

# Last Lap: Engaging with our Ageing

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 17 June 2012

Preacher: Canon Dr. J.I. Packer

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let me thank you, Bill, for your introduction, and assure you that even if you never introduce me again, you'll not be forgotten.

No one has ever introduced me in the memorable way in which you introduce me time after time. So, thank you for that, and thank you, we shall be saying more about this next week, but thank you so much for what you've done, you and Betty together, in making the wheels of Learner's Exchange go round for more than a quarter of a century.

It's a proud record, and we are truly grateful, all of us. Now, my title, Last Lap, Engaging with Our Aging, tells you straight away that what I'm offering you today is not a Bible study, although there's quite a bit of Bible in it.

It's a topical talk, rather, and it's a follow-on to a talk that I gave, oh, something like a year ago, I think, here, on the hope of glory.

It is, in other words, unambiguously and straightforwardly, a talk about getting older, a talk about facing the prospect of leaving this world, a talk which I hope will send us all home with joy and hope in our hearts as we contemplate what awaits us as Christians.

[ 2 : 11 ] There are two immediate sources for what I'm going to say this morning. Personal sources, I mean.

As most of you know, a year and a quarter ago, I had hip surgery. A medical man told me, after it had happened, that, yes, it is invasive surgery in its very nature, and the impact on the system is likely to be the same as if I'd been knocked down in the street by a truck.

Well, since, at the age of seven, I was knocked down in the street by a truck, that stuck with me, and that explained to me the intense sense of weakness, which I found was part of me when the surgery was done.

And it took me some months to get over that sense of weakness, which expressed itself not just physically, that I needed a walker or a cane to move around, but also inwardly, in the sense that I couldn't do any serious thinking, and the only sort of material that I could read was like novels.

Well, that hasn't been the usual Packer story, and I was surprised to find that that's how I was feeling. Well, that, in turn, sent me back to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, where weakness is one of the key words.

[ 4 : 09 ] Second Corinthians is the letter, I say the letter because there's only one of its kind, in which Paul writes to a congregation out of an intense sense of his own weakness in relation to them.

I don't know whether you know this, but let me say it quickly so that henceforth you will. Paul wrote Second Corinthians because he was going to visit Corinth, and he wanted to make sure that the collection, which they'd started to take for Paul, then to carry to Jerusalem for poor relief in Jerusalem amongst Jewish believers.

Paul wanted to make sure that the collection would be complete by the time he arrived. He wanted to raise that point with the Corinthians in a way which wouldn't leave them feeling that this was Paul giving them orders.

You've got to collect the money because I tell you so. And if you remember chapters 8 and 9 of Second Corinthians, at the beginning of chapter 8, Paul states the basis on which he wants them to contribute to the collection, namely, and I quote, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor, that you, through his poverty, might become rich.

Remember that, said Paul, and respond to that in your giving. Yes, well, that's the line of thought that he pursues in chapters 8 and 9 of the letter.

[ 6 : 14 ] But now, writing to the Corinthians at all is a difficult prospect for him because there are two factors in the situation, neither of which can he fully assess.

Factor one, he had had to write to them earlier to prescribe serious discipline on one of their members who had been misbehaving.

He calls it his stern letter. He refers to it at the beginning of this letter. And he's not sure how deep down they reacted to the stern letter.

He's afraid that it has soured pastoral relationships between him and them. And, second factor, he knows that Corinth has been visited by teachers of the sort that we call Judaizers who were assuring the church that Paul's theology was unsound in a number of important ways and Paul himself was not the important person that, no doubt, he'd assured them that he was and so on and so on.

And these folk were generating prejudice against Paul and he doesn't know how far they've got in doing that.

[ 7 : 49 ] So there are two further things that he has to do over and above making his point about completing the collection. One is to restore pastoral relations between himself and them, shall I say, to warm up relationships that he fears have cooled.

And the second is to counter what the visitors are saying about his theology and his ministry as a whole.

And that explains why the chapters about the collection are preceded by seven chapters in which he's trying to restore the pastoral relationship and followed by four chapters, 10 through 13, in which he's coping in the way that he thinks he has to with his critics from Jerusalem who are assuring the Corinthians that he is a dud.

