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Bible Study
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The Blessed Unity of God's People and Rejoicing in the Fellowship of Believers

Psalm 133 is a beautiful expression of unity and harmony among God's people. In this Psalm, we have no reason for depriving David of the authorship of this sparkling sonnet. He knew by experience the bitterness occasioned by divisions in families and was well prepared to celebrate in choicest Psalmody the blessing of unity for which he sighed. C.H.S.

Of the fifteen psalms in the series, Psalm 133 is the last of the four that is attributed to King David in the title: A Song of Ascents. Of David. We don't know exactly when David composed this song, but one likely occasion was when David was finally received as king over all the tribes of Israel, ending a terrible season of national division and discord.

"It could date from the crowning of David at Hebron when the leaders of the nation were, for a time at least, of one heart and mind (see 2 Samuel 5:1; 1 Chronicles 12:38-40)." (James Montgomery Boice)

David could have written this psalm when he began his reign in Jerusalem. The people usually journeyed to Jerusalem in family groups (Luke 2:41-52), so this psalm is perfectly suited for the situation. It applies to individual believers and churches today, for we also have our family quarrels and need to learn to walk together in God's love. The spiritual unity of God's people is the work of every believer, with the help of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:1-6), and three ministries of the Holy Spirit:

1. We Are Born of the Spirit - The Blessing Declared (v.1)
2. We are Anointed by the Spirit - The Blessing Described (v.2)
3. We are Refreshed by the Spirit - Like The Dew of The Mountains (v.3)

Psalms 133 (KJV) Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Psalms 133 (MSG) 1-3 How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along! It's like costly anointing oil flowing down head and beard, Flowing down Aaron's beard, flowing down the collar of his priestly robes. It's like the dew on Mount Hermon flowing down the slopes of Zion. Yes, that's where GOD commands the blessing, ordains eternal life.

A. We Are Born of the Spirit - The Blessing Declared

When you read the scriptures, you cannot help but discover that the "brothers" did not always live in unity. We are to walk and live in unity!

- Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4)
- Lot quarreled with Abraham (Gen. 13)
- Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him for a slave (Gen. 37) and the brothers did not get along among themselves! (Gen. 45:24)
- Miriam and Aaron criticized their brother Moses (Num. 12)

This Psalm begins and opens with an exhortation to **behold** - that is, to take notice. What follows is important and deserves our attention.

"It is a wonder seldom seen, therefore behold it! It may be seen, for it is the characteristic of real saints - therefore fail not to inspect it! It is well worthy of admiration; pause and gaze upon it! It will charm you into imitation, therefore note it well!" (Spurgeon)

David draws our attention to something **good** and **pleasant** - unity among the people of God.

It is **good** because it reflects God's heart and purpose of unity among His people (also described in John 17:20-23, Ephesians 1:9-10).

It is **pleasant** because it makes life together as God's people so much more enjoyable than seasons when constant bickering and conflict dominate.

Not everything that is good is pleasant, and not everything that is pleasant is good. Unity among God's people is such a remarkable blessing because it is both **good** and **pleasant** - and both to a high degree, indicated by the repetition of **how**.

"Precious and profitable, sweet and delectable...dainty and goodly, as Revelation 18:14. Communion of saints is the next happiness upon earth to communion with God." (Trapp)

David had in mind the relationship that God's people have with one another, not with the world around them. Believers should work to have good and peaceable relationships with all others (Romans 12:18), but here the focus is on relationships among God's people.

This **unity** is tested because these brethren **dwelt together**. In many ways it is easier to have some kind of unity with those distant. For us to **dwelt together** means the bonds of unity and peace will be at times tested.

This song was especially relevant for pilgrims travelling together to Jerusalem. "During the pilgrimages, the Jews enjoyed an ecumenical experience on their way toward and in Jerusalem. The pilgrims came from many different walks of life, regions, and tribes, as they gathered for one purpose: the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem." (VanGemeren)

B. We Are Anointing by the Spirit - The Blessing Described.

1. (2) Like oil on the head.

In the ancient Middle East, it was common to anoint one's head with oil, sometimes as a greeting entering a home (Luke 7:46). This was done to refresh the one receiving the oil, and to give a good smell from the fragrance that came from the perfumed oils.

Among God's people, unity refreshes and makes a pleasant atmosphere for all.

"The anointing oil intended for the head (Exod. 29:7) was not confined to it, nor could its fragrance be contained. Exodus 29:21 provided explicitly that after the pouring of the oil on the head, some was to be sprinkled on the robes: 'and he and his garments shall be holy'." (Kidner)

The picture in words (running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron) shows that unity is a rich and abundant blessing - as this oil overflowed the head and came down the beard. It also shows that unity is a rare and precious blessing, because the suggestion is that this was holy anointing oil, which was not to be imitated (Exodus 30:22-33).

Christian unity is "...far beyond that common friendship so highly extolled by Cicero, and other heathens; and is therefore here fitly compared to that nonesuch [perfect] odoriferous ointment." (Trapp)

This is a unity of holiness. "That anointing oil, poured upon Aaron, was the oil of consecration, and symbolized his separation from all evil; it was the oil of holiness." (Morgan)

"The odour of this must have been very agreeable and serves here as a metaphor to point out the exquisite excellence of brotherly love." (Clarke)

"What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high-priest alone!" (Spurgeon)

The oil upon the priest's head was good as an instrument of refreshing and greeting, as it would be for anyone else. Yet for Aaron (as high priest), it also was part of his consecration to priestly service (Exodus 29:7), which led to so many other good things. For example:

- Service unto God and His people.
- Atonement of sins.

- Offerings of peace, fellowship, and thanksgiving, and a
- Compassionate ministry to the people of God.

