

Shall We Know One Another In Heaven?

By Dr. Ian R. K. Paisley

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Faith Free Presbyterian Church
1207 Haywood Rd
Greenville, SC 29615

Website: www.faithfpc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/faith

Few people in this mad, crazy world in which we live, a world that concentrates on the temporal and has forgotten the eternal, ever speak or talk or discourse about heaven. I pity the man, I pity the woman, I pity the boy or girl, that never thinks, never contemplates, and never seeks in the word of God to study the mystery of heaven that has been revealed there in this book in which God has revealed his heart. I must say very plainly if you have not heaven in your heart, you'll never be in heaven. If you haven't heaven in your mind, you'll never be in heaven. And if you haven't it in your inward soul, you'll never be in heaven. I pray God, this morning, that those people who are strangers to heaven and the God of heaven may come to know him and please, God, some soul will start for heaven in this meeting today. God needs to awaken his people to the wonderful mystery of heaven and all that heaven is for those that know and love the Savior and are redeemed in his blood.

I want to discuss with you today the question that is often asked: shall we know one another in heaven? Especially when bereavement comes and separation and the shadows of deep sorrow, God's people need to reassure themselves and have their confidence built up in the sweet and precious revelation that God has given in his holy word about heaven and about the knowledge of heaven and all that goes on in heaven. Now without the Bible, we would know nothing about heaven. The only book that can reveal authoritatively what's happening in heaven and who are in heaven and what relationships are in heaven and what the work of heaven is, the only book that can reveal that is God's own precious book.

The minister read today that wonderful assuring portion in 1 Thessalonians 4. I hope you noticed the conclusion of the apostle. He said, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." If there was no recognition in heaven, how could those words bring any comfort whatsoever to the people of God, for those words are about our loved ones. We are not sorrowing as those that have no hope. What is the hope? The hope is we're going to see them again. The hope is that in the change and transformation of heaven, we will have a part with them and together we will be forever with the Lord. Now if there's no such thing as recognition in heaven, then those words are totally and absolutely meaningless. The Bible is filled with sweet confidence to the people of God about recognition in heaven and the joys of the future of the saints, "For eye hath not seen, ear

hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those that love him."

I want, first of all, in introducing this message, to give you two views of a father concerning two of his sons. The father is David. David, the man after God's own heart. The sweet psalmist of Israel. The son of Jesse. And the champion of the armies of Israel. When alas, alas, David fell into great sin, a sin that commenced with an act of adultery, a sin that continued in a stream and current of lying, and a sin that consummated itself in murder. David was restored to the Lord, for thank God there is mercy with the Lord. I was struck in reading one of Dr. Macartney's sermons, Clarence Macartney, the last fundamentalist to be moderator of the Presbyterian Church of America, and he said this: when Nathan went to meet the sinning David, he didn't go to charge him and indict him in fierce language because charging and indictment do not lead to brokenness of heart, but he told him the story of the death of the poor man's lamb, and it was that story that broke David's heart. But it's only the story of the death of the Lamb of God that can break man's hearts when they have sinned grievously against their God. And David restored, David having passed through the valley of penitence, and deep heart searching, and a cry for that, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow," that David was once more in communion with God.

The child born out of wedlock was dying. David went before the Lord for six days and did not eat, he did not sleep. He cried to God and on the seventh day the child died. David immediately arose from the earth, he washed himself, he anointed himself, he went into the house of God and he sat before God. His servants questioned him and they said, "We don't understand, while the child was alive you showed your pain, your concern, your heart brokenness for the child, and now the child has died, you changed, the brokenness is gone, the awful concern is gone, the fasting is gone, you've anointed yourself, you've come back to the palace and you're about to eat." And if you turn with me to 1 Samuel, you'll find there in the 12th chapter of that great passage about David. David, 2 Samuel 12, and you'll find that David said this in 2 Samuel 12:22 and 23, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." I shall go to him. What cheered the heart of the brokenhearted king was this wonderful fact that one day in God's heaven he will be with that child that he had mourned so deeply for. He would be united with that son of his. "I shall go to him."

