

Psalm 133

Unity

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Most of you are aware that Mrs. (Loma D.) Herbert Armstrong's favorite psalm in all the Bible was Psalm 133. Ross Jutsum later on sometime in the 1980s wrote a song using these words, "How Good and How Pleasant. . ." I am sure you all recognize it. There have been many other songs written using those words. I cannot say I know exactly what attracted Mrs. Armstrong to that psalm so much, whether it was just the poetry of the psalm or the imagery that comes out in it, or the meaning expressed in its three short verses. I expect however that the psalm's meaning is really what gave her that attraction, and I think that is what it was that also gave her a hope, a goal, and a prayer by what is expressed in it.

Whatever it was that attracted her to it, I think it makes a very fitting rallying cry for the truth of God in 1998. "How *good*, and how *pleasant* it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." It should be **our** goal, **our** hope, and **our** prayer just like it seems to have been Mrs. Armstrong's as we see the splintering, the scattering, and to see the pace hardly slackening over the last decade or so. Many have simply fallen away entirely from our fellowship, from the fellowship of the greater church of God. Many have rejected the Sabbath day and have rejected other parts of God's law, and are slipping, or have slipped back into the world. As we know, II Thessalonians 2 says that a great falling away has to happen before the end, and maybe, as we think, this is it.

Today though, rather than the falling away, I am more concerned with what remains—you and me. The congregations of the churches dwindle as families and small groups leave to join newly-formed churches. They have many different reasons for leaving and going elsewhere, and some of which I have heard seem to be fairly legitimate, and there are some which are definitely not legitimate. The "whys", though, are not important to this sermon as much as the fact that such action of leaving to form new and small groups further fractures the unity of the church. The pieces just seem to keep getting smaller and smaller and smaller and more distant all the time.

Several centuries ago a nursery rhyme was begun, I believe, because of the reign of Richard III who was a hunchback, and that nursery rhyme was "Humpty-Dumpty."

Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall.

Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall.

Can all the king's horses and all the king's men

Put Humpty-Dumpty back to together again?

Can Humpty-Dumpty (I am speaking of the church this time) be put back together again? Personally I do not think we alone can do it. *God* can do it, and *God will* do it—in His own time—but I think He is waiting for some indication from us that we want to be unified, and that we are willing to work for it under His terms—not our terms, but under His. *God* is waiting for us to act, to respond, because He has given us the things we need for unity. We are just not doing it.

What we are going to do today is look at Psalm 133. We used that as a base to look at unity among the brethren, and we will see, I hope by the end of this sermon, where we fit in bringing unity about. Let us go to Psalm 133, just three short verses.

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 LOORD commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.

Psalm 133 is the fourteenth of fifteen Psalms that run from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134. Most of your Bibles will have as a title, "A Psalm (or Song) of Ascents (or Degrees)." It is called either one. It all depends on which translation you have. What these "Songs of Ascents" were is still debated among scholars. All that they know is that these fifteen psalms go together somehow, but the phrase, "Songs of Ascents" does not give them enough information to know exactly what they were and how they were used. There are four different views. I want to give these to you.

1. The Jews themselves say that they are linked to the fifteen steps that lead from the Court of Women to the Court of Israel in the Temple. There were fifteen steps that went from one court to the next one, and that the Levites would stand on these steps on the evening of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and they would play their instruments, and they would sing these fifteen songs.

I have also heard a variation on this, that there was a procession that went up these fifteen steps, and they would start on the first step, the bottom step, and they would sing

a song, and then they would go up, and they would sing the next song, and then they would go up and sing the next song until they got to the Court of Israel. That is the Jews' version.