Well, I, as I said, I was very drawn to 2nd Corinthians during the weeks after my surgery because Paul makes no bones about the fact that he knows that folk are saying that he's weak and he's feeling very weak as he addresses the church and he wants them to know that.

And that's one factor which has led me to today's topic. And the second factor is that three weeks ago, Regent College had a conference on aging and I was fingered to round it off with a closing address.

[ 9 : 47 ] one or two of you, I think, were there and will have heard it. Well, let me say straight away, I'm not giving you an exact repeat of what I said then, but you will recognize, I think, that what I say today is a spin-off from that address.

In fact, it is, and I make no bones about that. My memory of being drawn into Second Corinthians and my experience of putting together a closing talk for the Regent Aging, the Regent Conference on Aging, those two factors crystallized in my mind to give me the outline for the talk that you're going to hear now.

Last lap, subtitle, Engaging with our aging. I am, as a matter of fact, in the phase of life that is sometimes referred to as a man's anecdotage.

So, I think I will begin with anecdotes. Yes, here we go. back in the 1940s in the days of the war, there was an entertainer named Donegan who frequently appeared on British radio.

Amongst his other entertainments was a song titled My Old Dad's a Dustman.

[ 11 : 37 ] You may know that Dustman is English for garbage collector. The English have a funny habit of using short words where North Americans use long ones.

So, My Old Dad's a Dustman and there's a chorus in it of course. But what I want to do is to recite for you one of the verses of the song.

It's stuck in my mind from the time I first heard it and it's there still. My Old Dad's a Dustman. This story must be told.

He got married last week, though he's 85 years old. I said, Dad, why'd you do it? Aren't you getting past your prime? He said, well, when you get my age, it helps to pass the time.

I'll tell you, he did it better than I could do it and he got a bigger laugh.

[ 12 : 45 ] And you have just given me. Now, yes, it helps to pass the time. Now, let me tell you that back in the 1930s, my grandmother lived in our home and how can one say it?

She was a kind of distant presence in the home. Can't say more. Day by day, she stayed in her room until tea time. Then she came down downstairs, ate with us, sat in her armchair, watched what we were doing, spoke when she was spoken to but otherwise was completely silent.

It would be wrong to say that she was making a contribution to our family life. She really wasn't. She didn't read. She didn't move from the armchair.

now that I look back on it, I realize that we were all treating her as someone who didn't count. Those two bits of anecdote, brothers and sisters, bring me to what I think, deep down, is the common attitude today to elderly people, and increasingly so as they get older.

You know there were three classes of elderly people referred to today in sociology and sociological talk.

[ 14 : 32 ] There are the younger olds from 65 to 75. There are the medium olds from 75 to 85.

And there are the oldest olds from 85 upwards. You know, people like the Queen and yours truly. The common attitude towards elderly folk, and as I said, increasingly so as they get older, is to trivialize them, really.

Trivializing old age. Treating it as the time when you are on the shelf, you don't count anymore, you're no longer significant, you should think of yourself as having been shunted into a siding, and that's where you'll be until the siding is cleared, because you're no longer with us.

the expectation is that older folk will live lives of boredom, and as you can imagine, that expectation itself generates a great deal of what's expected.

You tell people, take it easy now that you're retired, live idly, and folk do. You haven't a stake in community activity anymore, so just get used to living on your own, in loneliness, in isolation, in inactivity, without any creativity in your life at all.

[ 16 : 35 ] Face the fact that you've become useless, after all, you can't, most of us anyway, in this older age group, you can't drive a car any longer, you can't run things, others are not dependent on you anymore, you're past it, that's what you've got to face, you're past it.

You have nothing to look forward to, except, perhaps, to be well looked after, until you finally turn up your toes at the end of life.

Well, yes, I know I'm caricaturing, but I'm caricaturing with a purpose. Deep down, lots of people think about aging folks, both aging folks in general and aging folks known to them, and living in one sits quite close to them, they think about aging people in that way, and, well, all of us in one sense are aging people, some in an obvious sense with gray hair and all of that, but remember life is a terminal condition, we're all of us heading for old age at the moment, so, this is relevant, it seems to me, to all of us, and, you can see what kind of a view of life it is, it's a view of life which says that right at the end of things, well, you just drift, you have, as I said, ceased to count, you just, you're parked somewhere until life ends, well, that view of the way to live the last lap of our life is,

I conceive, as wrong as can be, you know how it is in distant races, when the racers get to the last lap, they've kept a little something in reserve so that they can put on a bit of extra speed, and I want to suggest that the last lap of the race of our life is to be lived in a way analogous to that, rather than simply as a case of drifting and being parked until you're out of the way.

