

Psalm 133

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Some of you may remember, if your memory goes back far enough, that Psalm 133 was Loma D. Armstrong's favorite psalm. And in honor of that Ross Jutsum wrote the song, "How Good and How Pleasant," that first the Young Ambassadors sang for a Feast film and then it was later put in both United and COGWA's hymn books. I do not know if it is in Living's or not.

I do not know why it was her favorite. I could see why it would be. It is a great psalm. Maybe it was the poetry. I do not know how creative Loma Armstrong was, but it could be the imagery that is in it. I would think though that it is the meaning that is expressed in Psalm 133 that really sparked her interest. If you read it very closely, which we will do today, I think you will see that it gives us a goal and a hope and a prayer. Because the themes that are expressed there and the way the metaphors are really more descriptive than we give them credit for being, just put it that way.

But I think Psalm 133 makes a fitting rallying cry for the church of God. It should be our goal and our hope and our prayer as we see the splintering, scattering, proceeding. I mean, it is still going on. People are still leaving the various churches of God. Many have simply fallen away. People are still rejecting the Sabbath and God's law and basically going out into the world again. Eventually, they are keeping Christmas and Easter and all the things that they repudiated years ago; just slipping back into the world.

So the church, if we consider the whole Body of Christ, all the elect of this time, we are disunited. It is a sad thing. We are disunited at the very same time we need to be united. That is, as the end approaches. However, I am not concerned about the whole church, necessarily, right now. I am concerned about what remains and specifically concerned about us, the ones who are in the Church of the Great God.

The congregations of the churches dwindle and you know, new churches are still being formed. How many hundreds have come out of Worldwide? It is just ridiculous! And people have many different reasons for doing so. I do not know why they think they have to go apart from the church and start something new, why they have to continue the scattering. I do not even know if it enters their mind, but they think that whatever it is, this truth or what they think is truth that is sending them away from the rest of the body, is more important than staying with the people of the church in the established churches.

Every time somebody leaves it fractures the unity of the church even more. And what it does is it makes it more difficult for there to be any growth, either for the church or for the individual, because now they are apart and there is no communication anymore. So you have to wonder, can Humpty Dumpty be put back together again? Personally, I guess I am more cynical, I do not think we can do it.

Notice the word "we" there. I do not think *we* can do it. God can and God will in His own time. But I think He is waiting for some indication from us that we want to be unified, not only with each other but with all the others that are part of the church of God and that we are willing to work for it under His terms, not under our own.

So we are going to use Psalm 133 as a base today and we are going to look at unity among the brethren and most of all I want you to see where we fit in bringing it about. There are certain things that *we* need to do to be unified with the rest of the church. So let us just go to Psalm 133 and read it. It is only three verses. By the way, this is a sermon that I gave many, many moons ago, May 16, 1998. That is 24 years ago, not quite to the day but pretty close. That is a long time ago.

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.

And that is it, just three very simple verses.

Now, in many of your Bibles, it will say under the title there, a Song of Ascents or a Psalm of Ascents. These 15 psalms, from Psalm 120 to 134, are called the Songs of Ascents or the Songs of Degrees. Some Bibles use degrees, some ascents. What they were, these songs of ascents, is still debated although there is no debate at all over the fact that these 15 psalms all go together, that they are a group, they are distinctive among the other psalms. So 120 to 134 have been known for 2,500 years as a group.

There are four different views about what these songs of degrees are and what they mean.

The Jews in their tradition say they are linked to the 15 steps of the stairs leading from the Court of Israel to the Court of Women in the Temple. The Court of Women was outside the Court of Israel. Women were only allowed to go so far into the Temple precinct and then there was a wall with a gate and there were steps leading up to this gate. And if a person were to go up the steps and through the gate, they would be in the Court of Israel and evidently there were 15 steps going up to the gate of the Court of Israel.

Now on the steps, it is said that the Levites would assemble and they would sing and play instruments on the evening of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles when we normally have our first service at the Feast. It is thought that they sang these 15 psalms, the Songs of Ascents. They would get on the bottom step and they would sing Psalm 120. And then once that was done, they would all step up, and on the second step they would sing Psalm 121; on the third step, 122; and all the way up to the final step and they would sing 134. So that is why they are called Songs of Degrees or Songs of Ascents. They were ascending up the steps to the Court of Israel. That is what the Jews say.

