

Overcoming Death

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Brothers and sisters, we've been looking at the whole business of sickness, and we talked about it for two or three weeks. We found out that sickness came as a result of us failing to receive the Holy Spirit -- the tree of life from God. It had the same effect on us as running a V8 high-capacity car engine on regular gas, and the whole thing "pings" like anything. That was the effect of lacking the Holy Spirit in our own lives. Our minds became impaired, our emotions became unbalanced, our bodies became weakened, and death set in in our whole personalities on top of sin.

I think it's very important to see that death is a progressive work. It is not simply a crisis event. It is a progressive work that leads to a crisis event, and Jesus came to save us from that whole law of sin and death. The sin was independence in refusing the Holy Spirit, and the death was that which set in on top of that.

Now you find that in Romans 8:2. God says clearly, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." It is God's will for us to experience Jesus' life, the Holy Spirit in us, setting us free from sin and from death. Not only from sin and sickness, but from sin and death. It is Jesus' work to wipe out all the consequences of the fall. So it is our privilege as children of God to walk above sin and to walk above death itself.

Now this is nothing new for God's servants, is it? All down through the Old Testament God's servants were overcoming death and were experiencing being free from the law of sin and death. You find that in 2 Kings 4:38-41: "And Elisha came again to Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, 'Set on the great pot, and boil pottage for the sons of the prophets.' One of them went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of pottage, not knowing what they were. And they poured out for the men to eat. But while they were eating of the pottage, they cried out, 'O man of God, there is death in the pot!' And they could not eat it. He said, 'Then bring meal.' And he threw it into the pot, and said, 'Pour out for the men, that they may eat.' And there was no harm in the pot."

And it was again and again God's gift to his servants to give them power to overcome death whenever they came up against it. You find it again in Daniel 3:16-27, and you remember the story probably from Sunday school days. Daniel 3:16: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.'"

"Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he ordered certain mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace."

"Then these men were bound in their mantles, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. Because the king's order was strict and the furnace was very hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And

these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.”

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He said to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?’ They answered the king, ‘True, O king.’ He answered, ‘But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.’”

“Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace and said, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come here!’ Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their mantles were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.”

Now obviously God can deliver his servants from the most obvious power of death, and he can do it whenever he desires and whenever he wishes. Now brothers and sisters, this runs right through the Old Testament. Elijah and Enoch never died. It just says, “And Enoch was not for the Lord took him,” and Elijah was translated -- went up into heaven.”

Now it is God’s will that we ourselves should experience victory not only over sin but over death. Death is as much our enemy as sin is. 1 Corinthians 15:26 says that very plainly. You remember it talks about the things that Jesus will put under his feet, and then comes to the final enemy, as God calls it. 1 Corinthians 15:25-26: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” It is God’s will that we should experience a destruction of death in our lives.

Now death can touch any part of us. Death can touch our bodies, and can bring them weakness and sickness. Death can touch our minds and emotions and can strike them with imbalance, and can strike them with impairment. Death can touch our spirits and can take the life out of our spirits. Now it is our privilege as a body of Christ always to resist death whenever it touches any part of us. So we are expected by the Holy Spirit to be experts on sensing when death is touching us in any way.

You can often sense it in a meeting, or in your attitude to another person -- death can strike at your whole relationship. I think some of the sisters have seen that -- death can strike at a relationship between you and your attitude to another brother in a moment and can destroy all spiritual life. So it is in our own situations through the week. You can be walking along in complete victory -- and death can strike right in. If you don’t resist death at that moment it will come in and will steal all life from you.

So it is God’s will that we should overcome death. It’s Jesus atonement and the power of the atonement that enables us to overcome that. Romans 5:17 has the fact of Jesus’ victory over death stated very plainly: “If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.”

Now do you see the words “reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ”? Jesus replaced our sin with his righteousness, and it is his desire to replace our death with his life. It’s his will that we should reign in life over death completely in every degree. It is God’s plan that Jesus should not only save us from sin, but should save us from any experience of death.