Now, how do I make my case? Well, my starting point is three facts, which I assume and which you're not going to challenge.

[ 19 : 33 ] Fact number one, you and I are embodied souls, or, if you like to put it the other way, as quite a number of textbooks today do, we are ensouled bodies.

souls. What I'm saying by that is that we are personal selves, that's what the word soul signifies as far as I'm concerned, we are personal selves, who know ourselves, I know myself as me.

The me that I know is distinct from the I that knows myself, this self consciousness is integral to my being, but that's the soul.

And then the soul, the person, the self aware person, lives in and through a body, a physical frame.

you ask what her body's for, well, they are at the very least for the enrichment of life in three ways, they are for experience, we've got five bodily senses, and through our five senses, we enjoy all sorts of feelings, not all unpleasant, most of the feelings of life are pleasant in fact.

[ 21 : 18 ] And then our bodies are for expression, just think of what we get across by the look on our face, I'm looking at your faces and forming some lightning judgments, you perhaps are looking at my face and doing the same.

Yes, we express a lot by our face, and by the tone of our voice, which is a physical thing, and by the way that we wave our hands.

Yes, I haven't started waving my hands in this talk yet, but I shall, wait for it. And, as I say, this is expression which I couldn't achieve without a body, without limbs and organs with which to do it.

And so, third mode, a third mode of significance, the body is for enjoyment. Eating and drinking and all sorts of other sensations come to us through the body.

We wouldn't have them apart from the body. so, what's the conclusion to draw? Well, it's the conclusion that Archbishop William Temple drew about a hundred years ago.

[ 22 : 48 ] God likes matter. He made it. God likes bodies. He made them. Yes, right and good so far.

God is the next thing we have to adjust to. Oh, wait a minute. Sorry, I'm jumping.

Let me go back a minute. We are, as I said, embodied souls. God made us that way and it was and is good.

Yes, but the second fact that I want us to have before our mind, before I say what I was about to say, we are created, you and I, in the image of God.

And that means, it means quite a number of things, but it certainly means that we are made for the following five types of activity.

[ 23 : 56 ] how do we know that these five activities constitute the image of God? Well, if we had time for it, I'd show you this from Genesis chapter one.

You know that the decision of God to make man in his own image is recorded at the end of Genesis chapter one.

Well, in the previous verses of Genesis chapter one, we have seen God in action, and from seeing God in action, we discern what the image of God is going to be when he makes man.

Man was made for rationality. We were given minds for thinking things out. God thought out the pattern of creation.

we were given minds and hearts for righteousness. God created in a fairly call it righteousness for he looked at everything as he had made it and saw that it was very good.

[ 25 : 17 ] We are created thirdly for relationships. Relationality is an aspect of the image of God.

God is a society, the whole Bible teaches that, the Old Testament by implication and the New Testament explicitly. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

One God, three persons. God is a relational life in its very nature. And we are made for relationships.

And then fourth, we are made for creativity. God made us and God made the cosmos. us and we are only fulfilled as creativity, the making of things, devising of things.

It becomes a part of our life. And finally, God appears in Genesis 1 as in dominion over the world that he's made and he made us to be, what shall I say, his bailiffs, if you like, or his gardeners, doing our own job in managing the world in which he set us.

[ 26 : 51 ] Well, those five ingredients in creativity, sorry, those five ingredients in the image of God have to be there in your life and mine.

otherwise we are going to get bored and frustrated because our nature isn't being fulfilled. I'd like to spend a lot of time talking about that, but time doesn't allow, so on I rush.

The third fact, which I assume in my argument, is that we, who are embodied souls, created in the image of God, we, here I mean, we in this room and in this church, we are disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are believers. We are folk who, by the grace of God, have discerned the way to live to God because God has shown it to us and we've received it and we are seeking to respond to it.