The second thing is what the modern scholars think and that is, they do not think very much. But certain modern scholars say that they are called Songs of Ascents because the ideas expressed in these psalms ascend from one psalm to the next. That is, Psalm 120 has a basic meaning, and then Psalm 121 has a little bit higher meaning, and then Psalm 122 has a little higher

meaning after that. And up it goes. The only problem with this idea is that it does not hold true. Psalm 120 does not have a more basic meaning than 121, etc. So I do not think that fits.

The third thing is what the early church fathers thought. Some of the early church fathers believed that they were songs that were sung by the Jews as they came back from Babylon, as they journeyed from Babylon back to Judea, back to Jerusalem. So they were called Pilgrimage Songs. The problem with this idea is that some of these psalms do not fit either. It does not fit the theme. Some of them are not about exile or coming back from exile or any of those things that you might think would go with that particular subject. So this one does not seem to be valid either.

Now, number four, the most likely explanation in my view, is that they are pilgrimage songs not sung on the way back from Babylon, but pilgrimage songs sung by the people as they went up to Jerusalem on those three great feasts of the year: Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. So people would leave in small caravans and they did not have much to pass the time on the two or three day journey that they took on going up to Jerusalem, so the psalmists of Israel came up with these 15 songs and they were generally recognized as songs that people would sing as they went up to Jerusalem.

What is interesting to me is that there are definite links to gathering at or going up to or proceeding to Jerusalem or to the Temple. That is, there are ideas within most or all of these psalms about moving toward God in one way or another, either physically toward Jerusalem or spiritually toward the Temple and God because God was the one who lived in the Temple. So there are ideas of progression in the Songs of Ascents.

I feel that because of this, it makes them directly applicable to the church. Let us think of it this way. The 15 psalms are a timeline. Psalm 120 is the earliest, Psalm 134 is the latest. Notice where Psalm 133 comes. Unity among the brethren comes right near the end. As you are progressing toward God from early times to now or to the end time, let us say, the idea of unity comes late, very late in the game. It is right near the end. It is number 14. So if nothing else, the psalm hints that unity is one of the last hurdles to cross. One of the last things, one of the last challenges that we have to face and conquer before the end, before we actually meet God at the Temple.

Notice where Psalm 134 ends up.

Psalm 134:1-3 Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord who made the heaven and earth bless you from Zion!

So by the time you get to 134, psalm number 15 in the Psalms of Ascent, you are in the Temple, you are in the sanctuary, you are with God. So Psalm 133 being the psalm directly before this, gives us an indication that this is something that we are going to be working on all the way up to the end. And it has its greatest challenge right at the end.

Let us parse these verses in Psalm 133. I will read the first verse again. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" One of the greatest ironies in this particular psalm is that the word unity actually does not appear in it, not in the Hebrew. The translators added it at the end of the verse to clarify the thought. But the last part of verse 1 literally reads in the Hebrew, "When brothers dwell also together!" The Hebrew word together there is *yachad* and it means together or both or joined, and it implies a unit or a union, a unanimity, if you will, and being one together.

Now, whether the word itself, meaning unity, the Hebrew word for unity, is there or not, it does not mean anything. The *idea* is there. It is about unity. It is just that the Hebrew word unity is not even mentioned once. Notice it says that this unity among brethren is good and pleasant, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together [as one] in unity."

The word good, the Hebrew word that underlies this, is a fairly general rendering of the term and probably could have been better translated, but it may not sound quite right. So good is fine. The word really means proper or fitting, or even the word right. It is correct. It is a good thing. So good covers all of those bases, proper, fitting, and right.

The word pleasant or the Hebrew word underneath pleasant has the sense of attractive, lovely, or charming, or even the word pleasurable, it is enjoyable.

So in God's sight, unity or togetherness among His people is both proper and very pleasing. It is *right* for brethren to dwell together in unity and it is also very *pleasurable*. And thus, we see there is no distinction here between who is saying it is good and who is saying it is pleasurable to or for. What this tells us is that it is good for the people, it is right and good and pleasurable or enjoyable, or charming, lovely, attractive, for both the people who are in unity and for God who is watching over it.

