

The Principle of Unity

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The foundational principles of the Christian faith support far more than our belief in the Savior. The principles that keep the stars in place, that maintain life on earth, that allow airplanes to fly, and that establish guidelines for justice and commerce—every principle of life has been clearly revealed in Scripture.

When the principles in God's Word are highly esteemed and honored beyond lip-service, we receive an outpouring of strength, wisdom, and supernatural provisions. For example, once we discover that God loves us personally, we find that He has commanded a blessing for believers who dwell together in unity. In that place, not only do we love our neighbors as ourselves, but we find abundant joy—the oil of gladness—that comes with serving others. What's more, we can continue to serve with a joyful attitude, even when we are physically exhausted, because the joy of the Lord is our

strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

But until the foundations of a man's belief system are shaken (Hebrews 12:27-28), he cannot fully appreciate the strength and stability that those principles, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, supply. This study of Psalm 133 helps to bring out the precise meaning of those verses that so beautifully express the vital importance God places on the principle of unity in the Body of Christ.

Chapter One

BE WHERE THE BLESSINGS
POUR DOWN

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

“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;

“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” (Psalm 133).

Though this Psalm was written several hundred years before the birth of Christ, the principle of unity that it so beautifully describes reveals God’s mind concerning the order and operation of the Church, which is the Body of Christ on earth. Where unity is magnified among God’s people, Jesus Christ commands a blessing. It is a special place of blessing, where

God's people receive more than simply "logistical" grace.

Logistical grace is favor extended by God to all men, regardless of their spiritual condition (Matthew 5:45). Whether it is a gift of fresh air to breathe or the benefits of a comfortable lifestyle, many Christians who do not live in submission to the Cross still enjoy the temporal blessings of logistical grace while they rely on financial or domestic security or other natural support systems.

The blessing referred to in Psalm 133 is a commanded blessing that reaches far beyond temporal security. This blessing is a *way* of life, a *Person* in life (Jesus Christ), an *attitude* toward life, and a *plan* in life, in which God commands His people to be blessed.

In verse one of Psalm 133, the word for "behold" is *hinneh* in the Hebrew. It refers to seeing something mentally with a fixed mind, to observe with accuracy and to survey earnestly. It means that a believer looks beyond the obstacles that come against unity and he looks to Christ. He does not express human viewpoint by saying, "Yes, I will forgive, but I can't forget." Instead, he applies the doctrine of unconditional forgiveness to others.

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21, 22).

Also in Psalm 133:1, “how” is the Hebrew word *mah*, and it is a particle of examination. This means that when we survey with accuracy, we mentally examine what we are considering from every angle of divine viewpoint. We do not allow anything to inhibit our understanding. The word “good” is *towb*, which speaks of something that is beautiful, virtuous, honest, right, suitable, useful, prosperous, abundant, valuable, favorable. The observation is that it is “good”, which means that it fits the believer’s life and causes him to be happy within, giving him an advantage. What a great advantage we have in dwelling together in unity, having the same mind.

The word “pleasant” is *na’iyim*, which speaks of something amazingly sweet and lovely, highly agreeable to the senses, because of its source and substance. Unity is beautiful, delightful, gracious, and abundant. “Brethren” (*’ach*) speaks of having a family resemblance because of having the same father. It is also the term for

affection between blood-bought believers in Jesus Christ. The phrase “to dwell together” and “unity” are both *yachad*. In the Hebrew this is a kal infinitive. It means, “to sit down, to remain and be settled down in the place of your calling.” The use of a kal infinitive here teaches that believers are to continue to inhabit God’s calling with God’s people with an emphasis of not just being in the same place but having the same mind.

Like Precious Ointment

Psalm 133:2 likens unity in the body of Christ to “the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard...” Both the “ointment” (or anointing oil) and the “dew of Hermon” are symbolic of refreshment. It is important to notice that in Leviticus 8:10-12, the oil was placed upon Aaron’s head in order to sanctify him.

“And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron’s head, and anointed

him, to sanctify him" (Leviticus 8:10-12).

