

God Works in Dark Times

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- [0 : 00] Good morning, church. Anyone of you speaks English, Kirund, besides my husband.
! Today's reading is taken from Genesis chapter 23.! And Abraham went in to mourn for Selah and weep for her.
And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, I am a sojourner and a foreign 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 prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our thorns.
None of us will withhold from you his thorn to hinder you from burying your dead. Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land.
- [1 : 19] 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, If long the son of Zerah, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owes it is at the end of his field.
For the full price, let him give it to me in your presence as a property for a burying place. Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites.
And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in in the gate of his city. Know, my Lord, hear me.
I give you the field and I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people, I give it to you.
Bury your dead. Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, But if you will hear me, I give the price of the field.
- [2 : 28] Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there. Ephron answered Abraham, My Lord, listen to me. A piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver.
What is that between you and me? Bury your dead. Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham waged out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites 400 shekels of silver, according to the ways current among the merchants.
So the field of Ephron in Mechpela, which was to the east of Memli, the field with the cave that 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 Selah his wife in the cave of the field of Machipera, east of Memli, that is Heblon, in the land of Canaan.
The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as a property for a bearing place by Hittites. Thank you very much, Vanessa.
- [4 : 01] This morning I want to begin by asking your question. It's not a question to answer out loud, but really to answer in the quietness of your own heart.

And the question is this. What is the, or what are some of the darkest times you've ever faced? What are some of the darkest times that you have ever faced?

The truth is, to be human is to face dark times. Because the world is broken. The world is fallen.

The world is not as God intended it to be. And so, we, we all experience dark times. Some of you, it probably may have been a dark time of unemployment, being out of work for an extended period of time.

Or perhaps a business failure, where you experience financial reversal. Or perhaps it was a personal illness.

[5 : 18] Or maybe the illness of a family member. It may have been a painful divorce. Or perhaps it was the death of a loved one, one or more loved ones, which is certainly the case for me.

I remember vividly still the first death that I experienced, the death of my father in 2000, and then the death of my mother in 2021.

And then more recently, just a few months ago, the death of my sister Orly. And those were dark times. And as I reflected on those dark times that I faced in death, it occurred to me that there were a lot of thoughts that were going through my mind.

I had thoughts about life and death. I had thoughts about God. But one of the thoughts that really did not stay in my mind in a repeated way, in a constant way, was that God was at work in the midst of the darkness that I was facing as I grieved the loss of loved ones.

That was not a thought that was constant in my mind. Yes, it was in the recesses of my soul. It was in the conviction of my heart somewhere down there. But it was not to the forefront.

[6 : 44] It was not an active thought that I was having as I walked through those dark times of losing loved ones. But this morning, as I think about that, and certainly as I prepared for this sermon this week, and I read through Genesis 23, I was reminded of the enduring truth that God is at work even when his children walk through dark times.

I was aware of the enduring truth that God is at work in our dark times bringing his purposes to pass. Sometimes it could just feel like somehow God's purpose in our dark times has stopped for us as if it were some kind of an interruption of his plans.

But in truth, even the dark times of our lives and the things that bring them into our lives, they're not an interruption of God's plan. Indeed, they are part of his sovereign plan for our lives.

And I pray that we see this this morning as we look at Genesis 23. I pray that as we look at Genesis 23, we will see how in this very dark time that Abraham faced, God was at work in the midst of it.

And then I pray that we would make connections. I pray that we make connections from Abraham to our own lives. And we will see that in the same way that God was at work in the dark time of Abraham's life, he indeed is at work in the dark times of our own lives.

[8 : 38] before we look at the text, let's pray together. Father, we bow our hearts before you this morning. We thank you for your faithfulness.

And Lord, as has already been prayed, your loving kindness and tender mercies are new every morning. And Lord, one of the expressions of your kindness to us is that we are able to gather in this place.

We are able to be reminded of truths that we can easily forget. And we are able now, Lord, to sit under the preaching of your word. And so I pray that you would speak to all of our hearts.

I pray, Lord, that you would cause your word to have its intended divine effect on all of our hearts. Lord, you sovereignly ordained that we should be here this morning to hear what we are hearing.

And I pray, Lord, that above my voice you would cause each person to hear your voice for our good and for the glory of your great name.