2. Certain modern scholars say that they think these psalms are called "The Songs of Ascents" because the ideas expressed in them ascend from one to another throughout the fifteen so that the first one has a thought right near the end of it, that the second one picks it up and takes it to the next level, and that at the end of that one, the third one picks up the final thought and takes that up to the next level, and there is a consistent movement from one thought to the next to a more higher plane. This is an okay idea, but it does not fit every one, so it is not the one that I would choose.
3. Some of the early church fathers (those people who were supposedly in the church in the first few centuries after the apostles) thought these were fifteen songs sung by the Jews as they returned from Babylon, from exile. The problem with this one is that there are a couple that, again, do not fit. Some of them do not seem appropriate to returning to the land.
4. This fourth one, which I think is most likely, is that these fifteen songs were pilgrimage songs sung by the people as they went up to Jerusalem, attending to Jerusalem. It is a common Hebraic idiom that you always went *up* to Jerusalem. Wherever you happened to be, even if you were five thousand feet higher than Jerusalem, you still went up to Jerusalem which was down five thousand feet, because it was *the great city*. You went up to Jerusalem. The people would go up to Jerusalem for the three great feasts: Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The pilgrims (the people from all over Israel) would sing these fifteen songs as they went up.

What is interesting to me is that there are definite links to "gathering" at Jerusalem, or "going to" Jerusalem. If you know the symbolism, Jerusalem, Zion, and the Holy City are symbols of the church, and these are the things the people were thinking about as they were gathering to Jerusalem. The feasts are interesting too, if you take it that the feasts show God's plan—the movement through time of what God is doing.

If we took the time frame of God's plan and put these fifteen songs and arranged them through there, where does the one about unity fit? It fits right near the end. The final one, (if you look in Psalm 134 at "Praise the Lord for all He has done! Bless His holy and sacred name") that is what you do when all the stuff is over with and done; but the final hurdle it seems is that of "brethren dwelling together in unity." The cycle is not quite complete until all the brethren dwell together in unity. Now in its greatest sense this will not happen until Christ returns, and we come together as one nation, as one church, and as one people at the resurrection where we finally **are** truly one with God, as His family, as the bride of Christ.

Let us look more closely to Psalm 133.

Psalm 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

This first verse expresses that goal, that hope, that prayer that I talked about earlier. What a great thing it would be if all the people could live together harmoniously! What things we could accomplish! What great pleasure we would have! How attractive that would be. That is the idea here.

One of the great ironies I mentioned to the elders yesterday (at the ministerial conference) is that even though the word "unity" is here in our English translation, the word "unity" really does not appear in this song. The literal translation of the last phrase, "for brethren to dwell together in unity" is, "when brethren dwell also together." Obviously the idea of unity is there. It is the Hebrew word *yachad*. The word *yachad* means "together," "both," "joined," and when brethren are joined, then brethren are together. The implication obviously is when they are united, when they have unanimity, when they are "at one." It is really not a direct translation to say "unity." It is really "together." That is why there is that little bit of irony.

The word "good" here is kind of a fairly general rendering. We use good for all kinds of things like "a good slide into second base," "that cake was sure good," and "Have you been good to your mother today?" Those kinds of things. We use it fairly generally, but the idea here is "proper." "How proper it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" "How fitting it is!" "How right it is for God's people to be one."

"Pleasant" has the sense of "attractive." "How attractive it is when God's people dwell as one." "How charming it is that these people all get along." "How lovely are thy dwellings, O Eternal, Lord of Hosts." We are God's dwelling, are we not? How wonderful it is when God's dwelling, the temple of the living God, is one building, and not scattered pieces all over the ground.

In God's sight unity or togetherness among His people is proper, and it pleases Him to no end. It has the same effect on us. The brethren who are thus joined together receive the benefits of the goodness and pleasantness the unity produces. That is why we should **yearn** for this unity, because it is right and good and fitting and because it is lovely and attractive and appealing. In being that way, it gives us great benefits.

Psalm 133:2-3 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.

Verses 2 and 3 describe what unity is like, and it describes it or compares it to oil and to dew. The choice of these two metaphors by David primarily extends the idea of "good" and "pleasant." Oil, running upon Aaron's head and down into his beard and onto his garments, was good and pleasant. It was good from the sense that it was proper and fitting for a high priest to be ordained with oil. That is the way it is done. It is the proper form by which the high priest is appointed and anointed by oil.

