

SAINTS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH ONE FAMILY

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A SERMON
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*“The whole family in heaven and earth.”
 Ephesians 3:15*

BEREAVEMENTS are among the sorest griefs of this mortal life. We are permitted by God to love those whom He gives to us, and our heart eagerly casts its tendrils around them, and therefore when suddenly the beloved objects are withdrawn by death, our tenderest feelings are wounded. It is not sinful for us to lament the departure of friends, for Jesus wept. It would be unnatural and inhuman if we did not mourn for the departed—we should be less feeling than the beasts of the field. The stoic is not a Christian, and his spirit is far removed from that of the tender-hearted Jesus.

The better the friend the greater our regret at his loss, although there also lie within that fact more abundant sources of consolation. The mourning for Josiah was very sore, because he was so good a prince. Because Stephen was so full of the Holy Ghost, and so bold for the faith, devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

Dorcas was wept and bewailed because of her practical care for the poor. Had they not been true saints, the mourning had not been so great. And yet, had they been wicked, there had been graver cause for woe. Brethren, we cannot but sorrow this day, for the Lord has taken away a sister, a true servant of the church (Mrs. Bartlett, the president of the large female class at the Tabernacle), a consecrated woman, whom He honored above many, and to whom He gave many crowns of rejoicing.

And we cannot but sorrow all the more, because so loving a mother in Israel has fallen asleep, so useful a life has come to a close, and so earnest a voice is hushed in silence. I have this day lost from my side one of the most faithful, fervent, and efficient of my helpers, and the church has lost one of her most useful members.

Beloved, we need comfort. Let us seek it where it may be found. I pray that we may view this source of grief, not with our natural, but with our spiritual eyes. The things external are for the natural eye, and from that eye they force full many a tear, for in his natural life, man is the heir of sorrow.

But there is an inward and spiritual life, which God has given to believers—and this life has an inner eye—and to this inner eye there are other scenes presented than the senses can perceive. Let that spiritual vision indulge itself now. Close your eyes as much as your tears will permit you to the things which are seen, for they are temporal and shadowy, and look to the eternal, secret, underlying truths, for these are realities.

Take a steady look into the invisible, and the text, I think, sets before us something to gaze upon which may minister comfort to us. The saints in heaven, though apparently sundered from us, are in reality one with us. Though death seems to have made breaches in the church of God, it is in fact perfect and entire. Though the inhabitants of heaven and believers on earth might seem to be two orders of beings, yet in truth they are “one family.”

*“Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
 With those to glory gone;
 For all the servants of our King
 In earth and heaven are one.”*

So sings the poet. The text tells us that there is a “whole family.” It speaks not of a broken family, nor of two families, but of “the whole family in heaven and earth.” It is one undivided household still, notwithstanding all the graves which crowd the cemetery.

To this thought I shall call your attention, hoping that thereby you may enter into that “one communion,” in which saints above are bound up with saints below. I invite you to consider the ties which bind us to those who have gone before, and the indissoluble kinship in Christ which holds us as much as ever in one sacred unity.

I. First, let us think of THE POINTS OF THIS GREAT FAMILY UNION.

In what respects are the people of our God in heaven and earth our family? We answer, in very many, for their family relationship is so ancient, so certain, and so paramount, that it may be seen in a vast variety of ways.

Let us note, first, concerning those in heaven and earth whom the Lord loves that their names are all *written in one family register*. That mystical roll which eye has not seen contains all the names of His chosen. They are born by degrees, but they are chosen at once—by one decree set apart from the rest of mankind—by one declaration, “They shall be mine,” separated forever as hallowed things unto the Most High.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

We like to keep our own family registers. We are pleased to look back to the place where our parents recorded our names with those of our brothers and sisters. Let us gaze by faith upon that great book of life where all the names of the redeemed stand indelibly written by the hand of everlasting love. And as we read those beloved names, let us remember that they make but one record.