[9 : 44] It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. So in this passage before us, there are two ways that I want to offer to you that God is at work, that God was at work in this dark time that Abraham faced.

first, God was at work in the death of Sarah itself. In Sarah's death, God was at work.

And what I mean by this is that God determined the exact moment of Sarah's death. He was not merely responding to it. He determined it.

Sarah died exactly when the sovereign Lord determined that she should die. And there are some people who have a hard time accepting this. They have a hard time accepting that God determines the moment of death for everyone.

Just as he does determine the moment of birth for everyone. It would be strange if God would sovereignly determine when we come into this world and then just leave it to chance, leave it to whatever, an accident or an illness or just circumstances of life to terminate our life in this world.

[11 : 04] Not so. The sovereign Lord is sovereign over everything in his universe, including the moment of birth and also the moment of death.

So it was the Lord who determined that Sarah would live for 127 years as we see in verse 1. her days and our days, her days where our days are in the sovereign hands of the Lord.

Now, when we reflect a little bit on some of the timelines that we could recall in Sarah's life, we'd remember that Sarah gave birth to Abraham when she was 90 years old.

And here she is dying at 127, so that means that Isaac was 37 years old when Sarah died. And you'd remember that Abraham was 10 years older than Sarah, and so he would have been 137 when Sarah died.

Now, we don't know the exact time they got married. Scripture doesn't tell us. but what we'll see in the next chapter, which we'll cover next week, we'll see that Abraham secured a son for his son, a bride, sorry, he secured a wife for his son, Isaac.

[12 : 36] And he did that when Isaac was 40 years old. Isaac married Rebecca when he was 40 years old. And so, although it doesn't tell us explicitly, it seems like Abraham ensured that Isaac got married approximately around the same time that he would have gotten married.

And if that is the case, if Abraham married when he was about 40 and Sarah was about 30, that means that they would have been married for about 92 years. 97, sorry, 97 years.

It's quite a long time. It's quite a long time to be married to someone and then to have that relationship to end in death. If you want to be a bit more precise with what we have written in the text, we know that Abraham was called from his land when he was 75 years old and at this particular point, it would have been at least 62 years that they had been married.

So they had been married for a long time, however you take it, but I believe that it is more reasonable that he got married somewhere in his 40s, give or take a couple of years.

So they had been married about 90 years. And Abraham is experiencing the first death in his family in the land of Canaan.

[14 : 06] And naturally he is grieving. That's what we see him doing in verse 2. He wept and mourned over Sarah's death. And by this time he is living in the land of Canaan for 62 years.

And he faced a serious problem. The serious problem that he faced was that he was a foreigner in Canaan. He was a resident alien. They allowed him to live there, but he had no stake in Canaan.

He had no property in Canaan. Despite the enormous wealth that he had, how God blessed him tremendously, he owned no land in Canaan. He did not even own a plot to bury his wife.

And so Abraham finds himself in this very strange position. God called him to this land. God says, I'm going to give you this land. And 62 years later, he owns nothing in the land.

And he faces this dilemma that he has a dead wife on his hands and he has nowhere to bury her. But burying Sarah in Canaan was not Abraham's only option.

[15 : 24] Abraham could have taken Sarah back to Ur of the Chaldeans, which is their homeland, and he could have buried her there. And that was a common practice back then. It's still a common practice today.

And we'll see this when we get towards the end of the book of Genesis, how Jacob instructed his sons that they were to take him back and bury him in the land of Canaan.

And even here today in the Bahamas, we have people, for example, who were born on the family islands, and when they die, many of them leave instructions and say, I want to be buried back home.

And sometimes this is done at incredible inconvenience and cost for those who are charged with the responsibility of carrying out that particular wish.

But it is something that is a long practice of people of wanting to be buried in their homeland.

[16 : 27] land. So Abraham could have, if he had decided to, taken Sarah back to Ur of the Chaldeans, and he could have buried her there.

But Abraham had no desire to do that. Abraham had no desire to do that because clearly God was at work in his heart, and even though he had been in the land of Canaan for 62 years, and even though he owned nothing in that land, that had become home to him.

That was the place that he called home. He believed God's promise, even though he had not yet received the fulfillment of that promise, and he was determined that he was going to bury Sarah in the land of Canaan, the land that the Lord had promised to him.