We may say "yech" to have this oil all over us, all the way down to our garment, but not this oil. This oil had many spices in it that gave off a very pleasant and pleasing aroma. It was that sweet savor in a way in the sense of an oil, and it was only used for this, and that unique, very pleasant odor was reserved only for this one occasion—the anointing of the high priest. If one was at one of the anointings of the high priest, one would always associate that smell with that ceremony, and if one would ever smell that again, one could probably only smell it again at another anointing of a high priest and it would bring back those memories of that other pleasant time when another Levite, a son of Aaron, was raised to the rank of high priest. It was fitting, and it was proper, and it was pleasant.

Regarding the dew coming down from Hermon, is it not good that the dew falls on the grass and on the crops? Is it not fitting that the land should be watered by the dew of heaven? Was not the Garden of Eden watered by the dew, and not by rain? Today it is a hot day. When I woke up and looked at my thermometer it was already up to about 80 to 85 degrees. Of course the sun was shining on it, but it is a hot day. How refreshing it would be if we had a dewfall to cut the heat, to cut the dryness. On a day like today it is not going to happen, but just think of it if the dew rolled off the mountains here, off the Appalachians, and came down into this region. It would cool us all down. It would invigorate us and make us feel good. That is how brethren dwelling together in unity affects both God and man.

How *good* and how *pleasant* such things are, but there is more to it than this. I have just given you the surface of this. Why did David choose Aaron? An anointing with oil? These types have a deeper connection with the unity of the brethren than simply being "good and pleasant." The one, Aaron, is the prototype high priest. Who is the anti-type? Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who now sits at the right hand of God, and mediates on our behalf. In the Levitical ritual it was in the person of the high priest that at-one-ment was made with the people on the Day of Atonement. It was only **he** that could go through

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the veil after his sins had been purged and after Israel's sins had been purged, to present himself before God and sprinkle the mercy seat with blood. The high priest is the vehicle of that oneness—the unity with God. Is that not true? Is that not what we learned about Jesus Christ? Who else has gone through the veil and made it rent in two, to open up our own unity with the Father?

Let us go to Colossians 1 to pick up this thought. Colossians 1 is speaking of reconciliation here in verses 19 through 22.

Colossians 1:19-20 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself. . . .

See, we were separated from God, and He chose what was to be His Son, the Spokesman, the Logos, the One who became Jesus Christ, to be the vehicle by which He would bring all of those who were afar off **near**, together with Him.

Colossians 1:20 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.

That is the blood that the high priest would bring in, to sprinkle on the mercy seat in the Levitical ritual there in Leviticus 16.

Colossians 1:21 And you [you personally] who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.

He has done it to you personally. He has given you access to the Father, given you the opportunity to have unity with Him, to be one. His final prayer in the garden was, *Father, let these people be one with us, as I am one with You, and You with Me.* [John 17:21]

Colossians 1:22 In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight.

Hang onto that word "holy."

This figure we have in Psalm 133 of the high priest is a central figure in our unity with

God, and that figure of course is Christ. He has opened the way for us to be unified, to be reconciled, and not only to be reconciled, but to be one, and move forward with Him.

Next in Psalm 133 we have "anointing" of Aaron; not just that Aaron is there, but we have an anointing. This is why I told you to hang onto the word "holy." Anointing is an act of consecration, meaning it is an act of setting something or someone apart for a special use. Such a thing is **consecrated** for a particular service. It is an act of ordination, or we could put it in another way, it is an act of "making holy," because holiness in its basic form, its basic meaning, means "to be different," but to be different in a much better way, a transcendent way. The Hebrew means "to cut out," like you cut out a sheep from the flock. You cut out a cow from the herd, or you cut out a piece of material from the totality of it.

This thing that is cut out is not anymore equal to what it was. It is used for something different. It is put to another use. In the case of God, it is used in a way that is higher. It is on a godly plane. That is why in the sermons on holiness my Dad gave several years ago, he talked about transcendence. It goes *beyond* what is merely normal, and that is what anointing does. Anointing is an act that does that "cutting out." When a minister is ordained, he is "cut out" from the congregation, and placed in service on a higher plane—God's plane. It does not make him better, he is just put "to aside" so that he can do a specific task, so that he can be recognized as someone "different," set apart, because of ordination, a form of anointing.

