

# Fellowship • Psalm 133

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *The Elder & The Homeless Man*

1. The church was full with nearly every seat in the pews taken when the homeless man wandered in
2. The church was an active one; it had a regular street ministry and feeding program
  - a. one Sunday every month they provided meals at a local park
  - b. they played music and someone gave a gospel message
  - c. they invited the men and women they met on the street to their church
  - d. but in their heart of heart, they always wondered what kind of reception these people who lived on the street would receive when they walked in the door of their new church
3. One homeless man, who had attended many such street services and eaten many meals from different groups was touched by the seeming sincerity of the people of this particular church
4. So one Sunday morning, he decided to attend their services
5. But arriving a bit late, he found no place to sit
6. So in his somewhat ragged clothing, and lacking the same kind of personal hygiene that marked the rest of the people there that morning, he made his way up the center aisle and sat down on the floor in front of the podium as the choir led the congregation in the mornings' worship
7. A tenseness fell over the congregation – what should they do?
8. This lone man sitting on the floor in the front of the room seemed awkward and presented a sudden distraction
9. It was then that one of the Elders of the church, a stately older man whom everyone knew as a godly and strict man rose from his seat
  - a. that morning he was wearing his typical Sunday attire
  - b. 3 piece suit, dress shoes, and immaculately groomed hair
  - c. he was the picture of dignity and order as he slowly made his way up the center aisle
10. The tension in the room built as the congregation watched the elder make his way toward the homeless man
11. They were certain the older man would bend down and ask the man to follow him back out of the room
12. Certainly his presence, sitting on the floor was distracting and inappropriate – or at least that's what everyone thought the elder was thinking
13. But when the elder got the man's side, he did something no one but his wife was expecting –
14. Working against the age that had stiffened his back and legs, he slowly sat down next to the homeless man and put his arm around his shoulder
15. The other hand he lifted to heaven, and sang out his worship to God with renewed intensity

16. The tension in the room was immediately broken – and the people’s hearts were united in praise to God as they were touched by the evidence of the Love of God for all people, regardless of what they look like on the outside

## **B. Song Of Ascent**

1. Psalm 133 celebrates this kind of refreshing love and fellowship
2. It is one of what are called the “Psalms of Ascent”
  - a. which means it is one of the special songs sung by the Jewish pilgrims as they made their way from their homes all over Israel to Jerusalem for the annual feasts of Passover and Tabernacles
  - b. Jerusalem is located on the highpoint of a ridge of mountains that run the length of the center of Israel
  - c. and no matter where people lived, as they approached Jerusalem, they would get to the foothills that led to the city
  - d. as they began this ascent, they would break into these songs and sing them the entire rest of the way
  - e. you know how it is when you are taking a trip to a relative’s house that is some distance away
  - f. a lot of the journey is just covering the distance
  - g. but eventually you see some landmark that tells you you are almost there
  - h. it’s like the landmark announces the end of the trip is at hand and the reunion is about to be made and this brings joy
  - i. my mother lives in Oceanside; about a 3 hour trip
    - 1) travelling through LA is just a blur
    - 2) but when I see San Onofre, and then Camp Pendelton, I start to get excited because the trip is almost over and I will once again see my mother
  - j. this is the way it was for the Jewish pilgrims
    - 1) they had been to Jerusalem on the annual pilgrimages before
    - 2) they knew the land and the route
    - 3) and as their road turned to begin making it’s way up into the hills, their hearts rose in joyous anticipation of seeing the holy city and worshipping in the temple
    - 4) so they would break out and sing these songs of ascent
3. Psalm 133 is especially poignant because it speaks of the kind of fellowship the people will enjoy as the smaller groups of pilgrims grow in size as they meet one another on the road
4. And all of them look forward to the great time they will have as they gather at their destination

## **II. TEXT**

### **A. Vs. 1-3**

- {1 } Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
- {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.

**{3} It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing; life forevermore.**

1. This simple psalm of only 3 verses is a wonderful memorial to the sweetness of fellowship
2. It celebrates good relationships and the refreshment they bring to our souls
3. Now, the word pictures David uses here may not be too appealing to us today, but understood in their historical context, they were beautiful expressions of renewal
4. This psalm reminds us of the important role fellowship with others plays in renewing our lives and refreshing our spirits

