

2 Corinthians 4 v16

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[0 : 00] Psalm 29. That's from the beginning to the verse marked four.

That's the first five stanzas. The tune is Gainsborough. Psalm 98. O sing a new song to the Lord, for wonders he has done. His right hand and his holy arm the victory have won.

The Lord declared his saving work and made it to be known to all the nations of the world. His righteousness is shown. Psalm 98 from the beginning to the verse marked four.

That's the first five stanzas of the psalm. O sing a new song to the Lord. O sing a new song to the Lord, For wonders he has done.

His light of God is holy on. The victory has won.

[1 : 19] The Lord declared his saving work and made it to be known.

To all the nations of the world, His righteousness is shown.

His steadfast love and faithfulness, He does remember well.

The cross of the will of the Lord, His prawdó stessona. And he made with him the hearts of Israel.

And all the nations of the earth And seeing what God has done Our God who brings me in my hands I live in my time alone Acclaim the Lord, O all the earth Shall love thee and rejoice Make music and be true and love To hear the heart of your voice

[3 : 32] Let's pray together. We come once again, our Father in heaven, with one collective voice praying for your meeting with us here on this occasion.

We give thanks that this is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it, That we will join together with your people all over the world As they sing a new song to the Lord Because he has done wonders.

And when we contemplate the wonderful, unique works and power of God Not only in the way in which you have created this world And despite our fallenness Have chosen a people for yourself But you have so loved the world That you gave your Son That whosoever believes in him Should not perish But have everlasting life We want to stand in that everlasting life this evening Rejoicing in you Because we have a reason to rejoice We give thanks for the new birth And the new creation That if any man, if anyone is in Christ He is a new creation The old has gone And the new has come Everything has been made new We pray, Lord, that we will discover What that new life is all about Particularly as we make our way through this world Help us to think Every choice and every decision And every situation that we find ourselves in We pray, Lord, to think the new person

The person that you have created us And the person who you are shaping And forming and forging Into the image of Jesus Christ Lord, we pray that he will be our example In everything we do We pray that you will help enable us Show us how to put him first And to glorify him in everything that we do And show us, Lord, that it's only as we do so That the world outside Our friends and our neighbors And the people that we know Who are not Christians That they will notice The fulfillment that lies within the Christian life And will note, like the disciples of old That we have been with Jesus Teach us how to be with Jesus Teach us to pray We ask the same question That the disciples asked of Jesus Teach us to pray And teach us, O Lord, not to To think that God requires A form of prayer As if it was some kind of Dead orthodoxy or formality

But we pray, Lord, that our prayer Will be full of zeal and thanksgiving And full of earnestness Lord, we remember how earnest Your people were in the Bible As they came to you And as they poured out their hearts before you And so we want to be earnest this evening We want our worship To reflect what God means to us We want to sing to you With our whole heart And put all of our being Into what we sing We want to come to you, Lord, this evening Giving thanks for all your wonders Your greatness Your love towards us And teach us, O Lord, that that love Is...

[6 : 46] It has changed People who were dead in trespasses And sins like ourselves Who were incapable of saving ourselves Show us and teach us, Lord How to approach you And show us, Lord That we have direct access With the Father And we thank you, Lord For the fact that you love your people To come to you in faith Believing that you are And that you are the rewarder Of those who earnestly seek you We also want to pray tonight For anyone amongst us Who still hasn't taken that step of faith In which they surrender all to Jesus And once again praying that Your word will speak to them powerfully We believe that your word Does not...

It does not return to you void But that it does accomplish that Which you purposed it And we pray the same tonight, Lord Here in our church And elsewhere Wherever your word is preached We give thanks, Lord, for it And we thank you that your word Is powerful and perfect And infallible and inspired We pray that your word Will take hold of each one of us tonight And will deeply affect The way we think and act And what we are Lord, give us to see the grandeur And the splendor of what Jesus did When he gave himself on the cross Give us to see the grandeur The perfection of the kingdom That awaits your people Even beyond this life We give thanks that Jesus promised That he was the resurrection And the life And that if anyone would believe in him Though he were dead Yet he would live And those who lived and believed in him Should never die Teach us to prepare

To be prepared for death Because it will come to each one of us Whether we are young or old Our Father in heaven We pray that this evening As we contemplate The process of aging Which must come to all of us We pray that we will never forget That some of us May not age any further Than we have done already And that we may be taken from this world At a moment's notice And that we may be transferred From this life And everything that we know And depend upon And everything that means everything to us In this world To eternity itself So Lord We pray that this will be an opportunity Perhaps our last As we stand before you And as we think about How serious the issues are Of being ready for To meet with the Lord Show us Lord That we must all appear Before the judgment seat of Christ And we pray Lord That that will not That that will not be a verse