The illustration is wonderful. When there is unity among God's people, it is not only good and pleasant in itself, but it also leads to so many other good things. When the people of God struggle with each other, there are so many other good things they are not doing and enjoying.

God intended the priests to represent His righteousness and salvation to a watching world. Spiritually speaking, this anointing made that possible. Unity among God's people has a similar effect.

What an abundant blessing unity is! It is like oil poured out so richly that it flows from the head to the beard, and then down to the very edge of the priest's **garments**.

There is some debate whether the **edge of his garments** refers to the collar (as Maclaren and others say) or to the bottom hem of his priestly robes. Either way, it was an impressive flow of oil.

Boice commented on the New International Version translation of Psalm 133:2 (*...running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe*): "In verse 2 the threefold repetition 'running down,' 'running down,' and 'down' - the Hebrew uses the same verb each time - emphasizes that the blessing of Aaron's anointing was from above himself, that is, from God." (Boice)

"In short, true unity, like all good gifts, is from above; bestowed rather than contrived, a blessing far more than an achievement." (Kidner)

This psalm emphasizes the blessings come from living in harmony and in mutual love. It compares this unity to the precious anointing oil that flows down from Aaron's head to his beard and garments, symbolizing God's favor and blessing on His people when they live together in peace.

When I think about Aaron being anointed as High Priest and the significance of the anointing oil used and what it represented from a spiritual and symbolic meaning in the Bible. It was amazing to me.

What was the purpose and significance of anointing Aaron?

- Consecration - The anointing oil was used to consecrate Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. It symbolized his separation and dedication to God's service.
- Holiness - The oil was considered holy, and its application set Aaron apart for sacred duties.
- Symbol of the Holy Spirit - The anointing oil serves as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Just as the oil flowed over Aaron's head, the Holy Spirit empowers and sanctifies believers for their spiritual roles.

What was the mixture of the anointing oil?

- Myrrh - known for its fragrance and healing properties.
- Cinnamon - added for its aromatic quality.
- Cane (Calamus) - contributed to the fragrance.
- Cassia - fragrant spice.

These spices were blended with olive oil to create a wonderful fragrance - a holy oil.

The application of this is that Moses poured the anointing oil on Aaron's head, signifying his consecration and setting him apart for God's service. The anointing process was both liquid and fragrant, emphasizing the symbolic aspects of the oil.

The spiritual implications is that the anointing oil represented God's favor and empowerment for ministry. It also reminds us of our need for the Holy Spirit to guide us, to sanctify us, and equip us for our calling in ministry. When think about Aaron anointing with oil it was more than a mere substance. It carried a deep spiritual significance, connecting Aaron to his sacred role and pointing to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

2. (3) We Are Refreshed by the Spirit - Like the dew of the mountains.

The Jews were basically an agricultural people and they depended on the early and latter rains and the dew to water their crops (Deut. 11:10-17). In the scripture, dew symbolizes the life-giving Word of God (Deut. 32:2), the blessing of God that brings fruitfulness (Gen. 27:28, 30; Deut. 33:13, 28) and God's special refreshing on His people (Hos. 14:5; Zech. 8:12).

King David used a second word picture to show how wonderful unity is among the people of God. It is also like the rich **dew** that covers Mount **Hermon**, making it green and moist. It is a distinct contrast to the dry wilderness found in other parts of Israel. Unity among God's people makes life thriving and healthy.

"On this mountain the dew is very copious. Mr. Maundrell says that 'with this dew, even in dry weather, their tents were as wet as if it had rained the whole night.'" (Clarke)

"The dew was ever the agent of renewal, of refreshment, of fertilizing force: that out of which life was maintained in strength." (Morgan)

"It refreshes the thirsty ground and quickens vegetation; so fraternal concord, falling gently on men's spirits, and linking distant ones together by a mysterious chain of transmitted good, will help to revive failing strength and refresh parched places." (Maclaren)

"To the Jew it seemed as though the Hermon range over towered the land and was able to drop its dews across the intervening distance upon the mountains of Zion. Thus, from the glory of His exaltation Jesus drops the dew of the Holy Spirit as blessing upon the lowlands of our life - that blessing which is life forevermore." (Meyer)

This blessing comes upon Jerusalem, which David established as the center for Israel's worship. In Jerusalem their unity would be displayed and enjoyed.

"This dew is not to be taken literally [in Jerusalem], for the falling of the dew availed very little to the refreshment or improvement

of the hills of Zion and Moriah, especially as now they were filled with buildings; but allegorically, for the favour or blessing of God, which is frequently called and compared to the dew, as Proverbs 19:12, Isaiah 18:4, Hosea 14:5, Micah 5:7." (Poole)

The blessing of unity is something God *commands*, something the previously cited New Testament passages teach (John 17:20-23, Ephesians 1:9-10, Romans 12:18). Since we will have **life forevermore** with the people of God, we should work hard to enjoy unity with them now.

"O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind, which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity." (Spurgeon)

"O, come the day when division shall cease, and enmity be done away; when the tribes of the spiritual Israel shall be united in a bond of eternal charity, under the true David, in the Jerusalem which is above; and saints and angels shall sing this lovely Psalm together!" (Horne)

The Holy Spirit is grieved by the sins that bring division (Eph. 5:25-32). Both images the oil and the dew remind us that unity is not something that we "work up" but that God sends down. When we get to the heavenly Zion (Heb. 12:18-29), there we will enjoy perfect unity "life forever more.

Resources:

Holy Bible

Warren W. Wiersbe, Commentary

Charles H. Spurgeon, Commentary

J. Vernon McGee, Commentary

David Guzik, Commentary