The filling of the Holy Spirit is required in order to empower a believer for the ministry to which God has called them. In the Old Testament, the anointing of the oil was a symbol of being set apart for a particular ministry. Moses anointed Aaron with oil, setting Aaron's life apart for his calling in the plan of God. Also, David was anointed to be king of Israel, and later to be king of the tribe of Judah. Elijah was anointed to be prophet. Because of Calvary, every Blood-bought believer has received the anointing of the Holy Spirit in his life (1 John 2:20, 27).

God Commands a Blessing

The word for "command" in the Hebrew is *tsavah*. God appoints, sets up, establishes, governs, and protects a blessing that He designed for His people. God commands that we would be blessed, and He sends people, messengers, and provisions to bless us. That blessing is *life* (*chay*) which is described as fresh and flowing water, liveliness, with revival as in the spring time—fresh and new. But it goes beyond a season: "even life for evermore." The phrase "for evermore" is *olam*, and it speaks of prolonged

eternity—eternity past into eternity future.

What causes a ministry to carry out God's plan in oneness? In the early Church, the believers gathered in the upper room with one heart and one mind, waiting for the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). Acts 2:1 records that they were "all with one accord in one place." According to Acts 2:4, that promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell them. The Word of God now governed their hearts, positive volition governed their will, and humility governed their capacity. Hunger for the Word of God dominated their minds, and their appreciation and appropriation of the Word of grace was able to build them up in their faith (Acts 20:32).

Guarding against Disunity

Satan is constantly doing everything in his power to divide the unity among members in the Body of Christ. First, he tries to divide hearts (Hosea 10:2). Then, he tries to divide the mind (James 4:8), because he knows that if a man has two masters or is double-minded, he will be unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). Yet, though Satan may have a counter-attack planned to hinder their unity, when believers go to the Cross

and ask for God's divine provision in prayer, God is pleased. It is His desire that we continue in one heart, one soul, one mind, one vision, and one faith, using the diversity of the gifts He has given each one.

After the priests and Sadducees threatened them because of their preaching, the disciples returned to the upper room to pray:

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit], and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:31-32a).

Heaven on Earth

The disciples spoke the Word of God with boldness because they had been with Jesus, and “great grace was upon them all” (verse 33). In His prayer to His heavenly Father, Jesus prayed three times that His people would share in the oneness that Christ had with His Father before the world existed:

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are... That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they

also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:11*b*, 21,22).

God made a provision for this kind of oneness among His people. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Also, Philippians 2:2-5 describes the unity that is possible when believers are humble and like-minded:

"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves....Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "Likeminded" means having the same content in thinking, while not necessarily having the same capacity or the same identical thoughts. When we are likeminded, each believer can share the same content of grace, with the same qualifying understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

THINGS THAT HINDER UNITY

The first hindrance against unity in the Body of Christ is the influence of party spirits. Party spirits reveal the influence of personalities instead of the Person of the Holy Spirit. Evidenced by cliques which deteriorate into partisan factions, these spirits hinder unity in the Body of Christ. In the Early Church, Paul reproved the Corinthians for division among themselves, since many believers had begun to follow men rather than follow Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:4). Party spirits have outward conditional unity that is based upon sympathetic, sentimental relationships. This superficial unity can overshadow genuine unity in the Body of Christ. Party spirits always produce self-defense mechanisms and guilt in those who are influenced by them through ignorance. Party spirits feed pride and independence, promote Satan's kingdom, and prevent the development of meaningful,

spiritual relationships.

In order to avoid party spirits, one must be Calvary-centered in Christ, filling his mind with categorical doctrine—storing up categories of specific truth from the Word of God to operate in specific situations. When a believer is broken and filled with the Holy Spirit, he will discern party spirits that could otherwise prevent him from being in a place where God commands him to be blessed.