It is good for both God and man. God revels in the unity of His people. It is a good thing and a right thing and very attractive to Him. So we receive the benefits of unity in the goodness and the pleasantness of the unity that is produced.

Let us go to verse 2. This is where it really begins to get interesting. It starts with "it is." Notice those are in italics in most Bibles. That means they are not there in the original Hebrew. What this means is between verse 1 and verse 2, there is no stop in thought. So this idea of being good and pleasant for brethren to dwell in unity goes straight into the second verse. And what the psalmist does here (it is David) is that he immediately gives you a metaphor so that you would understand better how good and how pleasant it would be for brethren to dwell in unity. So he gives this metaphor:

Psalm 133:2 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.

If you notice just quickly verse 3, it begins the same way. So verse 3 is also another metaphor that is describing what is good and pleasant about the unity that is produced between brethren.

Psalm 133:3 It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing—
Life forevermore.

What we have here is a statement of a theme in the first verse and two metaphors in the second and third verses that describe what is said in the first

verse. Does this sound like English class to you? Reading poetry. Well, it is very good to have that kind of background when you read the Psalms because it really brings a lot out of these things.

So verses 2 and 3 metaphorically describe what unity is like, not just what unity is like, what good and pleasant unity is like. And what he does is compare them to oil and to dew, water. Oil and water, they do not mix but in this they make two very good metaphors for unity. And as I mentioned, the choice of these two metaphors, the oil running down and the water running down from Hermon, the dew, extends the ideas of being good and pleasant. So we have to have that in mind as we think about them.

The oil consecrating Aaron as high priest is proper and fitting to his ordination. Remember the metaphors here are oil and water. So it is oil that is seen as good and pleasant here. It is good and pleasant because it is right, it is proper for the ordination of Aaron. Did God not say that Aaron was to be anointed with oil to come into his office? And it is very pleasant as well, because we have a recipe in the Pentateuch that tells us how to make this oil. And this oil was only supposed to be used for the consecration of the high priest. It was unique.

But if you look at the ingredients and know what these ingredients smell like, we would know that the oil that they anointed the high priest with smelled good when it was placed on Aaron's head. And what they would do is they would take a small amount and dump it on his head. That is why it would run down. And so those who were present at the ceremony or at least who were close enough, would not only notice that Aaron had actually been anointed with oil according to the Scripture, according to God's instruction, but that it was a pleasant experience because of the aroma of the oil that filtered out to those who were close by.

So the dew; let us look at this in the same way. The dew coming off the mountains is also good and fitting because dew is water. Dew brings moisture to the land so crops can be grown and has a very fitting and proper place in especially Israel's agriculture. They did not get much rain, they grew their crops mostly on dew, they relied on it. God made it that way because

He wanted them to trust Him. God was the one who gave the dew. And so it was fitting that the dew would be there to water their crops because that meant that they were being faithful to God and God was supplying their need.

It was also pleasant. Is it not pleasant to be refreshed by water in a dry land? It cuts the dryness, it cuts the heat, gives a little bit of humidity to the air so we do not all dry out (like we are doing today). But this is the metaphorical way how brethren in unity affect God and man. It is a positive, both a good thing and a pleasant thing.

But there is a lot more to it than just this. Those are only the surface metaphors. Why did David choose Aaron to be the person that he makes that first metaphor revolve around? Anointing with oil, anointing Aaron with oil. Now, these types have a deeper connection with unity of the brethren than simply being good and pleasant. I have three deeper meanings here.

The first one is that Aaron is the prototype high priest. He was the first, he is the prototype for all of those who come afterward. So he is the type. Well, if you have a type in the Bible, you also have an antitype and who is the antitype or the spiritual fulfillment of the role of high priest? Obviously, it is Jesus Christ. And so we have Aaron standing in as a type of Christ here. 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.