And that means that we are seeking, and have been seeking ever since we became believers, to be alert to God in a whole series of ways.

[ 28 : 16 ] living in the present is part of that alertness. Discerning the significance of our present company and our present circumstances and our present prospects is part of that alertness.

In other words, we think about people and we think about life. We seek to react creatively. to every situation.

Remember, we were made for creativity, so the prayer of our hearts again and again needs to be, Lord Jesus, what is the best that I can make of this situation for your glory and your praise?

And finally, let me say, as alert believers, we have sought year by year to be helpers and contributors and encouragers and stabilizers of others.

We've sought to be resource people for others who need resources, for projects which need us as resources.

[ 29 : 38 ] We have sought to count for God knowledge that has been integral to our Christian life. Of course, that's what the Lord Jesus means when he talks about loving one's neighbor as oneself.

All right, and over the years, by God's grace, this can be said, I think, of all of us who have sought to live the Christian life in this way, we have gained wisdom, wisdom which we are now in a position to share.

So, those are the basics that I assume about all of us as I propound my thesis.

My thesis now is as follows. We have to learn to live, to go on living with our bodies, in our bodies, through our bodies, as those bodies wear out.

See, it never was part of God's purpose that we should go on indefinitely in this world. The late, great Martin Lloyd-Jones preached a sermon which was published as a tract with the superb title, as it seems to me, Life's Preparatory School.

[ 31 : 16 ] I don't know a better image for thinking of this life that we're living. I'm continuing to think of it, may I say, as it proceeds and as we get older.

This life is a preparatory school preparing us for something richer and better and fuller that lies beyond. and in preparation for the transition to that fuller, better life, this body wears out.

It was never meant to last indefinitely and it doesn't. But now, though our bodies wear out as life goes on, our discipleship mustn't.

That's the big point that I want to make in this talk. Though the body wears out, our discipleship mustn't. our vocation must continue and hopefully because of the wisdom that we've picked up as we've moved along, our discipleship will be a richer and more fruitful thing with a greater potential for helping people in shall I say, may I call them wisdom ways than we were before.

This is the Bible picture of old age as a matter of fact and have I got a moment in which I can show you this.

[ 33 : 05 ] Yes, I'm going to take a risk and spend a couple of minutes showing you this. On the one hand, the wearing out of the body is presented to us very vividly in the 12th chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes.

You know, one of the wisdom books of the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes is a title invented for the book and it expresses by its very formation the thought that the speaker is a preacher and a teacher and a philosopher and a wise acre and a pundit.

He has a reputation, as you probably know, as a pessimist, but in fact he's a realist. And in chapter 12 of his book, he is being realistic about old age.

He begs the young person to remember the creator and get into godly habits in the days of the youth.

Before, and now I'll begin to read, before the evil days come and the years draw near in which you will say, I have no pleasure in them, before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened, that is, before joy in being alive fades because physically the burden is increased, and the clouds return after the rain, worries come to dominate your thinking, in the days, in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, that's the arms and the hands getting shaky, and the strong men, that's the legs, are bent, and the grinders, that's the teeth, cease, they cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows, that's the eyes of course, those who look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut, that's deafness developing, you see, the doors on the street are shut, when the sound of the grinders is low, chewing with a few teeth that you've got left as an effort, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, sudden small noises are upsetting in the way that they never used to be, and all the daughters of song are brought low, music even becomes a bore, and they're afraid of what's high, see the balance goes, dizziness replaces it, and terrors are in the way, scared of everything, the almond tree blossoms, that is the hair turns white, the grasshopper drags itself along, their walking becomes erratic and unsteady, and desire fails, emotionally, they become number and number inside, and it's all loss and weakness and apathy, and that's the end of the story under the sun, that is in this life, says the writer, sounds pretty grim, doesn't it, but he's being realistic, one way and another, all of us sooner or later, have to deal with the difficult bits of aging, and there he is listing difficult bits for our reflection.