God commands a blessing on any fruitful ministry that obeys the commandment to love and that fulfills the Great Commission by going into all the world and preaching the Gospel (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Personality Rapport Inhibits Unity

The second major hindrance to unity in the Body of Christ is personality appreciation or personality rapport in relationships, rather than Christ-centered doctrinal rapport. Personality rapport is friendship based on personality appreciation. It is the exaltation of one's natural preference above appreciating Christ in others. It is enjoyable to fellowship over common interests with other believers; however, the common interest itself should not be the basis for unity. A

relationship based on a temporal foundation will lose what appears to be unity when things change.

Christians who enjoy doctrinal rapport learn how to fellowship around the Word of God and the principles derived from the Word. As we learn how to apply the Scriptures to the specific details of our lives, we begin to appreciate the grace, love, power, mercy, deliverance, work, provision, and promises of God. The common conversations become eternal, and everything we do, we do to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

How can personality rapport be avoided? As believers, we purpose to develop doctrinal rapport in all of our relationships in the Body of Christ. The unprofitable time that was spent speaking multitudes of words is converted into study and prayer time, preparing our hearts in quietness before God (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

If some believers shared only doctrinal rapport in love, they would lose many of their so-called friends. Doctrinal rapport in a relationship means that there is a high regard among individuals for the love of Christ and the Word of God. But in personality rapport relationships, conversations revolve around the details of life.

It is all right to talk about those things at times, but to live in constant concern over them more than the provisions found in the Word of God will definitely hinder spiritual growth.

Subjectivity Hinders Unity

The third major hindrance to godly unity in the Body of Christ is subjectivity. Many Christians are plagued with subjectivity in their frame of reference. It happens when an individual voluntarily allows the unknown, invisible impressions from his psychological environment to overtake his emotions. Rather than depend upon the divine standard of objective truth as revealed through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit, his emotions (which were never designed to think but to appreciate God's thoughts) dictate to his mind how he should think.

Subjectivity can be a result of ignorance in how to think with God, or it may be an expression of an ego trip from the realm of self-exaltation or pride. It is often characterized by perceptions that are received by the mind apart from the truth. Some individuals listen to a stranger's voice, which directs them to follow a path that is contrary to the principles of absolutes found in the Word of God.

Subjectivity always feeds the emotions. To overcome subjectivity and enter into real unity with the Lord and with one another, a believer must be continually hiding the Word of God in his heart so that he will not sin against God (Psalm 119:11). The Word of God must become a lamp unto his feet, and a light to his path (Psalm 119:105). When he hides the Word of God in his heart, he is set apart by the Word as it dwells richly in his mind. The Cross is his frame of reference.

The believer is sanctified by the Word because the Word is truth (John 17:17). He learns to use recovery whenever he fails (1 John 1:9) and to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). In order to avoid subjectivity, the believer must be on a constant diet of the Word of God. When a thought comes in that exalts itself against the truth, cast it down (2 Corinthians 10:5) and let Christ raise up a standard (Isaiah 62:10). The application of objective truth in the grace and love of the Spirit will overcome subjectivity.

Natural Preference Prevents Unity

Another factor that prevents unity in the Body of Christ is natural preference. Natural

preference includes every desire that originates outside of the Word of God (Proverbs 19:2). Natural preference limits our vision for God and causes us to privately interpret the Word of God in order to complement the desires of our natural heart. Following the natural desires of the heart allows us to choose a lifestyle contrary to the perfect will of God. That person will begin to rationalize truth with his human reason instead of supporting his reasoning with a foundation of divine precepts.

Natural preference always promotes self-centeredness. A believer can overcome this way of preserving his life by allowing the Cross of Jesus Christ and the liberty of the Holy Spirit to fill him so that he can go from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18*b*). We overcome natural preference by submitting to the divine guidance of the Word of God.

“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psalm 115:3). God has an absolute will, and a believer is to yield to the absolute will that God has for his life. Jesus Christ will always root out our natural preference through His Word. Therefore, heed the Word of God and be led by the Holy Spirit into the absolute will of God.

Chapter Three

THE OIL: GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR UNITY

“Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him” (Exodus 29:7).

“And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him” (Exodus 29:21).

“Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels” (Exodus 30:23).

