's realistic. Hebrews 9:27. "It is appointed to every man once to die, and after this, the judgment." Did you know that death is mentioned 394 times? 394 times. You can't escape. It's mentioned that many times in the Scriptures.

One of the most famous-- you all know this if you're as old as I am, you remember a song by the Byrds that was based on Ecclesiastes 3. To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven, a time to be born and a time to die. [SINGING] "A time to be born" I won't-- I'll spare you. But it comes to my mind, I think of that.

Those who are born will all die. Now, those are realities that are happening simultaneously. We know this to be true. 4.3 people are born into our world every second. Two people die every second. So more than twice are being born onto the Earth than are leaving the Earth. What that means is, every hour, 6,316 people die. In the next hour, over 6,000 people will die on Earth. All of that to say the simple reality of this Psalm, death is a part of life.

And I'll get very graphic. One day, your home will be six feet under some plot of ground, as will mine be. So you can stay healthy until then, you can run, you can take vitamins you can pump iron you can count your calories, you can stretch your face past your ear lobes, but you're going to lose. One day, you will keep an appointment with death. A Washington DC undertaker signs all of his correspondence, "eventually yours."

Now, verse 7, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him." Go down to verse 11, we didn't finish that up. Their thought-- that is, these secular-minded unbelievers who have no thought for God, their thought is that their homes, houses will last forever. Their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names. Isn't it funny how town have names of people who started them as settlers years ago? The name still sticks.

But even us, we who-- I was going to say-- own or are making payments on properties, our name is written on the title. They call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless, man though in honor does not remain. He is like the beasts that perish. This is the way of those who are foolish. And of their posterity who approve their sayings.

So not even the wealthiest person with access to the world's best health care can escape death. People who tend to rely on wealth or status, or what they have in their family bank, to rely on that, it's an exercise in futility. Why? Because it says, you can't redeem yourself, you can't redeem anyone else. All the money in the world can't buy life. It always amazes me-- and I've noticed this is a trend-- I've noticed this in every generation, that the wealthiest people on earth get to a point where they have so much stuff. And then, one day it dawns on them. I'm going to die.

And then they say, well, I have a lot of money, maybe I don't have to die. Maybe I could invest in something that figures out a way to beat death. I kid you not. It's usually a mental disease of the very, very wealthy. And I was reading an article that cited an article in the New Yorker magazine, the article is entitled The God Pill, Silicon Valley's quest for eternal life.

And the article talked about Google's co-founder. You know Google. Everybody Googles something. It's a search engine. Google co-founder, Sergey Brin, along with wealthy entertainers, musicians, movie stars, along with Nobel Prize winning scientists, are collaborating in the launch of medicine's grand challenge in health and longevity, distributing \$25 million to, as one doctor put it, end aging forever. Good luck.

But this anti-aging research campaign by the co-founder of Google. He was speaking to a group of people, and with a straight face, he said this-- and I quote-- "No. I'm not actually planning to die." Close quote. Now, I got to believe that one day, Sergey is going to be very disappointed. As he finds out he, too, has an appointment with death. It is appointed to every man once to die. And after this, the judgment.

That's the point. It's one of the points of Psalm 49, that every kind of carbon-based life will perish. Be it man or be it beast. What does that mean to us? Simply, we should be aware of it. And we should be ready for it. Because once you cross the threshold of what we call death, and your body stops and begins to decay, your soul lives on. The question is, where? And that ought to bother some people to answer that question.

I always loved that story that Paul Harvey used to tell when he was on the radio. He told so many good stories. But he told the story about a man who was driving his car, lost control, and went into a ditch, and hit sign, a pole, and it was a gas station sign off of the freeway. He was rendered unconscious, so he slumped over his wheel unconscious. He had hit a gas station sign, as I mentioned. He is unconscious, didn't see this happen, but it was a Shell gas station. And the S fell off upon impact.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

So when he wakes up and he looks up, he sees the sign, "Hell, open 24 hours." What is he thinking? Life is unstable, death is universal.

A third major truth of this Psalm is the best. And that is, redemption is possible. Back down to verse 14 where we started a moment ago. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave. Death shall feed on them." It's irony, really, because sheep graze, but here it says, "death will feed on them. The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave." No matter how good you look, you won't look good for long.

"Their beauty shall be consumed in the grave far from their dwelling, but God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me." Here's one of those great "but God" sentences in the Scripture. One of the best statements ever. One of the most faith-filled declarations ever to be found in scripture. "But God will redeem my soul from the grave."