In ancient Israel they used this for anointing the king and anointing the high priest. In the church we have used it many times in ordaining elders, not the anointing with oil, but the act of ordination. We do use the oil in the case of anointing for healing. That is a setting apart for the special purpose of God reaching into that person's life and working a miracle, so that God can be glorified through that person. Did you know that you have been anointed as well? Let us go to I John 2.

I John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you.

You have been given an anointing **from** God which remains **in** you. We have had the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We have been called by the Father and drawn to Christ to become His disciple. We were baptized and had hands laid upon us, and that was the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We have been anointed. We **all** have been anointed into that same Spirit, **by** that same Spirit. It is the very thing that sets us apart as the sons of God [Romans 8:14]. Those who have the spirit of God are the sons of God. This is a

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definition of a Christian.

Go to I Corinthians 12, just a little backing to this.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

All of us together have this thing in common, that we all have been anointed into the Spirit, and we all have been made to drink into it. So as the body of Christ, the High Priest, we too have been anointed, just like it says in Psalm 133:2. The oil comes down upon the high priest, and it goes down and drops onto the body. We have all had the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Let us look at I Peter 2:9-10. These are very well known scriptures.

I Peter 2:9 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.

We have been set apart as "holy," just like the high priest was set apart, because we are that High Priest's body. We are now a nation bound by the Spirit—God's special people. If you look in Romans 15 it says we are to glorify Him as one body.

Romans 15:5-6 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded [to be in unity] 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.

Can we really glorify God when we are so **disunited**? Can we, with **one** mind and **one** **mouth** sing His praises? I do not think so. It can be done, but it is not going to be done in the way that glorifies Him the most. It will not be that good and pleasant way that occurs when brethren dwell together in unity.

Finally in Psalm 133:2 is the oil itself—the "precious" oil (or the "fragrant" oil, as I have

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seen it also translated). This is obviously a symbol of the Holy Spirit. I will just read quickly. This is when David was anointed.

I Samuel 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers.

"Brothers." "Brethren." "Anointing." "Oil." Now listen to the last part.

I Samuel 16:13 And the Spirit of the LOORD came upon David from that day forward.

We have, in a way, David's baptism, and he was separated from all his brothers, from all the people of the tribes of Israel, and anointed "king," just as we too have been separated from Israel, from the nations, and set aside as God's people to be kings and priests for God to the people, in the resurrection, and in His Kingdom.

I think it is very interesting and very significant what the oil is doing. It says "running down." That means "descending." The oil is descending from the head, down the beard, down onto the clothes. It comes from a higher place, and it goes down to a lower place. Is that not what God does with His Spirit? It comes from the highest place of all. He is even called "the Highest," our God and Father. He sends His Spirit down to you and to me **through** the Head, our Lord and Savior and High Priest, Jesus Christ, and then dispenses it to us, His body. Is that not a beautiful picture? I think it is. I think it is great.

This idea of descent is then repeated in the last part—"running down upon the edge of his garments." So we have "running down on the beard," and "running down on the edge of his garments," and then in the next verse it says "the dew descends upon the mountains of Zion." Three times in two verses you have that idea of "descent," "descent," "descent."

What is the picture we are trying to get here, or what is God trying to get us to understand? Unity comes from Him, down to His Son, and then down to us by His Spirit. A beautiful picture! He is the originator of unity, and without Him we can do nothing. We cannot have unity without it being given to us from above. It is kind of interesting. (I am going to say that a lot because there are a lot of interesting things in these three verses.)

I find it very interesting that there has been a debate for years and years about how far

the oil goes. Most people take it that the word translated in the *New King James* as "edge," and translated in the old *King James* as "skirts," means the collar. The word that is used there for "edge" and for "skirt" is literally "mouth" or "opening." What is the mouth of the garment? Well, you have two choices. On a robe it is either the neck, or the collar, which goes over the head, or it is the skirt. It is the hem of the skirt that is all the way down by the ankles.

