

Psalm 133

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Some of you may be aware that Psalm 133 was Loma D. Armstrong's favorite psalm. And later on back in the 80s, Ross Jutsum, in honor of her, made his well known song, at least within the church, "How Good and How Pleasant" because of that fact and presented that to Mr. Armstrong sometime in like 1984 or something like that. So it is a song that we are fairly familiar with if we know the music that has been around the church for a long time. I do not know why Loma D. Armstrong was so enamored with this particular psalm. Maybe it was just the plain words. It is very meaningful. But she loved it and let it be known that she really liked it.

This song crams poetry and vivid imagery and very deep meaning into only three short verses. And once we begin to take it apart, I think you will see that there is a great deal in it. And the psalm itself, in its meaning, contains a goal, hope, and a prayer within those three verses. And Psalm 133 makes a fitting rallying cry for the church of God at this time because it should be our goal and our hope and our prayer as well because we are still seeing the church splintering into smaller and smaller factions.

The scattering is proceeding apace. There are still new groups being formed out there and like I said, each time there is a split, we get smaller and smaller groups and many are still following very strange doctrines or going out on limbs on certain things, even some that are just weird. You know, why would this take you out of God's church when there is so much there? But I guess it is, I do not know, ego, being led astray, who knows? But the unity is not happening. Many have rejected many of the core issues like the Sabbath and the holy days and God's law, and just have slipped back into the world.

I think about my friends from college. Here we all thought that at Ambassador College things were great. We had a great class. We were going to go into the future and keep the church strong. And probably about, I do not know, 60% or 70% of those people are gone. They may be with Grace

Communion. I do not know. I do not think so many of them have gone into the world. And I look at my Facebook and see them with their Christmas trees and such and it just makes me sad.

But all in all, I look at this time of the church's history, human history, and the church of God is disunited when it most needs to be united. And so I think we should consider Psalm 133 seriously, because it has actually got all the solutions wrapped up in three little verses.

So today, I am more concerned with what remains rather than those who have gone away. The congregations of the church at large dwindle, new churches form, people have many different reasons for remaining apart, for being scattered from the brethren. Some are legitimate, some are not, but all those kind of actions further fracture the unity of God's church. And I had to ask myself, can Humpty Dumpty be put back together again? And personally, I do not think we can do it. I do not think we can do it at all because human nature is fractious. It wants to be alone, it wants to be separate, it wants to be on top with everybody else below us.

But I think the answer to the question is, *God* can do it. We cannot do it, but God can. We just heard today, that with God all things are possible, it can happen. So we do not need to be worried about that. He has the power and all the abilities to make it come to pass, but I think He is waiting on us. I think He is waiting for some indication from us that we *want* to be united, first of all. That we *want* to be together with our brethren and are willing to work for it. And here is the "gotcha," under *His* terms. Oh, we are very willing to be united for our own selfish reasons because we want to be on top because we think we have the right doctrines. We think we are in position to lead this new united church. But no, all of our goals have to come under God's terms, what God wants us to do.

Those things are found in Psalm 133. It is an amazing psalm being only three verses long, but it is packed with so much instruction and help. So using 133 as a base, we will take a look at unity among the brethren to see where we fit in bringing it about. So let us read Psalm 133. It is a psalm of ascents. David wrote it.

Psalm 133:1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forevermore.

Very well known; we probably can recite parts of it. Full of metaphor there that we can dig into, and we will. But let us just start here at the very beginning because the superscript of the psalm says it is a song of ascents. We need to know this for the particular background of the psalm.

Psalm 120 through 134, 15 psalms, are titled Songs of Ascent or Songs of Degrees in most Bibles. Now, that is great that they are given a title like that. But what they are is disputed. Nobody knows exactly what a song of ascent is, or a song of degree. Now, there is no debate about the fact that all 15 of them go together, they are written as a group. But what the group represents is another thing altogether. And there are actually four different ideas about what the Songs of Ascent are.

The first is the Jewish way of understanding it, saying that they are linked to the 15 steps of the stairs leading to the Court of Israel in the Temple, from the Court of Israel to the Court of Women, or the other way around, from the Court of Women to the Court of Israel.