I want you to compare something. Look at verse 7. I noticed this, after reading this several times, it took awhile. Verse 7. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother." Verse 15 but God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave." You get the message? You can't redeem anybody, you can't redeem yourself. The word "redeem" means to set free by paying a price, that's the language of redemption. You set a slave free by coughing up money and you buy that freedom for this slave. Usually, you own him to yourself, but you have purchased his freedom and you can let him go.

So the thought is, you can't pay a price to free anyone. God did pay the price to free everyone. God will redeem my soul. So you can't buy your way out of death. You can't buy your way into heaven, but Jesus, by his death, makes your death temporary. And with that, gives you a ticket to heaven. You can't get out of death. There's only

one way to escape death. And that is to believe in the Lord of life.

Now, there was a lawyer one time who was on his deathbed. And he said to his wife, honey, bring me a Bible. She was shocked because he never read the Bible. He never really cared much about biblical things. So she found a Bible, blew the dust off of it, gave it to him, he started looking at it. She came into the room some time later. He was just engrossed, poring over the scripture, turning the pages, page after page. And she finally said, what are you doing? And he said, I'm looking for loopholes.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHING]

There are none. The only loophole to death is to have a relationship with the one who holds the keys of life and death. That is, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[APPLAUSE]

Now, look at verse 15. Let's just drill down a little deeper into that. That's worth unpacking. "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me." I know this is poetic and lyrical, but it's also highly theological. It expresses faith in God for personal redemption and for eventual resurrection. So let's break it up into three different phrases.

The first phrase is, "but God will redeem my soul." In other words, God will provide payment for my soul. That's what redeem means. He'll provide payment for my soul. For us, when did that happen? At the cross. At the cross, payment was made. All of our sins laid on Jesus. The payment of blood, a perfect life, a sinless life, and atoning death. Payment was made on the cross. So he will redeem my soul. God will provide payment for my soul.

Second phrase. "He will redeem me from the power of the grave." So the thought, there, God's redemption includes giving me power over death. And then, look at that last phrase. "For he shall receive me." To me, that indicates that God plans to resurrect me at some point after death. He'll receive me.

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples? I'm going to prepare a place for you and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be with me. You'll be received. You'll be in His presence.

Same thought in Psalm 73. David writes, "you will guide me with your counsel and afterward receive me into glory." Now, some translations-- because receive means you'll just take me with you, or you'll just bring me, take me, invite me. They just translate this, "for he will take me" not "he will receive me" but "he will take me."

Now, that got my attention. I'm going to jog your memory. Because back in Genesis chapter 5, there's this guy named Enoch. And there's a short little verse, "for Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him." It's an odd rendering. It almost sounds like a guy who's walking around one day on this Earth, and then he's not. And God just took him from Earth to heaven. Turns out, that's exactly what it means. Because the commentary on that is found in the New Testament Book of Hebrews chapter 11, where the author says, "by faith, Enoch was taken away--" listen, "so that he did not see death." And he was not found because God had taken him.

All of these verses that I've mentioned speak about being in God's presence physically. Not just spiritually, not just, yeah, my spirit sort of floats. Yeah, your spirit will be with God. But at some point in the future, your physical body that decays in a grave will be raised from that grave, you will be transformed. And in actuality, in physicality, you will be in the physical, actual, literal presence of God. That's why Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you. Heaven is a real place.

In the Old Testament, Job-- this is one of the best scriptures ever in the Bible, ever, ever, ever. Job 19. Job was a person who lived during the patriarchal period, so that's one of the oldest texts ever. Job said this. I know that my Redeemer lives and He shall stand at last upon the Earth, and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh, I will see God. I will behold him with my eyes. My eyes, and not another.

So here's Job centuries before a Redeemer came. Centuries before the gospel was ever articulated, and he believes in physical resurrection. You know? Sometimes, somebody will say, well, I can't be there Tuesday, but I'm with you in spirit. What do they mean by that? I'm thinking good thoughts about you. I'm not with you there physically, but while you're doing that, I'm over here and I'm thinking of you. You're in my heart, you're in my mind. I'm with you in spirit.

But you will physically, at some point in the future, be resurrected to new life. What that means is, to shorten it up, death is not the final word. Jesus is the final word because He said I am the Resurrection and the life, whoever

believes in me will never die. Even experiencing physical death, it's like this momentary beep and it ushers you somewhere else. So life is unstable, death is universal, redemption is possible.

Now we want to bring this to a conclusion, which brings a fourth and kind of a final undergirding bottom line reality, and that is, confidence is conditional. Verse 16 begins the conclusion. Do not be afraid when one becomes rich. Now, it implies someone other than you, your neighbor. Somebody is getting a lot more than you're getting, thus, more powerful. Don't be afraid when somebody becomes rich. When the glory of his house is increased, for when he dies, he shall carry nothing away. His glory shall not descend after him.

