

Expressions - Sister Bell's Funeral

Jeffersonville, Indiana
March 13, 1962

1 Along with these testimonies and acknowledgments of our departed sister, I would like to leave these words also. My first acquaintance with the family of Bell was her husband, Jimmy, who was such a bosom friend to my father, who has gone on. And then, coming of years, I become a minister and was acquainted with Sister Bell, and know her as a real devout Christian. We will all miss her, everywhere. It's so easy to say words over someone like this, because you don't have to pull back anything. She was what was required to be a Christian.

2 When I heard the sisters sing a few moments ago, it just reminded me so much of her singing as we know her around here. She loved singing. I'm so glad that this was done, for it truly made the ... how Sister Bell would have felt. She'd like to've expressed herself in that way. My prayer, sincere prayer, is that we will all come to the end of the road with a testimony like she had.

Now I wish to read some out of the Scripture here, just a portion. I feel that she was such a great lover of God's Word, and his Word is so eternal. And I thought I would read a portion of the 14th chapter of Job.

Man that is born of a woman is of a few days, and full of trouble.

He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

... dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed him bounds that he cannot pass;

Turn from him, that he may rest, till he has accomplished, as a hireling, his day.

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branches thereof will not cease.

Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof dieth in the ground;

Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth ... like a plant.

But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, ... giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

As the waters fail from the sea, and the floods decay and dry up:

So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be risen out of their sleep.

O that thou would hide me in the grave, that thou would appoint me a secret, until the days of thy wrath be past. ...

If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

Thou shalt call, ... I will answer thee: thou will have a desire to do a work of thine hands.

For now thou numberest my steps: ... thou does watch over my sin?

3 Reading from the eternal Word, I would like for us to think upon just one word for a few moments, and that word is "Expressions." There's so much of life that's expressions. And there's no one that lives on earth but what some time in his life he's got to stop and think of where he come from, what's his purpose here, and where he's going hereafter. Everyone likes ... would like to look beyond the curtain. Reading here from the oldest book in the Bible, Job, this patriarch, he was trying to find this very thing. And he was giving vent to his impulse of God, expressing that He was a life after death.

4 We sometimes feel that when we're confronted with something like this, that this is all. But it isn't. It's the changing. It's the ... a step higher. It's passing from one life into another.

5 And Job, the prophet, as he was thinking on these things, he detected it in botany--plant life, tree life. So he was noticing that, how that God must be in his creation; that if He made the creation, then He must live in the creation, because He made it for a purpose for Himself to live in, like a house that a man would build. And these teeny little lives that's in all of God's creation is subject to its Maker.

6 And he was thinking that if a storm came by, and would bring down a mighty tree, yet that wasn't the end of that tree. It would live again. If the tree died, it would live. And many times when we are flusterated, if we would just look around us you can see God everywhere.

7 Now, we'll take Him... Like in the tree. If the tree is put here... And everything is here to serve a purpose, just as we are here to serve a purpose, just as our sister was here to serve a purpose. We're all here for a purpose of God. And if we can find what that purpose is, and then serve it well, there's surely... If God is mindful enough of a resurrection of botany life, He's mindful enough of a resurrection for human life.

8 So Job noticed (the patriarch) that the tree, if it died it lived again; and how that summer and winter changed its beings, and each day there left a testimony. He noticed if the tree was living in the summertime, and seemingly in the wintertime it died, the leaves that hung on the tree....

9 Now we are taught in the Scripture that there is a tree of life. It was in the garden of Eden. And this tree of life is where Christians hang as a leaf on this tree. And now in the wintertime, when the leaves are pretty, why, they ... or, in the summertime rather, when the leaves are pretty and green, after awhile frost comes and colors them different colors, and they fall from the tree. And the life goes back into the root of the tree. If we just notice, it's a mysterious thing.

10 Here sometime ago I was confronted to speak to a man who claimed to be an infidel, an unbeliever. And we were standing by an apple tree which belonged to him. And I asked him how old the tree was, and he told me so many years, and how many bushels of apples it produced each year. And this was in the early part of August, and I noticed the apples were already falling and the leaves were turning brown.

And I said to him, "I'd like to ask you a question." I said, "Why are those leaves turning brown, and falling off of the tree before any frost hits them?"

"Well," he said, "it's winter coming on. And the reason that they turn brown is because the life has left the leaf."

I said, "Where did the life go?"