And no doubt God was at work in this, putting this desire in his heart, putting this, keeping this desire alive, that one day he would see the fulfillment of this promise that God has given to him, that he's going to give him land.

And so, that was what he was determined to do. He had one option, and that was to bury his wife Sarah in the land of Canaan, in the place where he owned no land.

[17 : 53] And that brings me to my second and final point, and I should alert you that the second point is longer than the first point.

I needed to alert you the other way last week, but this second point is longer than the first point. Not only was God at work in Sarah's death, but God was also at work in the purchase of Mark Pilah.

Look again at Abraham's appeal to the Hittites starting in verse 3. And Abraham rose up before his dead and said to the Hittites, I'm a sojourner and foreigner 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 prince of God among us.

Bury your dead in the choices of our tombs. None of us would withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead. Now it's easy to miss what's going on in this exchange between Abraham and the Hittites.

[19 : 14] Abraham asked for property to bury his dead. the Hittites say, you're a wonderful man, you are a prince of God, we're not giving you any land, but you could bury your dead in one of our tombs, as a matter of fact, in the choices of our tombs.

And their response to him is understandable because in that culture, and indeed this prevails still today, we're getting land in a place that is not your own home, can be very difficult at times, and it certainly was very difficult at this particular time.

The general practice was that they did not sell land to foreigners, they didn't sell land to resident aliens, because the idea was they were not going to stay forever.

They wouldn't have any attachment to the land, that they were transitioning through, and there was no need for land. So what Abraham requested was property, what the Hittites offered him was a burial place.

Why do you need a whole cemetery, so to speak, when all you have is one dead person who you need to find a place to bury? And besides, it's just you, your wife, and your son.

[20 : 34] So why do you need more than that? And so they offer him a burying place and not property.

Abraham wanted property because he recognized that this is the land that God is giving to us, and I need a burial place, not just for Sarah and for myself, but for my offspring as well.

Canaan is our home. Now notice Abraham's response to the Hittites starting in verse 7. 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 dad 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 property for a burial place.

Abraham humbly, here he is, he's this man who they see as a prince of God. He shows his humility, he bows to them, and he ignores this offer of a place to bury Sarah, a tomb to bury her in, and he says, please, he says, if you would, would you please entreat Ephron for me, and would you encourage him to sell me the piece of property, well, the cave that is on his property as a burying place.

[22 : 27] Now, again, Machpelah is huge, and it is not just a tomb, it is a burial place, and what we see is that Abraham clearly had in mind the property that he wanted.

He knew where it was, he knew who owned it, Ephron, the son of Zohar, was the one who owned it.

Now, what is interesting about Ephron, the son of Zohar, and I am grateful to Bruce Walke for this insight, is he indicates that Ephron had to have been a very prominent citizen among the Hittites.

And he says this because, he said, it's unusual to have a non-Israelite identified by the name of his father. And he is identified as Ephron, the son of Zohar.

He said, normally when you see that for a non-Israelite in scripture, that is a sign that he is a very prominent person. And it appears so that he was prominent in this way and powerful as well.

[23 : 47] And it seems like this is why Abraham felt the need to appeal to all the Hittites and say, would you entreat Ephron for me? He, for whatever reason, didn't think he could approach Ephron himself.

He could have, but he felt it would be more effective to enlist the other men of the city and say, would you entreat him to sell me the cave of Machpelah that is at the end of his field?

This kind of gives some hint that Ephron wasn't an easy man perhaps, that this proposition Abraham knew this was not going to be easy and I need more than myself going to Ephron, I need these others to come to me.

Ephron also seems to be a very well-to-do man, and I struggle with this a little bit, but I'll just point it out to you, I don't know the implications of it, but he seems to have owned his own city.

He seems to have owned his own city. If you look at verses 10 and 18, reference is made to the gate of his city. At first I thought it was the gate of the city, but no, it's not the gate of the city, it's the gate of his city, so it seems like Ephron even owned his own city, but I only mention that to say that he seems to have been a prominent man, but anyway, the city gate was the place where business, official business, was transacted, especially when you needed witnesses, and certainly in a transaction like land, you needed witnesses to see that this was a bona fide transaction that was taking place.

[25 : 33] Ephron's offer to Abraham, in response to Abraham's request, to purchase this cave at the end of his field, the cave of Machpelah.