But if you'd turn over in the same second book of Samuel to chapter 18, there is another son there. His name is Absalom. He was a rebel against his father. He was a murderer of his own brother. He was a committer of incest with his father's wives. And he hung by his own hair and his erstwhile friend, Joab, put the darts through his heart. And when the message came back to David in the city, his first question to Cushai in verse 32 of that 18th chapter was this, he said, "Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushai answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and

wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

What a contrast between this son that he was going to be with in heaven and the son he would never see again because that son was damned in hell. I trust the solemnity of those two incidents in David's life will have a fit application to us all, and we do not see our loved ones won for Christ in time, we will never see them won for Christ in eternity. At death, he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Even as unclean, let him be unclean still. And he that is unsaved, let him be unsaved still, and that still as a measure of unending eternity in it. May God give us a love for our families to see them won for Christ in time.

Having said that by way of preface, could I make some very simple points to you? First of all, will we know our loved ones in heaven who die in Christ? First answer: the identities of God's people are not changed by death nor are they changed in heaven. We are identified on earth by our names. Our names are our identity disks. The identity of the saints are not changed, they still answer to their names. A very simple answer but how sublime it is. In Matthew 8, the eighth chapter of Matthew, and at the verse 11, we read, "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Abraham is still identifiable in heaven. So is Isaac and so is Jacob.

Remember how Christ established immortality of human souls in a parallel sentence over in Matthew 22 when he said to the Sadducees who denied the immortality of the soul, the immortality of the spirit, and the resurrection of the body, he said there in the 22nd chapter of Matthew's gospel, and at the verse 27, he was asked the question, "And last of all the woman died also." She had seven husbands. "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying," well, Abraham was long since dead, so was Isaac and so was Jacob, but God said, "I am," not I was, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

The identity of the saints is the same in the afterlife as it was in this world. If that was not so, what would be heaven like? A place of non-identifiable people. Could you imagine it? No, my friend, our identity remains. Careful emphasis on personal identity after death and the retaining of individual names is underscored in every passage of the scripture that deals with this subject. But secondly, second answer, the personalities of God's people are not changed in heaven. How do I know that? Well, we have a series of examples in the scriptures of those who were resurrected before the resurrection day. The widow of Nain's son, for instance. He died. He was resurrected. Was he the same son that his mother had said a fond farewell to and wept over as he died in her home? Was this some new son or was this her same dearly beloved son? Of course it was. The personality was not changed because of resurrection. Brokenhearted Mary and Martha. Was it their real brother Lazarus that they brought home from the graveyard or was it some strange being

that had been through the article of death and had his personality completely changed? No, it was the same Lazarus he brought forth. Jairus and his wife, did they embrace a little girl that they didn't know when she was raised from the dead or was it the same little girl that brought so much sunshine already into their home? It was the same little girl.

Yes, the personalities of God's people will not be changed. I'm reminded of an old Presbyterian minister in Scotland and he was sitting one day in his study and his wife, who seldom disturbed him because she was warned not to disturb him when he was in his study, she came in and she said to him, "I have a question that's worrying me." And he said, "What is your question?" She said, "Dear, will I know you when we both get to heaven?" John Evans was known as a wit by his fellow Presbyters, and he looked at her and he says, "My dear, do you think we will be bigger fools in heaven than we are here? I think I know you and you think you know me. Well, we'll know one another in heaven." Yes, our personality will not be changed.

Third answer: the unity of God's people will not be changed in heaven. You know, there is a sweet and blessed unity among the true people of God. There is something that unites us all. I was in a secondhand bookstore in this city this week with my brother Rod Bell. I usually frequent secondhand bookstores when I'm about certain places preaching. And this man came in and he said, "I'm glad to see you two men here because I have a question I have longed to ask you, Dr. Bell." So Rod said, "What's your question?" He says, "Tell me how you ever got linked up with this Presbyterian man here, this fellow Paisley." And Dr. Bell laughed and he said, "I met him under the blood." I met him under the blood. That man didn't ask any other question because that is the answer. When souls have been under the blood and when the blessed Spirit of God has called them from darkness into light and from the power of sin and Satan unto God himself, and they've been baptized by that spiritual baptism into the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all, there is a strange and there is a special relationship. It is the link with Christ and we become part of the Lord's mystical body. That's the deep knowledge that ties us together.