And he said to me, "Back to the root of the tree, where it come from."

And I said, "Is that the last of the leaf?"

He said, "No, that life will return next spring again with a new leaf." He had never noticed it before.

I said then, "I pray you tell me, sir, what intelligence takes that leaf off the tree even before cold weather, and sends its life back down into the ground for safety, until the coming forth of another season? You could put water in a bucket and set it on a post. It will never change by the seasons. So it shows that there is a God who masters life."

11 And we who are . . . claim to be Christians, who are borned of the Spirit of God, has been by the grace of God transferred from a tree of death to a tree of life. And when one of the leaves drops off. . . . Like, I heard that testimony from this wonderful church to the Giltage Baptist Church, where many of my precious friends are members, where one of its leaves has dropped off. We know that that life has gone back to the God who gave it for some purpose, only to come again in the general resurrection to never drop again, in the millennium. The great time is coming. Job had noticed these things.

12 Then he noticed in the life of the sun. . . . If you'll notice of a morning, the sun comes up. It's a baby. Its rays are weak. Then it

comes into its teen-age, about nine or ten o'clock. Then in the noontime, the middle of the day, it's in its strength. Then it begins to fall, and finally sets again over in the west, as it dies out for the day. Could we call that the end of the sun? No. The next morning it comes back up again to bring a new day for us.

13 Now, what is this? It's God's expression. And the word "expression" means to make known a feeling. It's God's expression to us to let us know his feeling for us, that death does not separate us eternally. We'll rise again, come back again.

Every time that the seed dies in the earth in the fall of the year, just like these flowers. . . . The little seeds drop out of them when frost strikes them, and the seed goes down on to the ground. And--as strange as it may seem, yet it is the truth--God is so infinite that He doesn't overlook anything. He has a funeral procession for his flower.

14 After the frost strikes them, then comes the fall rains, and great big tears of . . . drops of rain drops from the heavens, and buries that flower seed--pats upon it, and maybe it goes an inch or two beneath the earth. Then the cold winter winds begin to sweep, and the little petals are gone, and the stalk's gone, and then the bulb freezes, and dries up. And then the little seed freezes and the pulp runs out of it. And, why, by time of spring you can't find anything left of it.

But is that the end of the flower? Never. It was put here for a purpose. And when it has served its purpose well, then God, letting us know by the flower his expression to us. . . .

Just as sure as the sun gets a little closer to the earth to bring a warmer rays, you could not hide that life nowhere. You could cover it over with a rock. Did you ever notice when you lay your concrete in the wintertime? Where is the grass the thickest in the spring? Right around the edge of the concrete. Why is it? It's that life that's beneath the rock. When the sun begins to bathe the earth you can't hold life. It'll find its way out from under the concrete and stick its little head up to praise God, because the sun is the resurrection. . . . The s-u-n is the resurrection of all botany life. You can't hide it as long as the sun shines.

15 The S-o-n seems to be many times far away, but when He begins to shine the Son of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And every life, no matter where it's buried, how deep ... how far in the waters, or in the sands, in the rocks, it'll rise to the glory of God; because God is expressing to us, showing us just what He's doing.

16 His purpose is to show us through the flowers, through the sun, through the trees--through all life--that He is the resurrection and the life. God resurrects his life when it serves his purpose. And if the flower serves its purpose, and God has a resurrection for the flower, how much more for our sister who served her purpose in life? God has a resurrection for those that serves their purpose. We can find our purpose and then serve Him.

These little flowers, you might ask about them. They are here this afternoon to serve a purpose. That's what these flowers ... God had them for, to serve a purpose. On and on it could go.

17 If you notice, these flowers are not all the same color of flowers. They differ in color, showing that God is a God of variety. He likes different colors. Mixing it together makes a bouquet that He loves. God--a God of variety. He has his white flowers, He has his red flowers, and his ... all colors of flowers. And putting them together serves his purpose.

He has big mountains and little hills and plains. He has deserts, He has seas, He has the oak tree, the palm tree--everything blending together in its place where God, the God of all nature, can live and enjoy his beings, as living in his creatures and time that's serving his purpose.

18 If He thinks enough to resurrect that, and made a way of an escape for that for service in the future again, how much more has He of people, regardless of who we are, what race, color, creed, or whatmore that can dwell together in the unity of God's presence in his blessings?