Now, on these 15 steps, which would correspond with the 15 psalms or songs of ascent, the Levites sang and played their instruments on the evening of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. So they believe that these Levites would start on the bottom step and sing Psalm 120, then go up a step and sing Psalm 121, and go up another step and sing Psalm 122, and on and on and on until you get to 134 and you are on the top step. So they were all made for this particular occasion. That is the Jewish way. We will call it a possibility.

Number two, certain modern scholars say they are called this because the ideas expressed in them—all 15—ascend from one psalm to the next. So the

idea that is expressed in Psalm 120 ascends then to 121 and then that ascends to 122 and up and up and up and up and up and you go until 134. Well, this is a nice thought, that they are a great chain or links in a great chain of ideas that climax in 134. But if you go through them carefully, they do not fit the pattern, all of them. Some of them skip around and go to other things. So, nice try. But I do not think it works.

Number three, some of the early church fathers (these are the post-apostolic leaders of the church, most of whom went with the false church), they believe that the Songs of Ascent were songs sung by the Jews as they return from exile in Babylon. Another good guess. I guess you could say they went up to Jerusalem in that way from Babylon or they were up out of slavery. Again, like the second one with the modern scholars, this one has the same flaw in that some of them do not fit. They do not fit the coming back from exile theme that the early church fathers saw in them.

Fourth, and the one that gets the most approval by scholars and of just about any denomination is, the most likely explanation of the Psalms of Ascent is that they are pilgrimage songs sung as people went up to Jerusalem for the three great feasts, the pilgrimage feasts: Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. So most everybody in the land of Israel could make it to Jerusalem in about two days, maybe three if they went real slow or had a big crowd or they were just leisurely going up. But they did literally go *up* to Jerusalem from basically wherever they were in the land of Israel because Jerusalem is what? About a mile high? So they had to go up to Jerusalem to worship even if they were in Jericho, which is not very far away, was a pretty steep climb up to Jerusalem from the east. So along the way, in the mood for this particular feast, they would sing these songs as they walked along. I mean, they did not have their little Game Boys™ or any kind of other gadgets that they could play. And so in the camaraderie of traveling with big crowds, they would sing these songs as they went. They also did not have AM or FM and so they had to supply the music. So they would sing these songs and that seems to fit quite a bit better than any of the other explanations.

Now, what is interesting to me is that there are, in my eyes, definite links to gathering at or going in progression, going toward Jerusalem or to the Temple throughout these 15 psalms, the Songs of Ascent. I want to go to Psalm 134, verse 1, which kind of shows you what the goal is. It says here,

Psalm 134:1-2 Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand who by night stand in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.

So there is this idea that they are going up toward the sanctuary. That is the goal and it is a blessing for those who make it there, who are there. So they are going from the world, their normal lives, and they are going up toward the Temple, up toward where God is, toward God. And I feel this makes it very applicable to the church, if we look at the time frame of God's plan and put these 15 psalms in a line representing the passage of time. By the way, 134 of course, was number 15, so that is the end of the Psalms of Ascent. So that is where they get to, they get to being gathered at the house of the Lord.

Now, let us think about this though. I just mentioned that these are all flowing one into the other through a progress or a passage of time. They did it with their feet. They progressed from where they lived up to God's house where He lived. And so they showed a progression there in mileage, in distance, but we show that most of all in time and in growth. But think about this. Think of this in terms of where Psalm 133 is placed in this chain. It is number 14 of 15. Psalm 133 is right before you reach the house, you reach God's house, you reach, could we say, the Kingdom of God. And the final word, then, before we reach God's house is how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. So unity, it seems to me, comes right at the end, right before we reach the Kingdom of God. If nothing else, it hints that unity is one of the last hurdles to cross, one of the last challenges that we must face and conquer so that we actually are allowed into the house.

So what can Psalm 133 teach us? We are going to look at this very closely, verse by verse. Let us read verse 1 again. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

One of the great ironies of this psalm is that the word unity does not appear in it. It appears in our English versions, but actually "in unity" should be in italics in this verse because it is not there. The translators added it to clarify the thought. The thought is there definitely, but the Hebrew word for it is not. The last part of the verse 1 literally reads in the Hebrew, "when brothers dwell also together." The Hebrew word there for together is *yachad*, and it means together or both, like you both did something and so you were together in doing it, or joined, you are joined together like a man and a wife are joined together. They are to be united. The idea is there, it is just not there in the Hebrew word. So the word *yachad* actually implies a unit, or a union, or unanimity in doing something and what we might call being at-one or being one with others. So whether the Hebrew word for unity is there or not, the idea is certainly there that that is what it is talking about, dwelling together, unified as one front, as a unit.

