

Unity

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[0:00] Psalm 133, a song of degrees of David.

! David sings about a blessed unity of God's people.

It's a song about unity, about real unity, about brotherly unity, about true spiritual fellowship. And it's centred on Christ himself, lined up with God's truth.

That's the kind of fellowship we want. A fellowship with our Saviour and his brothers and sisters together. It's not just about a gathering of unrelated people.

It's a gathering of brethren. And that's the church of God. It's in a way following on from last time I spoke in the morning. David's talking about benefits. The benefits of fellowship.

[1:26] The benefits. He says, verse 1, Behold! He says, look at this! How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

It's good, it's pleasant. There's benefits here. There's benefits from getting together in God's kind of unity. In God's kind of fellowship. It's good and it's pleasant.

It brings many benefits. Think of the benefits of fellowship. The benefits of the togetherness. Of the joint encouragement. You know, we've had some exaltation that's lifted us already.

Of that encouragement. Of that fellowship. Of that support. Of that peace and togetherness that we can enjoy. The benefits of fellowship. It's good for us.

It's pleasant for us. Look at the other side of the coin, if you would, for a moment. How bad and unpleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in disunity.

[2:21] Or for maybe brethren not to dwell together at all. In Mark 3, 24 it says in part, If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. Disunity brings seeds of discord. It brings disharmony, disagreement, destruction, disorder, disaster.

Disunity creates misunderstandings and factions, hostilities and hurts, resentments and isolation. Disunity is not good for the fellowship.

Someone said if Satan can't destroy a church from without, he'll try to divide it from within. It's so true, isn't it? In 1 Corinthians 1 verse 10 it says, 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 or knit together.

It's the same word as translated elsewhere, knit together in the same mind and in the same judgment. That ye be joined together, perfectly joined, no divisions.

[3:38] The word divisions here, it means factions. The tearing apart of something that is whole. You know, I experienced that this morning. I had a shower and I used the towel and...

RIP. It's like that... That's what I've got in my notes here. It's something like that that was whole, that was like a piece of cloth being torn. That's the sense of it. Division. You know, that towel's only fit to be a car cleaning rag now.

We don't want a church divided, do we? We want a church that's united. And Satan loves to create conflict and disunity about clashes and arguments and falling out.

Now, the worldly times will disagree healthily about doctrinal issues, and that's a good thing. But Satan wants us to clash about the peripheral things, to argue about the finer points, to divide brother from brother and scatter us, tear us apart.

That's not a healthy thing for a church. We want to guard against that. As someone put it like this, there's nothing more disappointing than to meet a brother who has his dispensations right, but his disposition wrong.

[4:49] That's so true, isn't it? Now, we might have all the finer points just down pat, but it's our disposition, it's our attitude that counts

for more than such things.

Such things are secondary issues, as it were. And real Bible-based fellowship, it doesn't mean we disregard sound Bible doctrines. We want to have that as our foundation.

It's not a unity at any price. But nevertheless, there's a one accord that we can have in our brotherly love. As God's people, we have that wonderful unity that we can walk hand in hand with our fellow believers.

And Paul urges us in Philippians 2, verse 2, he says, to fill up my cup of joy, as it were, to live in harmony. He says, be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. In Ephesians 4, 3, he talks of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And in Hebrews 10, 24, the writer says, let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

[5:58] We want to look out for one another. And the benefits that can be enjoyed as we obey the Lord in this area, there's a benefit as we're exhorting one another, urging, encouraging one another.

As we see the day approaching, we want to get together and encourage. There will be times when we can work at those areas of difference and of disharmony.

We can work at those things and aim for reconciliation, to be peacemakers, to combine our energies and constantly support one another as co-workers, as a team.

You know, there was an old saying, you might have heard this before, that there was a man visiting an asylum for the criminally insane. And he was surprised just to see only three guards were guarding these hundred inmates.

And he asked one of the guards, aren't you afraid that the inmates will unite, overcome you and escape? And the guard said, lunatics never unite. You know, we don't want to make that mistake, brothers and sisters, do we?

[7:00] We want to unite in a healthy way, to be a united force, to fight our common enemy and to have that unity as God's people. There's benefits there, benefits there.

Secondly, there's brethren here. There's brethren in this verse. David sings of a unity, and it's a unity because we have that common bond to our heavenly Father.

We're brothers and sisters, even though we might be from different cultures and racial backgrounds and different language backgrounds, different family backgrounds, yet we're brethren, we're brethren, brothers, and we're sisters, and there's a unity there.