19 There will be a resurrection some day, just as sure as there's a resurrection for the flower. We all see that. We all believe that. We all know that these things are all expressions. They are testifying, telling us, making known a feeling that God wants us to know.

People who sent these flowers, the friends of our sister who sent these flowers, they're also making known to the family--expressing to them that their feeling of sympathy of a friend, of a sister, or loved one. They're trying to express. They are expressions, making known, declaring something. All these things that we could speak of for hours, the expressions of God to the human race, all these have their part and they play it well. Every flower, every tree, every sunrise, every sunset, everything plays its part well.

20 But all of those expressions of God, making known to us, and giving us an example that He was going to make a great expression some day--an eternal expression. . . . Then He sent us his expressed image in the form of his Son. God sent his Son in the expressed image of Himself, to declare to the human race what He thought of us.

21 He changed his cast. He become man. He become one of us--from God, the eternal Father, from the great creator, who before there was a world, filled all space, time. There was not even a meter or a light meter. Neither was there an atom or a molecule. He was still God, and He'll always be God. But the great One who, if you could look up at night and see the stars in the solar system. . . .

22 Some years ago I had the privilege to look through this big scope, and . . . where they claim you could see a hundred and twenty million years of light space, light meters. And beyond that is still moons and stars and worlds that He controls. And then He was so mindful enough to make an expression to us, knowing that He is so great, yet He came down in the form of a human being to express what He was.

23 He became a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief. He lived a human life. He had no place to lay his head. He was expressing what God was. He healed our sick when we were sick. He raised up the dead to show that He was God's expressed image. He laid a plan down for us all, that where we, too, could look at these small expressions and see God. Then we could look up and see God's great expression, and have the assurance, then, that when these hours come this isn't the end of it.

24 I like the expression that our sister in singing said a few moments ago. “This is my sister. I could not sing it this way unless she knew where she was.” See, there is a way we know where we’re going, because the expressed image of God laid down this plan. And He said whosoever would accept this plan would have eternal life. John 5:24 said, “He that heareth my words and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into the judgment; but has passed from death unto life.”

25 The greatest expression of all was Jesus Christ, who made a way for us. He fulfilled and vindicated all the expressions that these flowers and botany life and so forth--and the sun, and the solar system--has witnessed before his coming that there was coming a just One, that would make us firmly believe it, because He would be the expressed image of God.

26 And when He came and did what He did He proved that these expressions was right. He gave vindication to them. Because as a flower raises again, the tree raises again, the sun raises again, so shall the Christian rise again. It has to, because God in the express image of a human being, or a human being in the express image of God, proved it by his resurrection. Standing there ... when the prophet saw these things take place--Job--when he saw all the botany life, and so forth....

Then we who are familiar with the Bible knows that, sitting on this heap of ashes in distress, trouble had struck him. His church members had told him that he was a ... had secretly sinned. Many times it has been said that a person dies prematurely, or something, that maybe some sin they did. They did something wrong. Not ... that isn’t the case to a Christian.

27 When he saw this great, final expression, God making known his plan through Jesus Christ, he cried with a voice.... When the lightnings flashed, and the thunders roared, he said, “I know my redeemer liveth. And at the last days he’ll stand upon the earth. And though after the skin worms has destroyed my body, yet in my flesh I’ll see God: whom I shall see for myself.”

He saw that final expression many hundreds of years ahead. But being a prophet, in the vision he saw the coming of God’s great expression. He could look down and see the resurrection of the

seeds, he could see the resurrection of the trees, and the resurrection of the sun after it had served its time and raised again--served for a day, raised for another day. Flowers for one funeral service die and resurrect for another's funeral service, everything serving its purpose.

Then he saw in the distance the coming of that just One and screamed, "I know my redeemer liveth."

28 My flesh shall rest in hope," said David, "because he'll not suffer his Holy One to see corruption. Neither will he leave his soul in hell." He saw that day, that perfect expression of God, what He was going to do, to make known to man that death is not the end of the road.

29 This is not the end. This is the beginning. It's the end of sorrow. It's the end of time of decision. But it's the beginning of time of joy, and reward. It's not the end of everything. It's just the end of the mortal things, to begin the immortal things. She has gone to her rest. God rest her soul. Now, he cried this great expression because he seen what was going to happen.

Now, let us come to this conclusion. We have gathered here today to express, or to make known our feelings about a neighbor, about a sister, about a wife, about a mother. That's why we have gathered this afternoon--to make known, to express our feelings, our loss. That's why we are here--to do this. The father is to express the loss of the wife; the children, the mother; the neighbor, or the sister.