[ 37 : 10 ] Okay, what then are we going to say? Well, first of all, let's be realistic, as he is realistic, and recognize that the wearing out of the body can't be avoided, even if the wise acres of our time are right in thinking that human life through wise use of drugs could be extended to 120 years, well, even if so, I very much doubted myself, but even if so, you'd have to face physical decline at the end of 120 years, you couldn't avoid it, and physically, of course, we get impaired with disease and malfunction and deformity, and some of us get crippled permanently, and mentally too, there's a wearing out.

Cognitively, troubles come, we know about schizophrenia, we know about memory loss, we know about dementia, some people have always been at a disadvantage with things like Down syndrome and autism, and temperamentally, depression comes, delusions come, we are coming apart at the seams, bodies wear out.

yes, I know, I'm being lurid about it, but I do want to make the point, none of us is going to escape scot-free from all these troubles.

All right then, that's the third, that's the thesis, that's the first part of the thesis that I'm affirming. Our bodies will wear out and close down, but our discipleship, so I'm urging, must go on.

And where do I look for proof of that? I look to the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians, particularly in chapters 4 and 5.

[ 39 : 35 ] Some of you have Bibles in front of you, and they like to look this up and follow, but you don't need to have a Bible open in front of you, for I shall read everything that is significant, at least in my estimate.

And I'm going to pick up at chapter 4, verse 16, where Paul is in the middle of a passage in which, having said, we preachers of the gospel of Christ have a tremendous privilege, because our ministry is a ministry of the Spirit.

He said that in chapter 3, and he said it again in chapter 4, but now he says, there is, however, another side to the ministry of the gospel.

People treat us ministers of the gospel extremely badly, and in the first, or sorry, not the first part, in verses 7 through 12 of 2 Corinthians 4, he talks about that.

Speaking to the image, we have this treasure in jars of clay, verse 7, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

[ 41 : 00 ] We are afflicted in every way. Jump now, however, to verse 16. We do not lose heart.

Though, now, I'm reading the ESV, and frankly, I don't think this is a very good translation. What it says is, though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

what Paul actually wrote, coining a phrase for the purpose, is, though the man outside us is wasting away, that is, our physical frame, the man inside us, the personal self, that's what he means, is being renewed day by day.

This slight momentary affliction, he says, is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. As we look, that's with the eyes of the soul, not the physical eyes, as we look spiritually, not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

And then he launches, into an illustrative passage, which makes the point, I think, very vividly indeed.

[ 42 : 41 ] He uses three pictures. There's the picture of new housing, and then the picture of new clothing, and then the picture of new connecting, or new relating, those are the realities that await us, says Paul, beyond this world.

These are the realities which the last lap of life, then, will lead us to. Let me continue to read.

Paul is a tent maker by trade.

I expect you knew that. And here he is contrasting life in a tent, which he knows all about, as a tent maker, with life in a house.

Would you prefer to live in a house or in a tent? Surely, all of us know the answer to that one. We have a house awaiting us.

[ 43 : 59 ] We shan't be living in a tent any longer. Verse 2, In this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we shall not be found naked.

While we are still in this tent, which certainly we are going to leave behind eventually, while we are still in this tent, we groan being burdened.

Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Here, actually, the imagery gets a little bit out of hand.

The verb that Paul uses for being further clothed is the word that you'd use in Greek for putting on a raincoat or something like that over your indoor clothing because you're going out into the wet.

We know all about that here in Vancouver. the thought is that the further clothing makes for a better condition than you could be in without it.

[ 45 : 15 ] And what Paul has in mind is that being transferred to the house from the tent is going to bring us into a better condition than we ever knew when we lived in the tent.

Get it? We have new housing. We have new clothing. And verse 5 says, He who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Spirit in our hearts and the reality of life in the Spirit as we know it is preparation for this newer, richer, better life to which the last lap of this life is going to lead.

And he carries on. So, verse 6, so we're always a good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, note that phrase, at home in the body, we are away from the Lord for we walk by faith, not by sight.

But yes, we are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. We look forward to what's coming.

[ 46 : 43 ] We look forward to a connection with Christ, the enjoyment of his company that will be ours when we're living in the new house, whether it is when we're clothed upon in the way that we're going to be.



Yes, we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So, practical conclusion, verse 9, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

We make it our aim to please him. Our discipleship goes on of set purpose because it is through faithful discipleship that we please the Lord who has saved us.

