

**Funeral Message for A.B. Jackson Conducted on July 12th, 2017,
At the Reformed Baptist Church in Tama, Iowa.**

Psalm 103: 1-14 –

A Psalm Of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

If A.B. were able to be here and to speak to us today, he would ask that you would give careful attention to the truth of the Bible and the gospel message that I will give to you in the next few minutes. I am going to speak to you about how great God's mercy was to A.B. to change his heart and to save him from all of his sins, and to bring him now to heaven. But before I present that truth to you, I must tell you that from my perspective that A.B. was truly an amazing man. Only God can make a man like A.B. He had a love for life and a love for people. He had a tremendous sense of humor, and he had the amazing and sometimes even delightful ability to be able to take what might be a common and ordinary story of what happened in a certain situation and to make it come very much to life from his own perspective. And in doing so, he would hold your interest and rivet your attention to what he was saying so that you would understand many details of his perspective on that event or situation; details which would make you smile and laugh and be drawn to him. He had a very winning way in this regard. He would relate these stories not to make himself look great, but rather he would show his own weaknesses and how the Lord preserved him through many dangers, toils and snares.

I did not meet A.B. until 2008 when he married Brenda. I do not know much about his past life before that, but I did come to understand in conversations that I had with him, that the Lord had preserved his life in some very wonderful ways; once in a near fatal car accident, and another time in fall from a tower that he was painting, from a pretty good height. He also related some very funny stories of being kicked by a horse and landing in manure and being out fishing with another man and a snake falling into the boat that he was in. He was so afraid of the snake that he almost literally walked and ran on the water to be able to safely make it to land. I will let Brenda or Sheryl relate these stories in their particulars to you. But I am trying to say to you, that just his everyday experience was very interesting. I remember one time his telling me about how he had just gotten some new brown coveralls as a present and he wanted to put them on and try them out, walking in them, and so he went from his house across the street, and it was winter time, and there were little hills of snow on the sides of the road where the snow plow had gone through and piled it, and so he stood up on one of these hills and thrust his hands down deep in his coveralls and suddenly he slipped off of the hill and fell right into the street in front of oncoming traffic. Well, his hands were so deep in his pockets that he couldn't get them out and so there he lay, struggling and helpless, hoping that no one would run him over.

Fortunately the car that was coming toward him was able to stop without hitting him, and the kind people in it got out and asked if he needed help. But it was the way that he told that story that was so very funny; his lying at the side of the road struggling to get his hands out of the coveralls, it was something to make you smile, and make you think about how the Lord watched over his life.

The reason that I chose this Psalm to read to you on this occasion is because there really is a lot to bless the Lord for, in regard to the way that God showed A.B. mercy in his life. If A.B. were here this morning he would be the first to say: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” I believe that A.B., even with all of the trials and tribulations that he passed through would say this with joy, if he were standing here today. Before he came to live here in Tama, the Lord was patiently waiting and preparing A.B. for the time when he would really trust in Him for salvation. He did this by leading him into, and through, the many experiences of his life in the past where he would show him the vanity and awfulness of sin, and then show him mercy. It was after A.B. had been here for a few years, that there came the discovery that he had cancer. Then there was the removal of his lung, and the subsequent spread of the disease to various parts of his body, and all the treatments and procedures that he went through. It really has been a journey of faith for him, and far as I can see, somewhere in the process of those difficulties he began to trust in the Lord Jesus in a saving way. He began to pray and read the Bible. He would come and ask me for copies of Our Daily Bread to read, and he would begin to speak of the Lord’s help to him personally. And he wanted to tell others around him of his faith in Christ. In the time of these afflictions that he was passing through God led him all the way.

I know that there are many here today who can remember A.B. from the years before he lived up here, and they would be able to tell us more of what he was like during that time period. But I would like to state to you that I believe that although A.B. may have had a general faith in God during that time, and had a number of godly people who were great and good influences in his life, that he really did not come to know the Lord until recent years. That is my perception. A.B. was a sinner like we all are sinners, but there were points in his life, if the truth be known, that sin was working strong in him, and it would turn him away from pursuing a close and constant relationship with Christ. But in recent years, he began coming to church here, and least from my own perspective, he evidenced a saving change; a love for the Bible and a desire to talk about spiritual things. He began to evidence a real trust in God. A.B. loved his wife Brenda dearly, and every time a diagnosis came in which was going against him, he would try to reassure her that they needed to trust in the Lord for help and a good outcome.

Let it be known this morning that it is not just some people who need to be saved by Christ; it is all people who need to be saved by Christ. And once you exercise faith in Jesus for the salvation of your soul, you will become a person of praise. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. A.B. came to know the reality of all this because he was trusting in Jesus. It is by simple faith that Christ is received. It is by faith that you come to Christ for salvation. It is by faith that you begin to experience the reality of all the blessings of salvation, in which all of the sins that you have committed in the past are forgiven, and a new heart is given to you so you will want to learn to live in a different way from the way that you lived before. You may have been a drinker and a brawler before, but when Christ comes to set up shop in your heart, then you begin to rethink all of these things. You begin to see the problem is in your own sinful heart; that is why you did these things. I believe that A.B. came to realize this great truth: He very much needed Christ.

He was, as most of you know, a man of strong physical constitution. It is amazing how often the Lord showed him mercy in relation to being able to keep going over the past few years; it is something to praise God for. But you will say to me – The text says that God heals all of your diseases. Why weren't A.B.'s all healed? Well it does say this, but let's think about it in the context of the verses around it which speak of our iniquities, and redeeming the believer's life from destruction, we must conclude that the primary reference is to the spiritual disease of sin which plagues our hearts. True it is, that this body is affected by sin, and this is what eventually brings about our physical death. But Christ is the one who has borne all of the punishment due to your sin. Christ is the Great Physician, and He is the One who heals your soul and makes you whole within. It is He who will also raise all who believe in Him, from the dead on the last day, and present them faultless before the throne of God. It is because of Adam's sin in the beginning that all men are born into this world dead spiritually. It is the reason that all men will die physically too. The problem for all men is their not wanting the knowledge of God or His ways; not wanting to do His will according to the Bible, at many points in their lives.

How then can any of us be saved? It is because God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever would believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It was the Lord Jesus who said – "He who hears my word, and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life, and shall not come into judgment but has passed from death into life. This is what A.B. found for himself. This was the place that God led him to; to see that He needed Christ to be saved and to have eternal life, and escape the wrath and judgment of God. O, he may have not understood much of the theology of these things. But he came to know the reality of the truth that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man comes to the Father except by Him.

When you come to Jesus, God does not deal with you according to your sins, nor punish you according to your iniquities. Instead He looks upon Christ, and you realize that He has punished Him instead of you, when you believe in Him. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy. You may have committed many terrible sins in living your life for yourself, and even being hurtful to other people. But when you believe in Jesus, God removes your sins as far as the east is from the west. And He takes pity on you and brings you to your senses, and brings you to your knees to beg grace from Him. O let us not doubt the tender mercies of our God to all those who will fear him. To fear Him is to regard Him according to His word, to do it. And He remembers that you are dust. And so, today, I would have you trust in this great and merciful God who I believed saved A.B. Jackson, your beloved relative and friend. May you come to see the truth; that God is fully of mercy and He is very kind and good to those who will repent and trust in Him. May we receive this truth for Jesus' sake. Amen.