

Never Say Goodbye! (The Hope of Seeing Our Loves Ones Again)

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It seems like a normal and natural thing to say “goodbye” when our loved ones in Christ are finishing their journey and life on earth. Perhaps they are suffering from an illness of some kind, or their body is simply wearing out due to the natural aging process. For whatever reason, their time has come to depart and enter their heavenly destiny. Family and friends normally meet with them to bid them farewell. However, saying goodbye to our Christian friends is not necessary. I know this title sounds rather odd and even heartless but hear me out. For Christians, we never must really say “goodbye” to our loved ones who have also embraced Christ as their personal Savior through simple faith in His death and resurrection (Acts 16:31). When you really stop and think about it, the reasons for never saying goodbye to our loved ones in Christ are rather obvious

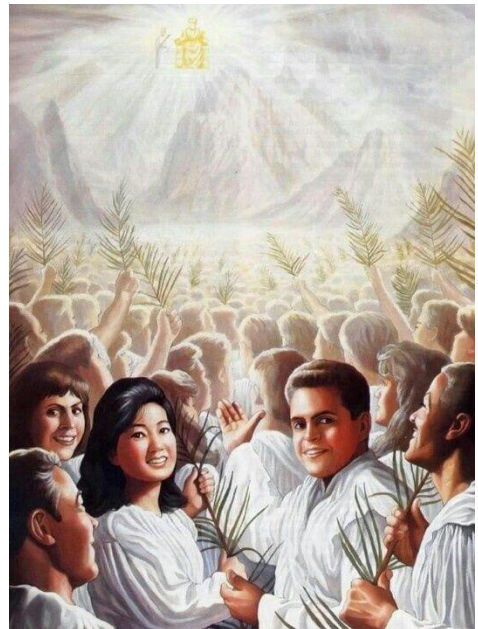
Let’s state it in a simple way. There is no need to say “goodbye” to our Christian family and friends. This is obvious for two reasons.

1. We will dwell in Heaven together.

The first reason we never must say “goodbye” is because we will see our loved ones in Christ again who have departed and gone on to Heaven. We will meet them there someday. Every person has either faced or will probably face the grief of losing a close friend or loved one to death. When death strikes, pious platitudes do little to bring comfort. The only real and lasting comfort when death takes someone that we love is the hope that we will see them again in Heaven.

➤ Going Home

2 Corinthians 5:8 declares: “We are confident, / say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present (*at home*) with the Lord.” It seems that Paul had a case of “heavenly



homesickness.” Paul wanted to leave his life on earth (“absent from the body”) for life in heaven (“present with the Lord”). He wanted to be home where he belonged. This means that Paul was looking forward to leaving his body and dwelling with the Lord in Heaven until he receives his glorified body at the Rapture. He was willing to be in the disembodied state that exists between death and the Rapture. In light of being with Christ, nothing else matters, and nothing can rob us of our cheerful hope and confidence regarding the future.

John Philipps remarked: “When a believer comes to the end of life’s journey, he closes his eyes, opens them to look one last time into the faces of his loved ones gathered around his bed, closes them again, and opens them to look straight into the face of Jesus. He is absent from the body, present with the Lord.”

The Bible teaches the wonderful truth that upon the moment of death, our eternal spirit leaves the body and enters its heavenly home and destiny where we will live in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ forever.

Philippians 1:23

“For I am in a strait betwixt two (*hard pressed*), having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”

Paul was hard pressed (between a rock and hard place). He wanted to remain on earth to serve the Lord and see the Church grow, but he also wanted to depart and be with Christ in Heaven, which he exclaimed “is far better.” This means it’s far better in the Better Land (Heaven).

“My heavenly home is bright and fair, I feel like traveling on.
No pain nor death can enter there, I feel like traveling on.
Yes I feel like traveling on, I feel like traveling on,
My heavenly home is bright and fair, I feel like traveling on!”