And this togetherness, the verse says here, David says, is good and it is pleasant. The word good is a fairly general rendering and might be better translated as proper or fitting or right. It is proper that brethren dwell together in unity. It is right that they should do so. Pleasant has the sense of attractive or even lovely, charming, or pleasurable. It is a good thing, it is positive. So in God's sight, unity or togetherness among His people is proper and it pleases Him. He gets a good feeling from it and nods His head in its rightness, its correctness. And it also has the same effect on the people who are in unity. When the unity is there, the people feel good. It is pleasurable to them. They see it as attractive and it is attractive to outsiders that people are dwelling together in unity. And so they receive the benefits of the goodness and pleasantness that unity provides. So all good here.

Now, let us look at verse 2. "It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments."

This is a metaphor, obviously, and verses 2 and 3 metaphorically describe what unity is like. We are given kind of a general overview that it is good and it is pleasant. That is, it is proper and attractive and pleasurable. But this gives you an idea of what it is really like, a more specific way, really, what it is like. And they, these two verses, 2 and 3, compare unity to oil and to dew.

Oil in verse 2, dew in verse 3. And what these two metaphors do is extend the two ideas of unity being good and unity being pleasant. Those ideas are in the oil and the dew.

Now the oil in verse 2 consecrating Aaron as the high priest is proper. It is the way it should be done and it is fitting to his ordination that he was anointed with oil and it ran down off his head after it was poured upon him. Many of you probably know that the oil that was poured on his head was also perfumed. It had a pleasant aroma and one could smell it if one was close enough to where the anointing was. And so this pleasantness kind of pervaded the whole ceremony, that it was a ceremony that was being done in observance or obedience to God's command to anoint Aaron as the high priest. But it was also very pleasant to watch and to smell even. It had these two ideas wrapped up in it.

The dew, in verse 3, coming off the mountains, is good for bringing moisture so that crops can be grown. And refreshing water is pleasant when one is parched, when it is hot out. These storms that we have been having, it is great that water comes down out of the sky and reduces our temperature a bit. It might not do great for our humidity, but it does usually knock our temperature down a little bit. It cuts the dryness and cuts the heat of summer.

These metaphors are saying that this is how brethren in unity affect God and man—and it is all positive. Like I said, it is fitting, it is good, it is pleasant, it is attractive and pleasurable. But there is very much more to it than this. We cannot just stop there.

Why did David choose Aaron and anointing with oil as a metaphor for this idea of good and pleasant because one is dwelling in unity? Now, these types have a deeper connection with unity of the brethren than simply being good and pleasant. Choosing Aaron here takes this metaphor another step further so that we can understand it more deeply.

Let us get into this. I have three points under here. Why did David choose Aaron and anointing with oil?

1. Aaron is the prototype high priest and of course, the anti-type, its fulfillment, is our Lord and Savior and High Priest Jesus Christ. So we are

looking through Aaron here to Christ, ultimately. Now in the Levitical ritual, it was in the person of the high priest that reconciliation was achieved between God and the people on the Day of Atonement. And similarly, it is through Christ that we are reconciled with God.

Let us go to Colossians 1 and just see this very quickly. We will read verses 19 through 22.

Colossians 1:19-22 For it pleased the Father that in Him [Christ] all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

So our conclusion here in part 1 is that the high priest is the central figure in our unity, especially in our unity with God, but also with our unity with each other. Christ is the rod around which everything else swings, if you will. He is the axle, He is the axis. He is the chief cornerstone, as it were. He is the one that holds everything together.

2. Is that we have the act of anointing itself. This is an act of consecration, of setting apart, of ordination, or of making holy. All of those are synonyms of that idea. And it was done throughout the history of ancient Israel in anointing a king or a priest, a high priest, especially. The church uses it now for anointing elders and for anointing for healing. The idea is that when one is anointed, you are set apart for a specific purpose. An elder is anointed to preach, to guide, to lead, to counsel, to do all the things like weddings and baptisms and funerals and things like that. They are set apart in a position where they are allowed to do those things and are appointed to do those things. The same thing for anointing for healing. The oil is applied to set that person apart for God's blessing and healing. So anointing is the act of setting apart for a specific or special purpose.