Now of course, many of us fall into the old trap and we say, "Well, if Jesus has overcome death, then all I have to do is sit back and wait and he'll just overcome it in me bit-by-bit." We had an old saying in Ireland. I suppose Northern Ireland is heavily Calvinist and heavily predestination in their thinking. We had a saying – you would go to a funeral and somebody would say – you didn't know what to say. Somebody would say, "I'm sorry for your trouble." That was a famous one. A complete understatement, but we said that. Then somebody else would come along and say, "Well, well, Mrs. O'Daugherty. His time had come. His time had come."

That tends to be an attitude among many Christians. They say, "Well, Jesus has overcome death. So God will save us from death as long as he wants to save us from death. And if he doesn't save us, well we'll die. That's it. And it's up to God, and our job is just to pad along and wait for the moment when he brings death to us."

Now loved ones, do you see that that is lazy passivity? If death is an enemy of God, then it is an enemy to be resisted. You don't simply say, "Well, Jesus has borne my sins, so whenever he wants to take them away from me he can take them away. Whenever he wants me to stop taking drugs he will take the craving away. Whenever he wants me to stop throwing chairs at my roommate he will take the chairs away." We say, "Jesus has borne that sin for me. Therefore I set my will against it and I resist it."

Now loved ones, that is God's will for death. Nothing can come to us from Jesus' atonement unless we set our wills for that thing or against that thing.

Now it is not the Father's will that we rest like that and say, "Oh no. Jesus has taken away death. So until God wants me to die I'm safe enough." No, the Father bringing about his will in you demands the total co-operation of your will. If you do not stand against death in your life, then death can take you before it's the Father's plan. Now we'll see later that the Father has a plan for each of us. But if you do not resist death on every occasion, until you know for certain that this is the Father's time for you, then death can take you out of God's will. So it is very important to see that death is an enemy that we resist, and the only possibility of Jesus' victory being made real in us is if we take that same relentless attitude towards death.

Now what kind of victory can we expect over death? Well, you can have victory in three ways. I'll try to go into the scripture for each of these. Either you can trust God to keep you alive until your work is finished. Or you can have the victory that when death does come there will be no fear but you'll meet it as a friend. Thirdly, it is possible, increasingly so in these last days, that some of us will be translated in the rapture before we meet physical death. Now it's in one of those three ways -- and God expects us to walk in victory in these ways.

Let's just look for a moment or two at the first one. We can trust God even in the face of the most terrible physical experiences and the most drastic physical dangers. It is right to trust God to keep us alive until our work is finished. And loved ones, there is no joy or glory in this attitude, "Oh well, I don't care. God can take me as soon as he wants."

No -- the attitude of the Christian is, "I'll stay here as long as I possibly can, and I'll resist death as long as I can -- to be used as much for God as I can." Loved ones, there are 2.5 billion people who do not know Jesus. We all ought to aim at living to 70 and I'm aiming at 85 -- but you all aim at 70 anyway. It's the Father's will that we trust God and we resist death until our work

is completed.

Now, you can look at some of the references to this. In Luke 4:29-30 you find Jesus himself doing this. He did not run into death's hands. There were other times when Jesus could have died. But he knew there was a right time -- and that was when his work was completed. Luke 4:29-30: "And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong." So they intended to murder him there. "But passing through the midst of them he went away." So Jesus escaped because it wasn't the time and so no doubt God gave him power to do that.

You find it in John 7:1. Here's a situation where he obviously avoided death. There was a time when he set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem knowing and prophesying what would happen there. But there were other times like this when he walked away from death because his time was not come yet. John 7:1: "After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him." So, he avoided Judea because he knew they would kill him.

Now there does come to some of us -- and we'll deal with it in a few moments -- there does come a revelation of when our time is due and when God is willing to release us. But until that time comes you do as Jesus did.

John 8:59: "So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple." You have to set that kind of action against the walking right into the arms of his enemies in Jerusalem. Obviously with him, there was a time to face death and there was a time to avoid it. So it must be with us. We do not foolishly walk into the jaws of death. We only walk there when we know that it is God's time. If we do not know then we pray, "It will be according to your will." But you only pray, "Let it be according to your will," if you do not know God's will. But if you know God's will then you pray strongly against death or towards death but you never pray really for death unless it is plainly God's will. If it's not that, then you resist with all the power you have.