Remember, the high priest was the only one out of all the people of Israel who could actually have contact with God at the Mercy Seat. You remember I said earlier that the women were only allowed to come in so far. And in the Court of Israel, the Israelite men could only come so far because they could not go into the area that was only for the priests. The priests could only go into the sacred place, the first chamber of the Tabernacle or the Temple, and only the high priest could go in, and only at one time of the year in that ritual on the Day of Atonement, through the veil into the Holy of Holies. The Gentiles were totally kept out, they had to stay out beyond the Court of Women.

So what we see is that there was actually very little contact between the people and God, and the only one, then, among the people who was allowed to be the bridge between God and man was the high priest. And at that time,

under the Old Covenant, once a year and for one singular purpose. But that one singular purpose, because it was one, stands out in terms of what it was supposed to do, and that was that our sins were brought before God, they were forgiven in the ritual through the sin offering, and then reconciliation was made between God and the people because sin had been removed now God and the people could have fellowship again. That was the point of the Atonement ritual.

Well, the antitype of that is Jesus Christ offering Himself for sin, dying, of course, being buried, being raised from the dead, and because He was resurrected from the dead, He ascended to heaven and He became the High Priest through whom we have reconciliation and we could now have fellowship with God. So the Old Testament ritual mirrored or foreshadowed what Jesus would ultimately do in the New Testament. So similarly, through Christ, we have reconciliation and the opportunity because of fellowship to have unity.

Let us go to Colossians 1. We usually read this a time or two during the Passover service so we have probably read this verse a couple of times in the past month or so.

Colossians 1:19-23 For it pleased the Father that in Him [that is, 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 [that is, peace between people and Him, that is, reconciliation] through the blood of His cross. And you [he is talking mostly to Gentiles here], 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 irreproachable in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven.

So what we can see putting together the ideas of the atonement, the high priest, and the reconciliation that was accomplished through Jesus Christ, that the High Priest, Jesus Christ, is a central figure to our unity. It does not happen without Him is what I am trying to say.

That was the first point, the first more significant thing.

The second more significant thing is the act of anointing itself. This is an act of consecration, an act of setting apart. We could call it ordination. But what it does is it makes somebody holy or makes a thing holy. It does not mean it is more pious or righteous or pure. In this sense, it just means it is separated, it is put in a different category, it is made to be different. And the difference is that God is now going to use this person or thing. A person has been set apart for use by God.

Now, this act of anointing was done in ancient Israel in appointing a king. And of course, as we see here, in appointing a high priest. The church uses it still in ordaining elders and it is also a part of anointing for healing. We do the whole ritual in the anointing for healing. We use oil in that case and what it does, when you are anointed the oil is placed on your head. And in the same way that the high priest is now singled out, in his case to be the bridge, if you will, between God and man, the person who is being anointed is now singled out for God's work in healing through the blood of Jesus Christ. So it is the act of setting apart for a special purpose.

Let us go to a few verses here. I John 2, verse 27. I just want this one verse or actually just the first part of this verse.

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

This means (he is writing to converted people here) each converted person has been anointed from God. We have received it from Him and it continues or abides in us. We just need to be anointed, if you will, or ordained once and it continues because all that time we are under His ordination or under His anointing, we are set apart for His use.

I Corinthians 12:12-13 For as the body [that is, the body of a person] is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ [meaning we are the body of Christ and we are Christ's body, that is, He is the head and we are the members of that body]. 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.

So it is through the giving of the Holy Spirit that we are baptized. Baptism is immersing in water. In this case, he is showing us being immersed in oil or immersed in the Spirit because usually one is anointed with oil. But in baptism, we are anointed or ordained immersed in water. We are set apart by that means. So we are set apart for a special purpose and placed into the Body of Christ and Christ is our High Priest. We are starting to circle the wagons here a little bit more here.

This is in the image of Psalm 133. What we see here is because we have been baptized or anointed or ordained and placed into the Body of Christ, we ourselves are in the image that David uses in Psalm 133 being in the high priest's body. Keep that in mind.

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.

What I really wanted there was the fact that we have been set apart and that we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation. We have been set apart or chosen as a holy, special people to God. And we are supposed to glorify Him as one body. Because we are in His body and He is the High Priest, we share the priesthood with Him. The priesthood is not just the Head, it is also the members of the Body. This is how great our ordination or our anointing is. Because we have been separated from the world and given His Spirit and placed into the body of Christ, we are now the Body of the Head who is the High Priest.