People will look at this and they say, "Well, they didn't put a bucket full of oil on the guy. If they did, maybe it would run down to his skirt, down to the bottom hem. It was probably just a small amount that was ceremoniously put on his head and allowed to drip down his hair and his beard and onto his shoulders." I do not think so. I think God inspired David to put "skirts"—the bottom hem. That would be my choice if I were going to translate this. It would be the very bottom hem down by the ankles, not the collar.

The reason I say this is because the whole of verse 2 and verse 3 is hyperbole. They are exaggerations. I can say this because the dew of Hermon has never reached the mountains of Zion, never reached Jerusalem. Hermon is way to the north. It would be miles and miles and miles away, and for that dew to roll down Hermon, go all the way across the Sea of Galilee, and all the way down Jordan and into the foothills of Judea, and finally up the slope to Zion, to Jerusalem, would be absolutely impossible. It would never happen.

So David is obviously using an exaggeration in verse 3. Why is he ultra-exaggerating in verse 2? They are parallel to each other. He exaggerates one place, and he is going to exaggerate the other. There was fair reason. He did not do this because he was slack. He did this because he wanted to get something across to you and me. Do you know what that was? That was that we are covered with oil from head to toe. If you are the "toe" in the church, do you not want to be covered by that Holy Spirit as part of the body? Does it not say in Romans that we **all** have that Spirit? Does not I Corinthians 12 say that we have all been given the Spirit? Well, it is not just on the head. It drips onto the garment which is around the body, and so the picture here is of the fullness of the Spirit let us say, or the completeness of that downpouring of God's Spirit over the whole body, not just the head, not just the shoulders, but all the way down till it covers every member of the church.

We are that High Priest's body, and we do what the Head says. That is a picture of what Paul brings out in I Corinthians 12. It is that Spirit that covers us all, that infuses us all and binds us into one. So what we have in Psalm 133:2 is that unity among the brethren is a holy thing, a special thing, a different thing, a transcendent thing—something that only happens because a holy God initiates it. In effect, unity by itself separates us from

humanity anyway without the aid of the Holy Spirit because man is not unified and never has been, and never **will** be unified, and by just an inkling, by just a small amount of unity, we are placed in an entirely different category from the rest of mankind. Unity then is a gift from our holy God by His Holy Spirit. It comes down to us from the Head, Jesus Christ, by means of the Spirit.

What we see in verse 3 continues and expands the ideas found in verse 2, except this time the symbol changes to refreshing water in the form of dew; not a torrent, not a thunderstorm, but a very soft gentle dew. Water, as you know, is another symbol of the Holy Spirit. In John 7:37-39 is where Jesus said that living waters will flow out of a person's belly. There is a little parenthetical statement after it that says the Spirit had not come yet, but He was referring to the Spirit as living waters.

John 7:37-39 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. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

In Psalm 133:3 you will notice the theme of descending continues. The dew descends upon the mountains of Zion. As I mentioned, Hermon is the highest point around in the far north of Palestine. It is actually in the ante-Lebanon range, which would make it actually just a little bit outside the realm of Palestine. Zion, in Judea, is in the far south. What we see here is another "top to bottom" image. If we were going to make Palestine into a body, this is another "head to toe"—all the way from Hermon, all the way down into Zion. This water descends from the top to the bottom. It covers the whole land. It is interesting too the word "Hermon" means "devoted," or "sanctified"—holy. It was another holy mountain, and it looks another holy mountain too. It is perpetually snowcapped and is running over 9,000 feet high, to be seen from miles and miles away. It is a majestic mountain like you would picture on a postcard to show the wonders of the land, and it is a fitting place to represent God.

