

Heaven Bound Together

Earlier this year, Shawn and I preached a series on how all of us, no matter what our individual life situation, can still be people who are bound for heaven. There's a sense in which every one of us has to make that journey for ourselves.

However, there's also a sense in which we can't make it by ourselves. There is no such thing as a lone-ranger disciple. Without the help of our brothers and sisters, none of us are going to inherit eternal life. This morning, then, I'm going to kick off a new sermon series, one that looks at how we can be heaven bound together.

Through the next several weeks, we're going to look at specific aspects of this, but this morning, I'm going to offer a few general observations. The first is that **WE ARE MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER**. Paul makes this point in Romans 12:4-5. American culture likes to celebrate the rugged individualist, but disciples of Christ aren't that way. Instead, being a Christian means being part of an army, a community, a family, and a body. This is fundamental to our spiritual existence, and if we deny it, we are also denying our unity with Christ.

Because we go through life together, we necessarily share our lives with one another. This bothers some people. They don't like the idea of the elders being in their business. They don't like the idea of other Christians being in their business.

What we must understand, though, is that if our brothers and sisters are minding their own business, they are also minding us. We are all supposed to be our brother's keepers. We are supposed to be in one another's lives, ready to offer whatever encouragement, help, or correction is needed. Because we are one body, there can be no division between us. The closer we come to one another, the more involved with one another we are, the more fully we fulfill Christ's desire for us.

Second, **WE NEED ONE ANOTHER**. Consider Paul's comments on the body of the Lord in 1 Corinthians 12:17-18. In this church, there's a wide diversity of people. We differ in age, race, wealth, education, gifts, family status, and every other way that people can differ. However, despite these differences, we are all part of the same body, and, indeed, our differences are part of God's design. He wants us to be different so that each one of us can help in a unique way.

Certainly, some Christians have a more conspicuous role than others. Here I am, up in front, talking to y'all. However, every Christian has a role, and every one of those roles is important. I love being up in front of people. Maybe you hate the thought, but if you use your gifts for the Lord, you are every bit as valuable and precious in His kingdom as I am, maybe more.

This includes not only the various works of the assembly, but also the ways that we serve when we aren't together. I've never seen one of my tendons or ligaments, but I know

they're important because they hold my physical body together. Some Christians are ligaments. They love the brethren, so they spend their week checking up on and looking after the brethren. Friends, Christians like that hold the church together. Their work is indispensable in getting all of us to heaven.

If you're a ligament, great! Be the best ligament for the Lord you can be. Write those cards. Have those conversations on Aisle 6 of the grocery store. Don't think for a second that your work is less important than mine or anybody else's. All of us can make an eternal difference in a Christian's life by doing what God has given us to do.

Finally, TOGETHER WE GROW INTO CHRIST. Let's look here at Ephesians 4:15-16. This is important for us to understand because I think that somewhere along the way, we've gotten into the habit of thinking of spiritual growth as an independent thing. If you show up for services, you can tread water spiritually, but if you really want to grow, you need to spend time by yourself on Bible study, prayer, and godly living.

Now, I'm never going to argue against Bible study, prayer, and godly living, but I think that overstates the case. Consider the word "edification". Edification isn't us building ourselves up. Edification is us building one another up.

Notice the language that Paul uses to describe edification here. Edification is about the whole body. It's about being held together by every joint. It happens when each part is working properly. This, friends, is how the body grows into Christ, and the more we seek Christ together, the more this will happen in us.

This happens in part, I think, because we express our faith in our interactions with one another. It's easy to claim to love the God I haven't seen, but do I live like I love the brother whom I have seen? Being heaven bound together is difficult. It requires us all to grow in our patience, mercy, understanding, and forgiveness. However, as we do grow in these things, we become more like Jesus.

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