And because the Head is the High Priest and it is connected to the Body, that means all the people who compose the Body are also priests. They are part of the High Priest. That is why being a firstfruit and being raised in the first resurrection is so glorious, because He is not just the one King and High Priest, He now has a whole family of people who are also kings and priests with Him.

Romans 15:5-7 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded [unified] toward one another, according to Christ Jesus [in Him], that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore [this is the command] receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Jesus welcomed us into His Body as fellow priests and kings with Him. The apostle Paul is saying, "Ok, here's the example. Receive one another, be unified in one mind with each other, with the ones that Christ has also called into His Body."

That was the second thing.

The third deeper connection here we have is the oil itself. This is the obvious symbol of the Holy Spirit. Let us just look at one, I Samuel 16. It is all laid out in one verse. This is the anointing of David as king over all Israel.

I Samuel 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers [notice that, in the midst of his family]; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David [who is a Christ figure] from that day forward.

So he anointed him with oil and the next thing that said is the Spirit of the Lord came upon him when he was anointed. It is an obvious symbol of the Holy Spirit for ordination, for setting apart, for baptizing, for ordination, all those different words that we use to mean that one is holy, set apart for a certain purpose.

Now, let us go back to Psalm 133. It is very significant and interesting what the oil is doing. Notice what it says.

Psalm 133:2 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.

What is the oil doing? Descending, it is running *down*. Think of this. Each word is significant here. The oil is running down. When something runs down, it goes from a high place to a lower place. It is descending. Is that not what happens when God gives us His Spirit? It comes from the highest place in all the universe, the very throne of God, and it comes down to us through Jesus Christ, upon us fleshly worms. We are the bottom. We are as far as the descent goes because we are lowly, we are physical, but it comes from a very high place and goes to a low place.

The idea of descent here is emphasized by being repeated. It says, "The precious oil running down on the beard, running down on the edge of his garments."

Psalm 133:3 The dew descending upon the mountains of Zion.

This idea of descent, of coming down from a high place, is very much present here. So what is the source of unity? If it is like oil running *down*? If it is like water running *down*? It is from this high place. That is where unity comes from.

This is kind of interesting. It is really intriguing. Scholars have debated for years, as in centuries, about how *far* down the oil upon Aaron's beard and upon his garments went. It is almost like how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. They want to know how far down this oil went. They understood that there was only a small bit of oil that was actually poured on his head. Maybe it was a cup, I do not know. But just think of it as a small amount as in comparison to a bucket, let us say, of oil.

And so it says, here, that it runs down on his beard and then runs down on the edge of his garments. So what is the edge of his garments? That is the question. That is what they have been debating for such a long time. Some say it means the collar. This little bit of oil runs down, goes into beard, and then falls on his collar. Sounds logical, right? So they say it goes down just a little bit. Others maintain that it goes to the bottom hem of his robe. This is where the bucket comes in. You would expect that if you poured a bucket of oil that it would run down his beard, onto his collar, and then all the way down to basically his ankles. So what is the answer to this?

The King James translators, if you have got a version of the King James, they will say it runs upon the hem. They translate the word, which literally means mouth, that is the word "edge" in the New King James. It really means mouth or opening. So they translated it as skirts. They interpreted this to mean that the oil goes all the way down to his ankles essentially and moistens the skirt or the hem of his robe. The New King James, like I just said, uses the word edge. They kind of fudge a bit because edge could be anything. Still other translations use borders.

But remember, the word means mouth and so it means an opening. So you have the choice of two openings on a robe, either the neck opening or the skirt opening at the bottom. Now, my vote, if you want my opinion on this, is that it means skirt or bottom hem. And the reason why I say that is because of verse 3. Not verse 2, but verse 3. We have to understand poetry here. Both verses 2 and 3, both metaphors are hyperbole, both are great exaggerations.