The anointing with oil is a divine prescription for unity in the Body of Christ. Not just oil was used on Aaron's head, but we see in Exodus

29:21 that the oil was mixed with blood and sprinkled on him. And in Exodus 30:23, Moses had to mix nearly five quarts of high quality perfumed oil, according to God's precise order, to be used to anoint the head of the high priest. In that day the oil was used for one specific purpose, and it was never used for anything else. This fact reveals the sacredness of the anointing of oil in order to separate and sanctify a man's life to God.

Nothing can compare with the oil of anointing which is given to the believer by Jesus Christ. Every believer's calling is precious in God's sight. In Exodus 29:7, the oil could not be confined to the head; it was poured out on the head of the priest so that it would flow over his entire body. When believers have godly unity, one with another, the Holy Spirit flows through them—from the top down—and God's life is manifested wherever they go.

God Is No Respector of Persons

In Deuteronomy 10:14-19 is a beautiful principle. Here, the Lord exhorts us to love the stranger, because we were also strangers who were called out because of His great love. He is no respecter of persons, rather He looks upon

the heart.

The grace of God spans and extends far beyond frailty and weakness. We believe in God by faith, and He works in our behalf. Salvation does not depend upon human goodness; it only depends upon the grace of God. In Colossians 3:10-11, God included the offenders and debtors as brethren in the Body of Christ. We receive the oil of the Holy Spirit by grace through faith. Still, our obedience to the plan of God determines the degree to which we are blessed. A believer must be in the place of his calling in order to have the oil flow upon him.

When we study this principle of unity, we learn that there is healing power in the oil. The oil was so unique, with such special ingredients. It brought healing as it spread down over Aaron's robe. Healing always comes through love, unity, and oneness. When a believer lets God deal with the division and strategy of the devil, He also takes care of indifference. Coldness, fear, resentment, and bitterness are destroyed when believers dwell together in unity.

The Bible says in Ephesians 4:1-3 that we ought to walk worthy of our calling, having an attitude of lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, "en-

deavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Spirit-filled believer who derives his anointing from Jesus Christ and the Word of God will forbear the brethren with an attitude of love. He will endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, which has already been established, in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:32 instructs us to "be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." This verse speaks of the experiential results of abiding in the anointing of our calling.

Grace, Marvelous Grace!

Never give up on people! They deserve to receive the kindness and compassion of Christ. Herein lies the oil of healing, the power of God, and the love of God that motivates us to forgive others without measure. Where believers dwell together in unity, God commands a blessing!

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the

hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

As Finished Work believers, we minister the manifold grace of God. That grace is not dependent upon the receiver. Grace depends upon the Giver, and never upon the receiver. And now, because we have received such grace, we minister grace when we speak.

In Psalm 133:2, the precious ointment flowed down to the skirts of Aaron's garments. The "skirts" is *peh* in the Hebrew, and it speaks of the mouth or opening or edge. Here is a beautiful application of this verse: The oil of anointing affects our speech as it flows down to our mouth. The skirts represent the edge of the portion of the Body of Christ. As God's people begin to obey the Word of God, the oil takes over and Satan is prevented from hindering believers.

Since Christ received us when we were still sinners (Romans 5:6,8), we can receive one another as Christ has received us (Romans 15:7). We can give the same love and grace to others that we have received from Him. We minister to the needs of others through the Word of God, a redemptive spirit, and the ministry of reconciliation. We minister grace, we edify, and we love others as Christ has loved us (John 15:12; 13:34). As a result, believers enjoy oneness within the

Body of Christ. We are not divisive, negative, selfish, greedy, unkind, hateful, cruel, indifferent, or reactionary. Rather, we are thoroughly motivated by His love and the consciousness of truth.

The oil will flow when individual members remain in their calling. Vision, prayer, a heart attitude of love, tears of compassion, goals, desires, delight, purpose—these are realized when sinners in a local assembly magnify Christ in the spirit of unity (1 Corinthians 12).