Let us go to I John 2, verse 27. We will just read the first bit here.

I John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you.

Now, this is our special anointing by giving us the Holy Spirit. We do not necessarily anoint with oil at one's baptism, but we do lay hands on just as we would for an anointing or for an ordination. And so we have an anointing of the Holy Spirit, which is symbolized a lot of times in the Bible with oil and water, both of which figure here in Psalm 133. So we all have that same anointing, right? If you are a member of the church of God, you have been given God's Spirit. You are now a child of God.

If you want to, you can jot down I Corinthians 12:12-13, which is baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit. It shows that it sets us apart for a special purpose and that is to be a son or daughter of God. And of course, that baptism or anointing or consecrating through the ritual of baptism brings us into the Body of Christ. And what is Christ? Christ is the High Priest. And so through this anointing, we are actually brought into the body of the High Priest who is shown in verse 2 as being anointed with oil. So we are part of this image in Psalm 133:2 because we are part of His Body.

Let us go to I Peter 2, verses 9 and 10.

I Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

So we have been chosen and set apart as holy, as special people to God, and we are supposed to glorify Him in one body.

Let us go to Romans 15, verses 5 and 7.

Romans 15:5 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,

that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

So we find here in Romans 15 that Paul is kind of using this idea of being in the same league, if you will, with Christ, because He has brought us into His Body and we have to start doing the things that He did. And one of the great things that He did was that He brought us together in unity in Him. And so we have to receive one another and bring everybody into unity with ourselves as well, imitating Jesus Christ.

3. Finally, there is the oil itself. This is an obvious symbol of the Holy Spirit. Let us just go back to I Samuel 16, verse 13 and I think it says it just right there in one verse.

I Samuel 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him [that is, David] in the midst of his brothers; and the Holy Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

Very clear connection here between the anointing oil and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon David. So anointing oil meant that God's Spirit came upon David.

Now, you get to some of the really good parts here in Psalm 133. I think it is very interesting and significant what the oil is doing. Let us look at this. "It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments."

What is the oil doing? It is running down. It says it there twice. It is running down, it is descending, if you will. The oil comes from a higher place down to a lower one. Now, we think of it as gravity that brings it down. But this is a pouring, this has some impetus from the one who is pouring, and it is being poured down on the Aaron's head and it runs down upon his beard and then it runs down onto his garments. And is that not what happens when God gives us His Spirit? I mean, you can go to Romans 5:5. God pours His Spirit

on us in the same way that the anointing oil was poured on the high priest. It comes down from God. This idea of dissent is being emphasized by being repeated in the last half of the verse. So the anointing oil goes down upon Aaron, it goes down upon his beard, down upon his garments. We get this idea of movement downward from a higher place to a lower one.

Now, scholars for decades, if not centuries, have been debating how far down the oil descended upon Aaron. A lot of them say, "Well, look, it was just a little bit in a horn, it was poured out on his head. Maybe half a cup was poured on his head, and that much oil, I guess if you give it a year or two, it could get pretty far down." But we are talking, it will go down on his collar, on his shoulders or maybe on his chest. And they usually say collar because of the Hebrew word there. Others say it goes all the way down to the bottom edge of his garment, all the way down to his feet where they are poking out under his robe. The translators of the King James version took this word to mean hem. They translated the word, which actually literally means mouth or opening, that is the word edge, which in the New King James actually means mouth, and the King James translated it as skirts.

So they are talking about the bottom edge, the bottom mouth. A garment like that has two mouths. There is the mouth of where the head goes and that would be the collar and then there is the mouth where the feet go, which could be the bottom edge or hem of the skirt. The King James chose the bottom edge, the hem of the skirt. The New King James, it is a bit of a fudge here that they just use the word edge and let you determine what it is for yourself. And maybe that is good that they left it, because they really did not know. I would rather it be a little vague than them choose the wrong thing. But still, other translations have borders, on the borders of his garment. Okay, fine. That is a fudge too. But really the choice here is between collar and the bottom hem.