The faithful of modern times are on the same page with the saints of the Old Testament, and the names of the feeblest among us are written by the same hand which inscribed the apostles and the martyrs. We confidently believe that Mrs. Bartlett’s name is found in the same roll which contains yours, my sister, though you may be the most obscure of the Lord’s daughters. “Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling,” so were you all comprehended in one election of grace.

The saints above and below are also *one family in the covenant*, “ordered in all things and sure,” made with them in the person of their one great federal Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly one are all the members of the human race in our first father, Adam, for in Adam we all fell. We realize that we are one family by the common sweat of the face, the common tendency to sin, the common liability to death.

But there is a second Adam, and all whom He represented are most surely one family beneath His blessed headship. What the Lord Jesus has accomplished was achieved for all His people. His righteousness is theirs, His life is theirs, His resurrection is the pledge of their resurrection. His eternal life is the source and guarantee of their immortal glory.

***“With Him, their Head, they stand or fall—
Their life, their surety, and their all.”***

Let us think how close we are together then, for we are in very truth nearer to the saints in heaven than we are to the ungodly with whom we dwell. We are in one covenant headship with just men made perfect, but not with the unregenerate. We are fellow citizens with the glorified, but we are strangers and foreigners among worldlings.

Christ Jesus represented us even as He represented the glorified ones in the old eternity, when the covenant was signed, and in that hour when the covenant stipulations were fulfilled upon the bloody

tree. And He represents us with the glorified ones still, as He takes possession of the inheritance in the names of all His elect, and dwells in the glory which He is preparing for His one church.

It is sweet to remember that all the saints in heaven and earth have *the covenant promises secured to them by the selfsame seal*. You know the seal of the covenant—your eyes delight to dwell upon it, it is the sacrifice of the bleeding Lamb. And what, my brethren, is the ground of the security of the saints above, but the covenant of divine grace, sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son of God?

We are rejoiced to see that, in the epistle to the Hebrews, in connection with the spirits of just men made perfect, the Holy Spirit mentions Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel. The promise and the oath of God—those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, are given to all the heirs of promise whether they be militant or triumphant. And to them all has the Lord said, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”

Glory be to His name, the blood which is the ground of our hope of heaven guarantees to the perfected that they shall abide in their bliss. They are there as the “redeemed from among men,” which we also are this day. That same blood which has made white their robes has also cleansed us from all sin.

The family in heaven and earth, again, will be plainly seen to be one, if you remember that they are *all born of the same Father*, each one in process of time. Every soul in heaven has received the new birth, for that which is born of the flesh cannot inherit a spiritual kingdom, and therefore even babes snatched away from the womb and breast ere yet they had fallen into actual sin, have entered heaven by regeneration.

All there, whether they lived to old age or died in childhood, have been begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and are born as to their heavenly state, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The nature of all regenerate persons is the same, for in all it is the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. The same nature is in the saints above as in the saints below. They are called the sons of God and so are we. They delight in holiness and so also do we. They are of the church of the first-born and so are we. Their life is the life of God and so is ours—immortality pulses through our spirits as well as through theirs.

Not yet, I grant, is the body made immortal, but as to our real life we know who has said, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Is it not written, “Ye are made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust”? I know there is no higher nature than the divine, and this is said to have been bestowed upon the saints below.

The new life in heaven is more developed and mature. It has also shaken off its dust and has put on its beautiful garments, yet it is the same. In the sinner born to God but yesterday there is a spark of the same fire which burns in the breasts of the glorified above. Christ is in the perfected, and the same Christ is in us, for we are “all of one,” and He calls us all brethren. Of the same Father begotten, into the same nature born, with the same life quickening us, are we not one family?

Oh, it needs but little alteration in the true saint below to make him a saint above. So slight the change that in an instant it is accomplished. “Absent from the body and present with the Lord.” The work has proceeded so far that it only remains for the Master to give the last touch to it, and we shall be meet for glory, and shall enter into the heavenly rest with capacities of joy as suitable for heaven as the capacities of those who have been there these thousand years.