## **B. V. 1**

**{1 } Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!**

1. I hope and pray all of us have memories of when we were younger, say, teenagers, when we just hung out with our friends
2. I can't say what teenage girls do when they hang out, but I know what guys do
  - a. there was a group of friends I hung out with who were really tight
  - b. there are 8 of us, and almost every night during the summer and on the weekends during the school year, we were together
  - c. we would almost always head over to Jeff VanWinkle's house – that was our designated meeting place
  - d. then we would sit around his living room and decide what to do
  - e. we'd go to the show, or Carl's Jr. or out cruising
  - f. during the Summer, we went in to the orange groves that surrounded all the housing tract back then in Orange County, and we'd pick up sides and have orange fights
    - 1) we did that till we got too good and people started getting hurt
    - 2) then we switched to our left hands to throw, till we got too good at that
    - 3) then we quit
  - g. and built underground forts in the orange groves until the police busted us and it was splashed all over the front pages of the local papers that Viet Cong style tunnels had been found in the county
3. You get the picture don't you? – We were tight and did everything together, including getting into trouble
4. I remember distinctly sitting in VanWinkle's living room with all the buds
  - a. and as we laughed and joked and put one another down with some of the best verbal jabs ever uttered
  - b. there would regularly come over me a feeling of belonging and satisfaction that is, well, indescribable
5. As I tell this little bit of personal history, I suspect many, if not most of you are thinking back to similar feelings
6. And those who do not have them, wish they did
7. Because there is something deep in the human soul that is sustained and renewed by this kind of friendship with others
8. "Behold," - look, see, consider - "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

10. Conversely, “Behold, how wrong and how difficult it is for brethren to dwell together in disunity!”
  - a. when there is tension and conflict
  - b. when relationships are strained and people don’t agree
  - c. when spite and anger fill the air
11. Some of you live in homes where the family is in disunity and you know how very hard it is to deal with
12. Some of you work in jobs where the tension is so thick you could cut it with a knife
13. And as a consequence, the turn-over and sick leave rates are incredibly high

### **C. We Are Social Creatures**

1. God has designed us so that we need relationships with others
2. The greatest and most important relational need we have is with God,
  - a. and until we have that relationship,
  - b. what we are ultimately looking for in our relationships with others will be frustrated
  - c. when couples come to me for counseling – one of the first things I try to sort out is if they are both born again
  - d. all too often a husband or wife is trying to have all their needs met by their mate
  - e. but the needs they are seeking to see fulfilled can only be met by God
  - f. once they have that relationship secure, then they can work on having a great marriage
3. But the point is – God designed us so that we find our fulfillment in relationships with others
  - a. oh certainly we gain a sense of satisfaction from accomplishing some significant goal or tackling a big project
  - b. but nothing can replace the satisfaction that rises from being in intimate communion with others we have let in to our lives
4. I would ask you this morning to consider the fruit of the Spirit Paul lists for us in Galatians 5

**{22} The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

**{23} gentleness, self-control.**

5. Notice how many of these are relational in nature
  - a. really, you could make a good case for saying they all are!
  - b. the point is that Christian growth isn’t something that takes place in a vacuum
  - c. Christian growth is relational growth
  - d. spiritual maturity is defined by relational maturity
  - e. the Christian walk is not isolated and solitary – it’s a pilgrimage traveled in the company of others
6. Paul goes on in Galatians 5 and says . . .

**{24} Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

**{25} If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

**{26} Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

7. These are all things that speak of disunity – of factionalism and contention
8. It's interesting that the Apostle Paul decries the lack of spiritual maturity among the Corinthians and sees the main evidence for their spiritual infancy in that they were selfish, full of envy and petty jealousies, and were divided into warring camps and factions
9. Friends, according to biblical standards, it isn't the presence of supernatural spiritual gifts that mark a person or church as mature – it's the presence of loving devotion to the Lord and also to one another
  - a. Jesus said the greatest command was to love God and your neighbor
  - b. John said that the one who says he loves God but hates his fellow man is a liar
  - c. that love for others is a sure sign of love for God, and that a genuine love for God will always work itself out in a practical love for those around us
10. It's remarkable that the record that's come down to us about the early church, is not that its critics remarked about how the miraculous was evident, but that these early believers loved one another
  - a. when the rest of society was falling apart under the weight of its own corruption and greed
  - b. the Christians were taking care of one another and the helpless and overlooked
  - c. this testimony of love was so powerful, that even when Christians began to face severe persecution, their numbers grew!
  - d. it was said that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church
  - e. why would men, women and children join a movement when membership in it could very well mean the loss of their lives?
  - f. it's simple: The reality of love among them cut through the emptiness and vanity of life apart from Christ
  - g. people chose to risk death for love, rather than live a life without it
11. Oh, that we might recapture that reality today!
  - a. that we might recognize the priority of committed relationships in the Body of Christ
  - b. that we might place a priority on developing intimate friendships with others who we can refresh and be refreshed by!
12. Notice how David describes this refreshing that fellowship brings . . .

#### **D. Vs. 2-3**

**{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.**

1. They didn't have the convenience of modern plumbing in the ancient world, at least they didn't when David wrote this
2. So the way people would refresh themselves between baths was by pouring perfumed oil over their heads
3. This oil, which was kept in a stone or glass bottle was cool and the perfume would help to mask the natural, less than pleasant scent that would eventually