That that forces anyone But a verse that brings to them The reality of the fact That we are accountable to you Lord we pray that That we will not be That we will not imagine That that the Christian faith Is a matter of coercion And forcing against anyone's will Or even frightening Against anyone's will But we pray Lord To be persuaded By the greatness Of what you have done for us The love of God Shown to us In the death of Jesus Christ Our Father in heaven May we see that love And accept it And may we turn to you And be saved As we pray Lord For the whole of Stornoway This evening We pray that you will work In the hearts and minds Of those who have no thought This evening of coming to church Or hearing your word We pray that that will change That as they sit in their homes Or gather with their friends Or wherever they are this evening We ask Lord

That you will place Within their hearts A longing And a discontentment With what they have in this world And a knowledge That there is more To this life Lord That they have been created To glorify you And enjoy you And as long as they fail To do so They will not have life To its full They will not have Abundant life Or eternal life Our Father in heaven We pray that you will Break down every barrier That is erected Between the human heart And the voice of God And we ask Lord That you will move Richly and powerfully In our town And in our neighborhoods And in our country We pray Lord That you will return to us And that you will pour out Your spirit upon us And once again Lord We plead with you That you will bless Those who are Those who are serving you abroad We once again We ask Lord For countries that we know So little about We think of

[11 : 37] South Africa With the country With which we have had A close connection For many many years We think of the Free church in southern Africa And ask Lord For every one of their Congregations And those who labor there And those who Go from From city to city And house to house And those who are Elders and ministers And members Of brothers and sisters In the Lord Jesus Pray for the Dumasani College And those who are Teaching there And the students there As they prepare For ministry We want once again Lord We want to see Countries like South Africa And indeed other African countries Flourishing We pray Lord For those We pray for The other places Lord Where we have had A connection We think of Marsalee Campbell's work In Uganda We think of The connections That we have had In Kenya Our father in heaven We pray Lord For the The people That we have heard From Sudan And many other places

Lord In that vast continent We pray That you will Work mightily From From one country To another In that continent And bring people More and more people And strengthen The church As it is Our father in heaven These things we ask In Jesus name Amen Our first reading is From 1 Corinthians On chapter 15 Page 1157 Verse 35 Page 1157 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 Verse 35 But someone will ask How are the dead raised With what kind of body Do they come You foolish person

What you sow Does not come to life Until it dies Unless it dies And what you sow Is not the body That is to be But a bare seed Perhaps of wheat Or some other grain But God gives it a body As he has chosen And to each kind of seed Its own body For not all flesh Is the same But there is one kind For humans Another for animals Another for birds And another for fish There are heavenly bodies And earthly bodies But the glory of the heavenly Is of one kind And the glory of the earthly Is of another There is one glory Of the sun And another glory Of the moon And another glory Of the stars For star differs From star in glory So it is With the resurrection Of the dead What is sown Is perishable What is raised Is imperishable It is sown In dishonor It is raised In glory It is sown In weakness It is raised In power It is sown A natural body It is raised A spiritual body If there is A natural body It is also A spiritual body Thus it is written The first man

Adam became A living being The last Adam Became a life Giving spirit But it is not The spiritual That is first But the natural And then the spiritual The first man Was from the earth A man of dust The second man Is from heaven As was the man Of dust So also are those Who are of the dust And as is the man Of heaven So also are those Who are of heaven Just as we have Born the image Of the man of dust We shall also Bear the image Of the man Of heaven I tell you this Brothers Flesh and blood Cannot inherit The kingdom of God Nor does the perishable Inherit the imperishable Behold I tell you A mystery We shall not all sleep But we shall all be changed In a moment In the twinkling Of an eye At the last trumpet For the trumpet Will sound And the dead Will be raised Imperishable And we shall Be changed For this perishable Body must put on The imperishable And this mortal Body must put on

Immortality When the perishable Puts on the Imperishable And the mortal Puts on Immortality Then shall come To pass the saying That is written Death is swallowed up In victory O death Where is your victory O death Where is your sting The sting of death Is sin And the power of sin Is the law But thanks be to God Who gives us The victory Through our Lord Jesus Christ Therefore My beloved brothers Be steadfast Immovable Always abounding In the work of the Lord Knowing that In the Lord Your labor Is not in vain Amen I'm going to turn now To page 353 Of Sing Psalms And sing in Psalm 92 The traditional version Verse 12 Down to the end Of the psalm Four stanzas Psalm 92 Page 353 And verse 12

[16 : 41] To the end The tune is Effingham But like the palm tree Flourishing Shall be the righteous One He shall like To the cedar Grow That is in Lebanon Those that within The house of God Are planted By his grace They shall grow up And flourish all In our God's Holy place The last four verses Of Psalm 92 To God's praise Verse 12 But like the palm tree Flourishing For like the palm tree Flourishing Shall he The righteous One He shall Like true The cedar Grow That is in Lebanon