We are one yet further, brethren, because all saints, whether in heaven or earth, are *partakers in the same divine love*. “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” not merely those in heaven but those below. The poor struggling child of God in poverty is as well-known by God as yon bright songster who walks the golden streets. “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.”

I tell you, timid, trembling woman, humbly resting on your Savior, that you are as truly beloved of God as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who sit down at His table in glory. The love of God toward His

children is not affected by their position, so that He loves those in heaven better and those on earth less. God forbid.

You, being evil, are not so partial as to bestow all your love upon a son who has prospered in the world, and give none of it to another who is bearing the burden of poverty. Our great Father loves the world of His elect with love surpassing thought, and has given Himself to each one of them to be the portion of each individual forever.

What more can He do for those in heaven? What less has He done for us on earth? Jesus has engraved the names of all the redeemed upon His hands and heart, and loves them all unto perfection. If then they all dwell in the bosom of God as the dearly beloved of His soul, are they not indeed one family?

As they all receive the same love, so are they all *heirs of the same promises* and the same blessed inheritance. I am bold to say that as a believer in Christ, heaven is as much mine as it is Paul's or Peter's. They are there to enjoy it and I am waiting to obtain it—but I hold the same title deeds as they do, and as an heir of God, and joint heir with Jesus Christ, my heritage is as broad and as sure as theirs.

Their only right to heaven lies in the grace of God which brought them to believe in Jesus. And if we also have been brought by grace to believe in Jesus, our title to eternal glory is the same as theirs. Oh, child of God, do not think that the Lord has set apart some very choice and special blessings for a few of His people—all things are yours.

The land is before you, even the land which flows with milk and honey, and the whole of it is yours, though you may be less than the least of all saints. The promise is sure to all the seed, and all the seed have an interest in it. Remember that blessed passage, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ"—not if full-grown children. Not if well-developed children. Not if strong, muscular children, but "if children," and that is all.

Regeneration proves you to be heirs, and alike heirs, for there can be no difference in the heirship if they are all heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Will you think of this, you who are little in Israel? You who rank with the Benjamites? Will you sit down and think of this? You are one of the same family as those bright spirits who shine as the stars forever and ever.

And their inheritance is also yours, though as yet you have not come of age, and like a minor must wait till you have been trained under tutors and governors and educated for heaven. You are a prince, though as yet an infant. One of the Redeemer's kings and priests, as yet uncrowned. Waiting, waiting, but still secure of the inheritance. Tarrying till the day break and the shadows flee away, but sure that in the morning, the crown of life so long reserved will be brought forth, and you also shall sit with Jesus on His throne.

So might I continue showing the points in which the saints above and the saints below are akin, but this last must suffice.

They are all members of one body—and are necessary to the completion of one another. In the epistle to the Hebrews, we are told concerning the saints above that "they without us cannot be made perfect." We are the lower limbs, as it were, of the body, but the body must have its inferior as well as its superior members. It cannot be a perfect body should the least part of it be destroyed.

Hence it is declared that in the dispensation of the fullness of time, He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. The saints above with all their bliss must wait for their resurrection until we also shall have come out of great tribulation. Like ourselves, they are waiting for the adoption to wit, the redemption of the body. Until all who were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the first-born shall have been so conformed, the church cannot be complete.

We are linked to the glorified by bonds of indispensable necessity. We think that we cannot do without them, and that is true—but they also cannot do without us. "As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body, so also is Christ."

How closely this brings us together. Those for whom we sorrow cannot be far away, since we are all “the body of Christ and members in particular.” If it be dark, my hand knows that the head cannot be far off, nor can the foot be far removed—eye, ear, foot, hand, head, are all comprised within the limits of one body.

And so if I cannot see my beloved friend, if I shall not again hear her gracious voice on earth, nor see her pleading tears, yet am I sure she is not far away, and that the bond between us is by no means snapped, for we are members of our Lord’s body, of which it is written, “Not a bone of him shall be broken.”

