

# Bless Be the Tide That Binds

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Date: 26 June 2022

[ 0 : 00 ] Psalm 133, verse 1 through 3, Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments, and the dew of Hermon as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.

For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore. In reference to the song that we sung before just recently, John Fawcett was born January 6, 1740.

He grew up in a poor family in Yorkshire, England. Fawcett, orphaned at 12, was bound out to a tailor in Bradford. He was given out to be an apprentice where he worked long hours. He learned to read and eventually mastered Pilgrim's Progress, the devotional classic by John Bunyan.

Fawcett was converted at age 16 in the ministry of George Whitefield. The evangelist passed through Bradford in 1755 and spoke from John 3, 14. Fawcett later recalled, As long as life remains, I shall remember both the text and the sermon.

He first joined the Methodists, but three years later began attending the Baptist Church in Bradford, England. And all God's Baptist people said amen, right? And upon telling Whitfield he wanted to preach, the evangelist gave Fawcett his blessing.

[ 1 : 15 ] He has ordained the Baptist minister at Williamsgate York Shower. John was asked to serve as the pastor of a small church at Williamsgate at age 25. This described Fawcett's congregation at Williamsgate.

The people were all farmers and shepherds, poor as Job's turkey, an uncouth lot whose speech once could hardly understand, unable to read or write. Most of them pagans, cursed with vice and ignorance and wild tempers.

The established church had never touched them. Only the humble Baptist had sent an itinerant preacher there and had made a good beginning. They were not able to pay much, and most of what John received as wages came in the form of wool, potatoes, or other produce.

When John and Mary began having children, they found it difficult to make ends meet. After serving at Williamsgate for seven years, his reputation as a preacher grew to the extent that he was invited to substitute for the ailing pastor, Dr. John Gill at Carter Lane Baptist Church in London.

Many of you probably have his commentaries or in your Bible programs you would have access to Gill commentaries. Upon Gill's death, Fawcett was offered the position. The church was very large and prestigious in London that would be able to provide him a much larger salary.

[ 2 : 24 ] The Fawcett family packed their household belongings and prepared to move. The day came and the congregation was in tears as John and Mary prepared to leave. Mary is quoted as saying, I can't stand it, John.

I know not how to go. John responded, Lord, help me, Mary, nor can I stand it. We will unload the wagon. And John is recorded to have said to the crowd gathered around them, We've changed our minds.

We're going to stay. John and Mary unpacked the wagon and let the church in England know that they would not be accepting the position. Fawcett then wrote this hymn to express his thoughts to the poor people with whom he had chosen to live and serve.

The following Sunday, after the decision to remain at Williamsgate, John Fawcett preached from Luke 12, 15, A man's life consists not in the abundance of things he possesses. He closed the sermon by reading the text of this new song, Blessed Be the Tide That Binds.

Fawcett's own ministry continued to thrive. In 1777, a new chapel was built for him in nearby Hedberg Bridge. He developed a ministry academy there and trained a new generation of pastors.

[ 3 : 25 ] His influence lasted through his support of the spread of the gospel, a voice in Christian congregational song, and his efforts in training the generations of pastors that would follow him. John and Mary continued their ministry in Williamsgate for 54 years.

Their salary was estimated to never be more approximately more than 25 pounds or \$200 a year. He lost his son, Stephen the Smallpox, in 1774, his mother in 1782, and his daughter, Sarah, in 1785.

These losses made Fawcett a more endearing pastor. In Fawcett, this long-continued and heavy domestic affliction brought about the tenderest sympathy towards those in his congregation who were also afflicted.

In 1811, Fawcett published his devotional commentary on the Holy Scripture and was honored with a Dr. Divinity from Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. Fawcett was author of a number of religious poetry works, several of which attained a large circulation.

Among John's noteworthy writings was an essay titled, Anger, who became a favorite of King George III. It said that the king offered John any gift or favor he desired, but John declined the offer with his statement, I have lived among my own people, enjoying their love.

[ 4 : 34 ] God has blessed my labors among them, and I need nothing which even a king could supply. Such was the heart and soul of a man who wrote these loving words. John Fawcett passed from this life, July 25, 1817, at the age of 77.

Those words we sung, Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts as Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above. Before our Father's throne, we pour out our ardent prayers, our fear, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain, but we shall still be joined in heart and hope to meet again.

And so just thinking about this man and his testimony and his love that God gave him, he knew he was rich in the fellowship of other believers, and he needed nothing else.

What a great testimony for all of us, to set the things that God has given us as the most abundant blessing in life and not to go after the things of this world. How sweet and how pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together.

[ 5 : 46 ] It's good, which means that is what ought to be. That is the good thing. What we just prayed about earlier was the good thing. It was the right thing to be done. But it's also the pleasant thing.

It's the thing that we want. The fellowship of other Christians is the right thing, but it's also the pleasant thing. It's the thing that our heart longs for. It's the thing that we want.

So when we think about Christian fellowship among us here in the church, we say it's good, and we say that it's pleasant. It's pleasing unto the Lord, and it's satisfying. It's what we want. It's not only our duty to do it, but it's also our delight.