I don't meet many Christians who ever ask the question will we know the Lord Jesus in heaven. They take that for granted. And we sing,

"Oh, the soul thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face,
And the luster of His kindly beaming eye;
How my full heart will praise Him for the mercy, love and grace
That prepared for me a mansion in the sky.

I shall know him."

My friend, if you know Christ, you'll know every member of his spiritual body. The same logic applies to Christ in the person of his incarnation and in the person of his body. Yes, the same knowledge that Christ has of all his people I will share with him. Just think of that for a moment. When you get to heaven, you will know every one of God's elect. I'll not need to be introduced to anybody in heaven because I'll know all about them in the

knowledge that God will impart. Jesus said, "I know my sheep and they know me." And in knowing him, they will know each one of the mystical members of the body of Christ.

"We shall come with joy and gladness,
We shall gather round the throne;
Face to face with those that love us,
We shall know as we are known:
And the song of our redemption
Shall resound thro' endless day,
When the shadows have departed,
And the mists have rolled away."

Fourth answer: the fraternity of God's people will not be changed in heaven. If you open the New Testament and look with me at Ephesians 3, there is a tremendous verse here in this passage of scripture and it tells us that Paul bows his knees here, chapter 3 of Ephesians. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth," mark it, "is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend," able to comprehend, "with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

There's a day when we're going to comprehend with all the saints. You've a microcosm of heaven in the Mount of Transfiguration. Now Peter had never in all his days set eyes on Moses nor had he set eyes on Elias. You notice that people didn't need to be introduced to either man. He said to the Lord, "Here we have Moses and here we have Elias." Because of the Mount of Transfiguration we have a moment there where heaven was entered and Jesus Christ revealed the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, and it is interesting to notice it was at nighttime. So in the darkness the light came. Just read the scripture and you'll find out it was the nighttime. People ask me how do I know? I've read the Bible, that's how I know.

And Elias, he had been in heaven about seven centuries, but Moses had been there about 1,500. They didn't need to mention this, they knew one another and they had a mutual conversation with Christ about what made it possible for them ever to get to heaven. The exodus that he was going to accomplish at Jerusalem. The exodus, his decease, his death. No wonder Peter said, "We want to stay here." But there was one thing that Peter failed, he just wanted a house for the Lord and a house for Elias and a house for Moses. He wanted there to be an outsider. I would have said, "Lord, I want a house here. I want a house." I would say, "Lord, let us build six houses," not just three tabernacles.

Oh, in that mountain that day there was a foretaste of heaven, and isn't it noticeable that the concentrated conversation was all about Christ, the Father that spoke from heaven, the center of his conversation was Christ. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him." What did they discuss on the mount? They discussed the cross and the blood. The highest thing in heaven will be the precious precious blood. The highest thing that's pointed out in heaven in Hebrews is we come to Jesus, "the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Praise God it's the blood that fuels the glory of Immanuel's land and the Lamb is all the glory in Immanuel's land.

There was an old man and he got up to give his testimony in a church meeting one day and he said this, "My brother and myself got saved at a children's meeting when we were just little boys. And I learned about heaven and heaven to me," he said, "was a beautiful city with streets of gold, with gates of pearl, with walls of jasper, with angels, and with a tree of life and the river of life. And when I was asked about heaven, that's what I talked about, but one day the Lord took my little brother in death and heaven changed for me. And when I was asked about heaven, I said heaven is the dwelling-place of my brother. That's what heaven is." He said, "Heaven changed. It didn't change in its building or its splendor but it changed because one was living there that I loved." And oh, thank God for our loved ones in the glory and this morning we remember them. We loved them in time but death with its cruel hand came and took them from us. Heaven to us is the dwelling-place of our loved ones, and best of all it's the dwelling-place of the greatest lover of them all, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Oh, how sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
So free from all sorrow and pain;
With songs on our lips and with harps in our hands
To greet one another again."