Though while he lives, he blesses himself, for men will praise you when you do well for yourself, he shall go to the generation of his fathers. They shall never see light. A man who is in honor yet does not understand is like the beasts that perish. That's the conclusion of this worship song.

And the conclusion is simple, it's an obvious conclusion. Don't be jealous of people who have a lot, because people who have a lot, when they die, they leave a lot. Like the millionaire who died, and somebody said, how much did he leave? And somebody said, every cent. You can't take any of it with you.

I've always been fascinated at Egyptian mentality burying their pharaohs. You know? They buried them in gold sarcophagi with ornate furniture and jewels and all of the accouterments of this life in a tomb, because they actually believed that they're going to enjoy them in the afterlife. Again, a great disappointment.

Job put it this way. Naked, I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. That's what Paul was thinking when he wrote to Timothy, 1 Timothy, Chapter 6, verse 7, "for we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it."

I wonder if you've ever noticed, but on the back of a dollar bill, on the right hand side of the reverse or the back side of a dollar bill, is an eagle. Shows the wings of an eagle. Did you know that's biblical? Did you know that's prophetic? But listen how. This is Proverbs, 23. "Do not overwork to be rich because of your own understanding cease, for riches certainly make themselves wings and they fly away like an eagle toward heaven." There was a man who said, you know? People say, money talks, the only thing that's ever said to me is, bye.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHING]

So I just find it fascinating that the back of every dollar has this eagle that's like, see ya. You don't hold on to it long.

Now, Verse 20, the last verse, gives a call for us to understand something. A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish. What does he want us to understand? Simple. Trusting anyone or anything other than God is foolish. Trusting wealth, trusting materialism, trusting a person, trusting an institution, trusting anything other than God is foolish. You say, well, those are strong words. Foolish. Well, it's actually used in the Psalm, in verse 13. "This is the way of those who are foolish."

Remember Jesus told a story about a wealthy entrepreneur. He made so much money and he was very successful. And he went on a building spree, but he suddenly died, so this guy had all this stuff and goes, I don't know what I'm going to do with all my stuff, I guess I'll just build bigger warehouses to store my stuff because I've got so much stuff. So he did that and he said, now I'm at a place in life where I can say to my soul, soul, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Problem is, he died suddenly.

Jesus said, God said to him, you fool, this night, your soul will be required of you. Then, whose will those things be by which you have provided? And when you understand that, the temporary nature of life, the certainty of death, the spiritual reality of everlasting life. When you understand that, it gives you a confidence because you have stability. And that stability breeds real confidence. And confidence is conditional. Not everybody has it. The believer has it, why? Because death isn't the end of the road, it's the bend of the road. It's just a bend in the road. It's a portal that's leading you somewhere else. It's the doorway to life. It's just a little blip on the radar screen.

One author said it this way. Only on this side of the curtain is death our enemy. Just beyond the curtain, the monster turns out to be our friend. The label death is still on the bottle, but the contents are eternal life. Death is our friend because it reminds us that heaven is near. How near? It's as near as a heartbeat, as near as an auto accident, as near as a stray bullet, as near as a plane crash. If our eyes could see the spiritual world, we might find that we are already at its gates.

And I think it's actually safe to say that. In a room of a group this size, some of us are at the gates, some of us

won't be here in a year. We don't know when our appointment to die is, but will not be late for it, whenever that is. And it could be that we're at the gates.

So let me take all that we have said and boil it down to an irreducible minimum. I like to do that. And let me put it to you this way. If there is no hereafter, then nothing matters. It's why many philosophers turn into fatalists. It doesn't matter. Because if you just sort of live biologically and consciously, but then afterwards you cease to exist, then there's no purpose to life and nothing at all matters.

So if there is no hereafter, then nothing matters. But if there is a hereafter, then nothing else matters. And that becomes the central issue and focus that we need to address. And we need to do it here and now, on this Earth. To think clearly and soberly about life, death, judgment, eternity.

Let's pray. Lord, it does matter. It does matter. You have revealed yourself in a document that has been scrupulously looked at and criticized and criticisms have been overturned time and time and time again. More than that, your spirit has changed so many of our lives. Like the testimony we heard before the baptism today. Incredible, your power to change a human life. The power of the gospel still as powerful today as ever before.

Lord, we know that our life here is very precarious. We don't know how long we're going to be on this planet. And, Lord, you could come and you could rapture us, but barring that, we're going to die. And we're going to be buried. But those realities exist. We can be. It's possible for us to find redemption.