You can see this the most though in verse 3. If you know anything about the geography of the land of Canaan, Mount Hermon, which he talks about there, the dew coming from Mount Hermon, is way, way to the north in Canaan. It is far above even Dan. Dan is way to the north. Mount Zion though, is down south. That is right about the border of the land of Judah and the land of Benjamin. So it is in the southern part of Israel. And so the dew runs down from way in the north all way to Mount Zion. It is a physical impossibility for dew to run from Mount Hermon, the 60 or whatever miles down to Mount Zion. It just would not happen. So it is obviously exaggerated. It is an exaggeration.

And we are to think of verse 2 in the same mode of exaggeration as verse 3 is. So the oil runs, in my estimation, onto his head, down to his beard, down to his collar, down past his belt, all the way to the bottom because he is trying to get a point across; that the oil covers all of Aaron, not just his head. So David uses poetic license here to depict the image of the oil going all the way from head to toe. Remember, this is the High Priest's body and we are the body of Christ. Does not the Holy Spirit, which the oil represents, make us one body? And we are all covered by the Spirit, we are all included in it.

So what David is bringing out in Psalm 133:2 is that unity among the brethren is a holy thing, a special thing, a different thing, a transcendent thing may be the best way of putting it. It transcends and descends all over the body. Think about it. Unity by itself sets the church apart from all other men or any other group of men or women because men without the Holy Spirit cannot have unity. And if they have unity, it is only for a small moment when everybody thinks together. And then, as soon as the situation is passed, they all fracture into their groups again. So men can never truly unify.

What we are seeing, then, in verse 2 as a metaphor explaining verse 1, is that unity is a gift of God by the Holy Spirit. And it covers everyone, everyone who is part of the Body of Christ. It comes down to us from the Head, Jesus Christ, by means of His Spirit. So he is illustrating here that the anointing of Christ is our anointing too. We are united with Him, first of all, in His priesthood and then we are united with each other. I will just mention Revelation 5:10 where it says that we are kings and priests or we are royal priests to Christ, or to God.

Let us think about verse 3 now. Verse 3, as I mentioned, continues and expands the ideas in verse 2, except at this time the symbol is not consecrating oil, but refreshing water in the form of dew. We know that water too is a form or a type of the Holy Spirit. So let us look at that in John 7, just to nail this down.

John 7:37 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."

This is very important for us to understand. He is talking about thirsting and drinking and that is what we do with water. Water we take in when we are thirsty and it satisfies us and refreshes us.

John 7:38-39 "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

[that did happen]; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given [but we know that it did, it was given on Pentecost in Acts 2], because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So it just waited for the glorification of Christ and then He would give the Spirit to us.

But notice that it says that out of those who have the Spirit would flow rivers of living water. That is just not Christ, the Giver of it. It means that out of those He gives it to would flow rivers of living water. See how He is including us in His works, even in this illustration of rivers flowing out of those people that He gives the Spirit to.

As I mentioned before, this theme of descent happens again in this verse. It goes down from the heights of Hermon to the mountains of Zion. Now something we need to know, I mentioned geography is important here, Mount Hermon is the highest point in all the land of Canaan. It is the highest point in that ridge of mountains that runs north and south all along the eastern part of the land of Israel. And I mentioned too, that Mount Hermon is way to the north and that Zion is far to the south. It is another top to bottom image just like Aaron's head, beard, and garments is a top to bottom image, Hermon to Mount Zion is a top to bottom image.

What this means is, He is talking about the whole nation of Israel, all the people, all the people in the land. Let us just look at one of these. I Samuel 3, verse 20, just to see how this was used in Israel. This has to do with the people's acceptance of Samuel as prophet.

I Samuel 3:19-20 So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.

This is a metaphorical saying that *everyone* knew and that is why this metaphor of Hermon to Zion also means everyone is included. Just as in verse 2, it was the whole body of Aaron, not just his head. It is this idea of completeness or allness within the metaphor.

Do you know what Hermon means? Now in Spanish it means brother. Right? Hermano. It does not mean that in Hebrew. In Hebrew, Hermon means devoted or sanctified or set apart. Is that not neat? So it carries the idea of holiness into verse 3. We saw the holiness in verse 2 because we were talking about the anointing of the high priest with oil. Now Mount Hermon itself is the holy one, the set-apart one. What better figure as Jesus Christ, for God.