Paul had an inkling that he would soon be moving on to Glory! Eventually, all of us as God’s children will enter our great heavenly abode. We are already citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3:20) and someday as God’s redeemed saints we will travel the last mile of our way on earth and enter this heavenly home. We will make the journey from earth to that dwelling place Christ had prepared for us in Heaven (John 14:1-3). We will be together forever and experience Christ’s presence *visually* and

intimately for Revelation 22:4 states: “And they (*all of God’s saints*) shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads” (*not on their foreheads literally but a reference to their inner awareness of God’s presence with them continually*).

Composer Don Wyrzten wrote the music for a wonderful song that pictures our earthly life as a “tempestuous sea.” It ends with these words:

“Just think of stepping on shore—and finding it heaven!
Of touching a hand—and finding it God’s!
Of breathing new air—and finding it celestial!
Of waking up in glory—and finding it home!”

Someday we will finally be home. But we will not be alone!

➤ Gathering Together

For the believer in Christ, when our spirit departs from our body, we will be finally home! But there is more good news! The Bible teaches that all the redeemed saints will be together in Heaven someday. We will be reunited on the other side.

Revelation 7:9 records this heavenly scene of saints gathered together:

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”

So here is great comfort for our souls today. Those of us who are believers, and which remain on earth after the death of a loved one, can know where our beloved family members or friends has gone. Furthermore, we can be reassured and possess great confidence (2 Cor. 5:8) that they have entered their heavenly home. This means we can also look forward to being reunited with them once again in Heaven. What a glorious day it will be when we meet together in Heaven!

“There is going to be a meeting in the air
In the sweet sweet bye and bye
I am going to meet you, meet you over there
In that home beyond the sky.”

Hebrews 12:22-23 mentions the Church being assembled together in her heavenly home “unto the city of the living God” (vs. 22). It addresses the Church in Heaven as: “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (vs. 23). God’s saints are pictured as being gathered together in the blessed place Christ has prepared for them (John 14:3). Yes, Heaven is pictured as a great gathering place, a meeting of all God’s redeemed people, a wonderful place of reunion and blessing with our loved ones in Christ with death, sorrows, and sickness related to this life having disappeared forever (Rev. 21:4).

“There’ll be no sorrow there,
No more burdens to bear,
No more sickness, no pain,
No more parting over there;
And forever I will be,
With the One who died for me,
What a day, glorious day that will be.”

Here is the point. When our loved ones in Christ are struggling to take their last breath here on earth, and they look up at us, we can say to them: “I will see you soon,” “I will meet you later,” or “I will meet you in the morning just inside the Eastern Gate.” It really is not a goodbye!



“Oh, the joys of that glad meeting
With the saints who for us wait!
What a blessed, happy meeting
Just inside the Eastern Gate!

I will meet you, I will meet you,
Just inside the Eastern Gate over there;
I will meet you, I will meet you,
I will meet you in the morning over there.”

Another beloved hymn reminds us about the thrilling moment of being reunited with our loved ones in Christ.

“Meet me there, Meet me there,
Where the tree of life is blooming, Meet me there,

When the storms of life are o'er, On the happy, golden shore,
Where the faithful part no more, Meet me there."

The 18th-century English pastor, Rowland Hill, lived to a ripe old age. In fact, he outlived most of his friends. Missing them very much and anxious to join them on the other side, he grew more homesick for Heaven with each passing day. It seemed so long since some of them had gone to glory that he would often jokingly say with a wink, "Do you think they'll remember me?" It was not unusual for him to go to some other believer well along in years with this request: "If you should go before I do, give my love to everyone. Be sure to tell them that old Rowley, although staying behind a little while, is coming on as fast as he can."

In Heaven and throughout eternity we will not experience marriage and physical relationships as we have on earth (Matt. 22:30) but this does not mean we will lose our affection and love for each other in the next life. There will be bonds and blessings that cannot be reversed. As we will see in our next point, Paul looked forward to seeing and being reunited with his friends at the coming of Christ (1 Thess. 2:19; 4:14, 17) and to dwell with them forever in Heaven. The teaching that we will not know or recognize each other in Heaven is unfounded. All things will be new from a physical and spiritual perspective in Heaven and throughout eternity (Rev. 21:4) but this does not mean we will lose our previous affections and love for our family and friends.