Now my vote goes to using the word skirt or bottom hem because of verse 3. You always have got to look at the Hebrew poetry because they are always writing in parallel. And so what we have to see there is that both verse 2 and 3 are hyperbole. They are exaggerations. They are not to be taken literally. And since verse 3 is even a stronger hyperbole than verse 2, we have to go with the fact that verse 2, going down to the bottom hem, is a moderate hyperbole. And then we will get to verse 3, which is just a fantastic

hyperbole. But I think that the two verses corresponding to one another puts in a good vote for taking it as the bottom edge or the bottom hem.

So the oil of anointing that was poured on Aaron's head probably actually did not soak him all the way down to his ankles, especially if we consider it was just a small amount. It would probably take a good bucket of oil for all that to get down to the bottom edge. And if that were the case, probably no one would want to be high priest in Israel. You know, keep the fire away. But the idea of complete coverage is in view here. That the oil that is placed on the high priest's head completely covers the high priest. It goes from tip to toe, it goes from top to bottom. It covers the entire person of the high priest, not just his head, not just his beard, but all the way down his body. And as the metaphor takes it over the top, or I should say, down to the bottom, it goes all the way down to the bottom hem. We will see why I say this about verse 3 in a minute.

David uses his poetic license to depict the image of the oil going all the way from head to toe, covering the whole high priest's body. And so we are included. It is not just the head of the body, but also the body of the body, if you will. The whole body of the person is covered in oil and oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. So not only does the head get the Holy Spirit, so does the body. It comes down to us, however, from the head. It is poured on the head and we receive it as the body from the head. It goes through that channel, if you will, from God, the great anointer, to the Son, or the High Priest who is the Head of the church. And then it goes down to the Body, the people who compose the Body of Christ. So there is plainly an order here that is happening with the giving of the Holy Spirit.

In this way, we are included in the anointing of the high priest. And this is why it tells us in Revelation 5:10 that we are royal priests. That that is our job in the Kingdom because we have been anointed *with* the High Priest to do this job. We have been given a separate assignment from everybody else. That is why being a firstfruit is so important, because we will be working directly with Christ in His High Priestly duties for the rest of our existence, which is forever.

So what David is bringing out in Psalm 133:2 is that unity among the brethren is a holy thing. It is a consecrated thing, a special thing, a different

thing, a transcendent thing. Unity by itself sets us apart from all of the other men. Because men who do not have this Spirit cannot be unified. But unity through the Holy Spirit is a miracle brought about by the agency of God and His Spirit. So we can see unity as a gift from God through His Spirit. It comes down to us from the Head, Jesus Christ, by means of that Spirit.

Let us get to verse 3 here. "It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forevermore."

Remember, I said verses 2 and 3 are both hyperbole, metaphorical and hyperbolic. They are illustrations that are a little bit over the top, but they are making a point. So this verse continues and expands the ideas found in verse 2. And remember, the ideas in verse 2 are also helping to expand the ideas in verse 1. It is all building one upon the other. These are good and pleasant things that we are talking about here. Here in verse 3, the metaphor is refreshing water in the form of dew. Water, as you know, as I mentioned before, is another symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Let us go to John 7. This is probably the most well known of these verses that compare water to the Holy Spirit.

John 7:37-38 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

The only difference between that and what we see in Psalm 133:3 is that Jesus is describing living waters. In the psalm, it is dew, flowing dew, which is very interesting. Have you ever seen dew flow? Normally it just sits there on the grass, right? That is normally what you see in terms of dew. But this is flowing dew. So notice here in verse 3 that the theme of descending also continues. "It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion." So a third time this idea of going down or descending appears in this psalm.

Now, what is the direction here? Now it is going down, yes. But literally what does he say here? It is going down from Hermon to Mount Zion.

Weird, is it not? It is flowing from a mountain to a mountain. That is a lot of water, if you think about it. How much water would it take to flow down one mountain and rise up another? Remember, I said it was 5,000-something feet above sea level. That is a lot of water. That is flood-like water.

