

December 8, 2008

Psalm 133 (NASB)

**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Coming down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's Beard,
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forever.**

Our nation's day of Thanksgiving has passed, and Christmas is almost here. Many of us have spent or are preparing to spend extra time with friends and family—many of whom we may not see very often. This makes for interesting times. Some families love to be together. Everyone gets along. The happenings of the year are recounted. Genuine laughter and tears are shared as naturally as the holiday meal. These families have something to look forward to as the holidays arrive.

Other families fall short of this kind of unity. Even if their disparate parts make the trek to a central location to share a meal or a weekend, the act may be more symbolic than heartfelt. There will be fewer smiles, fewer laughs, even fewer tears. Who can risk full openness with those who cannot be fully trusted? There may be a collection of warm bodies present, but unity has yet to arrive.

Most of us have seen or experienced both of these situations. We know what close bonds and mutual commitment feels like. We may also know how it feels to never feel fully safe or at ease. Only one of these situations resembles the blessing of life that God envisions for His covenant keepers.

It is interesting that we may immediately connect with how our families are impacted by unity or a lack thereof. We should consider the implications for the church. This psalm is about unity among God's covenant keepers. God expects His people to be unified, and He intends for that unity to be a blessing. When we work for unity, we are pursuing holiness, and God is molding us into something beautiful but not merely ornamental. He is forming us into a sanctified body—an assembly designed to relate not only to each other but also to the God of all blessings. Just as God anointed His chosen leaders, and just as God anointed the hills of Israel with the gifts of life, God is able to anoint His assembly today. But He desires unity.

It is not good enough for us to simply make our treks to a central location to share an hour or two. It is not enough for us to refrain from fighting and assume that all is well. Unity means more than lack of discord. Unity means investment in one another and in the mutual keeping of our covenant with God. When we learn to love and share and laugh and cry together, then we begin to experience the lush blessings that come with unity in the house of God.

In His service,
Patrick Barber