And think of it, there's a unity among brethren that goes beyond so much else you could compare it to. We're much more united, or ought to be, as brothers and sisters in God's family, than some kind of football team.

You know, a football team has a degree of unity, otherwise they won't really work together. More unity than a football team, more unity than an army.

[8:05] And I've seen some video of an army walking lockstep, you know, in perfect unison. You know, there's a real show of unity, a force there. But we as God's family have a greater unity than all of that.

Because why? Because we're brethren. We're brothers and sisters together in God's wonderful family, in His household of faith. We're united in that relationship, in that adoption, as a family unit in Christ together.

And isn't it wonderful to consider how God's brought we people here today together, as a church assembly, as a gathering together of His visible, present body on earth.

What a kaleidoscope it is, even today, to think that such as we could be related. Even though, you know, I hail from another country.

There's some Aussies here that are my brothers and sisters. You know, there's some African people. There's some Filipinos and Indian people. Some fellow Pommies.

[9:15] And we're all brothers and sisters in Christ. It's amazing, isn't it? To think that God has created this beautiful kaleidoscope of people to be yet one family together in faith.

And He's uniting us still as we are bound together by His love. Not a binding together with unbelievers, but a binding together of God's believing children.

A unity with Christ. And it's a faith commitment that joins us. Safe people getting together as brothers and sisters in the Lord. You know, Spurgeon said this, he said, Unity without truth is hazardous.

Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. Unity without truth is hazardous. We want unity with truth. To have that unity of fellowship.

Consider the unity of prayer. There's a unity in prayer. In Acts 1.14 it says, Of the church, these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.

[10:26] There was no problem of a poorly attended prayer meeting in Acts 1. They all devoted themselves to prayer. They were all there. You know, I've seen a church in Victoria, and it was only a small church, but one thing that impressed me when I visited this church, the pastor said, When we go witnessing, we all go.

They all go. And they had a trailer that they pulled behind a car, and they set up some open air platform, and they were all there. The witnessing wasn't some optional extra that the church did. They were all there. They were all devoted to witnessing. And here in Acts 1, in verse 14, They all devoted themselves to prayer.

Now that's not to say some are not physically able. You might be praying at home when we're praying here Monday night. God bless you for that. But it's good if we can make it. Let's pray together. Verse 2, It's like the precious iron man upon the head.

Now, it speaks of anointing there. And anointing in the Word of God speaks of separation. What's the word of paradox? Here that there's a unity of separation.

[11:38] A unity of separation. It's like the precious ointment. The ointment that the priests had in Exodus 30, verse 30, it signified holiness and separation.

A setting apart. So whilst there's a joining together, there's also a separating from. That's what Aaron's anointing signifies here.

And likewise too, we join together, but we're separated from. Separated from the world, worldliness, error, and false teaching. We're brought together, out of the world.

We're called out. Called together, called out. Out of darkness. Made that separated. Holy nation. We're a new nation. As it were.

A holy nation. God's nation, as it were. Of God's people. Of course we know the significance of Israel, and I'm not meaning to blur the distinction between Israel and the church, and yet, God's called His people, His separated people, a holy nation.

[12:41] And think of it, there's a separating from. The Word speaks about a little leaven, leavening the whole lump, of making that whole lump of dough rise. Just by that speck of yeast, makes the whole loaf rise.

And we need to guard against wrong and error, and separate in our unity. It's kind of unusual to think of it, but there's a separation in our unity.

And then there's a unity of the Spirit. It's like the Jew of Hermon. You know, have you ever gone out morning, and you that might get up earlier than me, and you look down at the grass, and it's covered with dew.

You know, that beautiful layer of freshness over the grass, as it's carpeted with that layer of dew. And it's a kind of picture, if you could think of it this way, of the Holy Spirit, isn't it?

Of that refreshing, of that revitalizing. The unity of the Spirit is something the Word talks about too. And yet, brethren can be divided, and we need to guard against that.

[13:50] As we read in Proverbs 6, verse 16, amongst the six things that God hates, yea, seven, that are an abomination, he says, he that soweth this good among brethren.

Proverbs 6, verse 19. Let's be a uniting church, if I dare use such a term, not meaning the uniting church of Australia, but let's be a uniting church, rather than a dividing church.

Uniting on sound doctrine, our biblical truth, unlike the name uniting church, I fear to say, in our nation, sadly.