That is in Lebanon Those that within The house of God Are planted by his grace They shall grow up And flourish all In our God's Holy place And in old age When others face The fruit still forth Shall bring They shall be And full of sun And they be

Finishing To show That upright Is the Lord He is A God To me And deep Of all Unrighteousness Is all Together Free We're now going to turn Over two pages From where we read Last to Second Corinthians Chapter 4 And verse 16 Page 1162 Second Corinthians

Chapter 4 And verse 16 Where Paul says So we do not Lose heart Though our Outer nature Is wasting away Our inner nature Is being renewed Day by day For this slight Momentary affliction Is preparing for us An eternal weight Of glory Beyond all comparison As we look 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 For we know That if the tent Which is our Earthly home Is destroyed We have a building From God A house Not made with hands Eternal In the heavens For in this tent We groan Longing to put on Our heavenly dwelling

If indeed By putting it on We may not be found Naked For 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 He who has Prepared us For this very thing Is God Who has given us The spirit As a guarantee So we are Always of good Courage We know that While we are at Home in the body We are away From the Lord For we walk By faith Not by sight Yes we are Of good courage But we would Rather be away From the body And at home With the Lord So whether we are At home or away We make it Our aim To please him For we must All appear Before the judgment Seat of Christ So that each one May receive What is due For what he has

[21 : 51] Done in the body Whether good Or bad Therefore knowing The fear of the Lord We persuade others But what we are Is known to God And I hope it is Known also To your conscience We are not Commending ourselves To you again But giving you Cause to boast About us So that you may Be able to answer Those who boast About outward appearance And not about What is in the heart For if we be beside Ourselves It is for God If we are in Our right mind It is for you For the love of Christ Controls us Because we have Concluded this That one has Died for all Therefore all have Died and he died For all that those Who live might no Longer live for Themselves but for Him who for their Sake died and was Raised amen Once again we are Asking that the Lord Will bless that Reading to us Going to turn now To page 120 In sing psalms And we are going To sing some verses From psalm 90 In sing psalms Going to sing Verse 10

Down to verse 17 That is five stanzas The tune is Highland Cathedral I am sure most of us Are familiar with That tune We have had it A few times At the prayer meeting I am sure we have Also had it here On a Sunday But I know That you are familiar With the tune In any case Psalm 90 Verse 10 Our years amount To 70 in length Or even 80 If we have the strength And yet our days In grief And pain are past Yet quickly end Away we fly At last The power of your anger Who can know Your wrath as great As the fear we owe Teach us to number All our days are right So will our hearts Be filled With wisdom's light Psalm 90 Verse 10 To verse 17 And then To the end Of the psalm We are going to Stand to sing To the end Our years amount To 70 In length

Or even 80 If we have the strength And yet our days in grief and pain are past, they quickly end up weary nigh at last.

The power of your anger who can know, you're as a great as is the fear we know.

Teach us to number all our days alive, so will our hearts be filled with wisdom's light.

[24 : 51] Return, O Lord, how long will you delay? Have mercy on your servants, Lord, we pray.

O satisfy us with your love always, that we may sing rejoicing all our days.

In flames of our love we shall bring us high, In joy for all the years you bring us high.

To our servants may your deeds be shown, And to the children make your glory known.

Now, with the favor of Almighty God, Have I done us rich blessings of our Lord.

[26 : 14] In salvation, we work our hands of God. Yes, Lord, for us, in salvation, we shall bring us high.

Let's turn to the second of our readings, 2 Corinthians chapter 4. Looking at the passage between verse 16 and on into chapter 5, the next chapter.

Verse 16 of chapter 4, where Paul says, We do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. And then if we jump to chapter 5, For we know that if the tent which is our earthly home is destroyed, We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, If indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For 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.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, Who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee, and so on.

[27 : 43] We have been looking over the past few weeks at how Paul makes these vast comparisons To show the splendour of the Gospel.

And this really is now the last one. Literally, for Paul, it is the last comparison. For Paul, this is the ultimate glory of the Gospel. A glory in which he looks forward to the perfection of the Kingdom of God That he knows he one day will see for himself.

He will be part of the kingdom of God. He is in the Kingdom of God, but he is looking forward to the day when he will leave this world. It is not that he does not love the people in this world.

Not that he does not love the work that God has called him to. But he looks forward to the day when he will be transferred from this life into the next. And that is how he grows old.

Chapter 4 and verse 16 is almost like Paul is looking in a mirror. And he sees the contrast between him now and what he used to be in younger days.