As an aside, it is also thought by some scholars to be the mount where Christ was transfigured, where His glory was shown to His disciples. There is good reason why David chose Hermon to be the place from which the water descended down into Zion. Zion of course is a very pointed reference symbolically to the church of God. We have seen a lot of that lately. In Zion, in the church, we are all brethren, and this dew, a metaphor for unity, descends down to us from the majestic heights of the holy mountain.

It is another beautiful picture, and it puts so much in a bit of poetry.

Lastly, the idea of Zion being the church is verified by the last thought here, that God gives eternal life in the church. That is where God has commanded His blessing—in the church. He has not given eternal life or even offered eternal life to anyone **outside** of His church. The church is Zion.

Now you may think, “Why did David stick that in where God commanded a blessing? Didn't he phrase that funny?” God **commands** His blessing of eternal life. That is a head-scratcher. God commands us to have eternal life in the church. Does that not strike you as a little odd? We typically speak of eternal life as being *given* by God, not as being commanded by God. This is a little bit different way of looking at it. I think it gives us some good indications about where unity fits and how it is produced.

First, unity of the spirit is a vital part of eternal life. That is why it is attached to the end of this psalm on unity, because that is the **goal** of unity. Right? Is that not what we want? Do we not want to be united so that we can all get to that same goal together as the bride of Christ, to be resurrected, to have immortality, and to have eternal life? Notice how I put that, because immortality and eternal life are not the same thing. Immortality is endless life. **Eternal** life is the life God lives—the **quality** of life God lives. That is why we desire it so much. We want eternal life because it is the life that God lives. It is the life that makes Him so special. It is the kind of life that only He can give.

Now think of this. To live forever in **dis**unity would be a curse, a punishment, a sentence, not a reward. But God lives in unity with His Son Jesus Christ, and they are happy, and we want that so much. Another thing, because God commands eternal life, and it is stuck here in a psalm about unity, unity must be something that we **do** in response to His command. So it seems like to me when God commands something to be done, there must be some response to accomplish His word. Right? When God says "Fetch," it just does not come. Something has to go "**get**" what it is that He says "Fetch," and bring it back to Him. Remember in Isaiah 55:11 He says that He sends forth His word and it does not come back to Him empty, unfulfilled, void.

I will tell you what it does not mean. What this does not mean is that "hocus-pocus," "abracadabra," and something gets done. It means a "**work**" begins, and it is fulfilled, and God receives that work back to Him as a completed project. He sends forth His word, and gives everything that is needed for the thing to be done, and then somebody has to pick up the ball and do it, and present it back to God as a finished work. That is what unity is. Unity is a command by God. “You will be *unified* in My church.” We have got to pick up the ball and give it back to Him as a finished work, or it ain't happening.

Unity is something we do in response to His command that it be.

Unity is another one of those godly works or those godly acts that consists of God **and** us working together to produce it. It is like salvation. It is like so many other things, where He does something, usually greatly more than what we have to do, but even what He does is not enough. We have to somehow respond to that, and finish it for it to be accomplished. He does not say, "You're going to be saved, you're going to be saved, you're going to be saved," and then nothing happens because He "hocus-pocus" says it will. No. We have to respond to His command that we be saved, and go for it on that process, and finish it.

Unity is the same way. God sends His Spirit, His very nature, and His power, and whatever gifts we need to begin the process, and then we take up the burden of promoting it and continuing it, and finishing it, and then we will have unity. You can pray all you want for God to unify the church, but if you are not doing anything to continue it and promote it and finish it, it is not going to happen.

I think we are done here in Psalm 133. Let us go to I Corinthians 1.

I Corinthians 1:4-9 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 confirm 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.

This is very interesting what he said here. First of all, we have been enriched in **everything** by God, in everything that we need. All the riches of His nature and His power and knowledge have been given to us. Everything that we need has been given to us. You do not come short in any gift. You have been given whatever gift you need. Then he says that God **confirms** us in the end. That is like "He who has started a work in you will complete it to the day of Jesus Christ." He is going to be with us to the end. He confirms that He will be with us all that time. We have got everything that we need, we have got all the gifts we need, we have got God confirming that He is going to be with us all the time, and then we have the next assurance that God is faithful. He is going to give what He promises.