Look at what Ephron says, starting in verse 10. Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, Ephron answered Abraham, in the hearing of the Hittites, all who went in at the gate of his city.

So it seems like they went to where Ephron was, as this conversation is happening. So Ephron says in verse 11, and know my lord, hear me, says Abraham, know my lord, hear me, I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it.

In the sight of the sons of my people, I give it to you, bury your dead. So Ephron heard his proposal, heard Abraham's proposal to buy this cave as a burial place, and for the full price, not at a bargain price, and surprisingly, Ephron offers Abraham not just the cave, but the field as well, and he says I'll give it to you at no charge.

In the hearing of my people, I give you the cave. Now this is nothing short of remarkable. This is nothing short of remarkable.

[27 : 10] It seems generous. Why would he do that? Why would Ephron, hearing that Abraham wants to buy this cave at the full price, turn around and say I will not only give you the cave, I will give you the field as well, and I don't want anything from you, you don't have to pay me for that.

Was it a genuine gift? Or was Ephron offering it and he was going to do as some people do, hold it over Abraham's head and look for future favors and manipulate him or even take it back?

Because you know if a person gives you something and you don't give them anything in return, they can take it back. But we can't be sure, but here's what we can be sure of, God was at work.

God was at work. God was doing more for Abraham than Abraham requested. God was doing more for Abraham than Abraham desired. He was doing more for Abraham than Abraham seemed to have faith for in this dark time that he is faced with Sarah's death.

But again, Abraham doesn't want just a tomb as the Hittites had originally proposed to him, and he doesn't just want a burial place that was just given to him under unusual circumstances where no price is being asked for it.

[28 : 47] And so we see in verse 13, Abraham humbly and skillfully accepts Ephron's offer. He says, yes, I'll take it, but he insists on paying for it.

He doesn't reject it, he accepts it, but he insists on paying for it. Look at how he does that in verse 13. And he said to Ephron, in the hearing of the people of the land, and you'll see this phrase, people of the land two times in this chapter, and it is reminded that Abraham is a foreigner, he's an outsider, he's not one of the land.

He said to Ephron, in the hearing of the people of the land, but if you will hear me, but if you will hear me. Ephron said to him, if you will hear me, he says back to Ephron, if you will hear me.

I, I, sorry, hold a second, I'm losing my place. So, Abraham, I should be in verse, not 13, but verse 6, hold a second, part of this.

Yeah. Forgive me. Okay, so, essentially, what Abraham is saying to Ephron is this, thank you very much for giving me the land, but I insist on paying the full price of it.

[30 : 36] And so, Ephron responds to him in verse 15, and Ephron says to him, my Lord, listen to me, a piece of land with 400 shekels of silver, what is that between you and me?

Bury your dead. Now, Ephron's response in verse 15 seems to indicate that he was not determined to give Abraham the land.

Because if he was determined to give Abraham the land, when Abraham offered the price, he would just say, no, I insist, you take it. I don't want anything from you. But he knows he is the price of the land in his mind.

It's kind of like, man, you can have it, you know, it only weighs 400 shekels. So, clearly, at best, we can say Ephron had mixed emotions, or maybe he wasn't fully decided what he was going to do with this land.

And so, he knows the value of the land, and he expresses the value of the land to Abraham. And I think the best conclusion on this is that he clearly was not determined to do it, to give him the land with no strings attached, free of charge, because he had this price in mind that he utters to him.

[31 : 59] Now, it appears that the price that he offers for the land is also very inflated. It seems that he is over charging for this piece of land.

And I was helped by Andrew Steinman's insight in his commentary on this price that Ephron offered to Abraham.

And here's what Andrew Steinman writes. He writes, Although we cannot be certain, Ephron's stated price appears to place a very high price on his field.

400 shekels would be about 10 pounds or four and a half kilograms of silver. David only paid 50 shekels to purchase the temple site from Ara'ana, 2 Samuel 24-24.

Armory paid two talents, 6,000 shekels, for the large hill of Samaria, a mound spacious enough to situate an entire city.

[33 : 06] 1 Kings 16-24. Jeremiah paid 17 shekels for a field in Anathoth, Jeremiah 32 verse 9.

It appears that Ephron is either vastly overpricing the field or offering a very expensive field at market rate. Either way, he must have done this in order to discourage Abraham from making the purchase.