And the idea that discipleship can slack off at the end of our physical life so that we are no longer the zealous active helping Christians that once we were that idea is mistaken.

Oh, granted, a lot of the things that we could do physically when our body was our tent was in good shape we can't do now that the tent is not in such good shape.

[ 48 : 14 ] well, that's the way of tents, they do wear out, eventually they leak and become quite burdensome to live in. But vocational discipleship must go on and indeed if possible be intensified now it depends on the state of our body whether we are able to do this.

But as far as possible we take it on, we intensify it, we have it going on up to the limit of what we're capable of.

And that's the way to finish well in this world as we move towards the finishing line. time. So, what are we going to say about our prospects?

Well, let me offer you a shower of paths for thought that will enable us to get as much of a grip as we can on what awaits us.

think of heaven, think of the coming glory by imagining, well, imagine four things.

[ 49 : 52 ] Imagine the eliminating of bad things and sad things and weakening things from our lives.

Imagine, secondly, the extrapolating of good things that we know here and now just as far as they can be extended so that one is always enjoying good things as far as they've got and always expecting better yet in the beyond.

Imagine, then, thirdly, the eternalizing of advances, advances in learning about God, advances in loving, loving God and loving others, advances in serving God and others, advances in creating things, for creativity, remember, is part of the image of God, going forward in every worthwhile activity that we know.

Heaven will be like that. The best will always be ahead of us, the best yet to be. And imagine, finally, though we can't get very far along this line, enjoying intimacies with the Father and the Son when we are at last at home with the Lord.

Think in those terms when your mind turns to heaven and the prospect before you and you will agree with me, I think, this is a prospect worth going after with every bit of energy and focus of which we are still capable.

[ 52 : 25 ] Let our discipleship then go on just as far and as fast as it can as we get older. And then, let me read you something which I read to you before, and you recognize it as soon as you hear it, I think.

then we may hope that as the time comes finally to leave this world, we shall be found thinking and saying something like this.

The thoughts of what I'm going to and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side doth lie as a glowing coal at my heart.

I see myself now at the end of my journey. My toilsome days are ended. I'm going now to see that head that was crowned with thorns and that face that was spit upon for me.

I formerly lived by hearsay and faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself.

[ 53 : 46 ] That's Mr. Standfast as he crosses Jordan at the end of Pilgrim's Progress, part two. And I can't wish, hope, for anything better to be in my heart when the day of transition comes, and I hope that it will be the same for you too.

this is what I wanted to share with you about living the last lap of our life here on earth and coming to terms with our aging.

Okay, we can discuss. Let's do that. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Any thoughts? Sugar.

This has been helpful and spoken from the point of view of an aging person to a lot of us also in the, well, not the oldest.

[ 55 : 01 ] older. No, no. The younger old. I think the part of scripture that cheers me about this age and stage is the part I was expecting you to read at the end of Ecclesiastes and you left out the best line, which is, then shall the dust return to the earth and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it and so that's the piece of me the piece that is able to relate to others and to God that is not going to die Amen Thank you for that Shiva I think it's interesting the weight of glory struck me because you know the obvious thing for our family that's come up this week is this whole euthanasia question and what Canada potentially would like to do and it seems to me that recognition of the weight of glory in God's creation and personhood and knowing who

I am in that you know that we know where we're disobedient we know when we need to cleave unto our God and we've known that about ourselves for a very long time and the recognition you know I am aging and it's humiliating in some ways but I know myself still as that same little ragamuffin that I was when I was five and you know the recognition of the weight of glory in who we are when we encounter one another is something that I think we need to have great respect even if we appear to be being lost you know when someone loses their marbles so to speak we need to be taught to recognize the weight of glory of who it is that God made us and and if we lose that as a culture through materialism that is when we will go awry and I think it behooves all of us here to keep that trueness of recognizing