We ministers, as I heard them down through the building giving those wonderful glorious comforting comments--clear-cut--that what the sister had meant to them, and in their congregations. . . . We ministers come this afternoon ('course in our hearts we feel sad too), but we've come to make known an expression of God, too, his truth about all this matter. We've come to express what God says about it, to comfort the hearts of the people, to let them know as hard as the shock may be, yet it's in the providence of Almighty God to do it this way, and it's his plan. And this isn't the end. This is the beginning of a new life.

Then we, who God teaches in his Word about these things, we come to give our expression. And how happy I am over this one this afternoon, that we all can express the same thing towards the Word of God, because she fulfilled it.

30 Sister Bell, as we knew her here at the Tabernacle--a lovely, sainted Christian woman--she made her expressions, too. She made known her feeling about God, as I heard the obituary read awhile ago, even before Brother Jim married her, I suppose, down in Tennessee. She made her decision. She made her expression.

And so it's the testimonies, and as far as I know from that day since, has never ceased to make that expression. Maybe today is over the corridors of heaven, somewhere yonder in the eternal realms of glory, walking the streets of God still expressing it. Beyond these shadows of mortal realms she still expresses it.

31 Sister Bell, as we know her, was not ashamed of her testimony. Not one time was there any blushing of her testimony. Not one time was she reluctant to say something. She expressed it, and she wasn't ashamed. I've seen her stand back there with her hands in the air, and the tears running down her cheeks; see her stand here on the pulpit, and sing songs that would make the whole church go into a scream, of a land beyond here. She wasn't ashamed. She give her expression everywhere. Every neighbor, every church, everywhere she was affiliated, she made herself known and expressed what she thought about God. It was her life. All that she could be, she expressed what she was in Christ Jesus, a newborn creature.

32 She was a lovely friend to my dear old mother that climbed the same steps a few weeks ago. Today they are together. What a wonderful thing it is to see the expressions how God does. Her letters, Sister Bell... Every time I would come home Billy, my son, would bring me a group of letters, telephone calls, constantly, from Sister Bell. "Pray for this one; pray for that one."

That ... what was it doing? To me that was her expression, her making known what was on the inside of her--a burden for her fellowman. A burden for her children, a burden for every one that was around, and every sick person.

33 Sister Bell almost ... lived by the grace of God the last few years. She was a faithful believer in God's healing power. And it so

happened the other night. . . . I've never in my life had prayer for her, and prayed with that dear old saint, until . . . unless God healed her. And the other night when I was called, I'd just got in from Arizona, about around midnight. They called my son, and said, "Sister Sheppard, a friend of Sister Bell's, wants you to pray for her. She's in the hospital." I understood it to be Sister Sheppard, some lady perhaps in the building now, by the name of Sheppard, that she knew. I thought she was in the hospital.

34 The next morning they called back about eleven-something, and said, "It's not Sister Sheppard; it is Sister Bell herself is in the hospital." And to see that the wise providence and plan of God. . . . Before we could ever get there, Sister Bell had done climbed the golden stairs. Before I could get there, God had plucked his rose of color to make his bouquet for the millennium. Before I could ever get there she was gone to meet God. God's expression of his love.

All these years of happy marriage was an expression of her loyalty as a wife, to make a home for her husband and her children. That expressed itself through the hard times when little fellows around the table, and hard going, and a mother. . . . It takes a mother to know how to put things together to make it last when little hungry mouths are around the table. But stand by her husband, loyal; stand by her children--it was an expression of genuine loyalty. That's before every one of you. I wouldn't have to say that. You know that to be the truth, see.

35 Yes, sir. And her never-failing plea for her children. . . . I don't believe I ever met her, or left her, without her asking a request for those children. That showed real motherhood, knowing that life is merely a dream, or a preparation place for her children. She wanted to meet them in a land beyond here, where there would be no more hard times.

She constantly would say to me (she called me "Brother Billy"), she'd say, "Brother Billy, pray for my children . . . none of them will be lost." If that isn't expressing real motherhood. . . . A mother who is interested in her children, interested in her neighbors, her husband, her loved ones. . . . It's God in the woman, expressing eternal things.

