

# KEEPING WITH UNITY

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | APRIL 12, 2020



## Class 1 – The Ascent of Unity (Psalm 133)

PURPOSE: Local church and global church sustainability.

### Introduction

Most of us know how our culture loves to throw around the word “unity” for virtually any gathering showing an iota of promise. The word usually appears in the news when a crisis confronts a nation or people group faced with odds stacked high against them. However, it may interest you that the word “unity” occurs only half a dozen or so times in all of Scripture. But that isn’t to say the theme of unity is absent from the Holy Writ. It isn’t. What the Bible does is genius: It naturally cultivates *a heart of unity* running on the back of this massive spiritual ascent to the Almighty. Thus unity, in Scripture, plays second fiddle to corporate worship.

### I. The Easy Part (Psalm 133:1)

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

#### A. Something Easily Understood

1. *It Captures a Familiar Scene*: King David and his “mighty men” with whom he spent time with in battle (as he was a fugitive with them during King Saul’s reign, away from the city of Jerusalem).
2. *It Captures a Familiar Exhortation*: It is the exhortation to “look up!” echoed in other Psalms (note: Psalm ch.120-134 = ‘Psalms of Ascent’).

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

–Psalm 121:1-2

Our help is in the name of the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.

–Psalm 124:8

Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the  
LORD, who stand by night in the house of the  
LORD! <sup>2</sup> Lift up your hands to the holy place  
and bless the LORD!

–Psalm 134:1-2

## B. Something Easily Accessed

1. Strong memories of the church coming together as one.
2. Identifying with the Israelites who were many times strangers in a strange land. Their incompatible ways with the world system often drew them all the more together.

## II. **The Hard Part** (Psalm 133:2-3)

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard,  
on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!

<sup>3</sup> It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of  
Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, **life  
forevermore**.

## A. Something Lost in Translation

1. We don't usually gravitate towards men making a mess with hair product.
2. What's all the excitement about "dew"? Mountain Dew? -What? And, who is "Hermon"?
3. Footnote: The weighty importance of the *strange* cross can be lost in culture at times (1 Cor. 1:18).

B. Something that Transcends

1. *By way of explanation:* What sounds strange to us in 21<sup>st</sup> century America would not have been so alien in the mind of the ancient Jew thousands of years ago.

To the early Jew the images of “Aaron,” the “oil,” “Hermon,” and “Zion” were germane to Israel’s overall historical narrative -much like ours with “George Washington,” “Old Glory,” and “Gettysburg.”

Aaron and the oil had to do with the ceremonial consecration of Israel’s holy priesthood. The oil was of a secret mixture which was not to be imitated (Exod. 30:30-33). It was to be poured *only* on Aaron’s head as a sign of God’s favor for him being Israel’s ordained representative.

The oil coming down like the dew of Mount Hermon takes the romantic imagery to a higher elevation (note: Hermon is above the snowline and thus has water coming down from it). Putting Zion on par with Hermon sounds like a tribute. It is, in fact, a form of exaltation. Zion is Jerusalem which sits on a *lower* arid, dry mountain in contrast to the *bigger* (wetter) mountain to the north. But here Zion appears to be rising.

In all, these images are not static. Rather they dance in rapid succession with each other as in a kaleidoscope.

2. *By way of expansion:* At the very end of Psalm 133 we perceive what the songwriter is reaching for; it is “life forevermore.” This makes for an easy segue to the gospels; for Jesus, the

“anointed one,” himself, is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6 & 3:16).

On two occasions Jesus Christ received personal, verbally announced favor of the Father from Heaven downward for his beloved One (see Matthew 3:13-17 & 17:1-8).

Much like the imagery of Hermon/Zion, from the side of Jesus flows rivers of living water (see John 7:37-39 & 19:31-34).

## **Conclusion**

Christian unity springs up from Old Testament doxology, where we resonate with the Hebrews’ desire to ascend the holy mountain in a majestic throng. At the top, Christ as our great high priest (Heb. 4:14) stands as our greater Aaron...

### **Keeping with Unity Course Outline (Tentative):**

- The Ascent of Unity (Psalm 133)
- The Depth of Unity (John 17:20-23)
- The Body of Unity (Ephesians 4:1-16)
- Unity Goals & Challenges with *Ligonier Ministries*
- Unity Goals & Challenges with the *Southern Baptist Convention*
- Unity Goals & Challenges with *9 Marks Ministries & T4G*
- Unity Goals & Challenges with *The Gospel Coalition*