William Graham Scroggie once remarked:

"If I knew that never again would I see or recognize that beloved one with whom I spent more than thirty-nine years here on earth, my anticipation of heaven would much abate. To say that we will be with Christ and that will be enough, is to claim that there we shall be without the social instincts and affection which mean so much to us here."

Reflect on this for a moment. All those who have embraced Christ as Savior will be there – our grandpas, grandmas, wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, children, friends, and family members. We will all be gathered together again in the great



heavenly city and “paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7; 3:12). The cords of this life will not be broken!

“Friends will be there I have loved long ago;
Joy like a river around me will flow;
Yet just a smile from my Savior I know,
Will thro’ the ages be glory for me.”

Beloved, we will see and enjoy the presence of our loved ones when we get to Heaven. And when we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing it will be! The Bible envisions all of God’s saints joining together in a great heavenly choir giving praise to the Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ) who gave His life for us on the cross.

Revelation 5:11-12 says, “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts (*living creatures*) and the elders (*representative of the redeemed Church*): and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

When we are gathered together in Heaven with our loved ones and the saints, it will be a time of rejoicing because of our renewed fellowships, but also because of Christ’s redemptive salvation.

“Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, Sing His mercy and His grace;
In the mansions bright and blessed, He'll prepare for us a place.
When we all get to heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory!”



The day is fast approaching when we will all be together again! Most people do not even live to the ripe old age of one hundred. This means that our time here on earth is relatively short. A great day of reunion is coming for God’s saints. From the perspective of time, it won’t be long before we are all together again in our heavenly home. For this reason, we must never really say goodbye to our loved ones in Christ. We will dwell together again in Heaven. Together we will enjoy our heavenly home and

fellowship with Christ. We will also enjoy the tree of life and river of life together in the beautiful paradise of God (Rev. 22:1-4).

Yes, we'll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God."

A pastor once stated to a friend, "I hear you lost your wife. I'm very sorry." He replied, "No, I didn't lose her. You can't lose something when you know where it is—and I know where she is!"

This is true, and someday we will be reunited with our loved ones in Glory and forever dwell together in the land where the roses never fade.

"Loved one's gone to be with Jesus
In their robes of white array.
They are waiting for my coming
Where the roses never fade."

2. We will experience the event of the Rapture together.

➤ Going up together

There is a second reason why we must never say "goodbye" to our family and friends who are saved and in Christ. Jesus is going to return for His saints someday in the event of the Rapture. This means we may never be separated from our loved ones who are still living with us on earth. Paul taught that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together" (1 Thess. 4:17). Caught up together! This means we will never be separated from our Christian



brothers and sisters if they remain alive until Christ's return. All of us who are still living should be looking for the uppertaker and not the undertaker! Yes, we may all go up together at the same time and never be separated from one another.

“Oh, joy! oh, delight! should we go without dying,
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying,
Caught up through the clouds with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives His own.”

➤ Meeting together

But what about those Christians who have died and gone to Heaven? Will they participate in the event of the Rapture? Will we see them? Yes! Paul goes on to say in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that we will be “caught up together” (*the living saints who are transformed*) with “them” (*the deceased saints who are resurrected and transformed*). If our saved loved one dies, we should not sorrow like the unsaved who have no hope of seeing their family and friends again (1 Thess. 4:13). This is because we have embraced the Gospel message of salvation and eternal life which gives us hope (1 Thess. 4:14) and therefore Jesus will bring the spirits of our saved family and friends back with Him to be resurrected and reunited with us at the event of the Rapture.

The Bible says, “even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thess. 4:14). Our loved ones are coming back with Christ at the event of the Rapture of the Church. God is bringing them back to be reunited with their bodies (resurrection) but also to be reunited with their loved ones in Christ (reunion). What a day this will be!

“When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more,
And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;
When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise,
And the glory of his resurrection share;
When his chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies,
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.”