Thus have I according to my ability set forth some of the points of this family union. May the Holy Spirit give us to know them for ourselves.

II. Let us now speak upon THE INSEPARABLENESS OF THIS UNION.

“The *whole* family in heaven and earth,” not the two families nor the divided family, but the whole family in heaven and earth. It appears at first sight as if we were very effectually divided by the hand of *death*. Can it be that we are one family when some of us labor on, and others sleep beneath the greensward?

There was a great truth in the sentence which Wordsworth put into the mouth of the little child when she said, “O master, we are seven.”

*“But they are dead: those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!
'Twas throwing words away, for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said ‘Nay, we are seven.’”*

Should we not thus speak of the divine family, for death assuredly has no separating power in the household of God. Like the apostle, we are persuaded that death cannot separate us from the love of God. The breach caused by the grave is only apparent—it is not real, the family is still united—for if you think of it, when there is a loss in a family the father is bereaved, but you cannot conceive of our heavenly Father’s being bereaved.

Our Father which art in heaven, You have lost none of Your children. We wept and went to the grave, but You did not, for Your child is not dead. Rather has Your child come closer unto Your bosom to receive a sweeter caress, and to know more fully the infinity of Your love!

When a child is lost from a family, the elder brother is a mourner, for he has lost one of his brethren, but our Elder Brother is not bereaved—Jesus has lost none of His. Nay, has He not rather brought home to Himself His own redeemed? Has He not rejoiced exceedingly to see His good work perfected in one whom He loved?

There is no break towards the Father, and no break towards the Elder Brother, and therefore it must be our mistake to fancy that there is any break at all. It cannot be that death divides our Israel—were not the tribes of Reuben and Gad and Manasseh one with the rest of Israel, though the Jordan rolled between? It is a *whole* family, that redeemed household in heaven and in earth.

How little death prevents actual communion it is impossible for us to tell. Some attractive, but worthless books have been written pretending to unfold to us the connection between departed spirits and ourselves. But I trust you will not be led into such idle speculations. God has not revealed these things to us, and it is not for us to go dreaming about them, for we may dream ourselves into grievous errors if we once indulge our fancies.

We know nothing about the commerce of the glorified with earth, but we do know that all departed saints are supremely blest, and that they are with Christ. And if they be with Christ, and we are with Christ, we cannot be far from each other.

We meet all the saints of every age whenever we meet with God in Christ Jesus. In fellowship with Jesus you are come unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable

company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. It is impossible to restrict our communion with the people of God by the bounds of sect, race, country, or time, for we are vitally one with them all.

Come, brethren, let us join our hands with those who have gone before, and let us with equal love join hands with those below, who before long will be numbered with the selfsame company. Death has removed part of the family to an upper room, but we are one family still. There may be two brigades, but we are one army. We may feed in two pastures, but we are one flock. We may dwell awhile in separate habitations, but one homestead will ere long receive us all.

As a matter which grows out of death, it may be well to say that *space* makes no inroads into the wholeness of the Lord's family. So far as spirits are limited to place, there must be a vast distance between the saint in heaven and the saint on earth. But we ought to remember that space, which seems vast to us, is not vast relatively, either as to God or to spiritual beings. Space is but the house of God, nay, God comprehends all space, and space, therefore, is but the bosom of the eternal.

Space also is scarcely to be reckoned when dealing with spiritual beings. We can love and commune with those who are across the Atlantic with as much ease as we can have fellowship with those in the next house. Our friends in Australia, though on the other side of the world, are by no means too distant for our spiritual embrace.

Thought flies more swiftly than electricity. Spirits defy space and annihilate distance. And we, in spirit, still meet with the departed in our songs of praise, rejoicing with them in our Lord Jesus Christ. Space does not divide—there are many mansions, but they are all in our Father's house.