But friends, we want to be a uniting church, uniting on sound doctrine, uniting on the book, uniting on his truth, uniting for the cause that counts.

And we need to look out for those who would cause divisions and offences. It says in Romans 16, verse 17. So friends, we want to be diverse, but not divided.

[14:52] United, but not the same. Different, yet one. And as brethren, we can stand together, we can strive together, we can work together, worship together.

As the folk in Acts, we can, as many scripture verses as I could list here, but some to refer to, of the community, the fellowship, that we find in the book of Acts, they were gathered together, they were praying together, they were praising together, sharing together, singing together, suffering together, witnessing together, and even weeping together, as they farewell Paul.

There was a togetherness, as they were all united in the spirit. Now think of it, as you've heard today, as some of our number, going through some troubling times, or times of sickness.

If you were to fall, and severely injure your wrist, it would swell up, and become very painful, the rest of your body, might feel bad about it, as well.

And the rest of your body, would sit up all night, to keep it company. That is where, the body of Christ should be, when one member is hurting, when one hurts, all hurt, and all should respond.

[16:07] So, quite an insightful thought, isn't it? To think, how can we share our love to Hazel, who's not here, for example, who's actually hurt her wrist.

And I know some do, invest a lot of time, in visiting. But maybe you can, at least make a phone call. Show your love, in some way.

And for Gene, no doubt at this time, and others at this time, going through some, troubles, and maybe going through, those emotional lows. We could think of, how can we, show our love, as part of that, one body, that we are meant to be.

When one hurts, we all feel that pain. We feel that compassion, towards these ones, going through such things. So, there's a unity, in the spirit.

And we're working together. In 1 Corinthians 3, verse 9, it says, for we are laborers, together with God. The church of God, is meant to be, a working, functioning, cohesive, force.

[17:10] Working together, as laborers, together with God. Now, someone put it like this, the walls of Jericho, fell, because Israel, was quiet together, together, they marched together, and they shouted together.

There was a unity there, and, the walls fell, God moved. And friends, we're all going up together. It says, we're going up together. We're all going to be caught up, together.

We'll spend eternity together. You know, I don't know whether, one of the two of you, might be my next door neighbor. I don't know. Oh, I've got to volunteer.

I saw that hand. But, you know, we won't get to pick, our neighbors in heaven. But, one thing's for sure, we'll have better neighbors, than down here, ain't there? And brother Paul said, there'll be some good neighbors, because we'll all be perfect.

You know, even me. We've got to spend, eternity together. It's going to be good, isn't it? And so, we should get used to one another, and love one another, and be one in Christ Jesus.

[18:16] Galatians 3, verse 28. You know, Tozer put it like this. He says, has it ever occurred to you, that 100 pianos, all tuned to the same fork, are automatically tuned to each other?

They are of one accord, because they're tuned, not to each other, but to another standard, to which we, each must individually bow.

And so, 100 worshipers together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other, than they could possibly ever be, by some kind of man-made unity.

There's a closer fellowship there. As we tune in, each one of us individually, one by one, as we tune our hearts to Christ, our Saviour, there'll be a closeness to one another as well.

And so, we brothers and sisters, there's a holy nation, there's a relationship, we're many branches, yet one vine, we're many members, yet one body. We're interdependent, we need each other.

[19:18] And so, we should show that brotherly love. So, there's benefits, it's good, it's pleasant, there's brethren, dwelling together, and thirdly, there's a blessing, there's a blessing.

We're seeing the, the wonderful blessing, God's commanded, a blessing. He's commanded it. He says, I guarantee it. When my people dwell together, in unity, I command a blessing.

Unity brings blessing. It brings harmony, and strength, and maturity. Corporately and, one by one, there's blessings. When we face satanic attack, we've got our brothers and sisters, giving covering fire, as it were, and watching out for us.

There's a powerful unity, when we're facing onslaughts, as our brother Brad shared, we can phone, and say, hey, I'm going through a tough time. You know, call out for reinforcements, as it were, when you're through, that time of attack.

Don't just jump ship, or sit home, and have a sad time. Call someone. Let us know. I need prayer. So we know.

[20:31] We can back you up. There's people praying in this church. There's a prayer chain. There's the email prayer. There's the prayer meeting. We'll lift you up before the Lord, and encourage your heart.

Friends, there's blessings from being knit together, from being welded together, cemented together. Every joint supplies. Ephesians 4. Every part is working, effectual working.