How I sympathize with her husband, my good friend. How I sympathize with them boys, to hear a message, some of them in

Germany, and different places, of “Mother’s gone.” But she might be gone from your presence here, boys, but she’s not dead. She’s alive forevermore. She’s a-living in a land to where she prayed that each of you would meet her. Don’t let her be disappointed. I’m sure she won’t.

36 See one spoke out of that wheel this afternoon. I remember when the first spoke was taken from my family. One by one they’ll drop away. It won’t be too long. But listen, that wheel can be united together again in another land where there is no broken wheels, where God’s great economy can be achieved, and can roll on through the ages. May it be that way, family. You’ve always had mother; now be with her forever. That’s right.

37 Another thing that expressed God’s love.... As I understand that her request was that she would never be old and linger along, have to linger, and be packed around and old-aged, and crippled-up, and sickly, and dying by inches. God granted that request. That’s right. Why, just a couple of Sundays ago she was standing here on a church pew singing the glorious gospel of Christ. What’s this ... what’s this of a mother, look like prematurely--about sixty-five years old--going? What does that mean? It’s God expressing Himself that He will not withhold no good thing from them that’ll walk upright before Him.

38 God expressing in her very death is God expressing to us that He’s God, and He’ll give those the desires of his heart, their heart, that will walk upright before Him, seeing this: that He is God. And we must all come to this place.

Then let us look at his tokens of expressions. His love, his church, his people, and everything that it is, is all God’s expressions to us. Then I think we all should bow our heads in humility, and thank God for this life, that through Christ, has conquered even death itself.

39 Then the words of Jesus when He went to Jairus’ daughter, “She is not dead, but she sleepeth.” She’s gone to her sleep, and not to her death, for she died many years ago as a little girl. And now

she lives in Christ, and only asleep to us; but awake with Christ. Let us bow our heads then and give thanks for this gallant life.

40 Heavenly Father, of course You know our hearts. Of course You know the thoughts in our mind. And you know all about us. We're the creation of your hands. And You know we're sorry to see Sister Bell be taken from us. God we are bowing our heads and hearts in gratefulness that her request was granted. And it's your desire for her was fulfilled, that even here at the end of the road when her obituary is written in the life of everybody she come in contact with, that she was your servant. Long may her influence live in the hearts of all who knew her.

41 God, we pray that You will rest her gallant soul in that land that she loved, and talked about, and sang of all these years. I pray for Jimmy this afternoon, Lord, when I see him sitting there. And he's expressing his thoughts as the crystallly tears rolls down his cheeks. He's thinking of a loyal wife, and of these children who, the tears running down their cheeks, they are thinking of a lovely mother. And we pray, God, that you will bless them. Comfort their hearts, reach out that hand that's beyond the reach of anything else that can go to the human heart, and give to them this great satisfaction, that some day we'll meet again, and we'll never have another funeral service there.

42 Bless her loved ones, her brothers, her sisters, her grandchildren, and her neighbors, and these churches, Lord. We know how they loved her. As she walked among us, she's walked among them. And together with them, Lord, we share this great mutual feeling that we loved her, and we're here expressing our gratitude to You for her life.

Mold us, Lord, and make us that we, too, when we come to the end of the road may be ready to meet You. Forgive our many sins, O eternal God. Have mercy upon us, Lord, for we are weak and weary.

43 And I pray that You'll give us comfort this afternoon. May we find it in these words that's been expressed from your Word through the different ministers, and those who are ordained to bring such, and to the neighbors and friends. May we find in there with the testimony of the flowers, and the trees, and the sunshine, and the leaves; and above all with the presence of the Holy Spirit, which

witnesses the resurrection of Christ, “I will not leave you comfortless. I’ll pray the Father, and He will give you another comforter, and He will abide forever.” Oh, how we love Him, Lord, and how we appreciate You sending Him to us, to give us this blessed assurance in the hours and time of trouble.

44 Now give us strength for the further coming of the service. I want to ask especially just now for these boys, sitting here in the uniforms. Blessed be those boys, as they’ll have to return back into their ranks. But I pray, Lord, that on that day... We appreciate these uniforms they wear now, but may mother’s prayer be answered. May they be dressed in the holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ at that day. The girls, and all together, Lord, that’s what we want to be, the Christian soldiers--real strong faith.

Guide us and direct us until that day, Lord, when we meet again. We thank You for her life, now, and pray that You’ll be with all of us until we all meet at thy feet. In Jesus’ name we ask it. Amen.