I Corinthians 1:10-11 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 be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

How? Why? They have been given everything they need, and they were still disunited. Is that not discouraging? Paul tells the Corinthians—“**You're still carnal!** That's why you have disunity.” They had not picked up the ball. They had not done the work that is needed for unity, and they continued in their fighting with their cat fights, and schisms, and wars, and dissensions. They had everything, and they were not using it.

I Corinthians 1:12-13 Now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ. Is Christ divided?

No! is the obvious answer to that question.

I Corinthians 1:13 Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

You are dividing yourself over one. You have got all the gifts you need, all the knowledge you need. God is with you. He is faithful. Do it! That is how you are going to have unity.

Now Paul was nicer than I am. He took fifteen or sixteen chapters to explain it to them. But that is the idea. They had everything they needed for unity. God was with them. He would help them, but they had dropped the ball. They were not doing their part. God had done His, but they failed to do theirs.

Ephesians 4:1-6 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a 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.

The part we have to do is walk worthy of our calling, and is not our calling to be **one**—to be one body, one spirit, one faith, one baptism, one hope, just as we have one Lord and one Father? We are to be one bride of Christ. He is not going to marry many brides. He is not a polygamist. He is going to marry one united bride. We can be disunified if we fail to practice verses 2 and 3. Without lowliness (which is humility), without gentleness (which is meekness), without longsuffering (which is forbearance or patient endurance), if we do not do these things in love and in peace, we will never have unity.

As long as we are proud, as long as we are easily angered and offended, as long as we jump on every little thing, having no patience, and as long as we treat each other hatefully, and as long as we cause strife, there will never be unity. Even with all that God does, it will not happen. He is not going to force unity upon us if we show that we do not want it, and the natural order of things is that we will disunify further if we do not show Him that we are working toward it. It is just the natural way of things. So without these virtues, even with God deluging us with oil and with water (the dew), we will not have unity.

I want to go to Romans 12 which begins a four-chapter section of practical advice that Paul gives to the Roman church about how to be unified and carry out God's will in the church. Paul tells us how to get along, how to cooperate with one another in order to accomplish the purpose of the church, to be the bride of Christ, to be children of the living God. Notice how he begins.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God . . .

And boy! Do we need mercy in this time of disunity.

Romans 12:1 . . . that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

This is the first point, the primary key, of how to be unified. Sacrifice yourself for one another. Sacrifice is the essence of godly love. If you are not willing to sacrifice, you are not showing love. It is as plain as that. It has to be having godly love, and to be willing to sacrifice that has to be the underlying attitude as we interact with each other in service. Notice that is the last word in that verse. It is your reasonable, your logical, your rational, your spiritual service. It is the way you minister to one another by showing love, and that willingness to sacrifice.

Let us look at the next thing Paul says.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world. . .

We just heard many sermons on not being conformed to this world, that how awful the world is.

Romans 12:2 . . .but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So the next part is throwing off the world, throwing off human nature, throwing off that inferior way of life that we learned. It is throwing off the old man, and putting on Christ, the new man. Paul says we have to transform and **renew** our way of life. We have to transform and renew our thinking processes in the way we judge situations, and thereby in transforming and renewing ourselves, we therefore prove or we become convicted by, or we approve what God's will is. We finally get it in there thoroughly that this is what God wants us to do when we transform ourselves from that evil way that we lived, to God's eternal way of life. If we do not start walking that walk, we will never prove it, and we will never be unified.

Romans 12:3-8 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering: he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

I read those six verses there because they all go together. They are all tied together by humility—that one is not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. That is the thought that runs through that whole section there. God has put us each in the body as it pleases Him, so do not think that you as the toe are better than the knee, because the toe cannot do the knee's job. God thinks of you just as highly as a toe as He does of

a knee, but He has put you as the toe, so why not in faith do the job as a toe, because that is what God wants you to be. If He had wanted you to be a knee, He would have put you in as a knee. But He gave you to be a toe—so be happy. Do the toe's work in faith. That is what He says.