You find it in Philippians 1:22-25, and you find Paul expressing this attitude: "If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." Many of us I think feel like that. That it would be better, obviously, to be with Jesus at this moment in a free world in a free place where there were no limitations. So it's not unique in us to feel that. We should see that all Christians feel that way. But if you will that way, and God has not told you that's what's going to happen, then dear ones, you are putting yourself on Satan's side.

A death wish is an enemy of Jesus and an enemy of God. You see Paul continuing in verse 24: "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith." So Paul says, "No. I know it is necessary for me to remain with you. So I know that I will remain for your progress and joy in the faith -- so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again."

Now loved ones, if Jesus sets your face out to the 2.5 billion people in the world, you set your face there and you trust Jesus for absolute health and victory over death until he plainly tells you that he wants you in the next world. But until then you set your face against death. That is the Father's will for us.

Now it is not Satan's will at all. John 8:44 states his will for us. John 8:44: "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him." The devil is a murderer from the beginning, and he intends to murder as many of God's saints as he possibly can. Do you see? Whenever you accept death or the working of death in you, you're really siding with Satan.

Now it's different, as you'll see when it comes to a saint of God to whom God has revealed that he must die. Then that is different. Then the saint welcomes that. You'll see that Paul came to a place in his life when he knew that. But if you don't know that, then you stand against Satan.

How does Satan really bring death? You find it in Daniel 7:25. This is Satan's method of bringing death among God's children. I think many of us succumb to this and think that it is just the working of the cross in us. Daniel 7:25: "He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High." Satan's job is to bring death into your life by wearing you out. Just wearing you out bit-by-bit. Just wearing you out with a little bit of worry, a little bit of anxiety, a little bit of wrong affection, just wearing like a drop of water on a stone, just wearing you down, wearing you down. If you don't see that and resist it, it will bring death.

Watchman Nee says this: "Sometimes the devil directly attacks believers and causes them to die. Many deaths are assaults such as these, though few recognize them for what they are. Perhaps it is merely a cold, sunstroke, insomnia, exhaustion, or loss of appetite. Perhaps it is uncleanness, wrath, jealousy, or licentiousness. Failing to perceive that the power of death is behind these phenomena, the full victory for Christians is jeopardized. Were they to recognize them as the assaults of death and resist aright, they would triumph. How often saints attribute them to their age or to some other factor and miss the real import of it all."

That's Satan's technique again, to persuade you that this thing is purely natural, that this is your personality, or this is the body that you inherited from your father or mother, and you can only expect it to do so much.

Dear ones, the history of God's children is filled with people who were too weak to live to 25 and they lived to 88. It is filled with servants of God who overcame weaknesses, and difficulties that the world said they could not overcome.

Nee says this: "The devil is a murderer. The purpose of Satan's work against the saints is to kill them. If he can add just a little anxiety to the believer's spirit, increase just a trifle the restlessness in his mind, cause the saint to lose sleep one night, eat less the next time, and overwork still another time, then he has made inroads with his power of death. Although a single drop of water is powerless, continuous dripping can indisputably wear a hole in a rock. Being well acquainted with this truth, Satan incites a little worry here, a little anxiety there, or a little neglect elsewhere to literally wear out the saints."

Now brothers and sisters, do you see it is the Father's will for us to get clear of all those things? You dare not nourish and cherish one piece of anxiety or worry for one night. Cherish it one night and Satan has made inroads in you in insensitivity. You'll be insensitive to it the next night, and it will just wear you down, wear you down.

The Father's will is that we walk in continuous renewing life. That can be you, loved ones. It is the Father's will that each day we come to the end of the day. We leave this old corpse at the foot of the cross and tomorrow morning we receive a new body and a new creation from Jesus, and we start anew. We start anew as a new creation every day. That way there is no wearing out. That way you die well. You die well and whole. It is God's will that you should experience that.