Remember, the believer who is operating in the power of the Holy Spirit esteems others more highly than himself. Applying this principle does not mean that a believer views himself as having less value to God, but rather that he honors another believer's priesthood, and respects his privacy. He esteems the individual callings of others in the Body of Christ; therefore, his attitude is, "I esteem your freedom and privacy. I must protect your rights as a believer-priest and minister the provision of grace that allows you to stand or fall before God without my interference."

Thank God for the precious gift of unity. Unity in the Body of Christ is a result of the specific prayer Christ prayed in the garden of Geth-

semene (John 17). We become like-minded, without haughtiness, as stewards of the manifold grace of God. In 1 Peter 4:10, manifold grace, *poikilos*, means "grace on every side." We are encompassed by grace and by the Word of God in the Spirit. We experience God's forgiveness as we forgive others. God gives us His grace, therefore we can afford to give grace to others. We respond to divine grace, without works.

When the disciples were in one place, in one accord, power came upon them by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1; 4:31,33; 9:31), and this power sent the Church into Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, as well as to the uttermost parts of the world. The members of the early Church were at rest. They edified one another, and they walked in the fear of the Lord. They went forth praising God while dwelling in peace. As they rested in the Finished Work, the Word of God was multiplied (Acts 12:24).

When the Body of Christ experiences this awesome unity, nothing can stop the cause of the Gospel! Whenever division is destroyed and unity is established for the sake of Christ, believers can proceed unhindered in progress to fulfill the Great Commission. Unity will only be

established as individual members of the Body of Christ take up the Cross and are filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18*b*). When a believer is filled with the Spirit, he is not easily wounded. "Great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). Believers have been endowed by God with a ministry of reconciliation and a redemptive attitude.

The Oil of Blessing

In Psalm 133, the Hebrew word for "descend" is used three times, emphasizing a vital point. This refers to Mount Hermon. The dew descended both upon the low and high places. No matter how low the valley, the oil will descend there to permeate the land with the life of God. Any ministry that honors the Word of God by living by *every* word (Matthew 4:4) will be blessed with oneness in the Spirit. As believers, we are continually filled by the Spirit of God as we live under the government of God's progressive plan.

Notice that people who are in the valley receive the dew. Every believer, at one time or another, falls into the valley of weakness or despair; but if he calls upon the Lord, he will re-

ceive the precious “dew of Hermon.” Symbolically, the dew represents the believer’s help from above in times of distress.

When believers dwell in unity and live in obedience to the Word, then God commands a blessing. In Psalm 133:3 the Hebrew word for “blessing” is *berakah*. It is a feminine noun signifying that believers who are unified live in a divine benediction. They live in divine prosperity, in a liberal blessing of grace. The oil releases other gifts and provisions which produce and intensify God’s abundant benefits. The oil of blessing descends upon the precious Body of Christ.

A church that honors unity will have God’s benediction, as well as His blessing, prosperity, and manifold grace in the midst of trials. They will experience a special freshness and a special power—not just now, but *forevermore*. In other words, there are eternal benefits when believers dwell together in unity. A church that honors this principle of unity will have life forevermore. They will be alive, vigorous, springing up with vital energy.

Therefore, forbear one another in love and keep the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:2). Receive the oil of God’s special empowerment for

His specific tasks. Let the oil descend into the valley of your life. The oil will cover you when you are abiding in your particular calling. His blessing is upon any ministry that exalts the principle of unity because He has called us to one Body, to one united purpose—to glorify the Son forevermore.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ entreated His heavenly Father for the fulfillment of unity both now, in this life, as well as throughout all eternity. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

When we love God, we can love ourselves, then we will love others, and as a result the entire Law of God is fulfilled (Luke 10:27-28). But how can we love God whom we have not seen? The answer is that we cannot. That is, we cannot love God until we accept the preeminent principle of 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."

Remember that the oil *flowed* down. It was not pushed down or otherwise applied through works of the flesh. The key to being covered was to be under the source. When we are in the place

where God called us to be, in one accord, the blessings will flow. Though obstacles may try to divert the flow, let the Word and the Spirit clear the path (Isaiah 40:3-5).