Do you know your geography of the land of Canaan? Or maybe I should ask, how well you know it? I should assume that you know something about the geography of the land of Canaan. Does anybody know where Mount Hermon? Anyone, anyone? Okay, I will tell you. It is way above Dan. Ha, bet you did not know where that was either. The phrase Dan to Beersheba is a phrase that the Hebrews use, the Israelites use to mean the whole nation from north to south. So Dan was the old Canaanite city of Laish and that was way up north (*way* up north for those of you who are fans of *The Court Jester*.) But you can see it in I Samuel 3:20 and II Samuel 3:10. Both of those scriptures talk about the whole land of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba. So Dan was far north, Beersheba was far south, but Mount Hermon was further north than even Dan. Mount Zion is in the south in Judah. And so it was a long way from Hermon to Zion, miles and miles and miles.

So what we see here, this idea of Mount Hermon to Mount Zion is another top to bottom image—from the top of the land in the north to the bottom of the land in the land of Judah where Zion is, where Jerusalem is.

Now, it is also interesting that we have the idea of separated or consecrated here because the word Hermon means devoted or sanctified. So we are going from a sanctified mountain all the way down to Zion, which is also a sanctified mountain because that is the place of God. God lives on Mount Zion. So we are talking about another sanctification process of which unity is one of the final steps. But we get this top to bottom notion with the dew flowing from Hermon all the way down to Mount Zion. And what is Mount Zion often a symbol of? The church. Not just God's place, but the church is often called Zion in the prophecies.

So what we have here, since Zion is a pointed reference to God's people in which we are all brethren, we are supposed to be unified, and this dew, a metaphor for unity of the Spirit, descends down to us from this very majestic, high mountain, high place, if you will (and not the idolatrous kind), but just a very high mountain. And by the way, even in the Middle East,

Hermon is often snowcapped even in the summer. It is that tall and that grand. It is a very beautiful-looking mountain, very majestic and snowcapped. We are getting the same vibes, if you will, of verse 2, that it is coming down from a high place on to the land in Mount Hermon and flowing all the way down through the land on to God's people all the way down in the south at Mount Zion.

So the oil did it with Aaron's ordination. Now the dew does it, covering the whole land, the Promised Land, the place of the people's rest, which they did not ever get. But the people of God under Jesus Christ have a rest that they will inherit.

The vehicle by which unity comes in verse 3, just like in verse 2, is the Holy Spirit symbolized by water. It is a beautiful illustration. It is interesting that you get in verse 2 an individual aspect of this. And in verse 3, you get a corporate aspect of it. It comes on the whole land, all the people. By the way, just as a side issue here, many people believe that the Mount of Transfiguration was Mount Hermon, which would fit very well.

Now, Zion's identification as the church or God's spiritual people is further verified by the last thought in the verse, last thought in the psalm. And that is, God gives eternal life only to those within Zion, within His people, within the Body of Christ. Now, I think it is very exciting how David phrases this. He says for there, "The Lord commanded the blessing—life forevermore." God commands the blessing of eternal life within Zion. Does that not strike you as kind of an odd way to put it? We often think of eternal life as a gift, as something that is just given, not commanded. And I think this gives us an idea or give us some good indication about where unity fits and how it is produced. That it is a response to a command and then eternal life follows.

First, we have to understand that unity of the Spirit is a vital part of eternal life. Remember, eternal life is not necessarily immortality, it is not necessarily length of life or endless life. But John 17:3 indicates that it is *quality of life*. Eternal life is to know God, to live life as God lives it. So unity as God experiences it is part of what makes God's quality of life or His eternal life so wonderful and so desirable. It is not the length of life that is desirable. Because length of life without character or with sin is not something to be envied or grasped. It is not something that we should ever

want. But length of life with quality character, the character of God, the way God lives, is wonderful and it is desirable because it always produces good and pleasant things, like unity. Living together in disunity, either with God or with our brethren, is a punishment. It is not a reward.

Also, consider this, I mentioned it before just in passing: because God commands eternal life, it must be something we do in response or in obedience to a command. When God commands something to be done, there must be a response to accomplish the word. I mean, God could make things by fiat, but when it is with a person, He has to command something to be done. And then the person takes that command in and responds either rightly or wrongly. And so God here commands eternal life. It comes upon us as a command and we have to respond. He wants us to respond by being in unity, by doing all the things that we normally would do to obey Him. The commands of the Ten Commandments, the other commands that He has given us, all the principles and the examples and the models and the other things that He has given to us through His Word. They are all things that are commanded and we have to respond to them. And if we respond to them in the right way, we will have eternal life. The same is true with unity.