[28 : 56] I do not even think he needed to do that. Because he knew within himself in any case the weakness that was creeping upon him day by day As he gave himself to the work of the Lord.

He was not what he used to be. He was not as strong and lively and as alert as he used to be. He was watching himself literally aging with every day that passed.

And it is as he does so and as he reflects over the changes that are taking place in his body and in his mind and his being. That he contemplates what is to come.

And that is why I would like to call what we have to say today. The way in which the apostle grows old. And the way in which every Christian ought to grow old.

Everyone who has this hope, this promise within them. Knows that death is not the end. And so therefore the process that naturally takes us to that point.

[30 : 00] It is a process that points all the way to the glory that follows that God has promised. To everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus. And who loves him. Who lives and dies in faith.

Now this is how the apostle Paul then copes. He doesn't just cope. He thrives with the prospect of growing old.

For him it is not something that he wants to just deny. But it is something that he sees as a stepping stone to glory itself. I want to look at several things in this passage.

Beginning with the very, which I want to say as the very foundation. Which is this, that the life that we have here is a temporary one. You may think well that is an obvious statement.

But I think that that is the very beginning of any reflection on how to grow old. And growing old doesn't just belong to people like me.

[31 : 02] Who are pretty much on the road in any case. People who are 40, 50, 60. If you are in your 20s or in your teens tonight. Then I remember as if it was yesterday, those days.

And I didn't think that ever there would be a day when I would look like I do today. Or be what I am today. It was all so far away. It was never going to happen as far as I was concerned.

And yet it has. And it has been like just a dream. Years and years. What you think today are going to take forever to happen.

Actually don't take forever to happen. And before you know it, you will be where I am. Before I know it, I will be where the older ones are today. And it will just be like the Bible says.

It is like a tale that is told. Like a vapor. That is here. It appears today. And that it just disappears by tomorrow. So the wise thing to do, like we were singing in the psalm.

[32 : 07] Is to count our days. So that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. This is exactly what Paul is doing. As he begins this fifth chapter of. He begins by saying this.

We know. We are aware. That the life we have in this world is not going to last forever. It is only going to last. What does the psalm tell us?

It tells us three score years and ten. That is seventy. Or if by reason of strength they stretch to eighty. And more than that. Well, so be it.

But even that is like a tale that is told. The fact is that the life that we have here has been a temporary one. If you walk through a graveyard.

And I am not deliberately tonight trying to be Mormon. I am just being real. If you walk through a cemetery. You will see lives that have been in this world. People like you and I. Who lived lives similar to how you and I live.

[33 : 09] And yet for them life has come and gone. For us life. It is here today. It will be gone. And it won't take long in happening. And Paul grabs it.

He grasps the reality of that fact. And he says this. For we know that if the tent. Which is our earthly home. He uses this analogy of a tent.

His mind is probably going all the way back to the children of Israel. Israel making their way through the wilderness. In which every day was a coming and going.

Very often God would lead the people through the wilderness. And for them it was a journey. In which they had to take up the tent pegs.

And wrap everything up. And pack everything up. And go away. It was only when they got to the promised land. That they discovered. And that they began to enjoy what it really was like.

[34 : 09] To live in a building. For the first time in their whole lives. They lived in a building. That had foundations to that building. So that was a real change.

A real contrast for them. And Paul is saying that this life is like a tent. It is as temporary as that. It is something that you live in only for a short period of time.

It is not a permanent dwelling. And it does not matter how many techniques you try. It does not matter how many anti-aging substances you buy.

Or how many processes you go through. Or how many voices you listen to telling you. This is the way you stay young and fit and healthy. All of these things maybe have their value.

But it is very limited. It is only going to have a value for a short period of time. No one can stop the aging process. The best minds in the world do not know properly why we age.

[35 : 10] But we do. It is a fact. The Bible helps us to understand. Because we live in a fallen world. It was not God's original intention when he made men and women.

Adam and Eve. But it is part of the consequences of a fallen world. A rebellious world. That we age and that we die. Death came into the world. Because Adam and Eve, our first parents, sinned.

And there is nothing we can do about it. It is amusing, isn't it? The lengths that people will go to try and live longer in this world. They would do anything to live longer.

And yet it is impossible to hold back the aging process. Life is like a tent. It is a temporary existence.

So Paul moves on from there. That is his foundation. That is his starting point. And he moves on to say this. That there is an inside as well as an outside.

[36 : 10] There is an inside as well as an outside. And he says this in verse 16. Though our outer nature is wasting away. This is chapter 4 verse 16.

Though our outer nature is wasting away. Our inner nature has been renewed day by day. You see, as well as the reality of his body showing signs of weakening.

He knows that God is working on the inside. And so he wants to focus. Not on what is happening.