It is Satan's will that you should begin to accept a little death here, a little death there, until gradually he brings death before your time. Now, God has a time undoubtedly for us. That's different from saying we know it, but John 21:22 shows that the Father has a perfect plan for us: "Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!'" You remember when Peter saw John, he asked Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'" Obviously the Father has a time for us. Now whether that time is arranged, it's hardly arranged before we're born, and undoubtedly it's planned by God in relationship to the value we are in the kingdom and undoubtedly God plans that time.

You don't expect that time unless Jesus has clearly shown you. Some of us will know it. Many of us will not know it. If we don't know it we'll resist death until God shows us by our death that it's our time -- but until then we resist. Paul seemed to know it -- as you can see in 2 Timothy 4:6: "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Obviously Paul talks knowing that the time is not far when he will meet Jesus face-to-face.

Now brothers and sisters, it takes very clear knowledge and very deep awareness of Jesus to know that your time has arrived. You can see the foolishness of this comment, "His time had come." No, his time had not come unless he was able to tell everybody, "God has told me this is my time." But if that hasn't been the case it is probably that Satan has succeeded in stealing another one of God's children. But unless you know clearly, we resist.

Can you know? Well, normally yes. Normally, the lifespan is outlined in Psalms 90:10. That's the normal lifespan of God's people and obviously, it can be longer at times and it can be shorter. But unless you know that for certain, this is what you should trust God for. Psalms 90:10: "The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore." So that's normal for God's children -- that we'll live, all of us here will live to 70, or we'll live to 80. But that is the normal plan for us and we should resist death until that time comes.

We should be in this world as long as we possibly can for Jesus. When we go out to China, when we go to Russia, when we go to India and there are no medical facilities and we are struck with malaria, or we are struck with some other disease, or we need a surgical operation that cannot possibly be done by any doctor nearby, then we trust the Holy Spirit to cure us, and heal us, and make us whole so that we can be alive for Jesus' work. But it's always that, loved ones. We always trust God to keep us alive until we complete our work.

Now if death should come then, how do we face it? Well, we face it as people who are walking after someone who has gone through before us. We go into death following a person who has shown us there is lightness and brightness on the other side. I would testify in my own life as I've been near both loved ones and others at the point of death, that a person who knows this Jesus that has gone through death has no fear. Death is a dear friend. It is a passing from one room into another

room. It is a going to sleep and a beautiful awakening in the morning. Death for us when it comes is not something to be feared at all.

I think the famous heart surgeon, whose name I can't remember, said that even non-Christians do not fear the actual business of dying. He didn't comment on their fear of what is after death -- but said they do not actually fear the dying. Now, we not only do not fear the dying, but we look forward to what is beyond. So it's a glorious thing.

That's stated several times in the Bible. Job 5:26 is one of those places: "You shall come to your grave in ripe old age, as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing floor in its season." It just seems the right time. It just seems the right time and it is God's will that we shall come to that.

I've often mentioned to you an old grandmother that I had who was an officer in the Salvation Army. She died at 85, and that was it. A very ripe age, and ready to go, and just the right time. It was just a continuing of her work. The Salvation Army people say, "You get promoted. That's what death is -- you're promoted." I remember the old funeral in Belfast in Ireland. I suppose they couldn't walk down this York Street now without getting shot at. But I remember the funeral with the Army band lined up at each side, and her going triumphantly down the center, and no sadness or anything -- just joy all the time.

Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands was the same. Everybody was dressed in white and they sang gospel hymns. That's the way God intends us to die, so that if we do die, if some member of the body here does die, then it's a joyful time. It's a time when we come together in joy.

I remember my father's death. We have services in the home in Ireland. I think I'd like us to do that in our houses when that time comes for us. We sang the hymn: In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear. And safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here. It felt really that he was singing with the rest of us before the throne.

That's what death is for those of us who are Christians. There is no fear. There is no sadness. There is no remorse. It is just a joy. It is going from this room into really what is a better room and it is a sensing. You'll feel that you have an extra interest in heaven because there's somebody there whom you know personally. It's the communion of saints. It's the communion of saints.