Think soberly. Consider that logically. Consider this seriously, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith, that you in faith can consider your place in the church and deal with it. That is what he says. If you teach, do it! Do it with all the gifts and everything that God has given you, but do not try to get the guy's job who is to lead. It is *his* job to do it diligently. It is not *your* job. God put you in here to teach, not to lead; otherwise He would have given you that job, but He did not.

Exhort. If you have been given that job to exhort, then exhort. If it is your job to do ministry and give service to one another, do it, but do not try to take the other guy's job whose job is to prophesy. Do you see what Paul is getting at? I am trying to put this in as many ways as possible. He is saying, in lowliness of mind, be content where you are, because obviously God has put you there for a reason. If you do the job that God has given you to do, you are fulfilling His will. Hallelujah! We can be united because we are not trying to grab each other's job. Enough said.

Now he lists a torrent of practical tips. "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another." What I just read to you is a recap of the first three. He talks about love, which is your reasonable service. He talks about abhorring what is evil, and clinging to what is good. Is that not being conformed to this world, and transforming your mind? I think it is.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.

You are to prefer the other guy. You, in humility, abase yourself and let him do his job, because in the scheme of things, as the knee, he is over you. In one sense the knee has a function, and when the knee needs to function, the toe must follow, but when the toe has a job to do, the knee has to take orders from the toe. Do you get what I mean? We each have our area of responsibility, and if we kind of leave each other alone, and follow, and give the other guy precedence in doing his job, then maybe we will all get the work done, because you are not stepping on his job and he is not stepping on yours. When you need his cooperation, he follows you, and when he needs your cooperation, you follow him. You do not need to fight. Just do your job. When you must follow, then

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follow, and when you must lead, then lead. That is how it is done. We do not need to worry about doing other peoples' jobs. They will get done. If they are doing theirs well, and you are doing yours well, then the whole body moves forward.

Romans 12:11 Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

That is where all of this has to go. It is all in service to God. The toe says, "Okay toe, you with the rest of the foot go one step forward." We do this because the Lord says so, and so the toe, with the rest of the foot takes the rest of the leg and steps forward, and we all do it because God is the One who says it is to be done. We are serving His wishes. Whatever we do, we do to serve God.

Romans 12:12-14 Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

There are all kinds of interesting little commands that he gives us as to how to produce unity. You can see how these things promote unity, do you not? Strife would cease. In verse 17 it says, "Repay no one evil for evil." Would not strife cease if we would stop giving him back what he gave to us?

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

There it goes. Strife ends because we are all trying to live peaceably with each other.

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

Why do we have to get back at one another? Let God do it. It is His kid. He will take care of him. It says in another place, "Who are you to judge another's servant?"

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If we would start doing some of these things, unity would begin. Like I said, strife would

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cease, tempers would cool, offenses would be forgiven, grudges would be dropped. Social, cultural, racial, financial, differences and distinctions would not matter a bit. We would not even think of them. Needs would be met. Peace would reign in the church. We have been much wearied by the lack of peace in the church. We could have rest in our unity. Growth in the spirit and character would *explode* because we would have the peace in which righteousness can bear fruit.

We would develop that righteous character. Blessings would **rain** down from God, and His work would be done. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Would it not be great? Do we not *want* that? I sure do, especially after figuring all this out this week and last week in doing this sermon. I could just **see** the things that could open up if we had unity, and how wonderful it would be.

So we cannot bring unity alone, but we sure have a big part to play in producing it, and when it happens, God gets all the glory, for if by means of His Spirit that is all possible. Even so, we have to work on ourselves to be one with God. As that happens we cannot help but become unified with others who are doing the same thing.

I have only touched on the fundamentals of unity in this sermon. Over the next weeks and months you will be hearing sermons and sermonettes and reading articles where the principles of godly unity will be expounded, hopefully in their minutia so that we can all get it. If we truly want unity in the church, in the Church of the Great God and in the greater church of God, unity must begin with you and with me till it spreads throughout the entire church, and we are one with God and with each other.