Not on what he can see in the mirror. But what he knows that God is doing on the inside. Let's come back to what I started saying before. And to the way in which people cope with growing old.

It's really quite tragic, isn't it? The way in which people, they can't handle it. And I suppose if I wasn't a Christian, I would find far more difficulty in growing old than I do.

[37 : 14] I'm not saying that it's welcome for anyone. It's not welcome for anyone. It's something that, there's something natural about wanting life. Life is for wanting, isn't it?

It's what God has given us to be in this world. Death and old age are areas which are features of the human race that God never created us with originally.

And it's quite tragic how some people cope or try to cope and end up not coping with the reality of advancing years.

Some people just simply deny it. They talk in terms of, as if it wasn't there. Well, you're whatever age, young. You're 50 years young. And they talk in language like that, they think, well, and then they say, well, you're 50, I'm, I'm, I'm, you're as old as you feel.

Well, we all know how well meaning an expression like that is, but it's actually not true. You're as old as you are. And that's a fact. You can't change that.

[38 : 25] It's almost like as if in this world people just want to close their eyes to the reality of what is not only around them, but what they are experiencing themselves.

For some people, they reach a stage, usually about middle life, where they realize that they haven't done anything like what they dreamed as they were children. So they try to do it.

And they pull out all the stops to try and achieve the dreams that they once wanted to achieve. If they've made more money in their middle life, if they've advanced in their career, they want to start spending their money like crazy on doing the things that they've always wanted to do.

In an effort to make the most of life because they see the advancement of age. Other people do what's worse.

They try to be young again. They look at themselves in the mirror and they see that the age process is there and it's advancing. And yet it's not as bad as all that.

[39 : 34] They say to themselves, well, I'm maybe a little bit overweight, but nothing that can't come off in the gym. So off they go to the gym. Why am I wearing older clothes? I'm going to start wearing younger clothes again.

I'm going to start acting like I used to act 20, 30 years ago when I was a young person. Why should I give in to the aging process? It sometimes gets worse than that.

Where they discover that their partner in life, they would like to be back in the old days when they were young and free and single.

And so off they go. Leave their partner in life alone. Off they go with someone else. Typically someone who's maybe 20, 30 years younger.

In order to become young again. It's what they call midlife crisis. How tragic. How pathetic is that?

[40 : 34] For anyone to waste the rest of your life simply in an empty existence. Less harmfully. Other people, they see the advancement of older age and they want to do things.

They want to not just spend their money on what they haven't spent on before, but they want to do things like learn a language or do a degree. Nothing wrong with that.

Nothing wrong with that whatsoever. But it's yet another way in which someone may try to cope with the reality of advancing years without really facing it.

Because the only real way to face it is to be right with God and to come to believe and to trust in Jesus Christ. That's the only way that anyone can be prepared for the end of the road, which is inevitably death itself.

But as far as the apostle Paul is concerned, to set your sights, there's only one way of getting to that place. And that's to set your sights on what God is preparing for you.

[41 : 42] And Paul is absolutely thrilled when he thinks, when he thinks that in actual fact that although the mirror shows him that his body is not what it used to be and becoming weaker and weaker and slower and slower and aging more and more.

Yet he knows that on the inside, God is doing the opposite. On the inside, he's not what he used to be. He's more advanced than he used to be.

Because God has done a work in him to make him more like his savior. He's being renewed. He's being transformed on the inside.

It's not always obvious or as evident as we would like it to be. But that's what God is doing. What is it he tells us in Philippians? That he who began a good work in you will continue that work to the very end.

That's what the Christian has. And if you're not a Christian this evening, if you're not following Jesus, you don't have this marvelous reality of God preparing you and changing your character and renewing you from within as he prepares you for the day when you will be taken away from this world.

[42 : 59] What is it that God is doing? What does Paul mean when he tells us that we are being renewed day by day? What exactly is God doing in that process of renewal?

It's a very interesting question. The Catechism tells us that he's teaching us to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. Well, that's one way of putting it.

But I think another way of putting it is this, that what God is doing is replacing the image of God in us that was distorted and corrupted when Adam and Eve fell.

Every one of us bears today something of the image of God. That's how God created the human race in his image and in his likeness. But the effect of sin coming into the world was that that image became twisted and distorted and corrupted.

When a person becomes a Christian, God starts a process of change within that person in that he is renewed day by day back into the image of God in Jesus Christ.

[44 : 16] Paul tells us he puts it this way in Colossians chapter 3 and verse 10. We have put on the new self that is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. So what God's purpose in us is, is to be more and more like Jesus Christ.

And when you remember that that's why we were born in the first, that's why we're here. To glorify and to enjoy God.