And dear brethren, it is such a great mercy that *sin*, that greatest of all separators, does not now divide us, for we are made nigh by the blood of Christ. When we think of those bright spirits before the throne, they seem to be of a superior race to us, and we are half tempted to bow at their feet. But this feeling is rebuked in us, as it was in John, by the voice which said, "See thou do it not; I am of thy fellow-servants, the prophets: worship God."

They are one with us, after all, for they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—and that is exactly what we have done. Beloved in Christ, we are already justified and accepted in the Beloved as much as the glorified. The veil is rent for us as well as for them. The dividing mountains of sin are overturned for us as well as for them. Sinners as we are, we have access to God by the blood of Jesus—and with joy we draw near the throne.

They have attained to perfectness, and we are following after. They see the Lord face to face, but we also who are pure in heart have grace given us to see God. The atoning blood has removed the middle wall, and we are one in Christ Jesus.

Neither do *errors* and failures of understanding divide the family of God. If, indeed, they did, who among us could be of the same family as those who know even as they are known? The little child makes a thousand mistakes, and his elder brethren smile sometimes, but they do not deny that he is their brother because he is so ignorant and childish.

Even so, dear brothers and sisters, we know very little now. Like the apostle, we may each one say, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." For now we see through a glass darkly, and only know in part, but this does not disprove our kinship with those who see "face to face." We are of the same school, though on a lower form, and it is written, "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD." What they know they learned at those same feet at which we also sit.

Neither can *sorrow* separate us. Ah, they know no tears, their griefs are ended and their toils, but we must abide awhile in the stern realities of life's battle, to wrestle and to suffer. But it is evident that we are not divided from them, for we are all spoken of in one sentence as, "These are they that are coming out of great tribulation," for so the translation may run.

Those who are already arrived and those who are on the way are described as one company. The sick child is of the same family as his brother in perfect health. Soldiers who are enduring the brunt of the battle are of the same army as those who have gained their laurels. To deny that your warring soldier is a

part of the host would be a great mistake. To say that he is not of the army because he is in the midst of the conflict would be cruel and false.

The saints militant are of the same host as the triumphant. Those who are suffering are of the same company as the beatified. None of these things part us—we are still one family in Christ Jesus. Who shall separate us?

III. A topic of deep interest now comes before us—THE PRESENT DISPLAY OF THE UNION.

We have been speaking of our being one family, but perhaps it appears to you to be only a pleasing theory, and therefore we will notice certain points in which our unity practically appears.

I like to think, first, that the *service* of those who have departed blends with ours. I do not mean that they can descend to earth to preach and teach, and labor. But I do mean this, that they being dead, yet speak. Their service projects itself beyond this life.

A good man is not dead as to his influential life and real service for God as soon as the breath leaves his body. His work has a momentum in it which makes it roll on—his influence abides. “Even in their ashes live their wonted fires.” A very large part of the power which the Holy Spirit gives to the church is found in the form of influence derived from the testimonies and examples of departed saints.

Today the church of God feels the influence of Paul and Peter. At this very moment, the work of the apostles is telling upon the nations. Is it not certain that the energetic souls of Luther and Calvin have left vital forces behind them which throb and pulsate still? Perhaps the Reformers are doing as much today as they did when they were alive.

So each man, according to his talent and grace, leaves behind him not merely his arrow and his bow, his sword and his shield, for other hands to use—but the arrows which he shot before he died are still flying through the air, and the javelin which he hurled before his hand was paralyzed in death is yet piercing through the bucklers of the foe.

The influence of my dear sister, Mrs. Bartlett, will operate upon some of you as long as you live—and you will transmit it to your successors. You Christians will be the more intense because of her glowing example—and you sinners will find it the harder to live in sin, when you remember her tearful warnings.