Don't you feel that around here in this church tonight, that there are not only angels and archangels, but there is a whole company of heaven that sees us? I remember one dear brother in north Minneapolis who died desperately of cancer. I remember being with him the day before he actually died and there was no mention of pain. No pain -- there was just a joy. I remember saying to him as I left, "God bless you." He said, "No, no brother. God make you a blessing." That was the day before he died of what is supposedly one of the most painful diseases.

So, do you see that for children of God death is a joyful thing? Loved ones, there is no fear in death for those of us who know Jesus -- because he has already gone through it and he has prepared a place for us and we know that -- so it is a delight.

The other possibility is that we would be translated in the rapture. You see that in 1 Corinthians 15. As Layton {an elder of the church} said earlier on, you do have to live in the expectancy at any moment of Jesus returning -- because it does seem there are many signs that we are in the last

days.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52: "Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep," -- you see, some of us will not go to sleep {die} at all -- "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."

But we shall not all sleep. Some of us will be translated in the rapture. You have it in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord." Undoubtedly some people on the earth will experience that and there are many signs that we are in those last days.

But you come to that not by doing what the disciples did on the Mount of Ascension, looking up and staring. You come to that by being concerned with Jesus' work here on earth. Then when he comes, it's just an optional extra joy that you expect. We should not pray for the Lord's soon return. With 2.5 billion people who do not know Jesus? Loved ones, if there's love in our hearts for these people, then we'll want Jesus to stay away as long as possible until we get to these 2.5 billion.

Now if we have no interest in getting to them, then of course we want the whole thing closed down as soon as possible. But it's Jesus' love in us. Jesus wants them. He wants them to himself. His desire is always, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." His desire is always weeping over Jerusalem. "I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens, but you would not." But that's always the heart of Jesus. When the heart of Jesus beats within us, it's a heart that doesn't yearn for a soon return, but really, really wants time to get to the 2.5 billion.

Loved ones, that's why I say we must be about our Father's business. Do you see that? There is only one way to be found on that day, and that is not storing up our own bank accounts, or making our own futures, or ensuring our own comfort. The only place to be is with those 2.5 billion who don't know him, working there and to be found there preaching, or speaking to them, or sharing with them, or lifting them up when Jesus comes and taps us on the shoulder. That's the way he wants to find us.

Now, what brings life? Proverbs is full of things, brothers and sisters, that bring life. You might like to look at some of them. I'll just give you the references quickly and at least it will be on the transcript if you want to look up these verses.

If you look at Proverbs 3:1, you'll find that God has put promises of victory over death right through his word. Proverbs 3:1: "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare will they give you." That's God's direct command, that living inside his commandments will bring length of days and years of life.

And Verse 8: "It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones." His word will be this. Obedience to his word will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

I do believe, brothers and sisters, that it's true what we've shared on other Sundays -- that many of us who have little weaknesses and ailments would find them healed if we walked in obedience to Jesus' commands. Many of the strains and the worries that we have in our bodies we have because we are not really trusting him. There is strain, or tension, or worry, or anxiety in so many of our hearts. We're encumbered and troubled about many things when only one thing is needful, and because of that, sickness and death are making inroads in us.

You find it in Proverbs 4:20-21: "My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to him who finds them, and healing to all his flesh." Again, God promises that his words are healing.

There are more, dear ones, if you check Proverbs 10:27 and then 14:30. And just look quickly to 10:27: "The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short." Then in 14:30: "A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh, but passion makes the bones rot." "A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh," and everything that involves our turning from ourselves, and turning from our own ways, and turning to God's ways, enables him to make his will real in us.

Brothers and sisters, really the central part of it is you fight and resist death -- until the end. When God tells you it's your time, then you welcome him. But until that moment you resist death. Brothers and sisters, I don't care if your body is worn out. I don't care whether you have any arteries left. It doesn't matter how hypertension has got a hold of you. You stand against death knowing that Jesus' body is available for what your body cannot face. You trust him until that final day.