That's the purpose of human existence. That's why God made us in his image so that we glorify and enjoy God. And we will find who we were always meant to be by glorifying and enjoying God.

We can only do that as we are renewed by God the Holy Spirit from the inside. For Paul, this is worth more than anything else he can find in this world.

It is absolutely wonderful as far as he's concerned. And he doesn't mind growing old. Because growing old is only one step further towards that day of consummation when he will be brought in.

[45 : 29] When that process will be completed. When God will have finished finally his work. Which is a work that he's doing in you and in me today.

If we belong to Jesus, God is working day by day to perfect that image. So that one day we will stand before him in perfect, perfect holiness.

You may think tonight, well there's a long way, he's got a lot of work to do yet. So be it. But he'll do it. He will continue that work.

By showing us how to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. So that's what God is doing on the inside. That's the first way in which Paul copes with the aging process.

He goes on to talk about something else. It's related but it's not quite the same. He says this, that there's an invisible reality as well as a visible reality.

[46 : 28] And what I mean by that is that the things, what does he tell us in verse 18? As we look 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. He's shifting focus from himself and how God is working in him to the world around us. Life as we know it here in this world.

These are the things that are seen. The life that you and I know and that we hold on to. Because it's all we have. It's all we can see.

And of course we want to cling on to this life. I don't know anybody. I don't suppose there's anybody here tonight that doesn't want to cling on to this life. We naturally, we want the things and the people and the places that we are familiar with.

And we don't know how we could cope without them in any other existence. That's why the thought of heaven is faith. Because faith looks to God.

[47 : 31] And it grounds our belief in God and in him alone. Yet there is something sentimental about every one of us. The older I get, the more nostalgic I get.

I don't know if you've had this experience. I'm not sure. But the older I get, the more I meet people that remind me of days that I once had in this world.

It's always the better days, isn't it? It's not the bad days. It's the good times. I keep on meeting people who remind me, take my mind all the way back.

And it gets worse as I get older. Some of you are older or some of those of you who are older than me, this may happen to you all the time. And I'm also discovering that I am being replaced in this world.

That life is moving on. The world is moving on. And one day I won't be there in the world. But that won't stop the world from moving on. I keep on meeting people who I knew as kids.

[48 : 36] And they've got kids. My own kids have got kids. Their friends have got kids. People who babysat. For us, when our kids were small, they've now got kids of their own.

There's another generation. It's like I've wakened up and all of a sudden there's a new generation. And I don't know them all.

I know some of them. One or two. It's like a whole generation has just appeared out of nowhere. They're living their own lives.

They're charting their own course. Thankfully, many of them are becoming, are learning how to follow the Lord. Because that's what it's all about, isn't it? That's God's covenant promise.

That's what we long for our children. That to know the Lord and to love Him and to follow Him and to obey Him. And that's the way, isn't it? One generation passes away and the other one, the other arises.

[49 : 42] I reckon I'd become totally despondent if it wasn't that I was a Christian tonight. Because all this would have no purpose for me. I would see no guiding hand in any of this.

But as a Christian, I know that this is the way that God has been working from generation to generation. He's doing all the time. The same God who gave me everything in this life.

He's making all things new and preparing me and you, if you know Him, for another life. The next life. The life beyond the grave. It's just as real as this one.

Waiting for God's people in which nothing will change. Young people will be young all their days. Everyone will be young for the rest of eternity.

There will not be an aging process. We'll all be the same. Timeless, changeless, eternal. Number four. That God, the same God, who gave us our bodies will give another body.

[50 : 45] body to each one of us who loves and follows him. What does Paul say in chapter 5 and verse 1 about the body that God will prepare for his people? He tells us it's a building. We know that if the tent in which our earthly home is destroyed, which he knows it will be, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

What does this tell me? And I want you to notice that within these words there is actually quite a lot of information. That's why it's important to study the Bible, not just to gloss over it and to read it quickly, but to study it. Because the more you study it, the more you actually glean, you extract information that is there for our encouragement and for our knowledge.

It tells me, first of all, that it's a building and that it is a building which is our earthly home.

Look at what he says. We have a building. He's going to go on to talk about a body. He's only using the analogy of a building, but it's actually a body. The same God who provided you and I with the bodies that we have in this world will provide his people with another body. But this time it won't be a tent. It will be a building. It will be as different from this body as a building is from a tent. It will be unchangeable. There won't be anything corrupting in or changeable in that body. But look at what he says. He says, we have it. It's there already. God has made it already. He's designed it. He's designed what you and I are going to look like. He's designed the very body that we are going to possess in his presence and perfection, which means that as soon as we leave this world, there will not be any perceptible time difference between leaving this world and awakening in heaven. We have it already. It's there. Present tense. It's not what will be. He says it's what is. God's already done it for us. Everything is prepared. He's waiting for us. Is he waiting for you? There's only one way to prove that and one way to be absolutely sure, and that is by coming to faith in Jesus. It's the only way we can have this hope, this promise within ourselves. It's also a building from God. God has made it his personal business to make sure that there will be a body prepared for us. In fact, it's already there, like I said. Now, when we read that this is a building from God, what does this mean?