As an aside, Mount Hermon is thought by many to be the Mount of Transfiguration. That is where James, John, and Peter saw Jesus in glory. So it makes a fitting image of deity. Hermon, if you have ever seen the pictures, is pretty much perpetually snow-capped and is a very glorious, good looking mountain to see. It is a fitting place to represent God in terms of it being majestic and worthy. That is why it is called devoted or sanctified. Because actually many of the Canaanite peoples thought that their gods lived on Mount Hermon, just like the Israelites had a special place in their hearts for Mount Sinai.

So it is like Mount Hermon in this part of the metaphor, stands for Aaron's head in verse 2. The idea that the dew comes down from the head, Mount Hermon, all the way down to Mount Zion. And Zion is a pointed reference to God's people. It is there all the way through the Old Testament. They talk about Zion being a place of the people of God. And so that is transferred to the New Testament as the church, the church in which we are all brethren. And this dew, a metaphor for unity of the Spirit, descends down upon us from the majestic heights of the holy mountain and comes to us and refreshes us and feeds us. Do we not use water for sustenance as well? It is just a beautiful image, the way I see it.

Now, Zion's identification as the church is further verified by the last thought in the psalm. Notice what it says. This is really interesting.

Psalm 133:3 The dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forevermore.

We know that God did not give eternal life to the people of Israel, but He has given eternal life to the church, those He has consecrated, those He has

anointed to be part of His Body, the converted, the elect. We have a lot of different names for these type of people. So this idea of eternal life, life forevermore, gives us the idea that he is not speaking about the people of Israel. He is talking about that holy nation, the people of God, those special people.

But did you notice the wording here? It is really neat. David phrases it far differently than I think most of us would. He says that God commands the blessing of eternal life within Zion. Have you ever thought of it that way? That God *commands* eternal life among His people? I think it is odd. I would not have put it that way. We typically speak of eternal life as being given or provided, not that it is commanded. And I think the way this is set up gives us some good indications about where unity fits and how it is produced.

First of all, unity of the Spirit is a vital part of eternal life. Think of it that way. Unity of the Spirit is a vital part of eternal life. Now, we have got to remember John 17:3, that eternal life is not necessarily immortality, it is not length of life or quantity of life, not endless life. But from John 17:3, we see that eternal life is actually the *quality* of life. It says there that eternal life is knowing the Father and the Son. So unity as God experiences it is part of what makes God's quality of life, that is, His eternal life, so wonderful and so desirable. Think of it from the other direction. To live forever in disunity, you with God or with our brethren, would be a punishment, not a reward. Would you want to be in conflict with God or with your brethren forever? So unity is actually a part of the quality of life of God.

The second thing: because God commands eternal life, it must be something we do in response to His command, right? When God commands something to be done, there has to be a response to accomplish His Word. Remember Isaiah 55:11? When He sends forth His Word, it does not return to Him empty, it does not return to Him in futility. It is accomplished. That does not mean that when He sends out His Word that hocus-pocus, abracadabra, it just happens. There has to be a response. In the creation, the response was from creation. It did things. Obviously, these things came into being without, let us say, a physical response. But once God sent out His Word in Genesis 1, things began to happen in nature in response to what He said, His commands. So when God makes a command, a great deal of work has to happen so it can be fulfilled.

Now, he says that eternal life, this blessing, is a command of God. It has to be fulfilled. It is not just given; eternal life has to be responded to, the command for eternal life has to be responded to. The same thing happens in terms of unity. God commands unity as part of eternal life. It is something we have to respond to, unity is something we do in response to God's command for it. So unity is another one of those godly works or acts that consist of God and us working together to bring something about. That is the principle that we find in Philippians 2:12-13 where we work hand-in-hand with God. He does something and we do something and when we both do our parts, something wonderful is produced in the end.

So God supplies a part, we respond by doing something to fulfill what He started, what He commanded.