Some of you, I do not doubt, will be her posthumous children, born unto her after she has entered into her rest. Do not let the living think that they are the sole champions in this holy war, for, to all intents and purposes, the spirits of the just made perfect stand side by side with them. And the battle is being carried on, in no small measure, by cannon which they cast, and weapons which they forged. Though the builders are absent in body, yet the gold, silver, and precious stones which they builded, their Lord will establish forever.

Then again, we are one family in heaven and earth, and that very visibly, because the influence of *the prayers* of those in heaven still abides with us. Do not mistake me, I am no believer in the intercession of the saints above. I believe that they pray, but I believe it to be a damnable error to urge anyone to seek their intercession.

What I mean is very different. I mean that prayers offered while they were here, and unanswered in their lifetime, still remain in the church’s treasury of prayer. Many a mother dies with her children unsaved, but the prayers she continually offered for them will prevail after her death. Many a minister and many a private member pleads with God for blessing on the church, and perhaps does not see it. But prayer must be answered—and fifty years afterwards it is possible that the church will reap the result of those supplications.

Is not Scotland today the better and the holier for the prayers of John Knox? Is not England the brighter for the prayers of Latimer and Ridley? The august company of the glorified have ceased to kneel with us in person, but in effect they do so. They have gone to other work, but the incense which they kindled when they were below still perfumes the chambers of the church of God.

Further, the unity of the church will be seen in this, that their *testimony* from above blends with ours. The church is ordained to be a witness. My brethren, we try to witness as God helps us to the truth as it is in Jesus, even as those who are above once witnessed with us here in life and in death.

What a sweet witness dying Christians often bear when they cannot speak, in the gleam of the eye, in the perfect rest of soul, which others may well envy, enjoyed just in the moment when pain was most severe, and the flesh was failing.

But now that these spirits have entered within the veil, do they cease their testimony? No. Hear them. They bear witness to the Lamb, saying, "For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." They make known to angels and principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are engaged with them in revealing the abundant mercy and all-sufficiency of the Lord. You are comrades with us, you shining ones. You are fellow witnesses for Jesus, and therefore you are one with us.

The main employment of saints above is *praise*. Beloved, what is ours, but praise too? Is it not well-put by our poet,

*"They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in songs below"?*

Their music is sweeter than ours, freer from discord, and from all that is cold or wandering, but still the theme is the same, and the song springs from the same motive, and was wrought in the heart by the same grace.

I think I shall never praise my Lord in heaven more sincerely than I often praise Him now, when my mouth cannot speak for the overfloodings of my soul's delight and joy in my God, who has taken me up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and put a new song into my mouth.

The deep obligations of every day overwhelm me with indebtedness. I cannot but praise my God, when I think of dire necessities perpetually supplied, multiplied sin continually pardoned, wretched infirmity graciously helped. Yes, we are one family, because when holy worship goes up into the ear of the Eternal, our praise blends with the praise of those who are glorified above, and we are one.

Brethren, I believe we are one in some other points as well. Do you not rejoice over sinners? Is it not one of our holidays on earth when the prodigal returns? "Verily I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Do you ever cry out against sin and groan because of the power of error in the land? Know you not that the souls under the altar also cry with the selfsame indignation, "O Lord, how long! Wilt thou not judge and avenge thine own elect?"

Do you not expect each day the coming of your Lord, and look for it with rapture? They also do the same. They say there is no hope in heaven, but who told them so? The saints, like ourselves, are looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Your joy, your desire, your hope—are not these the same as theirs before the throne?

Towering over all is the fact that *The Well-Beloved is the common joy of saints in heaven and on earth*. What makes *their* heaven? Who is the object of all their worship? Who is the subject of all their songs? In whom do they delight themselves all the day long? Who leads them to living fountains of waters, and wipes all tears from their eyes?

Beloved, He is as much all in all to us as He is to them. Jesus, *we* know You and *they* know You. Jesus, *we* love You and *they* love You. Jesus, *we* embrace You and *they* embrace You. Jesus, *we* are oftentimes lost in You, and *they* are lost in You. Thou Sun of our soul, Thou life of our life, Thou light of our delight, You are that to us which You are to them, and herein we are all one.