Loved ones, you can see that this is a joyful way. You know, it will be great when I'm 85 and you're 75, and we're moving, we're moving still out to the rest of the world. And if you're moving out to the rest of the world, then God can enable us to do that kind of thing and to live as long as he wants us to.

Now loved ones, any questions? This is maybe not the kind of thing you have questions on.

[Question inaudible]

The question is about the Millennial views. I am glad to say, loved ones, that I am an ignoramus really. I am trusting God to lead me in preparing a series of studies on it. But I know something about it. I'm not an absolute ignoramus, but I'm not by any means an expert on it. So I'd rather in a way wait and do a series of studies that will be complete. Yes, because I'm sure if I make a statement here there will be 10 or 20 people who will think otherwise. Brother?

[Question inaudible]

Yes, it seems to me "transfero" in Latin would be "to bring away or bring across." It means just that God lifts a person up as he did Jesus, just lifts him up from the earth and lifts him into himself. That seems to be what happened with Elijah and Enoch.

[Question inaudible]

That's right. The physical body just disappeared from the earth and Elijah or Enoch's bodies were

never found, and neither was Jesus' body ever found.

[Question inaudible]

That's right. That's right. Death and relationships with people. It seems to me that many of us in the body here, and I say this because I've sensed that some of the sisters are having some of this difficulty and the brothers must be having it in a different way. I think in the body here God has set up a great Christ-like love among us, and it is a pure love with no thought of self in it. While we live on that level then you'll find a continual openness in the body.

Now let a sister or a brother allow death to enter into that Christ-like love, and let it develop into a kind of natural crush on someone, and death begins to enter in. There is no longer any blessing in that relationship. The sister is not being a blessing to the brother, and the brother cannot be a blessing to the sister.

There have been a number of situations where brothers and sisters have found that a real obstacle -- a real difficulty. I think it's very important to really keep death away from our personal relationships. I think indeed, many of the sisters would admit that they have spent many depressing hours over this same business.

I think it's true it's the same with me. I can have it in a different kind of way, not in relationship to a love relationship at all, but I can allow something of a personal feeling to enter in between myself and another brother and sister. Once I do that, death comes in. I no longer am pastor to that brother or sister. They no longer are my brother and sister in the body. It becomes a personal relationship with all the little human irritabilities that come in there.

So I think it's very important to perceive death the moment it enters in and to drive it back and resist it without any argument at all. So those would be two examples of death in human relationships.

[Question inaudible]

Coldness between two brothers? Where there's anything but an overflowing, outgoing, spontaneous love of Jesus that is building up the other brother or the other sister -- that is death. I mean, some of us have got used to this attitude, "Oh well, love is an absence of hate." No it isn't. No.

Love is a positive wanting the other person's wellbeing and having an absolutely open and generous heart towards the other person, or wanting the very best for them. If there's a coldness or a nothingness between you and the brother or sister, that is death. It has the coldness, and loneliness, and darkness of death.

[Question inaudible]

Kirk says for him death is a shadow in the relationship, and that's good. Where there's just a shadow comes across and you can't look the person straight in the eye with absolute confidence and full love.

How does it come in and how is it defeated?

It comes in undoubtedly when we begin to say, "Not your will but mine be done." We begin to want

our way. We begin to want satisfaction out of the relationship. We come to that place. I think it's very easy in a body that has been so prospered and so blessed by the Father. It's very easy to come to a place where we suddenly say, "Boy this is great. This is really great." We sort of lay back and we say, "Well, I'm going to enjoy this."

As soon as a person begins to do that they begin to bring death into the body, and death comes into their own relationships. They begin to ride on the life of the body, and they sink into it, and they're a weight and a burden. They feel a pressure each time you come into their company.

It seems to me it comes from turning your eyes to yourself and turning your eyes away from God. God has shown me more and more each day that you have to live every day aggressively for Jesus. If you step back in the least to look after self -- that death creeps in. Before you know it the joy is gone and the spontaneous fountain flowing up to the Father is gone.