God sends His Spirit, His very nature and power to begin the process. That is what we see in Psalm 133. That the oil runs down upon Aaron's head and all the way down to his toes, that the water comes all the way down from Mount Hermon all the way down to Zion, it covers all of us living down there in His Body. And then with the Spirit, we take up the burden of continuing and promoting unity. God wants it. It is something that He has commanded, but it is not something He is going to just give the church and force upon it. It is something He gives the church in the form of His Spirit and then we have got to make it work among us. So it is a work. It is an effort. It takes perseverance and sacrifice and humility and a lot of other things to have unity within the church.

We could look at the Corinthians. They messed up. God had given them the same things. Paul tells them, you are not behind in any of the things that God gives. He has given gifts to all of you, but you are so fractured. He says, I desire that you speak the same thing. But one says, I am of Paul, another says I am of Apollos, and another says, I am of Peter, and another says, I am of Christ, thinking of himself as more pure and wonderful. And they were all fractured because they were not taking the command and working at it.

We can see that today. We are, like I said in my sermons on I Corinthians, that we are very much like them. We are divided. Some are of one minister, some of another minister. Some are of this belief, some are of that belief.

Some make this their banner, some make this other thing their banner. And we are not working at it. We are not making the efforts to be united.

Now, we have got to work at it among ourselves first and then it can flow out from us. So that is why I said at the beginning, I am not concerned about all the other churches. I am concerned about us right here. That we have to begin the process small, locally, within our group, and then it can start expanding out. We, like the Corinthians, have dropped the ball somehow. God has done His part by giving us His Spirit. But, I am sorry to say, we have failed to do ours and we keep fracturing.

What do we do then? What is our part? Let us go to Ephesians 4. Here, Paul tells us how to be one.

Ephesians 4:1-6 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling which with you were called [here it is], with all lowliness and gentleness [that is the word meekness], with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring [that is a work, when you endeavor to do something] to keep the unity of the Spirit [it is there, we have to keep it] in the bond of peace. [these are definitive statements] 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.

All the tools are there, God has supplied everything that we need. He has given us the instruction, He has given us His Spirit. He has given us the example in Jesus Christ. He said, these are all things that you need to be one in mind and heart and Spirit with. And He says, what you need is what is found in verse 2, lowliness and gentleness or meekness with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are the ones that have to make the efforts to do that, and it is not easy.

So the reason why we have the disunity that we do amongst all the people of God is because we are not practicing verses 2 and 3. Without lowliness or humility, without gentleness, that is, without meekness, without longsuffering, which is forbearance or patient endurance, without doing

these things in love and peace we will never have unity. We will look just like the world, and we do in terms of unity. So without these virtues, even with God deluging us with His Spirit, whether water or oil, however you want to look at it, unity will never happen because it is a cooperative thing that we do at His command.

Now I am going to give you an assignment. We are already running up on the end of the time here. I want you to go through Romans 12, the whole thing, because Romans 12 tells us how we can be unified with one another. It says it in different terms than he uses in Ephesians 4. But we need to read these things. He gives actually a torrent of practical tips that will bring on unity if we just follow them. Some of them overlap, but they are very foundational principles that he lays down in verses 1 through 8. And then he goes on and gives us practical examples a little further along.

But he tells us in plain words how we can be united with each other. And as you go through them, you will see how doing these things would promote unity. Strife would cease, tempers would cool, offenses would be forgiven, grudges would be dropped. Any social, cultural, racial, and financial distinctions would not matter, needs would be met. Peace would reign among us. Growth would explode. Righteous character, the character of Jesus Christ, would develop in us and blessings would rain down from God. He would do His work. It would get finished because His people are coming around and being unified with Him and being unified with each other.

"Oh, how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity!" That is the goal. No wonder Mrs. Armstrong loved that verse.

So we cannot bring on unity alone, but we can sure do a huge part in producing it just ourselves. But when it happens, God gets all the glory because He provided all the materials to make it happen. It is only by means of His Spirit that it is possible. Even so, we have to work on ourselves to be one with God. And as that happens, as we are producing the fruit of the Spirit, we cannot help but become unified with the others who are doing the same thing.

If we truly want unity in the church, in the Church of the Great God and in the greater church of God as a whole, unity must begin in me and in you till

it spreads throughout our little church and then spreads beyond its borders
and we are all one with God and with each other.