God's glory in in who we all are when we when we encounter one another even as we stand up to leave this this place it is the weight of God's glory in us that makes the reality of who we are and I I find that very exciting because you can recognize that weight of glory in a person with Down syndrome a person who has lost their marbles at the end of their life you know there's a mystery there and I I I find that exciting and we need to exercise who God made us keeping right up to the end as much as we can and be faithful to who God made us anyway I'm not asking the question I'm just I I get excited by that well you're speaking wise words Nora and thank you for them when you're sitting on a seesaw with someone else if they are lighter and further out at the end in other words to achieve balance sometimes on one side somebody's sitting closer and somebody's sitting further out a lot of what you've been talking about has to do with the interrelationship of the mind spirit soul and we don't have as many words for the other the body and one of the things that

I have come to I really in our you know when we recite the creed one of the things that stands out to me personally is the resurrection of the body and maintaining a balance on those two topics I think is difficult because we see the body ending and I wonder what your comment on that would be because I see more on the soul spirit mind end of the sea salt than I do on the body end I should I think have put in explicitly my belief that the house reserved for us in heaven the house that we shall put on one day is the resurrection body and that the resurrection body will have none of the limitations that this physical body has

I mean the limitations that force you sometimes to say oh I wish I could do that but I can't it'll be a body in other words which will enable us to do everything that in fact in glory we should want to do the marriage if you like between the soul and the body will be perfect and as this body I said about half of this didn't I as this body provides us with all sorts of possibilities of creativity and enjoyment which wouldn't be ours if we didn't have bodies limited though these bodies are in the world to come it will be

[ 61 : 40 ] I say like that only more so because there will never be cases of our wishing we could but physically we find that we can't that won't be part of the experience of heaven I think that the line of thought which goes right the way back to Plato which supposes that the self the soul if you like will be happier without a body is a complete mistake and I should have I should I think have nailed it as a mistake in the presentation sorry I didn't that's that's that's my response to you and I hope you hear it as a very positive response everything that in heaven we shall want to do we shall be able to do isn't that terrific with even in evangelical circles with putting this world right or putting one's life now right yes

I think you're right I think that there was an unfocused but very powerful reaction against what we might call heavenly mindedness as a Christian condition about the turn of the 20th century the turn of the 19th century partly because the various forms of socialist politics which had emerged in the previous half century since Marx started writing they all focused on putting straight scandalous things in the present and invidious things in the present you know social divisions which how can

I say it which put down great sections of the community and all that sort of thing and evangelical Christians Bible Christians they saw that the world was shifting its thought to focus on making this world and this life better and they felt I don't think this was ever put into words but they felt we must show them that the Christian life is better than any secular reconstruction of the social life for the poor or whoever it is and so the emphasis in Bible teaching shifted to what a wonderful experience the Christian life is and we've had a hundred years of that and the lopsidedness of it is now apparent because we are like you say out of the habit of thinking about the life to come and realizing that this life is when you get right down to it a preparatory school for that and it does mean that

Christian people when it comes to facing death discover suddenly sometimes they're not prepared for death they don't know what to think about it they don't know what to expect and they begin to panic inside bad news bad news so there is an imbalance needing to be adjusted there yes I do think so could you comment on the physical reaction to the joke you had originally of marrying a baby bad because the problem of remarriage and how do I relate to my former wife that sort of question I think it's a real one as far as thought about it yes it is and it isn't a question that

I'm particularly skilled to answer I mean I've only I've only known the blessing of one wife 57 years and on we go you know I think though that well it's obvious and I don't need to dwell any further on it simply to get remarried as a convenience so that you'll have somebody to make the bed and do the washing up and you won't have to do it yourself that's inadequate as an ideal and the other side of that point is that if I plan if I'm bereaved and I plan to remarry well I must plan right from the start that the new relationship will be every bit as rich and how can I say it inclusive as was the original relationship with the spouse that I lost and

[ 68 : 10 ] I think and perhaps you think too that there's a great deal of self ignorance and self deception that threatens our minds at that point and I think that's all I can say really in answer to your question it's very tricky ground were you going to contribute something from your standpoint well I believe what he says and I think that the way to understand it is that in heaven though I suppose we should be conscious that there are such things that there is such a thing shall I say as two genders part that's part of

God's creation the relational exclusiveness of marriage monogamy in this life will no longer be a part of the part of the heavenly experience simply because the how can I say the pattern of friendship fellowship mutual appreciation will enfold and indeed blot out the sense of exclusiveness I think that the pattern of serial marriage in the