So it's defeated by getting back onto the cross. Saying, "Lord Jesus, not my will but thine be done for you. It's your comfort, your pleasure I want. This is your time."

It begins to come in when a brother or sister gets annoyed that they have to do something because it's taking up their time. That's when death is entering in. When someone asks them to do something and they're thinking, "Ah, my time. This is my hour." The opposite is a body of brothers and sisters who are going out never claiming their own time, never claiming this is their time to do what they want. The body will prosper, and will rise up, and will spread.

[Question inaudible]

Priority of commitments. Yes, it seems to me it has to be Jesus first. I've slowly learned that then it has to be your wife next. Then it has to be the work. My wife was very patient while I was learning that. But it seems to me it has to be Jesus, and then the loved one that you're committed to or the people in your immediate circle. It seems to me impossible for a person to be doing work, if it were Jean {a member of the church}, being a blessing in the bookshop -- if she isn't first a blessing with the people with whom she lives in the house. It seems to me the promise is to Jerusalem, and to Judea and Samaria, and then the outermost parts of the earth. But it's first to the circle that lives around us. So it's Jesus first and then the people that we live with, and then it's the work of God. And it seems to me the first two are the work of God really.

[Question inaudible]

Sister says I said that you would know when your time had come and it seems that many people like Marshal and the missionaries that were killed by the Indians and other people -- Wycliffe translators who were very close to God -- did not know. And sister, no, I'd just say -- no, I didn't say that everybody would know their time had come. No, it seems to me some people are given that privilege but there are many of us that God does not tell.

[Question inaudible]

Yes. They'll resist up to the point of death, yes. Then the Father -- the thing is that there comes a quiet assurance. They may say there comes a quiet assurance that this is the time, yes. And you have to realize that in the case of the missionaries who were killed by the Indians, you're working against a world of evil, and not every death has been the Father's ideal will. Often he has had to

permit a death because some of God's people, maybe the intercessors who were interceding for those men were not interceding. So you have to allow for the fact that it's wrong to say that every death of every child of God is God's will for that child.

Often I'm afraid God's children come to death earlier than they ought. But it is true that some know that it's their time and many of us will not know, yes. That's why I don't think one should be morbid about it and wonder, "Now Father, could you give me a date?" It seems to me the only way Jesus will ever let us know is when we're out after him thinking only of him, and incidentally, he will let us know sometimes as he let Paul know. But many of us will not know.

I think that this is a corny thing to do, but I would like tonight to say that I have used many men in speaking and in preaching over the years. I would like to thank the man who wrote *The Spiritual Man* -- Watchman Nee called it. I don't know if he's dead now or not. I am not a Nee worshiper by any means and I know where I disagree with him in the books. But this is the end of maybe three or four years when I've preached just through these three volumes of *The Spiritual Man*. I'd like to acknowledge the blessing that Nee has been to me and I'd just like to thank God for him. I think I owe that to him in love whether he is on the other side listening or whether he will be told by the Father. But he has been just a blessing to me and over three or four years has just been a great source of real balanced teaching. I'm not saying Nee is the be all and end all. I think Jesus is the be all and end all.

Shall we pray, dear ones? Dear Father, we praise you that you have called us to a life of victory over sin, Satan, the world, and death. And we thank you that it is your will for us to experience this victory completely in our own lives. So Father, we accept your ordinary normal standard for ourselves: three score and 10 years, or by reason of strength four score.

And Father, we trust you for health and wholeness from the life of Jesus for that time. We will abide by the rules that you give us for our bodies. We will obey your commandments, and we will trust you to preserve us to complete the work that you have set before us. And Father, we as a body would commit ourselves to that.

We think of these 2.5 billion people who do not know you, and Father, we commit ourselves to them and to you on their behalf, and we trust you to keep us alive until there are 10,000 of us out in the world for you. We trust you for this. Thank you for such a clear purpose our Father. Thank you for taking away our purposeless, meaningless, directionless lives and instead giving us a full life with a plain and simple purpose, and with limitless power to fulfill that purpose. We commit ourselves to you now for that.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and ever more. Amen.