Yes, we will all be there! I can hardly wait till that morning! What a blessed hope we have of seeing our Savior and the saints again. The best is yet to come! A great day and eternity lie ahead for God's redeemed. The bright and cloudless morning is soon coming. All of God's saints will be together again! We will share in the likeness of Christ and once again express our love to one another. We will enjoy God's presence and fellowship along with the renewed friendships and fellowship with our loved ones.

Paul the apostle looked forward to seeing his deceased Christian friends at the coming of Christ when he said, "are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ as his coming"" (1 Thess. 2:19). As already stated, at the return of Christ we will be "caught up together with them" (1 Thess. 4:17) which means we will meet our saved loved ones who have gone on before us. In a similar way, Paul spoke of "our gathering together unto him" (2 Thess. 2:1) which refers to all the saints meeting together with the Lord Jesus Christ in the event of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Reunited at the Rapture! This will be a great reunion! Jesus may come today! So, never say goodbye! We will meet again at the event of the Rapture.

"There is a message written in the Word of God for me,
My Savior put it there to ease my load of care.
I read, 'Let not your heart be troubled, I will come again,
That with me you may be through all eternity.'

So many hearts are broken here, so many tears are shed
But Jesus brings sweet peace, this message brings relief.
He'll come again for those he loves.
The clouds will part someday,
And Jesus will break through, I'm going up, are you?

This is the Christian's hope,
And like a beacon in the storm,
It still sends forth it's light, to make the pathway bright.
The dead in Christ, and we remaining,
Shall be upward caught.
Oh, what a day t'will be, blest day of victory!

The Christ I love is coming soon,
It may be morning, night, or noon.
My lamps are lit, I'll watch and pray.
It may be today, it may be today."

Jesus gave these comforting and hopeful words in John 14:1-3:

“Let not your heart be troubled (the PEACE): ye believe in God, believe also in me (the PERSON). In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you (the PLACE). And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also” (the PROMISE).

All of us can anticipate sharing in the prophetic event of the Rapture. Meeting Christ and our loved ones at His coming is a blessed hope and will be a time filled with overwhelming joy. Dearly beloved, we can be absolutely certain, possessing the joyous anticipation, a living hope, that Jesus will reunite us with our loved ones at His coming. We will be together again. Therefore, there really is no reason to say goodbye to those who are brothers and sisters in Christ. Our parting is temporary and will not be forever. The Bible teaches that Jesus may return for His saints at any moment (Phil. 3:20; Rev. 22:12) and take them back to their heavenly home as Jesus promised (“that where I am, *there* ye may be also”).

This means we may never be separated from our loved ones (family and friends) who remain alive until the coming of Christ. At the same time, we will be reunited with them who return with Jesus in the event of the Rapture. We know where our saved loved ones are and we will see them when Jesus returns, with a newly resurrected and glorified body. We can comfort our hearts in this blessed hope! Either way you look at it,



we will be together again. So, rather than saying the normal “goodbye” to our husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, grandpas, grandmas, and friends in Christ who are passing away and leaving us, we should say, “We will meet again in Heaven or at the Rapture. And it may be soon. Perhaps Today!”

The blessed promise of our gathering together and reunion with our beloved family and friends someday at the Rapture is designed to be a comfort to our hearts. The prophecy about the Rapture is given to produce comfort in our souls. We have the blessed hope of being reunited with all our loves ones in Christ who have gone on before us – a mother, a child, a husband or wife, a grandpa or grandma, a friend in

Christ. We will all be together again when Jesus returns to Rapture and reunite the saints of all the ages and take them back to their heavenly home (John 14:1-3). The truth of the Rapture should transform the way we view death. We will see our loved ones again. We will see Jesus and our beloved family members and friends and together we will enjoy one another's company for eternity. Beloved, let us "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18).