Old Testament law which Jesus had been confronted with that's one of the many things in the Old Testament that's superseded already in the new and well I don't know how much I don't know how much more I can say since I'm uncertain I better stop talking I think but I am sure that Jesus was being oh sorry when Jesus said they won't marry or be giving in marriage in heaven they'll be like the angels he's promising us something better richer somehow more glorious than we've known in earthly marriage rather than implying that something we've known in earthly marriage will not be there and we shall go through eternity wishing that it was can we leave it there that's just a formula yes please some people today have this very sort of flip attitude towards aging oh they'll just say oh aging is just a number in a way just a marriage and then people will say oh definitely better than what we think it's easy like it's just not thinking so the whole concept is like kind of minimising to look as though oh well it's just nothing to it it's a piece of cake don't worry about it it's all fictitious kind of thing let's drift well I can yes I can think of a better ambition than simply let's drift anything that comes under the heading of trivialising life as it goes on implying that is that the longer life continues the less is its value that is very much the way of the world which measures us all by what we can do you know but it's utterly contrary to the bible view of things it's best I can offer you on that

Terry one of the things that I've taken away from this morning is even though the physical body begins to fail us the imperative is to continue that relationship and grow that relationship you have with God but the discomfort that I have with society is that works if your mind is still clear and we haven't quite grasped what to do with people who we think have lost that ability to make that connection and you speak of people who might have Alzheimer's and they that's a memory problem it's not an associative problem it's not an ability to make a connection with God but when we look at the patients with

Alzheimer's they we treat them a lot differently because we feel that they cannot do a lot of the cognitive things that we expect and there is a there is a discomfort within our society I don't think we've dealt with that and how do they relate to God well we all of us relate to God according to God's pattern of redemption and renewal through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith we are linked with Christ and with that pattern of renewal and the fullness of that pattern of renewal will only in any case appear in the life to come I mean none of us we're all of us work in progress none of us has got to the stage which if you'll allow another joke which

[ 75 : 17 ] Billy Graham's wife right at the end of her life in her last illness when she knew that she was near to death she said that she'd got to on the basis of a notice that she had seen apropos that she'd seen apropos of road repairs that were going on in the neighbourhood the notice said end of construction and her comment was that she believes she's near the end of construction and is glad to be because the construction will very soon be complete and it will be of course for all of us we shall receive the new house that's waiting for us the new body the resurrection body and we shall find that in our resurrection body we can do all the things that we've mentioned and we shan't have any of the difficulties that we do sometimes have with this body so everything we shall find will be infinitely better it's unimaginable but it's glorious

I mean unimaginable things can be glorious it will be better than I can think or you or anybody meantime what we must do I think with people who are cognitively impaired is remember that they were made in the image of God same as we were same as we are I better say and we honour the image of God in them so we show them respect and we show them love that is in their case we show them all the affection and goodwill that we can think of that they will appreciate that varies I know from case to case again we are not very good at that in our society we've got lots of institutional arrangements for looking after folk like

Alzheimer's patients from the standpoint of keeping their bodies going but relationally in terms of helping them to make the most of the shall I say the mental ability that they've still got or sometimes got because with Alzheimer's it's in and out isn't it sometimes they're with you and sometimes they aren't it's one way affection that they need I mean that's the best we can give them and public arrangements for one way affection and that kind are very limited in the nature of the case they have to be because apart from the grace of God people aren't up to showing one way affection on a long term basis simply simply aren't and it seems to me that this is an area where the Lord's people perhaps in particular the Lord's elderly people could have a major ministry which at the moment they're not having but that opens a very large subject for discussion and we can't do that at this stage of this morning's talk and well in any case

I couldn't lead that discussion if it were opened I should call on medical people to help me I should need to so that's the best I can do on that one Bill is standing and you know what that means oh wait a minute I think what I'm getting on this is that it doesn't matter what sort of earthly conditions the body has the connection between God and his creature doesn't break no it doesn't because it's all that line I mean he's always connecting with that inner person in there that he created whether we can or not that's right and the fullness of what he has in mind for us will not in any case appear in this world the fullness lies beyond this life is a preparatory school getting us ready for that

Bill did you want to say something yes thank you very much Dr. fell go andší■ à L■ in zoo