There's so many questions that you could ask in this respect. You could ask, for example, well, is our body here in this world not from God? Did God not give us the body that you and I sit in right now in this church? The answer, of course, is yes. But the difference is that we have developed through a natural process of birth and gestation and conception within our mother's womb.

[54 : 27] And throughout the generations, there has been the transmission of sin. That's why the Bible tells us that we are all born in sin. Sin has transmitted itself through the human race from one generation to another through families so that every single person is born in sin.

So whilst it is right to say that the bodies that we have have ultimately come from God, they have come there by way of a natural human process, conception, development, birth, and so on.

But the body that God will prepare for his people as they're taken out of this life and as they enter into eternity doesn't go through that process at all. It directly, it is directly made to measure by God, the designer and builder. It is made perfectly. He has made it his personal business to provide that for us.

Here's another question that you can chew over, especially those of you who like discussing. And I hope that we all love discussing and thinking about the Bible and what it teaches.

And this is so intriguing, isn't it? You remember way back at the very beginning when God made Adam. Adam, he made his body from the dust of the ground. He used the dust of the ground as the material out of which he built Adam's body before he breathed the breath of life into him and he became a living being.

[56 : 06] And that means that there is a connection or an affinity between the dust of the ground, which is God's creation, which was Adam's environment, and Adam himself. There was a connection, there was an affinity between the ground, the earth, and Adam.

Now, here's my question. I wonder if the body that God prepares and builds for his people in heaven will be made, will be constructed by the very substance of heaven itself so that there's a connection between heaven itself and God's people.

I can't answer that question definitively or dogmatically, but it does really stretch your mind, doesn't it, to ask what material will this, is it right to talk about material? Yes, it is.

Because it's God's material, the material of this world, the substance of this world is God's substance. He made it as it is. It's his world. The earth is the Lord's and everything that belongs.

But it gets even more intriguing. He says it's from God. He says it's a house. He says it's not made with hands.

[57 : 34] It's not made with hands. What does that mean? Well, it could mean just what I said before, that there is no natural human process by which we have developed and have been born.

It comes directly from God. But there's something else in this. If you're reading this, you may cast your mind back to something that Jesus said way back when he lived in this world.

And when he talked about the temple in Jerusalem, and he said, destroy this temple, which is made with hands, and I will build another one not made with hands in three days.

What did he mean when he said that? Well, he was talking about his own body, his own life here. And he said, destroy me, which was exactly what was going to happen.

They were going to take him, and they were going to crucify him on the cross, and he was going to die. But yet three days later, he rose again in another temple, in another body, a body which was the same in one sense, and yet different. The body with which he rose was different from the body in which he died.

[58 : 48] And what this tells us, I believe, is that the body that God gives his people, as they enter into his perfection, as they enter into his glory, is a body that is connected with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It will be as different from the body that we have here, as Jesus' body was from the body that he had before he died. God is able to transform us and to create new things.

Always remember that nothing is impossible with God. And as we try to lay hold upon these great truths, we do so in faith. Let's carry on just for a few moments before we finish.

Because Paul goes on, and he tells us, he tells us that meanwhile we groan. He tells us that it's eternal in the heavens, unchangeable. It never will fade away.

There will be no aging process in heaven. But he tells us that meanwhile we groan. We groan because everything in our lives is defective.

[59 : 57] The best things in life are spoiled in some way. Am I not right when I say that? We know that the universe, something within us, a voice within us tells us that the universe is not right.

It's not just when we see disasters and wars and events which reminds us of a broken and a fallen world. We groan. We groan when we're sick. We groan when we grow old.

When others pass away. When we're left on our own. When there's bad news. When we're disappointed. The very fact that life is so full of groaning and misery is a testimony to the world that has gone so badly wrong.

And yet God has done something to reverse that process. He has sent the Prince of Peace into the world to reconcile the world to himself. To heal the world.

To bring people to himself. To renew them and to change them. And to make them into a new creation. Paul goes on to say we long. He tells us, he answers some of the natural questions in these words that God's people ask.

[61 : 03] They say, how am I going to function without a body? How am I going to function in heaven? Some people have the idea that we are kind of floating spirits somewhere. We might ask the question, well, how can we?

How can we exist in another world without what we are so familiar with here in this world? Well, Paul answers that question.