God has promised that death has lost its sting for believers in Christ (1 Cor. 15:55-56) and for this reason we possess the spiritual blessing of eternal life in Heaven and will see one another again in the afterlife. Of course, we naturally grieve when our friends or loved ones die. Even Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35). However, the Bible declares that our weeping should not be the weeping of despair and

hopelessness. The Bible says that our "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). A better and brighter day is coming. It's almost here. I can hardly wait! This could be the dawning of that grand and glorious day! We will soon be together again!

On one occasion on an airplane flight Dr. Criswell found himself seated beside a well-known theologian. He desperately wanted to start a conversation and they did get to talk. The man told Dr. Criswell about how he had recently lost his little boy through death. Dr. Criswell listened as he told his story. He said he had come home from school with a fever, and we thought it was just one of those childhood things, but it was a very severe form of meningitis. The doctor said we cannot save your little boy. He'll die. And so, this seminary professor, loving his son as he did, sat by the bedside to watch his coming death.

It was the middle of the day and the little boy whose strength was going from him and whose vision and brain was getting clouded, said, "Daddy, it's getting dark isn't it?" The professor said to his son, "Yes son it is getting dark, very dark." Of course, it was very dark for the child. He said, "Daddy, I guess it's time for me to go to sleep

isn't it?" He said, "Yes, son, it's time for you to go to sleep." The professor said the little fellow had a way of fixing his pillow. He fixed his pillow like he always did and laid his head on his hands and said, "Good night Daddy. I will see you in the morning." He then closed his eyes in death and stepped over into Heaven.

Dr. Criswell said the professor didn't say anymore after that. He just looked out the window of that airplane for a long time. Then he turned back and he looked at Dr. Criswell with the tears coming down his cheeks and he said, "Dr. Criswell, I can hardly wait till the morning."

As born-again Christians we have a "lively" or living hope (1 Pet. 1:3). It's real! It's certain! Joy comes in the morning! No one can take away our hope from us – not even the Devil. We will see our loved ones in Christ again. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18). We are to find deep solace, hope, and comfort for our grieving hearts in the truth of God's Word which promises that we will see our saved loved ones in the future when Jesus returns for His Church.

Interestingly, the word "maranatha" is an Aramaic expression that means: "Our Lord comes." It was used as a greeting by the early Christians (1 Cor. 16:22). When the early believers gathered together or parted, they didn't say "hello" or "goodbye" but "Maranatha!" The Christians used this phrase ("Our Lord comes")



because they actually believed Jesus could return at any moment and together they would be taken back to their heavenly home. This means "goodbye" really should not be in the vocabulary of Christians. As you leave home today, don't say goodbye -- say "Maranatha!" Beloved, if we had the same upward look today, it would revolutionize the church. O that God's people had a deepening awareness of the imminent return of the Savior!

While on a South Pole expedition, British explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton left a few men on Elephant Island, promising that he would return. Later, when he tried to go back, huge icebergs blocked the way. But suddenly, as if by a miracle, an avenue opened in the ice and Shackleton was able to get through. His men, ready and

waiting, quickly scrambled aboard. No sooner had the ship cleared the island than the ice crashed together behind them. Contemplating their narrow escape, the explorer said to his men, "It was fortunate you were all packed and ready to go!" They replied, "We never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was clear of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and reminded each other, 'The boss may come today.'"

In a similar way, Jesus may come today! How important for us as Christians to be "packed and ready to go" and to meet our returning Savior with gladness. The hymn writer Horatius Bonar exhorted us "to be ready for the last moment by being ready at every moment...so attending to every duty that, let Him come when He may, He finds the house in perfect order, awaiting His return." The trump may sound at any time. How important for us as Christians to be "packed and ready to go!" But more than this, we can live with great expectancy and hope that we will also be reunited with our loved ones in Christ when Jesus returns, and that we will enjoy one another's presence throughout eternity. It's maranatha - not goodbye!

In conclusion, those of us who are Christians through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26) possess the tremendous and blessed hope of seeing our loved ones again – **here** (on earth), **there** (in Heaven), **or in the air** (at Christ's coming). And yes, we will be together forever. It's not goodbye forever, but together forever!