IV. Last of all, there is to come, before long, A FUTURE MANIFESTATION OF THIS FAMILY UNION, much brighter than anything we have as yet seen.

We are one family, and we shall meet again. If they cannot come to us, we shall go to them by and by. It does not often happen that we carry to the grave one who is known to all this congregation, but seldom does a week pass but what one or other of our number, and frequently two or three, are taken home.

I have to look upon you and upon myself as so many shadows, and when I meet you, how often does the question occur to me, “Who will go next?” Naturally, I think of some of you who have grown grey in your Master’s service, and have passed your threescore years and ten. You must go soon, my brethren and my sisters. And I know you are not grieved at the prospect.

Yet the young as well as the old are taken home, and men in middle life, with the marrow moist in their bones, are removed, even as those who lean upon their staff for very age. Who knows but what I may leave you soon? My brother, who knows but that *you* may be called away? Well, in that blessed day when we leave the earth, we shall perceive that as we are free of the church below, we are citizens of the church above.

Whenever some of us enter an assembly of believers, they recognize and welcome us—the like reception awaits us above! We shall be quite at home in heaven, when we get there. Some of you have more friends in heaven than on earth. How few are left of your former friends, compared with the many who have gone above? In the day when you enter into heaven, you will perceive that the church is one family, for they will welcome you heartily, and recognize in you a brother, and a friend, and so, together with them, you shall adore your Lord.

Remember there is coming another day in which the family union of the church will be seen, and that is when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised. It may be that we shall all be of the company of those who sleep, and if so, when the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we shall have our share in the first resurrection.

Or if our Lord should come before we die, we shall be “alive and remain.” But we shall undergo a change at the same moment as the dead are raised, so that this corruptible shall put on incorruption. What a family we shall be when we all rise together, and all the changed ones stand with us, all of one race, all regenerate, all clothed in the white robe of Jesus’ righteousness! What a family! What a meeting it will be!

*“How loud shall our glad voices sing,
When Christ His risen saints shall bring
From beds of dust, and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day.”*

Beloved, I cannot dwell upon what glory will follow on earth, but if our Lord shall live and reign on earth a thousand years, and if there shall be set up a great empire, which shall outshine all other monarchies as much as the sun outshines the stars, we shall all share in it, for He will make us all kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with Him upon the earth.

Then, when comes the end, and He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all, we shall forever be with the Lord. My soul anticipates that grandest of all family meetings, when all the chosen shall assemble around the throne of God. It is but a little while and it shall come. It is but the twinkling of an eye, and it shall all be matter of fact.

We talk of time as though it were a far reaching thing. I appeal to you grey heads who know what seventy years mean—are they not gone as a watch in the night? Well, let the waiting be prolonged for ten thousand years, if the Lord pleases. The ten thousand years will end, and then forever and forever we shall be as one family where Jesus is. This hope should cheer us.

Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? Cheered by the prospect of an everlasting reunion, we defy you to sadden us! Encouraged by the glory which God has decreed, we laugh at your vain attempts to make breaches in the ranks of the one and indivisible family of the living God!

The practical point is—*Do we belong to that family?* I will leave that naked question to work in every heart. Do I belong to that family? Am I born of God? Am I a believer in Jesus? If not, I am an heir of wrath and not in the family of God.

If we do belong to the family, *let us show our relationship* by loving all the members of it. I should not like a brother to be gone to heaven and to reflect that I was unkind to him. I should not like to think that I might have smoothed his pathway, but I did not. Or I might have cheered him and refused.

Dear brethren, we shall live together in heaven forever, let us love each other now with a pure heart fervently. Help your poor brethren, cheer your desponding sisters. Let no man look only on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Brother, be brotherly. Sister, be a true sister. Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth, for we shall soon be at home together in our Father's house on high.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—REVELATION 7

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—872, 832, 859

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.