Edifying itself in love. Ephesians 4. 15 to 16. The whole body, fitly joined together. And the body grows.

The body grows when that happens. So, friends, think of it. If you can, think, how can we be, that stronger church? You know, this is a milestone, as it were, an anniversary of our founding as a church entity.

How can we be a stronger church? I pray that we can be a more united force. That we can be more united. We can have a closer unity, a closer oneness in Christ, as we knit together in love.

[21:34] to be that more effective church, that we can bear one another's burdens. You know, someone said this, the Christian life, it's not a solo flight to heaven, with the occasional piece of formation flying, on Sunday mornings.

You know, we're meant to be together. And let's take opportunities to do that. You know, there's those formal times in the newsletter, of meeting times. But let's not be confined to just that.

Let's find opportunities, how we can build each other up. And learn from each other. That's another blessing. You know, we can learn from one another.

And that's why we like to encourage, participation. Because, there's many ways we can learn from each other. We've got tea and coffee after. That's another opportunity, to be a blessing, and to be blessed.

Iron sharpens iron. Proverbs 27, 17, So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. You know, we can sharpen one another, and get that encouragement, of the sandpaper, that is around us.

[22:43] You know, some of our brothers and sisters, are a bit like sandpaper. Amen? And that's a good thing. We need a bit of, we've got a few rough edges. I can speak for myself. There's a blessing of obedience too.

As we get together, we're honouring the Lord. He's commanded a blessing. He says, when you gather together, I will be in the midst. Matthew 18, verse 20.

And so friends, think of it, the blessings that we enjoy, as believers, the blessings of eternal life, of salvation. You know, the summer now number, they regularly go witnessing.

You might think, well, I could, I could tag along. I could tag along. If you're free on a Friday, Brother Pablo's down, Soul Spring, handing out leaflets. You might be able to tag along, if you're free, at that time.

There's encouragement, mutual fellowship. There's blessings. There the Lord hath commanded the blessing. Where? When the brethren dwelt together in unity.

[23:46] Talks about the Jew of Hermon. Talks about the mountains of Zion. What happened on the mountains of Zion? That was where our Lord was crucified. Our Lord was crucified on the mountains of Zion.

On that hill called Calvary. There the Lord commanded the blessing. Even life forevermore. Calvary is what we think of when we gather. Calvary is what we think of when we fellowship.

Calvary is what we think of when we think of His great love with which He has loved us. And we think of opportunities to invite others to come and hear the message. How we can encourage one another and witness together to be that visible church in this community.

And sometimes, yeah, we spend so much time even, it can be true, in churches that we can spend so much time infighting. Infighting. It's like a story told with Lord Nelson one day that the Battle of Trafalgar was occurring and Lord Nelson went to the deck of the ship and two British officers were having an argy-bargy.

They were crawling about some insignificant thing. And he whirled them about and pointed to the ships of their adversary. He said, gentlemen, there are your enemies. You know, friends, we have enough trouble with the enemy Satan and yet, brothers and sisters, you know, sometimes you might find it hard to get on with each other.

[25:17] You know, I'm sure that's never the case but, you know, we need to realise the enemy is out there and we need to help one another. Even those Christians you might find you don't get on so well with or you might not click with, they're your brothers and sisters.

Come on, let's get together and be a team and realise there are your enemies. Let's work together and the Lord will command a blessing. So, friends, just to wrap up how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

When brethren, get it together as a blessing. There's benefits. It's good and it's pleasant. We're brethren dwelling together in godly unity under the heavenly Father and there's a blessing.

God's commanded that. Receive that blessing in response and, friends, think of it as we just wrap up how can I, how can I, put yourself in this question, how can I be a more cohesive part of this fellowship?

How can I be a blessing and receive a blessing? How more, how more can I fellowship? How more can I bless my brothers and sisters that are here and more especially the ones who are not here today?

[26:33] You know, friends, let's think, how can, how can that happen? And how can I be a part of that? Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can call you Father and there's people here that we can say they are our brothers and our sisters today.

Lord, and there's brothers and sisters not here today. We pray, Lord, help us to think how can we be a church that has a united power, united in the Spirit, united in prayer, united in faith, united in doctrine.

Lord, help us to be that people that can be welded together, compacted together, joined together and that your Holy Spirit can bring that wonderful unity of the Spirit amongst our fellowship.

And Lord, help us to see how we can be that people that you've called us to be and receive that blessing you've commanded to bless us with. In Jesus' name, aïne.