You set us free from the slavery of sin, and then you promise a future time when our bodies will be resurrected, transformed, suited for an eternal environment, and we will live forever. That gives us confidence, Lord. We want to understand that. I just pray for those who haven't, but now they're beginning to. Maybe you've opened up their heart, you've opened up their eyes. Lord, I pray that you draw them to yourself.

In this moment, where we're kind of processing all this, I want to just ask you a question, and that is, are you certain? Because you can be. Do you know for sure that when you die, you will be in God's presence because he has redeemed your soul, thus he will receive you into His presence and into His glory?

If you're not certain about it, if you go, I hope so, it's just not good enough. You can have real certainty. And it comes from a conscious decision, where you realize, I need God, I need him because everything in this life is just sort of turned up empty for me. It's not what I thought it would be. I've drunk deeply of the wells of this world and I've come up thirsty.

That's by design. God designed this world so you would never be satisfied by it. But only in a real relationship with Him. And He can change your life. So I want to give you that opportunity before we close. If you're willing to turn your life over to Christ, though you may be a wonderful person, a religious person, a churchgoing person, but you've never surrendered your life to Christ personally, and you're not certain of that relationship, I want you to be sure.

Or if you've wandered away from Him or you remember some previous experience, but it's not real today, you're not walking with Jesus right now, you come home to Him. You'd be forgiven by Him. If you want that and you're willing to receive Jesus as your Savior. Our heads are bowed, our eyes are closed. I'm going to leave mine open and I'm going to ask you to raise your hand right now. And what you're saying by raising your hand is, I want to do this now. I want to give my life to Jesus right now. I want the hope of heaven right now. Skip, here's my hand. Pray for me. And I'd love to pray for you. I just need to know who I'm praying for. So would you raise that hand up? Keep it up for a moment, so I can acknowledge you, if you don't mind.

God bless you right there to my left, and right up here in the front, and right there in the middle, and again, in the middle. I see your hands in the back on the aisle. Got it. Anybody else? Right up here in the front. On the side, a couple of you. Anybody else. Right there in the middle. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. I see your hand. Many all around. If you're in the balcony, please raise that hand up. Yes, sir. Toward the back toward the back on my right.

Father, we thank You for every person, every hand, every struggle, every sorrow. There's not a perfect person on this platform, there's not a perfect person in this congregation. We're talking right now to you. The only person who is perfect is God because we are not-- you know our need and our plight, and you are so willing to forgive and erase when we acknowledge that we need you and we're willing to repent and turn to you. Thank you for these who are. I pray. Lord, that they would have a new level of joy, a real freedom, and a new confidence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's all stand on our feet. We're closing this service. I'm going to ask those of you who raised your hands, and I saw

a lot, so we're going to wait for everyone. We're going to do this quickly. If you raised your hand, get up from where you are standing right now, find the nearest aisle, and come stand up here. I'm going to lead you in a prayer. We're going to make this deal, this transaction before heaven.

[APPLAUSE]

You just come up and stand right here and give your life to Christ. It'll take just a moment. Every person Jesus called, he called them publicly. And I want you to come and give your life to Christ publicly. Do it right now. We're going to wait for you, but you come. If you're in the middle of an aisle, say, excuse me, and they'll let you out. But you come. Don't say, I raised my hand, that's good enough. No, no. You come. Come and let us celebrate you and encourage you. That's right. Listen to it all.

[APPLAUSE CONTINUES]

[ACOUSTIC MUSIC PLAYING]

You are welcome. You are welcome. You are welcome. No problem.

[SINGING] Lift up your face. You're not too far.

Anybody else? Just come. Will you raise your hand or not?

[SINGING] As you are. Come as you are.

See, I'm really close. I hope you're not uncomfortable. Would you please scoot in a little bit more? I just want to see eye to eye. God loves every single one of you. Every single one. Now, I'm going to lead you in a prayer. I'm going to ask you to pray this out loud. After me, say these words from your heart. Mean them. Deep inside of you, pretend if you can. Nobody hears, it's you and God. And you're giving Him your life. You're giving Him access. You're giving Him control. You're turning your life over to Him.

So I'll pray. You pray out loud out for me. Say Lord, I give you my life.

Lord, I give you my life.

I know that I'm a sinner.

I know that I'm a sinner.

Please forgive me.

Please forgive me.

I believe in Jesus.

I believe in Jesus.

I believe He died on the cross.

I believe He died on the cross.

That He shed His blood for me.

That He shed His blood for me.

And that He rose again from the dead.

And that He rose again from the dead.

I turn from my sin.

I turn from my sin.



I repent of it.

I repent of it.

I turn to Jesus as my Savior.

I turn to Jesus as my savior.

I want to follow Him as my Lord.

I want to follow Him as my Lord.

Help me to do that.

Help me to do that.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Music to my ears.