But what we can see, putting aside all the questions and wonderings and whatever, Abraham did not flinch at the price. He did not flinch at the price.

In verse 16, it says, Abraham listened to Ephron and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named, the 400 shekels.

In the hearing of the Hittites, 400 shekels of silver according to the weights current among the merchants. So really, what happened here was a transaction was consummated.

[34 : 14] There were witnesses who heard Ephron say that land is worth 400 shekels of silver, and Abraham in their presence counted out 400 shekels of silver, and he gave it to Ephron who accepted it.

And so the transaction was closed based on their actions, based on the witnesses who were there to watch exactly what happened.

This could seem like a very, very trivial matter, but brothers and sisters, this is a major, major occurrence in the book of Genesis and in the life of Abraham.

And Abraham's possession of this land could not be clearer. And remember, as I try to remind us about what's happening here in Genesis is Moses is writing to the children of Israel as they are leaving Egypt, walking through the wilderness, and he's saying you're going to the promised land, and he is trying to show them you have claimed to this land.

You have a linkage to this land. A historic linkage. This would be more than 400 years later that Moses is writing to them after this transaction we're reading about would have taken place.

[35 : 41] But look at the language that Moses uses to describe how Abraham gained legal title of land in the land of Canaan.

Look at verse 17, sound of verse 17. So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it, and all the trees that were in the field throughout its whole area was made over, meaning it was deeded over to him.

It was deeded over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites before all who went in at the gate of his city, Ephron city.

After this, Abraham buried Sarah, his wife, in the cave of the field of Machpelah, east of Mamre, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan.

The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

[36 : 48] Could not be clearer. Moses repeats himself in several different directions to say, this is Abraham's land. He got it legitimately. He was offered it for free.

He paid a very expensive price for it. The land legally transferred from Ephron to Abraham.

And Moses is making this very clear to the children of Israel people that they have a historic claim to this land that their forefather Abraham lived in.

Canaan was their land by promise of the creator God. And see, God is able to do that. God is able to go to one group of people and say, I'm going to eject you out of the land and I'm going to put another people because he is the creator.

And it is his land and he can do whatever he wants with it. And he did that with the people who were dwelling in the land of Canaan when their sin had risen to a level that was unacceptable and he ejected them out of the land.

[37 : 54] He gave the land to the children of Israel. But not only was Canaan theirs by promise, Canaan was also now theirs by purchase by this land that Abraham, this strategic piece of land that Abraham owned in the land of Canaan.

It is a holy fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to give him land. This is his first possession of land. Apart from the well that he had dug and he was able to get Abimelech to agree that that is yours, he now has real estate, he now has property in this land.

the region of Hebron. And Hebron was the place where many of the promises that God gave to Abraham that he was going to bless him with offspring and bless him with land, it took place right on this very site where he now is occupying this land.

You can see this if you take some time to read from like Genesis 13, 14 through Genesis 18 and verse 15, you'll see how God repeated this promise of offspring and land and it's right in this region of Hebron that he does that.

To Israelites, Hebron is second only to Jerusalem in its importance. Hebron is, even right now, a place of contest between the Arabs and the Jews.

[39 : 32] the cave of Machpelah, which is northeast of Hebron, is covered by the mosque of Haram el-Khalil, a Muslim mosque and it's a point of contention between Arabs and Jews today.

But what I want us to see in this passage, brothers and sisters, is how God moved Abraham from being a wandering foreigner, a resident alien in a land that he only had claimed to a well.

And God brings him to own a costly piece of real estate in the land of Canaan. That was God's doing. It was God's doing in the dark time of Sarah's death, in the midst of her death.

God, who ordained the moment of her death, also orchestrated the circumstances that he would gain this possession of land in Canaan in fulfillment, in the start of the fulfillment of the promise that God had given to him.

He wanted only a burial place, he wanted only a cave, and God went beyond and God gave him both the cave and the field. at the end of Genesis, we'll see how a famine brought Jacob out of the land of Canaan and took him to Egypt.

[41 : 06] And we'll see Jacob's commitment to this land that Abraham had purchased in Canaan. We'll see this in Genesis 49. As a matter of fact, let's look at it.

Genesis 49, 29 to 32. Jacob had just blessed his 12 sons, and this is what we read, starting in verse 29.