He says that we will not be unclothed, but that we will be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Another question that people ask is, will I be me?

Will I stay as I am? Well, we won't stay as we are, but will I be me? How do I know that when I die and leave this world, that God, he may take someone to be with himself, but it may be someone else, and you can't cope, and neither can I, with the prospect of being someone.

I'm the first to admit how defective and sinful I am. I fail in so many different ways, and yet I can only be myself. You can only be yourself. And the prospect of being someone else, just, it's unthinkable, isn't it?

[62 : 22] Imagine you were to wake up one morning and go to the mirror and you're someone else. You couldn't cope. You would freak out. And some people get the idea that in heaven we'll be someone else. Well, Paul answers that question.

He says, by being, he says, for in this tent we groan longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. It'll still be ours.

It won't be on someone else's. It will be us. It's you that God has saved. It's me that God has saved. Not in order for me to be someone else, a new identity or a new personality, but it's me that God has redeemed, as I am.

And God will bring me into his kingdom in safety and in perfection and in holiness one day, whenever that day will be.

we long, we long to put on our heavenly dwelling. We groan that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal might be swallowed up by life.

[63 : 32] The clothing that Paul talks about here is a very, is for while we are still in this tent, we groan being burdened.

Not that where we would be unclothed, that where we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Paul changes his analogy here and he talks about clothing and he talks about how we will put on that new body, but it's not something that will require us to put, you know how when you take off, when you want to put on a jacket, sometimes you have to take your jumper off so that you can, to create enough space to put your jacket on.

Well, Paul's language here is very different to that. It's that we would be further clothed so it's like leaving your jumper on and then putting a jacket on so that the immortal swallows up the mortal just like the jacket swallows up the jumper.

The immortal, he says, will swallow up the mortal. What does this mean? It means that we will continue as us.

I will continue as me. You will continue as you. And yet there will be a wonderful transformation. Transformation in which we finally will bear the image of the man from heaven.

[65 : 02] What will we look like in heaven? We will look like ourselves. Not losing our identity. but we will look like Jesus. Bearing his image. His identity. Just let me finish.

Perhaps I've been maybe a little bit deep tonight. I hope not. I hope I've given you something to speak up, to think about. And I hope that it's been challenging. It certainly challenges me.

because it's real. Presents us with God's truth. God's promise of everlasting life. And God's provision for each one of us who follows him.

I want us to just close by thinking of how we are to be meanwhile in this world. Verse 9 in chapter 5 tells us, so whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

[66 : 05] I want to leave you with these thoughts this evening. We make it our aim to please him. I want to ask you tonight, is that what your number one priority is?

As you continue in this life for however long we are going to live in this world, is that our number one priority to please God?

You might say, well I don't even know how to start. Let me tell you there is only one way to start and that is by believing him. The only way to please God is to trust in Jesus Christ as your savior.

Because there is only one person in whom God was ultimately and perfectly pleased, Jesus Christ. This is my only son in whom I am well pleased.

God's way of salvation and the only way is that when we trust in Jesus, he connects us to Jesus so that his death becomes a payment for our sin and so that our faith by which we come to him becomes the life that we have in Jesus.

[67 : 19] And God is pleased with every single person who is united to Jesus Christ. God says to all his people, you are my son, you are my daughter in whom I am well pleased.

That's the only way to live and the only way that we can be absolutely sure that that life will be ours. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we give thanks then this evening for all that we've been able to think about and we ask, Lord, that whether we understand fully and none of us does understand these great, great promises.

We just try to grasp them and we have such tiny minds, such defective understanding that we can't do it and yet it's real for every one of us because your word tells us that there is another place, a place of darkness, a place of punishment that we never want to ever experience.

We ask, Lord, tonight that as we try to grasp these great truths that not only we will grasp them but, Lord, that they may be ours, that they belong to us. We pray that by faith you will take these truths and make them ours in Jesus' name.

Amen. Page number 316 and it's Psalm 73. Page number 316. Verse 23 to 26.

[68 : 59] Psalm 73 is the Scottish Psalter version of the Psalm. Verse 23 to 26. Nevertheless, nevertheless continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

Thou with thy counsel while I live will me conduct and guide and to thy glory afterwards receive me to abide. Verse 23 to 26 of Psalm 73.

and we'll stand to sing. I will stand to sing. Amen. Amen.

To thy glory afterward, receive me to abide.

To thy in the heavens die, but thee, O Lord, the Lord.

[70 : 56] And in the earth, whom I desire, besides thee there is love.

My flesh and heart, the faith and faith, but God of faith we have.

For all my heart, for Jesus' name, and portion forever.

Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion, fellowship of the Holy Spirit, may they rest on and abide with each one of us, both now and always.

Amen.