- come to mark a person living in the arid Middle East
4. But the picture David uses here is even more refreshing
    - a. he speaks of the anointing of Aaron
    - b. God had given a recipe for a special oil that was to be made only for the anointing of the priests
    - c. no one else was to make this mixture for any other use – if they did, there were subject to the severest punishments
    - d. this oil was the most aromatic, most refreshing perfume there was
    - e. and when Aaron was anointed to begin his office as the high priest of Israel, an entire flask of it was poured over his head
      - 1) it dripped down his head,
      - 2) onto his beard, and down his official robes
      - 3) bathing him in a sweet cloud of delightful aroma
    - f. as he went about his duties, and passed by others, they would be blessed just by the trail of scent he left behind
  5. If you've ever been in the mall or at work or where ever and someone passed by that was wearing a cologne or perfume that you really liked, you have a slight idea of what David is speaking of here
  6. Or here's an even better example:
    - a. if you've ever been really hot and grimy from some activity and then taken a nice warm shower, you have an idea of what David is saying here
    - b. one of my greatest delights in life is to get home after a long backpacking trip and then get in the shower!
      - 1) after several days of hiking and wearing the same clothes
      - 2) and trying to take a bath in a mountain stream that is about 40 degrees
      - 3) nothing feels more refreshing and renewing than a nice hot shower
      - 4) with some herbal shower gel, and some shampoo!
  7. What all this is to the body – fellowship is to the soul!
  8. David goes on in another picture . . .

**{3} It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing; life forevermore.**

9. Hermon is the massive mountain on the northern border of Israel upon which the seasonal snows fall
  - a. it is the melting of these snows that provide the water that feeds the Jordan river –
  - b. and the Sea of Galilee, which acts as the reservoir for the entire nation
  - c. when we take our tours in Israel, the guides always tell us about the strategic importance of the Sea of Galilee
  - d. it's water level is always an issue of prime concern to every citizen
  - e. and right now, the people are gravely concerned because the snow fall on Mt. Hermon is way, way behind normal schedule
  - f. there is grave concern over major drought in Israel this winter and next year
10. David is painting the picture God sending the rains and snows on the mountains of Israel, which would translate into well watered fields and full wells, and the continuation of healthy, prosperous life in the land

11. You and I, living as we do in modern America, run from the rain and see it as a nuisance
  - a. we have our umbrellas
  - b. and dislike the rain because it gets our cars dirty
  - c. but for those who live in an agriculturally-based economy,
  - d. the rain was a tremendous blessing
  - e. and instead of running indoors, they stand out in it and lift their face to the skies, letting the drops fall on their skin
  - f. ah!!!!!!! Refreshment – LIFE!!!!!!!!!!!

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. The Call To Unity**

1. As I said earlier – the Christian walk is a Walk with others
2. Jesus never intended that we would walk in isolation
3. On the contrary, He called us to unity
4. He said that He would build His Church, not individual, isolated Christians
5. Peter said that the Church was comprised of living stones, built *together* by the Spirit – you and I are those stones – and one stone, does not a building make!
6. It's as we fit our lives together and join one another side by side that we find our own sense of purpose and meaning fulfilled in the larger work God is doing
7. Jesus placed tremendous priority on the unity of His followers
  - a. in John 17, He casts the unity of His people as the evidence of the Unity of the Godhead
  - b. in a world divided by sin, it was the love and unity of the Church, He said, that would stand as the single greatest testimony to Him

#### **B. Individualism Vs. Fellowship**

1. One of the strengths of the American culture is the high value placed on individualism and personal ambition and motivation
2. But just as this is a strength, it can turn in to a weakness if we fail to realize that God also made us to need committed relationships with others
3. And He ordains that the Church *not* be a coalition of individuals but a Community of the Committed
  - a. committed first to Him
  - b. and then to one another
4. Here's the problem – the pace of life is so hurried, so fraught with busyness, that it seems we have little time for working at building relationships with others
5. The only way we can overcome this hindrance is to put priority and value on it
6. We have to make developing key friendships a top priority
7. We have to stop making excuses and just do it!

#### **C. Cliques Versus Fellowship**

1. One of the criticisms every church hears now and then is that new people, or even people who have been attending for some time find it hard to break in to

- the cliques that have formed in the local church
2. We've heard this over the years
  3. But let's think about this:
    - a. how many people can each of us reasonably be in close, intimate fellowship with?
    - b. maybe 2 or 3 other people
    - c. then we have a little bit wider group of genuine friends – maybe another dozen or so people that we share some common interests with and do stuff with
    - d. it's unreasonable to expect that a person can have a sphere of friends that is much larger than say 15 people
    - e. how many men did Jesus chose to call to himself and be his closest friends?
    - f. how many did he invite in and then disclose Himself to – 12
    - g. and even then, he picked only 3 of them that He was most intimate with
  4. It is not wrong for believers to gather in smaller groups
  5. Call them cliques if you want – the problem isn't cliques – it's cliques we want!
  6. The point is – everyone should be in one! And If you're not, then you should be
  7. So, how does one go about getting in to a group of other believers they can become a committed part of?
  8. Small groups – Crown, GKGW, another home group, a ministry here at the church
  9. Stop waiting for someone else to reach out to you – you reach out!
    - a. invite people over to your house,
    - b. out to lunch after church, pie after study
    - c. a hike on Saturday, shopping on Sunday afternoon
  10. Because - Behold how good . . .