Then he, Jacob, commanded them and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite.

in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.

There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah, his wife. And there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.

[42 : 27] He's rehearsing family history. He knows the story. He knows how this land came to be theirs. And he holds it as a sacred and a precious thing that God has done for them.

And he says to his sons, when he's about to die, he says, don't you bury me here in Egypt. You take me back to the land of Canaan and you bury me in the cave of Machpelah, where all of my ancestors, where the mother of Israel, Sarah, and where the father of the people of faith, Abraham, and others are buried.

God providential God providential used this dark time of Sarah's death to begin the fulfillment of giving land to Abraham and to his offspring.

Brothers and sisters, this is a wonderful reminder to us that God is always at work even in dark times. Jesus, and the darkest moment of human history was when Jesus Christ hung on the cross, and at the brightest hour of the day, 12 noon, until 3 p.m.

in the afternoon, the land was covered with thick darkness, and Jesus hung on the cross, and God the father poured his wrath out upon Jesus as the payment and punishment for sin.

[44 : 09] And in the midst of that darkness, God was reconciling undeserving sinners to himself, providing for their forgiveness, providing for them to be adopted as sons and daughters.

And who would have thought if you were at the scene of the crucifixion that day, there would have been nothing that you could visibly see that would point to God being at work in any of that.

It would have been grotesque, it would have been heart-wrenching, but God was at work in the midst of it. He was at work in the darkest moment of human history, working and fulfilling his plans.

And it's an old plan, God from Genesis 3.15, that one day he was going to send the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent, and he did that on his cross.

And God was at work in the midst of that. And brothers and sisters, not only was God at work in the dark time of Christ's death on the cross, but he is at work in the dark times of our lives.

[45 : 22] As a matter of fact, because he was at work in the darkness of Christ's death on the cross, he is able to be at work in the darkness of our lives if we love him and if we are called according to his purpose.

And that is the condition. The promise of Romans 8.28 is not a blank check to the whole world. The promise of Romans 28 is a narrow promise.

It is a narrow guarantee to God's people, those who love him and are called according to his purpose. That he works in all things. All things includes dark things.

All things include bad things. God works in them for our good. And brothers and sisters, wherever we can see it or not, let's believe that. Let us believe that in our most difficult times, in our darkest seasons, we have a sovereign God who is at work.

And he is at work fulfilling his plans and purposes for our lives. Dark times don't stop his plans and purposes. Dark times are a part of his plans and purposes.

[46 : 40] He works in the midst of them. And I don't need to this morning to ask if you are in dark times. And by you, I don't mean all of us.

But some of us this morning are in dark times. We're in hard times. And thank God you're here this morning. The best place to be in a dark time is in the house of God with God's people.

This is the best place to be. The worst place to be is all alone by yourself. Rehearsing your own thoughts to yourself. The best place to be is in God's house that you can hear and be reminded that God works in dark times.

He's doing what we can't see if we love him and are called according to his purpose. If you're here this morning and you don't know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, in a sense you've been eavesdropping on the sermon.

You've been listening in on a conversation, a message from God to his people. But you don't have to be on the outside.

[47 : 50] You don't have to be listening in from the outside. You can be on the inside if you would put your trust in Jesus Christ. If you would turn from your sin and you would put your trust in Jesus and you would yield to his will in your life, you too will be included in this wonderful promise in Romans 28 that God works in all things for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

and you can hold on to that in your darkest hour, your most difficult season. You can hold on to that and you can say, God, though I don't see it, I believe you are at work for my good, fulfilling your plans.

I pray you do that today. Let's pray. Father, thank you that you are the sovereign Lord.

You are the faithful God. You work at all times and in all seasons and in all circumstances, including the dark times and the dark circumstances.

Lord, I pray for those who would you speak to all of our hearts this morning and remind us of this precious truth. And Lord, I pray especially for those who find themselves this morning walking through a dark time.

[49 : 22] Those who belong to you would remind them, Lord, that you are with them and you are working for their good. And Lord, for those who do not know Christ, I pray that you would help them to be reminded of their need for a Savior.

Convict them of sin. Grant them faith and repentance. Would you bring them to yourself?
God, do your work, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. dethers, dethers, dethers, dethers, dethers, dethers, dethers, dethers, dethers,
dethers, dethers, dethers,