It's not a job, but it is our joy. This unity comes not just from being in the same location geographically or meeting at the same church every Sunday, but it comes from finding all of our wealth in the cross.

Psalms 135 verse 5 says, Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good. Sing praises unto His name, for it is pleasant. The Lord is good, and His praises are pleasant.

[ 6 : 46 ] You find what is good, and you find it pleasant, meeting together and serving the Lord. So our unity in here is rooted in goodness and praise of God, and there's nothing else like it in all of this world than what God has given us.

And he goes on to describe it even farther. It says, It says, And a sweet cinnamon, half so much, even 250 shekels, and sweet calamus, 250 shekels, and some more things, and some more things, and it will continue, and altar.

And it's just very detailed about this going on. I'm surprised nobody has made the Exodus beard oil yet. It's just really involved here. But what we see here is that it was fragrant, with all the different spices.

One year, Jackie Chris had given Stephanie some cinnamon essential oil, and she left it on my desk, and I thought, Huh, I wonder what this would feel like in my beard. That was a bad idea, all right?

You don't want to think. And I took that cinnamon, I put it in there. It smelled good, but I thought I was going to see Jesus for a moment, all right? It was. It hurt. But it's just all these details, and it's like, it brings this incredible smell.

[ 8 : 23 ] I like to say fragrant, but it's so hard for me to say. It brings this incredible smell, and an aroma that came from it. But it was also very sacred, is what we're looking at. It's very sacred, this wonderful smelling thing.

But the attention that's given here in this passage, when speaking about Christian unity, there's so much you can look at that, that it was costly, it was given to them. You could take so many things, but the part that's taken from that story, applied here in this verse, is that it ran down.

It was what you might consider excessive, or it was abundant. Some of you are hearing this, and you say it went from the head, through the beard, into the collar. That sounds messy. It's not messy, but it was abundant.

It was more than needed. It was more than ever deserved. That's what God has given us. That's what John Fawcett said. I don't need that church in London. I don't need this from the king.

I just have what that I need. God has met my need here in this Christian fellowship. And then lastly here, verse number three. So we see that it is good and pleasant.

[ 9 : 27 ] It's the right thing. It's also the thing that we desire for. It's like the oil that runs down. The Christian fellowship is abundant. It is wonderful. And then it's like the dew of Hermon, verse three.

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 forevermore. So Mount Hermon, which is now in Lebanon, was obviously Israel at this time, is 9,000 feet tall.

Mount Zion, the highest place that they would have things built there, highest point in Jerusalem, where the priests would do their work mediating between God and man of some 2,500 feet.

And so it's just 9,000 feet down to the 2,500. Mount Hermon, you would look at it and it would be snow-capped. You would see that it would have the dew, the precipitation that would be upon it.

The Mount Zion was God's blessings that were brought down upon the people. And how special and unique that was. What we're seeing here is that because the Lord had established the fact, that is what makes it so wonderful.

[ 10 : 34 ] Just like God had ordained the dew of Hermon to come down upon it, just like He had ordained the work at Mount Zion, He has commanded His blessings upon us even more.

It's God ordained. It is from Him. It's established. That's so incredible. It's not created. It's revealed. It's not created, but it's celebrated in what God has given us.

The closer that we draw together around the truth, the closer we become one to another. It's nothing that we have to fabricate. We actually can't. If we're not united in the truth, then we're not united at all.

If we step outside of the truth, try to unite in anything else, in anything lesser, then we're not united at all. We're just acquaintances. We're just event attendees. We're just something that the world can provide.

But in here, or on Mount Hermon where the snow comes down, or on Mount Zion where God has a sacred work, or among God's people, there's something that falls down upon us, His blessings that is good and it's pleasant, and it's from the Lord.

[ 11 : 34 ] Would you like to hear more about the dew that is descended upon us? Ephesians 2, 13 through 18. I'm going to read this and pray, and then we're going to sing that slightly odd song by John Fawcett one more time.

But we're going to appreciate it even more because we love the word so much and we love the man's story. And then if we wouldn't mind, we will sing it as well with my soul. Ephesians chapter number 2, verse number 13.

It is the dew that is descended upon us. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall partition between us.

Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, for to make in Him of twain one new man, so making peace, that He might reconcile both unto God and one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh.

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Is there anything that you could say to another person in all the world that would ever make you any closer than me to be able to look at you and say, for through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

[ 12 : 48 ] The death of the cross brought peace with God and allows for unity among those of us who have access to the Father by His death. It is good, it is pleasant, it is overflowing, and it's been given to us by God, and we say thank you.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for what you have done in allowing us, after salvation, to be put together in church families. Lord, we say that the Christian fellowship that we have, Lord, we pray that it is a sweet-smelling aroma unto you, Lord, that it is a sacred calling in which we have been given.

Lord, it's more than we could ever deserve. Lord, it is the right thing, though it's also the pleasant thing. We're so grateful for it. Lord, as our brother said in John Fawcett, there are many tears of sympathy that are shed.

Lord, we have shared tears together as a church family. We have shared laughter together. We have shared meals. But Lord, most importantly, we share access to the Father because of the death of your Son, and we are so grateful.

In Jesus' name I pray, amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 14 : 09 ] Amen.