Remember, God says in Isaiah 55:11 that He sends forth His word and it will not return empty because that word is *heard*. It does not mean that that word is sent out and then hocus pocus or abracadabra or whatever, it just happens. Whenever God sends out a command, a great deal of work happens. It is that responding to the command that accomplishes His will or something is fulfilled. His will is fulfilled.

Now, the same happens regarding unity. Unity is something we *do* in response to His command that we should have it. Unity is another one of those godly works or acts that consists of God and us working together to produce it. I mean, just remember Philippians 2:12-13,. This is what I am driving at here.

Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

There is that word pleasure again and it is good pleasure. It is good and pleasant. And it is because we are working together with God to accomplish His will. That is, in this particular instance, our salvation. But unity is another one of those things that we have to do in concert with God. So God supplies a part by His Spirit, right? And we respond by doing something to fulfill what He started. God sends His Spirit, His very nature and power to begin the process with us. And then we take up the burden of continuing and promoting unity, since we are using unity as the example. So we have to work or we have to put forth a lot of effort; we have to persevere, we have to sacrifice, we have to have humility. All those things go into producing unity. God asked for it to be done by His command and we have to follow through and do what it takes to accomplish it. And the result is eternal life—life forevermore.

Let us go to I Corinthians 1. Now the Corinthians were well known, infamous if you will, for being disunited. Paul here lambasts them pretty hard for being so disunited. But I want you to see what he says in verse 4. Let us go down through verse 10.

I Corinthians 1:4-10 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also conform you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you may be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Now, the very interesting thing that I see here is that Paul says that God had given them every gift that they needed and that He would ensure that He would help them all the way to the end. But even though they had all these resources, they were completely enriched with the gifts of God's Spirit, they were still in disunity. There were divisions and schisms and dissensions

among them. And he says, Christ is not divided, Christ's body is whole, but the Corinthians had dropped the ball somehow. God had done His part, but they had failed to do theirs.

Let us go to Ephesians 4, verses 1 through 6.

Ephesians 4:1-6 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

These are the things that we have to do to walk worthy of our calling and to be unified. We have been called as the sons of God, sons and daughters of God. We have been called to be like God in every way. And God is one! God is unified. There is one body, the church of God. It is united. And it is united wherever we may happen to be. It is a spiritual organism, one spiritual organism because everybody that is part of that body has the Spirit of God and that is the way that it is—united across time and place.

But we can be disunited if we fail to practice verses 2 and 3. If we are not lowly and gentle and longsuffering and forbearing and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Without these things we will never have unity because we will never give in. We will never sacrifice. We will never let other people do things. We will never show any kind of love, even with God deluging us with oil and water and dew, if you will. It will not happen because we are not responding properly.

Now, I would like to give you an assignment since I am running out of time here. I would like you to read Romans 12 in its entirety. Romans 12 begins a four-chapter section of practical advice that Paul gives the Roman church on how to be unified and to carry out God's will. Paul tells us how to get along, how to cooperate in order for us to accomplish the purpose of the church. And I do not have time to go through all of these because it is jam-packed with practical things that we can do.

He starts off with some principles, but by the time you are getting to about verse 9 or so, you are getting his practical advice about how we can do things to promote unity and what would happen once the unity was in place. And as you go through them, you will see how doing these things would indeed promote unity. Strife would cease. Tempers would cool, offenses would be forgiven, grudges would be dropped. Social, cultural, racial, and financial distinctions would not matter, would not matter a hill of beans. Needs would be met. Peace would reign. Growth would explode. Righteous character would develop. Blessings would rain down from God. His work would be done.

How good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity. And we have a manual in Romans 12 about how to get it done.

Now, we cannot bring unity alone, but we sure have a big part to play in producing it. And when it happens, we cannot take any credit. God gets all the glory because it is only by the means of His Spirit that it even becomes possible. It is His Spirit that flows down through Jesus Christ to us. It all starts with Him. Even so, we do have to work on ourselves to be one with God. And as that happens, we cannot help to become unified with others who are of the same mind.

If we truly want unity in the church, the Church of the Great God and with the other churches in the greater church of God, unity must begin with the individual—with you and with me—till it spreads throughout the church and we find ourselves one with God, one with each other, and with life forevermore.