I remember once by the joy of leading a very wise man to Christ when I started my ministry some 51 years ago on Ravenhill Road in Belfast. This man was a terror even to his own godly companions but the grace of God reached him and the blood of Christ cleansed him and he became a most devout believer. His greatest desire was to win his wife for Christ and his dear wife came to know the Lord. They were a happy couple and then God sent them a little baby and their happiness seemed to be complete. But I got word one day that the little babe had taken ill. I went down to that home and I stood beside the cot and both of them were heartbroken because the verdict was death, and I was the link between them with one arm around one and one arm around the other and we sobbed together. And then I said to them, "Mother, father, the Lord can take better care of your child than you could ever take care of it. That child will know no pain, no sin, no heartbreaks, and no sorrow. And one day when you get to heaven, you'll be able to thank the Lord Jesus that he brought up your child, he schooled your child, he kept your child, and you'll be able to bless God for what you think today as a tragedy but in reality it's a triumph." And thank God both of them got the message, and in the darkness God put a beautiful rainbow over their valley of tears and they grew in grace and of the

knowledge of Christ. Both of them passed on and one of the things that cheered them both in the hour of death was they were going to see their little one again.

"Growing in the upper garden, flowers the earth too rudely pressed,
In that land shall reach perfection by the heavenly gardener dressed,
Where the flowers bloom forever, death can find no entrance there,
All is life and light eternal, all is joy beyond compare.

And there the buds from earth transplanted for our coming watch and wait,
In the upper garden growing just within the golden gate,
Though our hearts may break with sorrow by the grief so hard to bear,
We shall meet them some glad morning in the upper garden there."

I have sought today to bring you a message that we will know one another in heaven but the greatest joy we're going to have is the reality that those that we won for Christ on earth will not be changed. The Apostle Paul said that his converts were going to be his crown of rejoicing in the day when we reach the glory land. Well, there must be recognition in heaven if those that we win for Christ are going to be our crown of rejoicing and I ask you one question: will there be any stars, any stars in your crown? Dear child of God, are you bringing people with you to the glory land? Have you a heart concerned for your families, your friends, your neighbors, and those with whom you work? Have you a heart concerned to see them on the road to heaven? To be there, to be there, oh, what must it be to be there if we really believe that. Shouldn't we be working overtime? Shouldn't we be straining every spiritual muscle and every spiritual nerve to bring as many with us to the Promised Land?

When I was a boy we used to sing a hymn in my father's church and it was a hymn about the responsibility of the people of God. It went something like this,

"We're going home to glory soon,
To see the City bright,
To walk the golden streets of Heaven,
And bask in God's own light;
But some of you are out of Christ,
And held by many a snare,
I cannot leave you lost and lone,
I want you over there!"

Dear sinner friend, get to the cross today and start on heaven's uphill road to heaven. Wash your garment and get ready for the great marriage supper of the Lamb. And dear child of God, that view of heaven that I sought to give you today should be an encouragement and a spur to your soul that this is not our home, that our citizenship is in glory, that where our treasure is there must our hearts be also. May God help us as a church to set our affections on things above, not on things beneath, for we are dead and our life is hid with Christ and God. Amen.

Let's bow our heads.

Father in heaven, we thank thee for the beautiful city of God. We are amazed when we read the statistics that are given in the Bible that this city its length and breadth and height are all the same. We are amazed at some of the things that are said about heaven but we thank thee that there is no temple in that city, and there is no created light in that city for the Lamb is the temple and the Lamb is the light thereof.

*"I've wrestled on towards Heaven,
Against storm and wind and tide,
And there the dew of sorrow
Were lustered by his love!
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."*

Lord, may every soul here be on the road to glory washed in the blood of the Lamb. For Jesus' sake we pray it. Amen and Amen.

If you're in this service this morning and you're not a child of God and you'd like to be a child of God, we're here to help you. We're your servant for Jesus' sake. Don't go away without telling us of your need. We'll be glad to put at your disposal what knowledge we have of the word of God to show you the path to the cross and the path that will start you for heaven and for home and for God today. May God grant if you're not on heaven's road that you'll leave this meeting on heaven's road today. For Jesus' sake. Amen and amen.